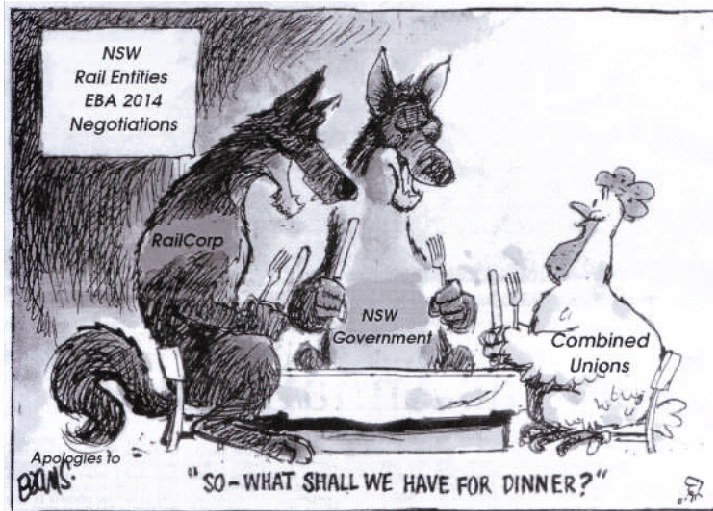


Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**ALP UNION HIERARCHY BRAZENLY,
"SHOVES OUT THE WINDOW" EBA LOG OF
CLAIMS & PREPARES TO SELL OFF JOBS!
MEMBERS' VOICE ORGANISES ON THE JOB
FOR DIRECT ACTION TO ACHIEVE
JOB SECURITY & WAGES & CONDITIONS
JUSTICE!**



Central News;	Letter From RailCorp CEO;
STA Busie News;	Questions for Union Officials;
Victorian Railway News;	International Transport News;
"Optimasia";	New STA Rosters Mayhem;

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news in the NSW Railways lately, is the union hierarchy's betrayal of the EBA log of claims and total disregard of grass roots demands not to sell off jobs. With this ploy, the union hierarchy is transparently seeking to purchase a pay rise to assist its electoral fortunes in coming union elections. It also signals to the bosses, it will roll over before further attacks on conditions, etc. Whilst, it's failing to take any action regarding the current push by management to cut jobs. Particularly aimed at wrecking up booking offices to facilitate commuters taking up the Opal Card. (See article Page 6.)

A new prong of the bosses' attacks are plans to worsen the jobs of barrier staff, and drive many off the job. Justified on the basis of phoney customer service considerations. (See article Page 3.)

In State Transit, a new attack of the bosses has become apparent with new rosters commencing in May. The broken shifts entailed in some of these rosters imposed on drivers who live distant from depots will pose serious hazards. Contributing to more fatigue, and accidents leading down the disciplinary slippery slope. (See article Page 9.)

In this edition, we provide a sneak prevue of an upcoming mad cap TV movie, a sort of Disney and TfNSW remake of "Fantasia". It's all about the fantastic schemes of the STA bosses and the O'Farrell Government in the buses. However, not so entertaining for drivers swept up in the madness! (See article Page 11.)



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.sparksweb.org

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CENTRAL NEWS

Standing Orders

There are plans to remove chairs from barriers so that staff attending to ticket barriers have to stand for up to 4 hours. Not a problem you may think? It has been relayed to me that one manager has said that if a staff member can't stand for 4 hours then they "are not fit for duty".

This crazy proposition is part of the new Customer Service regime that pervades Sydney Trains these days. The new extreme regime management believes that customers will have a better perception of the organisation if staff greet them standing.

Do customers really want or need this? Will we be bowing next?

When I visit the doctor, solicitor or almost any professional person they are sitting behind a desk. I pay a service fee for their professionalism. They are not standing when they offer advice. The new Sydney Trains standing gimmick is about perceptions that are not even enshrined as social norms. They want us all to be mini politicians, one of the few professions that stand, smile and stoop to gain favour.

