

No.152

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Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**TIME TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH CASHED UP
BAIRD GOVT. WITH BILLIONS TO BURN &
STRIKE BACK AGAINST STA CEO ROWLEY'S
MARAUDING "RAMBO" BOSSES
WITH DIRECT ACTION!**



*"You look bored dear, maybe the resort owners
will let you torment THEIR employees for a while."*

STA Busie News;	NSW Railway News;
International News;	STA "Work to Rule";
Victorian Rail News;	STA "Log of Claims";
Sydney Trains Rabid Fat Cats;	Bob Carnegie Victory;

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news in the STA, has been the wave of nasties which have accompanied the new EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement), introduced late last year. In selling the EBA, the union hierarchy brazenly lied to the grass roots, that the bosses were not intending to squeeze more from drivers. The reality has been more savage attacks, involving the draconian discipline regime, opening back and middle doors for passenger entry, etc. There is a move amongst the grass roots to fight back with direct action and regain conditions lost due to successive EBA scams, in which the union hierarchy have been complicit. An important precursor, is “Drivers for Affirmative Action” in the NSW Railways, which in March 2004 waged a campaign of direct action and won large bonuses. With better organisation and planning, it would have achieved much more.

This mooted campaign in the STA, organised by the grass roots on behalf of a “Log of Claims” is also aimed at securing a fair share of “goodies” from the Baird Govt. Lately, the media has been full of stories of how cashed up it has become, with \$30 billion from stamp duty and even more billions from leasing electricity assets. Whilst the grass roots in various sectors have been hard hit by rising rents and “crazy” real estate prices. The grass roots in other sectors of transport need to take account and consider copying this positive initiative, to both fight the feral fat cats, but also to secure some of the Baird Govt’s “bounty”, before its Liberal business mates gobble up all of it! (See article page 7.)

In this edition, we again provide a report of the spying by our moles in the bosses’ office. In particular, they have focused on uncovering some new unwholesome plans for the job, by a certain Peter Rowley, STA CEO. (See article page 6.)

In Sydney Trains, lately the feral fat cats have been displaying their claws, with the imposing of a range of nasty new rules. One of the most vicious and cruel has been the removal of seats for barrier staff, which is resulting in worsening health. Other rules, which are equally unnecessary are just about making life a bit more difficult. These sharp claws urgently need some filing, with industrial solidarity by the grass roots in more strategic sectors! (See article page 3.)

Sparks welcomes contributions in the shape of poems, articles and cartoons by transport workers. Please send to Sparks PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web site www.sparksworld.org

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N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Cruel and Unusual Punishment Continues.

Rules, rules, new rules, who's rules, who rules.

I'm convinced that the N.S.W. Government and its public transport management hates it's workers. How else can you explain some of the ridiculous practices that have been implemented.

The trial of station "right of ways" has been a continuing farce with safety vests forcibly removed, then under consultation with the unions, staff were forced to wear them once more. The latest situation is that some platforms will be wearing them while others won't, depending on whether they are using a flag or the new light to safely despatch the train. Nobody can really remember a time when there was a safety issue related to the use of a flag. That does not stop management, however, from trialling heavy hand-held L.E.D. lights that look something like a small tennis racquet. Handy though, I must admit, for cuffing an unruly passenger around the scone.

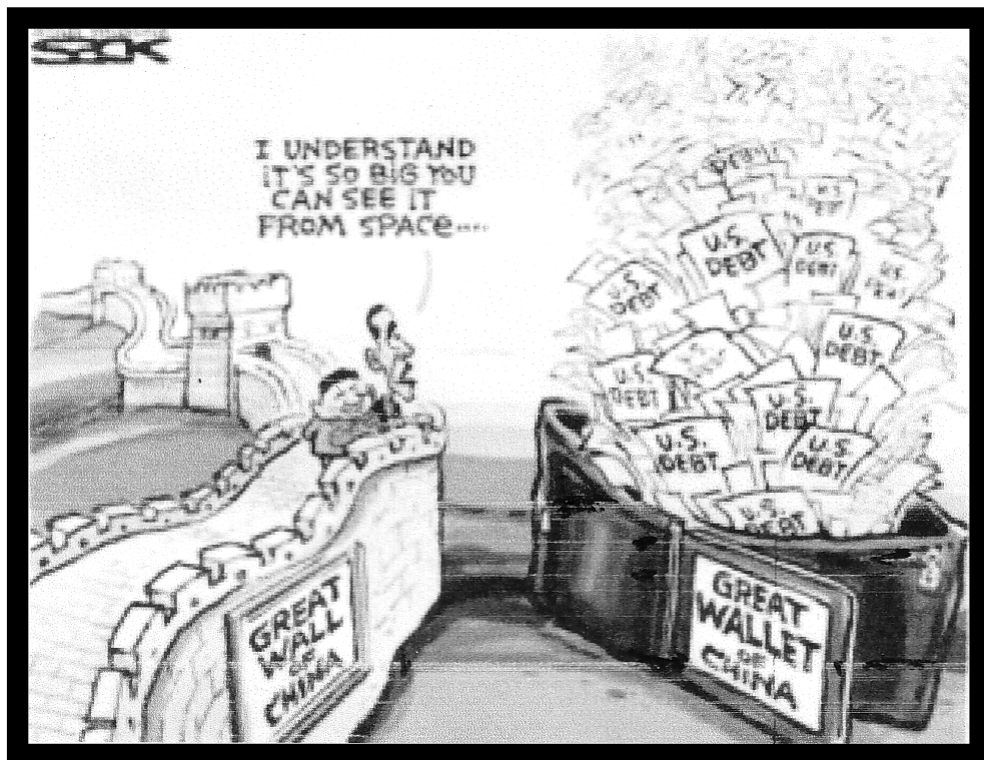
These things must have cost a few dollars when you factor in the whole management implementation program that surrounds anything new. But hey, if you are a manager, that's what it is all about. Change for change sake, just so that you can justify your existence. It's a way to get noticed if you are a manager.

Another way to get noticed is to get staff to stand all day while attending "customers" needs. The ongoing punishment of staff by making them stand for 8 to 12 hrs a day is continuing. Yes, despite all of the medical literature that says that making employees to perpetually stand is a bad idea, rail management says exactly the opposite. It's "good customer service" according to them, neglecting to say that these reforms are good for their own K.P.I.'s. This disgraceful, forced, work practice says a lot about the way employees are viewed by these present crop of bean-counting managers.

There is some evidence that making staff stand for a prolonged time is having some impact on the number of sickies people are taking. Management is cracking down through their absence control measures but it seems to me that it is having little effect. We can't really tell as we have have not seen any of their updated K.P.I. graphs posted on the wall lately.

Now staff are beginning to succumb to a number of ailments, from foot and back soreness to swollen knees and headaches. Some employees have already left the job, medically retired or resigned, rather than put up with constant pain. Some staff working ticket barriers have told me that they have to have regular physiotherapy just so that they can get through each day standing.

Constant appeals to the union hierarchy have failed to bring about a reasonable approach to the treatment of employees. Our union has fallen hook line and sinker for management's line



about improving customer service. Faxes sent to the union by affected employees threatening to resign has not made one iota of difference to the predicament that they find themselves in.

The Customer Service General Manager that introduced these draconian measures has now quit the railways saying that she has lifted the “standard” and achieved what she set out to do. In her new position as CEO of Kennards Hire, she will prove to be an effective tool for Kennards Hire stockholders. There is no expectation that the new Sydney Trains Customer Service management will roll back any of these practices any time soon.

Recently there were changes to the way that staff bundy on and off. There used to be 3 minutes leeway either way when you signed on or off. Often this meant that if your train was or bus was late you could still be regarded as being on time if you bundied up to 3 minutes after your sign-on time. Likewise if you hit off 3 minutes before sign-off time you could possibly catch your transport home. Now there is no leeway despite having to be on the job, ready to start, on or before your sign-on time.

This might mean that you will have to wait up to half an hour for a train or bus to get you home. Management are under no such constraints, coming and going as they please. Often their knock-off time coincides with the time of an express ride home.

It all makes no sense, since often the people clocking off have been relieved by someone taking over their job for the next shift. There is no work for them left to do. There are no savings at

all to be found in a few minutes leeway. This illustrates clearly why these new practices are less about saving money or improving the business. Instead it's all about punishing employees and putting them in their place.

Amongst the general workforce disillusionment is widespread. Employees feel as if they are not valued at all. If there had been a union fightback, some dignity may have been restored within the workforce. At least there could have been some solidarity and camaraderie built up which may have strengthened the workforce backbone against the attacks. Alas there has been nothing but more capitulation and excuses from the union leadership who know nought about, or just don't care about, organising on the job.

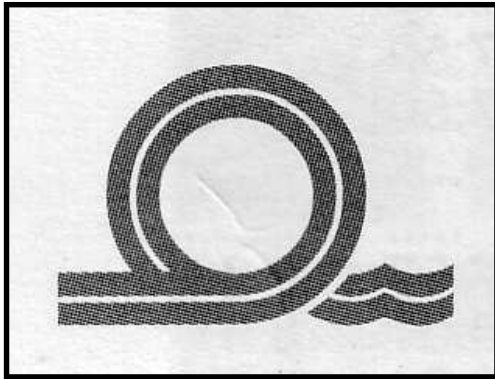
Job insecurity is the main motivator for fear amongst employees. Because there has been wave after wave of reform over the last 15 years leading to massive job losses, individual experience teaches them that they could be next. The attrition process continues unabated. There are staff reviews in the pipeline that are expected to bring even more cuts. In the areas of maintenance, SDM's below a certain grade, NSW Trains staff, Sydney Trains staff are all mooted for another swing of the unemployment sword to the neck. This follows the wholesale removal of Booking Clerks from ticket offices, replacement of full-time cleaners with part time cleaners, the closure of information centres with the loss of dedicated and knowledgeable staff which has been sub-contracted to the private sector, the removal of Transit Officers, the contracting of nearly all maintenance work with the loss of a skilled workforce, the removal of Station Managers to be replaced by Station Customer Managers, with little experience, but twice the salary.

Due to the high job attrition rate and the recycling of full time staff for part timers many depots no longer have an official union delegate to represent local staff issues. Having locally elected delegates is essential to containing the rabid zeal of local managers. All workplace depots workers need to campaign to have locally elected union delegates. Delegates need to understand the implications of industrial issues impacting in their area and more generally, regionally and nationally. They also need to have the guts and ability to confront management and to campaign for better conditions for members.

What members don't need is another union head office appointed stooge that makes excuses or does not understand the issues and doesn't consult with members before or after talking to management. That type of unionism is a dead end and one which workers have no need for any-more.

A rank and file structure with regular local meetings is preferable, but not always possible. It is something that workers on the job should aim for. They need democratic, self managed local branches that invigorate and build solidarity and confidence within the workplace and in the union. Perhaps that should be our next campaign.

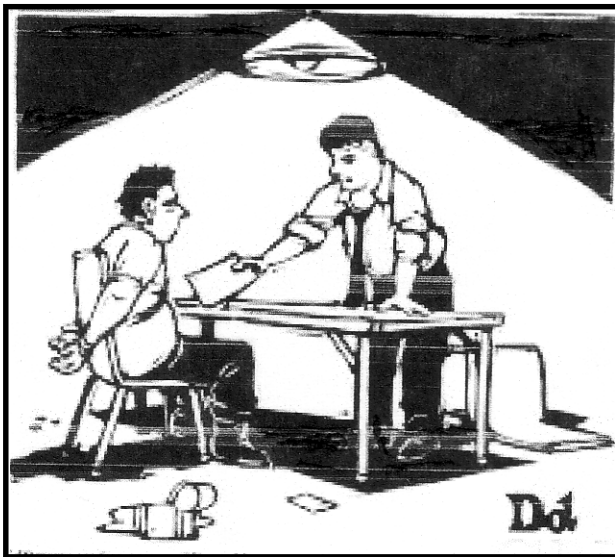




“STASILAND”

It had been a bad start to the day for one of our correspondents. He was just about to board his bus and start his runs, when he was suddenly leapt upon and grabbed by the scruff of the neck by a gang of Depot Admin staff. They were sporting the new State Transit “STASI” look now fashionable in Depot Admin. circles of trench coats with dark glasses and jack boots. They had been hiding behind his bus in ambush mode, clenching rubber hoses. As they pounced, they cried out with glee as they clutched their trophy, which they had been relentlessly hunting for months, “you’re wanted in the office immediately!”