Some staff will have to go through pain to stand for such long periods. However there are other more insidious side effects to long term standing that you need to consider. Much research has been done on the long term effects of both standing and sitting for long periods of time. Both are bad for you. Keeping the body upright requires considerable muscular effort resulting in reduced blood supply to loaded muscles leading to fatigue and pain in various parts of the body. Standing requires 20% more energy than sitting. Blood tends to pool in the legs and feet. According to research on the effects of long term standing and poor health concerns include:

- * painful legs and feet and often swelling of feet and legs
- * painful bunions and corns on the feet
- * heel problems such as plantar fasciitis and heel spurs
- * Achilles tendonitis
- * varicose veins
- * other changes to the feet, including flat feet
- * lower back pain
- * restricted blood flow
- * locking of joints, stiffness and immobilisation
- * arthritis in feet, knees and hips
- * stiffness and pain in the neck and shoulders
- * medical problems in pregnancy and birth defects, spontaneous abortion
- * elevated and high blood pressure

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



* heart and circulatory problems including atherosclerosis and hypertension

Also according to several studies, workers who are required to stand are usually in lower status jobs which do not allow them to raise issues of comfort. They fear that if they raise these issues customers and managers will think that they are lazy. So they will often put up with pain and discomfort which eventually effects their psychological health and well being. For workers to have to suffer in this way is both demeaning and degrading.

Management and some health professions just don't get it. This hangover from the master and servant relationship is outdated. Management of Sydney Trains need to respect, appreciate , care for and value the employees that they have.

Compounding factors can make health problems related to prolonged standing much worse. It is incumbent on us all to recognise that no two people are the same and that they have different histories. A combination of individual circumstances such as age, the amount of shift work and length of shifts, mental acumen, health (especially diabetes, cardio vascular and asthma), fitness level, weather (e.g. hot, cold, wet, windy) and travel times to and from work all con-

tribute to deteriorating health exacerbated by prolonged standing. They act as a multiplying factor that increases the contribution to fatigue and poor health.

Fatigue and poor health combined with prolonged standing also increases susceptibility to injury through slower reaction times and poor concentration. This also results in poor performance, unhappiness and absenteeism. You can chart this using your own misery index.

We have mentioned that continuing to punish employees or disrespect their rights and health will lead eventually to much higher absenteeism. It is much easier for staff to take the day off than raise health concerns and discomfort with a manager. Also the psychological effects of carrying out orders that devalue the rights of employees will lead to absenteeism and should not be underestimated. Is it any wonder that KPI's related to absenteeism are headed in the "wrong" direction.

So what can be done to ensure the health of employees remains paramount?

Management must:

- * implement regular breaks and rest periods (hourly) that include walking and some sitting
- * rotate staff through jobs that provide a variety of sitting, standing and walking
- * pregnant staff must keep standing to an absolute minimum - clerical or light duties could be provided
- * ergonomically redesign the workplace so that it presents a customer friendly interface as well as looking after the health needs of workers providing the service.
- * make it easy for staff to report health problems with dignity and respect rather than ridicule.
- * allow seating at the workplace but encourage staff to stand when approached by a customer. Many of the ticket barriers are far too busy anyway for sitting to be practicable. The option of a chair or stool should always be provided.
- * supply anti fatigue matting and explain its use
- * consult with applicable employees to ascertain ways of ameliorating health problems and take into consideration concerns that are raised.
- * include affected employees in any risk assessment. Employees have an obligation to do their own risk assessment if not satisfied and raise any concerns.
- * explain the use of and supply correct footwear designed for prolonged standing
- * make sure there are adequate workers to give breaks and share work
- * provide a secure environment to limit stress
- * make sure facilities such as toilets, hand washing, drinking water, hot water, tea and coffee making facilities etc are available nearby during breaks
- * monitoring and review all work changes over a substantial period of time

Most health and safety laws contain a clause under management "duty of care" provisions. WorkCover laws state that "where a task can be done sitting down. A suitable chair should be provided"

Until consultation actually takes place staff need to defy the “no sitting” ban or call for breaks as they see fit. If management continue down the path of making employees stand when the work can be done sitting WorkCover can be called upon to issue a “workplace improvement notice”.