He was viciously flailed with the hoses, frog marched into the office and put under the spot light! He pleaded with the union rep, who was meekly just standing around, watching the unfolding carnage, to help him out. The rep spoke with the Union Executive on his mobile to get advice. The rep blurted out, “they told me, the union’s hands are tied, it’s all been okayed in clauses of the latest enterprise agreement, the union officials told us, we didn’t have a worry in the world about! Apparently it was



“After you confess to causing the injury to that passenger entering via the back door, can you fill in this survey to improve our interrogation methods.”

voted for overwhelmingly to get an imaginary pay rise!”

Our correspondent had been the subject of “a clandestine surveillance operation” – Code named “Operation Put the Jack Boot in”. Depot Admin. Staff disguised with phony, bright red moustaches and orange cardigans had been lurking unobtrusively at terminuses, equipped with concealed stop watches, clip boards and high tech cameras, amongst the crowds of commuters. It had all been part of CEO Rowley’s new “Let’s up the pressure on drivers!” and “We want to control everything! Absolutely everything!” shoot from the hip management approach.

A mole of ours at STA HQ had heard on the grape vine that Rowley had just attended a special meeting in the conference room with some faceless Transport for NSW bureaucrats, who gave him his orders. He was told that with the re-election of the Baird Government, for the next 4 years he had to toughen the STA disciplinary regime to power drive austerity. He must “radicalise” his subordinates to put their foot down. Later on, our mole overheard Rowley raving to depot bosses about the wonders of the East German “Secret Police” techniques of control and “why can’t we have it here, in the STA, right now!” He foamed at the mouth, pounding his fists on his desk! Rowley thundered, “Get “Madam Slash”, our “Iron Maiden” at Randwick, who has done such great work issuing \$100 fines and getting 6 drivers to leave the job, and her counterpart at Waverley, to start stamping drivers’ toes with their razor sharp stiletos over missing bus runs! Their counterparts at all other depots to follow suit!”

After some “routine” water boarding and being suspended by a meat hook in the boss’s office by Rowley’s merry STASI men, followed by a vicious kick in the ribs, our correspondent suddenly woke from a stupor. He then had thrust in his face a small mountain of graphs and spread sheets showing he had on occasion been 5 seconds late to terminuses on runs! After catching his breath, he told his interrogators, “But your timetables are completely, unrealistic!” The response he received was definitely “revealing”. “The timetables aren’t supposed to be realistic, it’s all about the dollars we can squeeze from drivers and the trophies we get. Those older drivers we can fit up for the sack!” They continued, “We’ve got the union hierarchy in our pocket, so don’t expect any assistance from them!” CEO Rowley, the smiling assassin, who had been listening in, suddenly burst into the proceedings. Seeing the shell shocked state of the driver, he craftily gave our correspondent a reprieve, so more fear could be spread on the job.

STA BUSIE NEWS

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: How are you finding the management onslaught?

Waverley Busie: In regard to the current EBA commencing late last year, we were told by the union officials that we would get the meagre 2 1/2% pa pay rise, without any further nasties. As the bosses, couldn’t squeeze anything further from us. However, after the new EBA was

up and running, we have faced a new wave of attacks. Now, there is definitely a bad smell on the premises. The bosses are pushing the new draconian discipline regime to the limit. In the Eastern Suburbs, they are imposing harsh penalties in the shape of hefty fines, which effectively reduce our wages for periods of time as punishment for infractions and engaging



in “trophy hunting” with the fitting up of many for the sack. I’ve noticed quite a few drivers getting the sack lately over disciplinary matters. The other day I met someone who had been a driver at Waverley and had been sacked last year and was very annoyed with the STA. He is now employed by a private bus company. He mentioned that he found the job there to be definitely not as harsh in regard to the disciplinary regime and meeting timetables. The bosses are over engineering the job. It seems they are making changes to our work every fortnight and engaging in ever more manipulative control techniques on us.

One alarming new initiative commencing from 15/6/15 is a so called 10 day trial for opening all doors of buses, at four of the busiest stops in the city e.g. Kippax Street, Elizabeth Street and Wynyard for Opal Card holders to enter. On these stops, the boarding of buses at these doors is to be monitored by “marshals”. In reality after this so called “trial” of opening all the doors for entry, it’s likely to become permanent. It will cause confusion amongst commuters generally and will contribute to a grave safety hazard. No doubt this short sightedness and lack of judgement of the bosses, will cause a fatality. Most likely, the driver will then be targeted as the culprit. There has been some discussion on the job about the likely cause of this latest stupidity. One theory is pressure on the CEO from the Baird Government, resulting from a push to cut the STA budget by 10% and the loss of revenue due to the Opal system malfunctioning on buses. We’ve got to hit this madness on the head with direct action immediately! This latest stunt of the bosses and the Liberals, just shows how low the STA has gone and how much the job has deteriorated.

A particularly weird new initiative of these “over glorified accountants”, are 6 monthly meetings with your supervisor called GPS. According to feedback from some who have attended these little chats, it’s about assessing your “performance”. The bosses say these interviews are replacing the regime of attaching sheets to your journal. This new approach maybe even more dangerous. As the bosses will be assisted in building up a case against those being targeted for a disciplinary dividend and the issuing of an E1, based on alleged complaints and mistakes. In

regard to the previous regime, at least, we could immediately challenge any allegations against us. Certainly, there is absolutely no trust between us and the bosses, as a basis for participation in such cosy little chats.

Another is a “competition” for the best depot in regard to cutting late running. Whilst on average, every month you would get 7 to 10 sheets clipped to your journal regarding alleged breaches of CEO Rowley’s “Code of Conduct” policy. Why isn’t there a “Code of Conduct” for the bosses? By this ploy, the bosses were constantly sending the message, “you are under our control!” It’s also, about the bosses putting everyone on the office processing “assembly line”. These so called breaches are often just some trifle the bosses seize upon to use against us, or just brazenly “cooked up” or the result of the bosses’ own slip ups.

In recent weeks, the bosses tried to seize upon a phony breach of the Code of Conduct, in regard to one of our routes. A driver was taken into the office by depot admin. over his failure to pick up passengers on a tricky route. The driver pointed out that there was no map or display showing changes made to it on the notice board. So the driver couldn’t be blamed for the complaints.

The bosses want to put us through an agitator and get some to fall through the grid and get the sack. Good Heavens! Anyone’s job could be on the line, even Big Jim’s could be next!

Compounding the problem of the increased pressure on us from management’s manipulation are the problems we are facing with the Opal system. We now have to continually check both the front and back doors due to passengers problems tapping off with the Opal Card. Overtime is always on offer, due to missed runs. The unrealistic nature of the timetables, has even been admitted by the bosses in the Eastern Suburbs. In doing say 6 runs for a line of work, you normally can only do 5 runs. The bosses don’t concern themselves with the deteriorating health of drivers caused by overwork, increased stress, and exhaustion. However, they just seize upon any of our slip ups for fitting us up for the sack. As a result of these factors, there has been a huge turnover of drivers. In recent weeks I’ve noticed 12 to 15 leaving.

This whole process has been power driven by the Federal Government providing subsidies for employers such as the STA to employ older and long term unemployed. Whilst, the Eastern Suburbs depots workforce need to be reduced by 200 drivers, due to the tramway extensions in the area. As a result, the bosses seize on every opportunity or create new procedures to target particularly older drivers for a disciplinary dividend. Consequently, whilst depleting the workforce, the bosses can boost the STA budget. So they are looking good, and not looking bad.

WORK TO RULE CAMPAIGN & DRAFT LOG OF CLAIMS!

The only way we can beat this onslaught is with a “work to rule” campaign involving drivers and mechanics, where we show the bosses, the Government and commuters, that “We are in Control of the Buses!” We need also to ban immediately “going into the office” and allowing

entry by commuters to the bus from the middle and back door, as part of this campaign. A draft log of claims for the campaign includes the following items for consideration:

1. New “realistic” timetables for all runs determined by depot committees;
2. Improved layover breaks at the end of runs, e.g. 15 minutes;
3. A higher per hour rate of pay for drivers and mechanics, e.g. an extra \$7 per hour;
4. The immediate cessation of the use of CCTV footage for disciplinary matters and the abolition of fines for not wearing the vest on depot premises;
5. The immediate cessation of the “Lateness Crackdown”, “Optimisation”, the draconian “Accidents Policy”, so called GPS 6 monthly interviews and back and middle door opening for entry to the bus;
6. Improved recreation and sick leave for drivers and mechanics, e.g. an extra 2 weeks recreation leave and an extra 2 weeks sick leave, with all restrictions about taking sick leave in current and previous enterprise agreements removed;
7. A code of conduct imposed on the bosses in regard to their dealings with us, monitored by depot committees;
8. Increased staffing of workshops with mechanics and apprentices, with the current speed up in work to come to an abrupt end;
9. The completion of all required maintenance on all buses;
10. The reduction of the period of traineeship to 3 months;
11. All existing casuals and trainees to become permanents;
12. A very “hefty” bonus for our working under the trying conditions associated with the Tramway extensions and WestConnex construction, etc, e.g. \$5000 pa.
13. The restoring of “spare shifts” and the “on the road” servicing by mechanics;
14. Abolition of the existing discriminatory “Drug & Alcohol” testing regime;
15. Non discriminatory allocation of rosters, overtime and equal access to creamy runs, monitored by depot committees;
16. The restitution of any loss of facilities at depots due to punitive action by the STA CEO, monitored by depot committees. Tempe Depot requiring particular consideration;

HOW WILL WE ORGANISE THE CAMPAIGN?

Permanent committees away from the tentacles of the union hierarchy need to be established in depots to implement and coordinate the campaign, and network with other committees at depots throughout State Transit. Everyone in the depots needs to be encouraged to get behind it. One approach could be for certain depots doing the “work to rule” one week, followed by other depots on the next week. A permanent STA wide “coordinating” committee consisting

of delegates from these committees, should be elected for this campaign and future ones, with strict mandates, instant recall and limited tenure of office.

We need to “spread the flames” via agitation in the private buses, the railways and taxis and encourage the grass roots in these sectors to pursue concurrently, similar campaigns and establish this grass roots organisation. In this way our campaign will be assisted and we can build a “bonfire” under the Baird NSW Liberal Government. It will be cashed up with Billions from the leasing of Electricity Assets and a stamp duty bonanza from the real estate boom and can provide plenty of goodies. With this campaign we can transform the fear, many feel on the job, into dynamic offensive action. To fight back and regain all conditions lost over the years, through the smoke and mirrors of the enterprise bargaining scam, which the union officials have been complicit. This campaign will also be the best defence against privatisation.

Sparks: What are drivers’ views of the CEO and the union hierarchy lately?

WB: CEO Peter Rowley had been touring the depots 18 months ago to sell his 10 point plan. Not surprisingly, he received very cold and hostile receptions at the depots. This was particularly the case at Tempe, where he was told to “piss off!” No one wanted anything to do with him. However, we believe Tempe has been targeted. As certain extra facilities which the locals were wanting to improve the job have been denied. There are certain rooms at the depot, where it was to be installed, remain unoccupied.

Drivers generally are asking, why Rowley is still on the job? Why hasn’t he been paid out and sacked years ago, as the major culprit for the destruction of our jobs? We are supposed to live in a democratic society. So why can’t we elect our CEO and vote Rowley out? Some years back we got rid of a very unpopular depot manager at Waverley, known as “Patrick The Bull”. He left the depot, as he was made to feel very uncomfortable in his job.

Several months ago, the hopeless union officials had been in receipt of a hot reception at Waverley. At a union meeting, they were the target of some hard hitting criticism and abruptly departed the scene!

Sparks: How is the mechanical section faring?

WB: Like the drivers, the mechanics have a graph on their window as part of a competition with mechanical sections at other depots. If their section doesn’t pull its weight, mechanical sections at other depots beat them. No doubt as part of this throat cutting mania, I’ve recently noticed that the standard of maintenance has dropped considerably. It has been highlighted most dramatically in Mid May, when a Burwood gas bus burst into flames. There was a report about the incident on TV where some union reps were interviewed. Whilst in recent weeks I personally had 2-3 buses which had electronic problems, affecting power to the engine. In one case, after getting a bus from the workshop bay, it took me 5 minutes to get the bus started and I had continuing problems with it. Constantly cutting out during trips. In one incident, I was driving through the underground section of the Eastern Distributor where the bus lost power. The other day a driver mentioned to me, that he had booked off a bus to the workshops due to the engine continually back firing. When he picked up the bus, the problem remained.