JUST 10 QUESTIONS FOR OUR UNION LEADERSHIP

1. Why is it that when I ring the union office for help or for information there are no Organisers available? Why are they on leave and unavailable at a time when people are losing their jobs and when EBA negotiations are taking place.
2. Why has no union member’s meeting been called of transport workers in order to work out a strategy to save the jobs of those affected by job cuts?
3. Is there a plan to concede some jobs to win a moderate pay rise, despite members clearly voicing their opinion that they wanted no trade-offs?
4. Why have staff EBA briefings and meetings been called off in certain locations? What is the meaning of coming to convened briefings poorly prepared and with very little strategy or organisation?
5. What is being done to ensure job security? Why are the rail entities still hiring when some of the most experienced staff are losing their jobs? Why are displaced staff unable to fill vacant positions?
6. What is your view on the increasing numbers of part-time employees being employed in place of full time employees. Why is there no fight for full time jobs over insecure forms of work?
7. Why are negotiations on the EBA continuing while staff reviews, resulting in job cuts, are being rolled out across the entities?
8. Why have the Salary Maintenance provisions within EBA been ignored with some regressed employee’s receiving less than the agreed (EBA 2010) 12 months Salary Maintenance?
9. What can we do about the confusion around job placement and recruiting? Many staff are frustrated that assessment processes discriminate against older workers who often have more experience and training yet perform poorly in written tests. On the other hand some staff are having to sit for assessment tests again even though they have passed within the valid period of 12 months. During this time the previous results are still valid.
10. Why should I remain a member of my Union if it can’t protect my job or fails in the most basic task of organising to protect jobs?

By Angry Unionist

A Case for Change

Dear Howard (RailCorp CEO)

Thank you for the letter that you sent to my home address. I have to disagree with you on a number of matters contained therein.

Firstly you have given employees some erroneous information that is just a confusion of the facts. It's the issues that are not explained that is the problem. Is the confusion of facts intentional?

Management's Crazy Logic

You claim that it costs \$10 million a day to keep our trains running and that this amount could build 21 regional hospitals. That is all well and good, but the NSW Health budget is in the vicinity of \$20 billion a year, almost 5.5 times of that allocated to rail. What is the point though of comparing the number of hospitals with not running the railway? Bizarre!

Who's Ripping Off the System?

Perhaps if they cut the salaries and generous perks of the executives within RailCorp it might be a good place to start reducing running costs. Executives, (and there are many), say on, \$400,000 p.a. earn nearly 10 times the annual salary of those that take the brunt of abuse for the failings of the rail system, the Customer Service Assistants.

Executive salaries are roughly 4 times the wage of a train driver that is away from home all hours of the day, often working shift-work around the clock.

Some Realities

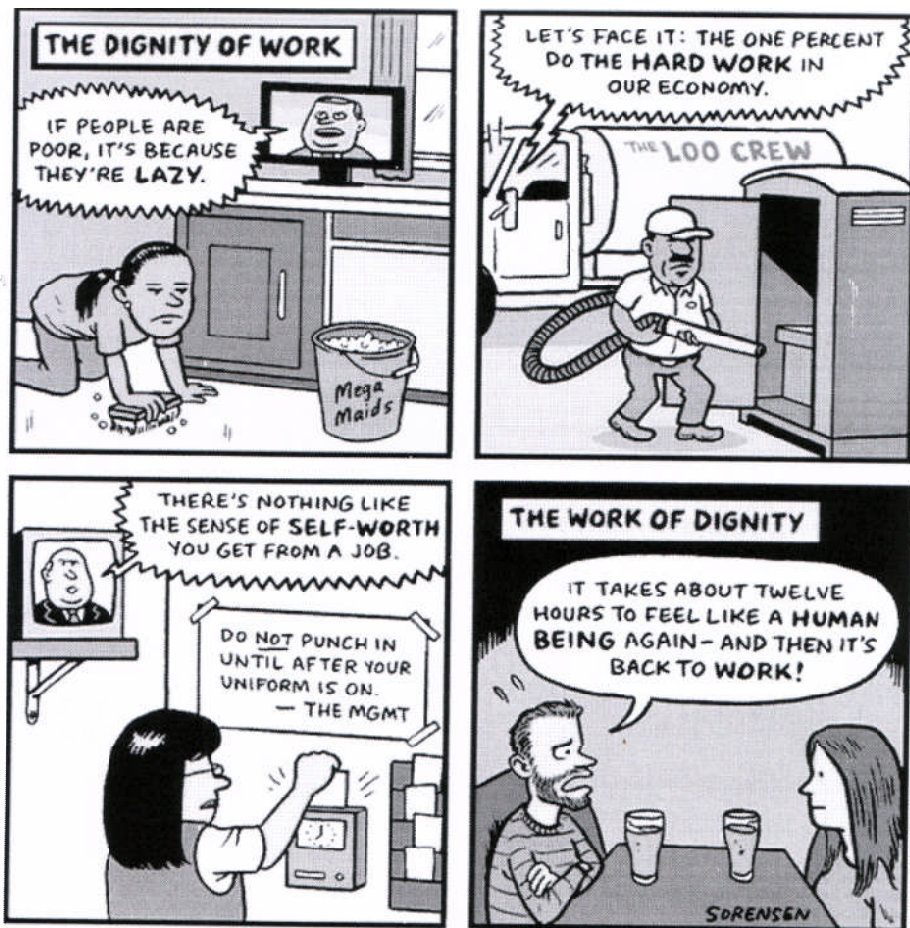
When you do your comparison with the costs of running the railway here in Sydney with those overseas it is akin to comparing oranges with elephants. Let me first state that Sydney is one of the most expensive cities (rated 4th most expensive in a new poll) in the world.