There needs to be “black boxes” installed on buses to report such malfunctioning. Whilst the radio room has been covering up for faulty buses. Recently, a driver reported a faulty blinker on his bus. He was told by the radio room to drive the bus really slow back to the shed. The driver advised that the blinkers were like an extension of his body and he needed the blinkers to communicate to other motorists, and so he couldn’t continue operating this bus. In previous years, before the major cutbacks to the STA, there were drivers on spare shifts who would have taken a replacement bus from the shed and the driver would have continued on his runs on this bus. Alternatively a mechanic would have accompanied the driver on this bus and fixed the problem on the road.

Recently when I was in the workshops, it looked like a “ghost town”. It was in stark contrast to years ago, when there were much more mechanics and apprentices around. How is it possible to expect proper work to get done on the buses, with such a deplorable situation? It wouldn’t be tolerated in a private company!

Sparks: What’s happening with recycling at the depot?

WB: There has been talk among a lot of drivers that there is no proper recycling service, except in the case of cardboard. The bosses are using the excuse of “security” to stop bins being allocated for other types of recycling such as cans and bottles. They claim NSW is at the high-



est level of security. More likely the bosses are just making it up, as an excuse for their neglect of recycling and to save money.

Recently I was shocked to read in the STA journal “In Transit” claims that the STA is adhering to “environmental best practice”, given their appalling record on recycling.

Sparks: What are the latest developments with tramway extensions construction and the WestConnex?

WB: A recent Channel 7 story reported on the likely high levels of traffic chaos, which the extensions along George Street, will cause for the next few years. Luke Foley, Leader of the Opposition has also raised some significant points. The Tramway extensions construction will create a type of “East-West” “Berlin Wall” style divide in the city. Whilst, shop keepers whose business will be adversely affected, won’t be compensated. It seems to me, that George Street and the Eastern Suburbs, particularly Anzac Parade, already have very adequate bus services. There is absolutely no need for tramways in these areas.

Another Liberal initiative which will be a money spinner for Liberal corporate donors and will cause traffic chaos is the WestConnex. The major investors in this project are Leightons Lend Lease, Evans and Peak, Transurban and MacQuarie Bank. The WestConnex will create massive congestion in St. Peters and Newtown, where traffic will be discharged. Whilst the cross city tunnel also is likely to be choked with traffic. Recently, a Haberfield home owner, who criticised the project on talk back radio, subsequently had several project people fronting up at his home, demanding that he soft pedal his complaints. It just goes to show, how fearful the project consortium is of a groundswell of opposition from locals. Recently, I was upstairs at Westfields, Parramatta, where I noticed WestConnex had a stall. Whilst, on the next level down, News Limited, also had one. In the tunnel connecting Westfields to the station, I had a coffee and cake at a cafe. I asked the store keeper, whether it was also owned by Westfields. He concurred and complained about the rents being put to the max. Whilst, the WestConnex consortium will be gouging large profits from motorists with high tolls. It struck me, here was a great trio of voracious corporate cowboys.

Sparks: What have been your impressions of stations in the Railways under the Liberal Government?

WB: I noticed just before the NSW State elections, in the Eastern suburbs, stations suddenly being done up with paint jobs and street furniture installed. Whilst, recently when I was passing through Central and Town Hall stations, I have noticed that the barriers have been changed. Now to use the toilets there, you now have to go through the barriers. As a result of this dirty trick of the Liberals, you have to use your Opal Card or one of the remaining paper tickets.

Sparks: What are your views on “Fly In, Fly Out” employment and 417 Holiday Visas?

WB: On a recent ABC Radio “Background Briefing” program, there was a very interesting report on this issue. Fly In and Fly Out employment by Mining Companies which is peddled by the Liberals is having a very harmful impact on towns in QLD. There is little business being provided for local shop keepers and employment for locals. Many shops in these towns are being closed and boarded up. Those who have invested in these businesses are facing bank-

ruptcy. Another ploy by the Liberals to cut wages and conditions is 417 Holiday Visas. A recent 4 Corners TV program exposed how workers on these visas are being savagely exploited on farms supplying Australian supermarkets. Whilst, Labour Hire companies which provide the jobs, are ripping off these workers for millions in unpaid wages.

Sparks: What books have you been reading lately?

WB: Recently I read a quite excellent book, "The Rise and Fall of Gunns

Limited". It was one of the largest companies in Tasmania, and wielded major influence on both Liberal and ALP state governments. Its plans to construct one of the largest pulp mills in the world in the state would have caused an ecological disaster. The chemicals released by the mill operations in the neighbouring river would have poisoned it, wiping out extensive scallop farming. It has also been involved in cutting vast swathes of beautiful old Flowering Gums, some up to 117 metres for saw mill chips. Even in California, the giant Sequoias were left uncut. John Gay, General Manager of Gunns was particularly crafty in spruiking the benefits of his company's investment in the state with his promise of plenty of jobs to be created by the pulp mill. Whilst, he ensured there was no consultation with the community over the mill construction and operations. He blamed the community and environmental groups for opposing the mill. In the end, Gunns was sending Tas. broke. With the role of Gunns in Tas., we have a microcosm of what goes on under both ALP and Liberal Governments in NSW due to the manipulation of Corporate Cowboys.

Sparks: What is a "megalomaniac"?

WB: According to the "Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language", it means: Someone with (1) a mental illness characterised by delusions of grandeur, power, wealth, etc. (2) A lust or craving for power.

There has been a whisper that a well known agitator boss is now transferring from Randwick to Waverley. Will this boss be getting up to the same tricks at Randwick, also at Waverley?

On the subject of our bosses, a work colleague sent me a text the other day. It was his impression that the bosses think they own all the STA workers and infrastructure.



BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What's the latest with the Opals?