It's also one of the most sparsely populated cities as it is spread out in all directions across the Cumberland Plain and beyond. Because of that, passenger densities per square kilometre are not what they are going to be in cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore or even large US cities. So we end up with a metro system that travels relatively large distances without having the passenger densities that are experienced in other cities such as Singapore.

On the "Economies of Scale" Sydney's rail system almost does not rate. The Hong Kong MTR for instance has an annual revenue of H\$334.24 billion, bringing in an annual profit of HK\$148.48 billion.

Who's Getting the Cash

Mr Collins, when you talk about costs being 50% higher than comparable railways, I think that if you took into account all of the variables, that this is not such a bad figure. Poor management practices such as cost overruns on infrastructure and bailouts such as that which occurred on the Airport Line and the generous rescue package for the building of Millennium



trains, then the same again for the Waratah train rollout, have cost commuters and taxpayers \$millions, if not \$billions.

You Really Think That We Earn too Much?

However, I don't think that this is what you are referring to in your "Case for Change" document. I think that you may be referring to wage rates being too high. I strongly disagree that that is the case though. Considering the cost of living pressures in Sydney would you like rail workers wages here to drop to the wage levels of rail workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia or the US for that matter? If that is what you want you won't get excellence, you won't get productivity and you will never get your "World Class Railway".

Investment, Investment, Investment

To get to your "World Class Railway" the Government will have to invest much much greater sums of money. Massive investment in rail in China, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore is

what lifted them into the modern era. If we spent on rail that which was targeted and spent on tollways and other roadways we might see some changes for the better in rail. Alas, politicians are about short term lucrative returns for investors. Our politicians have no vision of what it takes to have an efficient, friendly and affordable public transport system.

Invest in Employees

The other investment that you lack is the investment in your employees. From management's point of view, employees are the scapegoats for everything that is wrong with rail. Employees are hounded instead of praised, de-skilled instead of trained and now they are blamed for the cost blow-outs and lack of efficiencies in rail. From your point of view, it is employees who must change and bear the brunt of draconian work practices.

Petty acts such as removing car parking spaces that are necessary for the well being and safety of staff will not not endear them to your program or earn you any credibility. Instead it will be a further pointer to the way that you view staff.

Just like at Qantas, it is loyal employees who you show the way to the door because you are charged with reducing the transport budget by 5% pa. It is also loyal employees that lose their homes or can no longer afford to send their kids to get a higher education.

Yet in this country the rich have never had it so good. Neither have their direct servants, the CEO's and politicians who take us for fools and trot out garbage like that contained in the document "Case for Change".

Our Urgent Need for Change.

Yes, we also have a Case for Change. We need radical change, one that does not need the touts, grovellers and servants of a Master Class that has no time for us. A change where workers are treated with dignity and respect and no longer have to put up with the puerile drivel with which we are daily bombarded. Surely as the sun, that change is coming and sooner than you think.

By Concerned Rail Worker

BUS NEWS

By The Transport Scrutinizer

It appears that once again the State Government is preparing to unleash its wrath on Transport Workers. In the case of Bus Employees, it appears that more new draconian rosters are to come into effect in May this year. This will result in the reduction of straight shifts and the overall increase in the number of broken shifts. Some of these will have 13 hour spreads which is totally unfair to those who live some distance away from their depots.