Burwood Driver: Recently there have been efforts by management to rectify the problems. As mentioned previously, there are some buses at the depot, where the Opal has always malfunctioned. An Opal Tech came to the depot in recent weeks and met with drivers and worked on the Opal system on these buses. The problem is that despite the maintenance work, the Opals on these buses are still unreliable. You can't tell whether on the next run, they will be still operating. There is also a very serious safety issue with the malfunctioning Opals. In the case of passengers who get out of the back door, they often find they haven't properly tapped off and have to get back on, to try tapping off again.

The union has taken some action on the issue with articles in the papers. However the Government denies the problems. Management has advised us that the problems with the Opals we are facing is due to conflict with the green machines on the buses. However, the private buses continue to have problems with the Opals like us, but they have never had the green machines.

Sparks: How is the situation at the depot with part time work?

BD: As mentioned previously, many drivers have gone on to part time work. However, we now have a shortage of drivers for weekend work and the rest of the week. As part timers don't work on weekends and DOC's.

Sparks: What developments have occurred with the "Involvement with Children" payment, the Government wants to impose on drivers?

BD: Latest news is that the legal challenge pursued by the Union Officials over the issue was rejected by the Industrial Court. It has determined that to be employed in the STA as drivers, we have to pay it.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What's the latest with the "Involvement with Children" payment?

Leichhardt Busie: Latest news is that to continue on the job we have to pay it. I think it's quite unnecessary as to get the job in the first place you have to have a police check and when you get your DOT ID card. So it seems it's just a revenue raising measure by the Government. However, we can claim the payment as a deduction on our tax.

Sparks: How have you been finding the Opal system?

LB: As a result of the STA losing revenue, they seem to have ironed out some serious problems we have been having with the Opals. However, we continue to have considerable problems with the Green Machines malfunctioning.

Other news is that we have a new Depot manager. He seems nicer than the previous manager, although we'll have to see how he goes. We are constantly seeing a high turnover with the

trainees and a continuing shortage of drivers. With some drivers working 12 out of 14 days per fortnight for the last six months, and many are experiencing exhaustion.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In issue 150 of Sparks we spoke about the termination of a long serving Conductor. In this issue, we will talk about current developments in this case and other issues. Once again names have been changed.

Sparks: In issue 150, mention was made about Union Officials blocking a train.

Clarence: May we introduce you to Ichabod and Isabel, who will speak about this issue.

Sparks: What part of V/Line do you work?

Ichabod and Isabel: We work in a Customer Service Area.

Clarence: In issue 150, we said the sacked Conductor was reinstated in another area of V/Line.

Sparks: Why?

Ichabod: You see, because of Industrial Action and a proposed rally to support the Conductor, V/Line did not want its dirty linen exposed.

Isabel: The reason, the Conductor accepted the new job offer, was if he had taken his case to FAIR WORK AUSTRALIA, and was successful, then V/line would have said, there was no Conductor position available and paid Compensation.

Clarence: This was another case of a sacked Conductor, who won his case and was paid compensation.

Rastus and Roscoe: At this point, may we join the discussion. Most of the Drivers at V/Line, say the Conductor should be reinstated, as a Conductor.

Ichabod: As regards industrial action on the evening of July 2nd last year, Union Officials occupied the track on Platform 15 at Southern Cross and delayed a Geelong Train for half an hour.

Rastus: The Union Officials stood in front of the train and with assistance of M/Train and Tram Division employees, who were on the platform held placards denouncing the sacking of the conductor.

Roscoe: Some of the drivers were on other platforms saw the Conductor Manager walking around. An organiser of the RTBU said to him to give the Conductor his job back. The manager walked away.

Isabel: Passengers on the Geelong Train were given leaflets explaining why the train was delayed and after half an hour the train departed.

Sparks: What was the aftermath?

Rastus and Roscoe: The next day the Melbourne Age ran a story about the industrial action. The feedback, the drivers received was most passengers on the Geelong Train supported the action.

Ichabod: The Chief Executive of V/Line sent a circular to all employees condemning the industrial action. In the circular, he said the Conductor received a fair hearing.

Isabel: What fair hearing? We had support from most of the members and no support from most of the Conductor Service Managers. That is why Conductors have no respect for CSM's. Rastus and Roscoe: These circulars just make the majority of drivers sick particularly when the Chief Executive's picture appears on the circular.

Ichabod: The only reason the sacked conductor was offered another position was because the Chinese Community had contacted V/Line and told them, what they thought of the treatment of the Conductor.

Rastus: We drivers heard rumours V/Line had planned to go to Court to get an injunction to stop the Rally.

Clarence: Correct, but the injunction would have been defied.

Sparks: I have heard a rumour, that the Conductor was to return to the trains.

Ichabod: It was to have happened, but the Chief Executive changed his mind.

Sparks: Why?

Ichabod: It is alleged that HUMAN RESOURCES objected, saying their authority would be undermined. You see, one of the females in Human Resources does not like the Conductor being reinstated.

Isabel: Not only Human Resources, but one of the Conductors has stated certain Managers do not want him to return.

Rastus and Roscoe: One of the Drivers heard a Conductor bad mouthing the Conductor in the common meal room at Southern Cross.

Clarence: What do you expect?

Sparks: I hear there has been a restructure in V/Line Management.

Ichabod: The Conductor Manager has not had his contract renewed.

Rastus and Roscoe: There has also been a management reshuffle with the drivers.

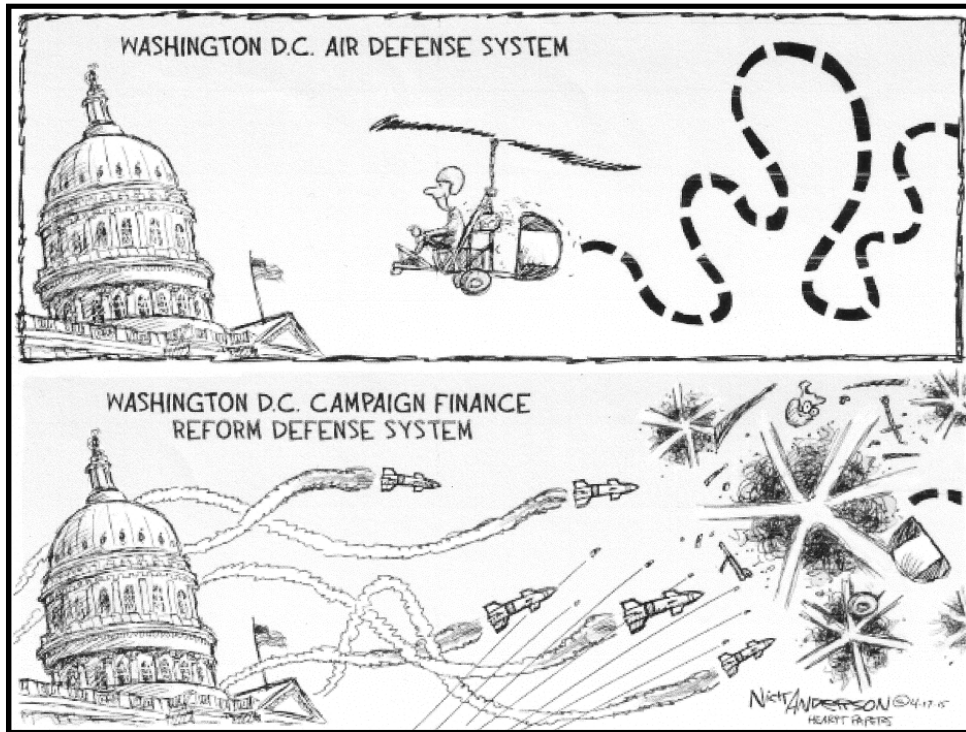
Ichabod: The Conductor Manager finished in December. It is rumoured the V/Line Board was not satisfied with his performance. The Conductors cheered when they heard he was going.

Rastus: I wonder if the way he handled the sacking of the long term Conductor led to his demise.

Roscoe: Maybe.

Ichabod: The reason most of the Conductors hated him, was because he did not have the guts to stand up to Human Resources. Also he was one of the persons responsible for removing a popular Manager at Southern Cross.

Sparks: Issue 139 gives an excellent description of how this Manager was removed.



Ichabod: The CSM's are now under their respective area managers.

Rastas and Roscoe: I wonder what future there is for CSM's?

Isabel: No future! If a future restructure occurs, they may create a new position, which covers the duties of CSM's and the positions will be advertised.

Clarence: Yes, create a new Customer Service Managers position readvertised it around V/Line and say an existing station has ten positions and needs only seven, then the ten people scramble for the seven positions.

Ichabod: This is not new, it happens in other industries.

Rastus and Roscoe: CSM's haven't the guts to stand up to Human Resources. You see with the sacked Conductor, the CSM's should have helped him, not fence sit.

Sparks: What about the Drivers?

Rastus: The Driver manager has retired.

Roscoe: We do not know whether he was shoved. You see this restructure is a result of the new chief executive. A new position was created over the Driver Manager.

Rastus: It is rumoured, another new Position will be created and it will be on a contract.

Sparks: What is this rumour of Fly in, Fly out?

Rastus: You see, some of the new CEO's team have come from interstate and at the end of the working week, they fly back to their respective place of abode. We wonder, if it is at tax payer expense? Whilst in Melbourne, it is alleged that they reside at a five star hotel.

Ichabod and Isabel: One thing Conductors and Station Staff have noticed is that since the Conductor Manager has departed, the number of Crawlers on the job, have gone quiet.

Sparks: In concluding, we have once again run out of space, and thank you Ichabod and Isabel for coming forward.

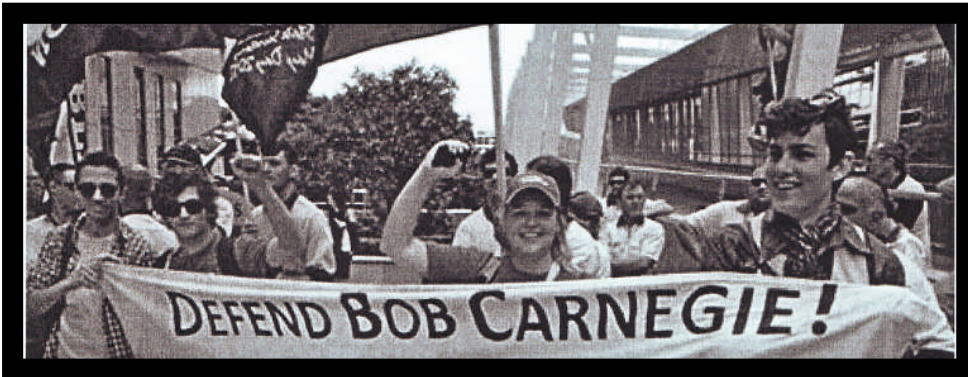
Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the sacked conductor should be re-instated as a Conductor. As for the Conductor Manager, GOOD RIDDANCE, you know what we Drivers think of you. Finally, if you are stood down, tell your workmates.

Congratulations to Bob Carnegie and his Team

Bob Carnegie was recently elected to Secretary of the Queensland Branch of the Maritime Union (MUA). Bob had a history of struggle and grass roots activism within the union movement.

Bob Carnegie's election to the MUA Queensland Branch Secretary's position is a stark reminder that rank and file activists can still win union elections. However, it takes a lifetime of commitment and solidarity building to do it.

Bob has a long commitment to helping his fellow workers. In 2013 Bob found himself in court after being pursued by construction company Abigroup for organising a picket, which



stood for a number of weeks, at the construction site of the new Brisbane Children's Hospital.

"We're not going to let them get away with slave labour." Bob chanted outside the construction site. The courts later issued an order forbidding him to attend or take part in industrial action related to the building site. This he rightly disobeyed and was further charged with 18 counts of Contempt of Court and various other charges.

Abigroup even hired a cameraman to document Bob's exploits on the picket line. This was presented to the court as evidence against him.

Bob arrived at the court to defend his contempt charges surrounded by 150 or so other union members who formed a guard of honour which cheered him on. This type of solidarity is essential to win such a case.

“Mr Carnegie raised his fist in the air and led a chant of: “The workers united will never be defeated”, before he walked into the Federal Court building.”

“Earlier, hundreds of union members rallied outside the Federal Court building this morning to support Mr Carnegie.”

“Unionists chanted “Hands off Bob”.” - Brisbane’s Courier Mail.

To cut a long story short, Bob was found not guilty of 34 charges, after building firm Abigroup Contractors decided not to proceed with them in the Federal Magistrates Court.

Bob’s election to State Secretary of the MUA should embolden us all to continue to fight the good fight alongside our members while having every faith in their decisions and actions.

Surely his promise to back up ordinary members on the job and empowering them to work together for the good of all was a major selling point in Bob’s campaign.

“I want to do two things: improve participation in the union and defend conditions. We need to re-engage the members – by campaigning, through organisation and by education, both industrial and political. I want to develop democratic structures on the ground. There has to be a levelling of the hierarchy; workers have to feel that they can participate in the decision-making process.” says Bob in an interview recently in Red Flag.

I know that in other unions the membership is calling out for a say on the day to day running of their union campaigns and are sick of not being consulted by union leaderships that excuse their sell-out deals as being in the too hard basket.

Bob has injected a ray of hope into a workforce cowered by the old leadership. Let’s see them move forward together to inspire other workers into taking up the cudgel.

When asked,

“How will you foster members’ involvement in their union given the decline in participation over years?”

Bob replies,

”Through struggle. I have huge faith in the membership and the delegates. We need to build confidence that their leadership will stand by them, no matter what. And we need politics. We look at things not from a narrow trade union perspective but from a working class perspective and that’s fundamental – not just the workers directly affected but the broad working class movement.”

“I believe that workers will respond to fearless, class conscious representatives who are acting in their interests and the working class movement. Hopefully, that will get them to see that there are bigger questions at stake in terms of what is happening in this society.”

Good luck to Bob Carnegie and all of your members in Queensland. If anyone can do it, you can. - MV

International Transport Workers' News

British Channel Ferries Wildcat Strike

24/6/15

Summary of today's events in Calais, France.

Now that things seem to have calmed down in Calais, it seems like a good time to wrap up the blog. Here's a summary of what happened there today.

Thousands of travellers were stuck on both sides of the travel after French sailors launched a wildcat strike against plans by their employer to sell off two ferries.

Workers blocked the port of Calais then the entrance to the Channel tunnel with burning barricades, snarling up traffic in the area and across the sea in Kent. Calais remained blocked for most of the day.

Migrants camped out in Calais took advantage of the heavy traffic to try to sneak aboard slow-moving vehicles they hoped might take them to Britain.



Lorries backed up on the M20 heading to the Dover Ferry Terminal, due to the wildcat.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Eurostar passengers found themselves stuck at St Pancras station after Eurostar cancelled all their trains until tomorrow.

Kent Police responded to the disruption of cross-Channel ferries from Dover by turning the M20 southbound into one long lorry park. The force has said its Operation Stack contingency plan will remain in place until tomorrow.

The deputy mayor of Calais, Philippe Mignonet, reiterated calls for the English border to be moved to Calais. The move would make UK authorities responsible for migrants waiting there to try to travel across the Channel.

The National Crime Agency issued a warning in its annual report that the number of migrants attempting to make the crossing between Calais and Dover is expected to increase.

STOP PRESS: There were also “sympathy” strikes in the port itself, with around 50 protesters trying to stop ferries from leaving for England.

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Ferries are now moving again between Dover and Calais Boats from Dover to Calais resumed at about 6pm, a spokesman for P&O said. But there is a backlog which the shipping company will work overnight to clear.

Dan Bridget, the spokesman for P&O, said: “The aspiration is by tomorrow we should be back to normal. Obviously we will be in touch with passengers if that’s not the case.”

The backlog was not too severe because many passengers had heeded warnings to stay away from the Channel crossing for the day, Bridget said.

Ref. The Guardian/London Evening Standard

IRISH BUS NEWS

17/5/15

Last weekend, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann workers went on strike over plans by the National Transport Authority to tender out 10% of public routes to private operators.

A few days earlier, SIPTU’s (Irish Transport Workers Union) banner at Liberty Hall had been unfurled to state: ‘Say No to Privatisation; privatisation results in fare increase, reduced services, a threat to free travel, a bad deal for taxpayers and job cuts’. SIPTU and NBRU members and strike organisers have emphasised the damage privatisation will do to society, primarily concentrating on the loss of community services and the race to the bottom in bus drivers’ terms and conditions [1]. The striking workers deserve our support and their claims should be taken seriously. This is definitely the case when the regime media adhere to a deeply unimaginative line, loudly declaiming traffic disruption to an imagined city of angry consumers and silently accepting the hollowing out of public services [2]. At the same time, however, we also need to think about what’s not being said, about the words that don’t make it on to the papers or the banner.

References:

[1] See Scott Millar, ‘Save Our Bus Service’ in *Liberty*, April, 2015. Available at http://www.siptu.ie/media/media_19045_en.pdf

[2] Number of Irish newspaper Nexis results with words 'strikes' and 'chaos' in headline: 288. Number of Irish newspaper Nexis results with words 'privatisation' and 'public transport' in headline: 3. Via Richard McAleavey, Facebook, 1st May. See <https://hiredknives.wordpress.com/>



What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic Unionism means grass roots controlled unionism, not control by officials. It also means that workers in one industry should be in one union so as to remove artificial divisions that can cause disunity. Such a union should be fully organised and controlled by the membership.

To achieve this we believe a union should be organised along the following lines:

1. That no person employed by the union should earn more than the average income of the membership.
2. The Spokespeople should have no executive power - all decisions should be made by the union membership in the course of mass meetings.
3. Spokespeople are only to act as delegates elected by the membership to carry out decisions made by the membership in mass meetings.
4. That a mechanism is instituted for the instant recall of spokespeople/delegates who break the above rules.
5. That all positions within the union be held on a limited tenure, the duration of which will be decided by the membership.
6. That a programme of decentralised decision-making be implemented within the union structure, so that we won't need full time officials.
7. All loss of earnings incurred by elected delegates who miss work as a result of carrying out union duties will be reimbursed by the union to the extent of the lost wages.

Only in this way will we see the creation of a democratic, united, fighting organisation which can stand up for the rights of workers and their families against unhelpful union officials, bosses, political parties and governments.

**MEMBERS' VOICE - Fighting for Membership
Control of the Union & Direct Action to Fight
Back! Web Site:**

Users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice

Email: membersvoice2010@yahoo.com

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/ Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-group/531249043571323?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-group/531249043571323?fref=ts)

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