The alleged reason for this is cost savings which is utter lies. Broken shifts actually cost more than straight shifts. Think why the Railways, since they began in 1855 to now, have always employed their staff only on straight shifts. All this proves is that the STA wants to make its Employee's lives a misery, further reducing time to be with partners and families and more im-

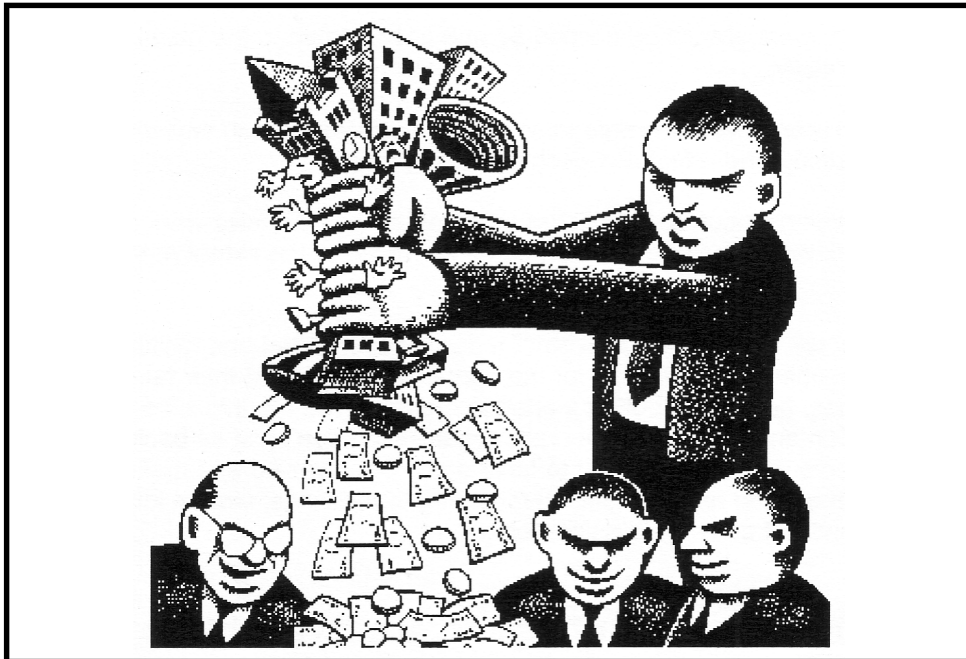
portantly, THUMBING THEIR NOSES AND TOTALLY IGNORING FATIGUE LAWS THAT ARE CURRENTLY IN PLACE FOR HEAVY VEHICLE DRIVERS.

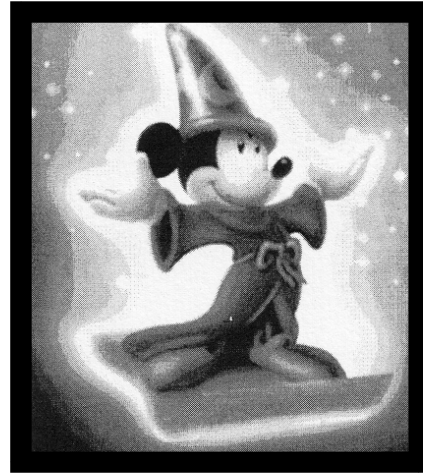
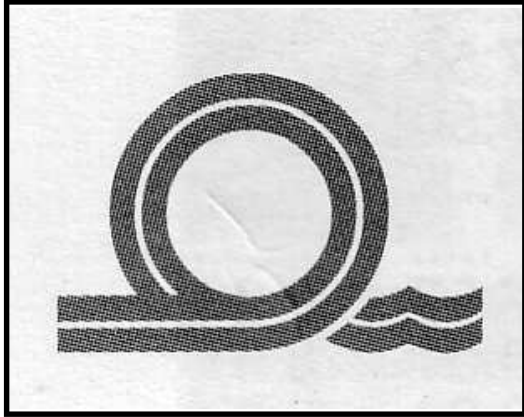
As a result, if the Union does nothing to fight this form of official bullying, Drivers will, after doing day after day of 13 hour spread shifts, become that fatigued due to inadequate time away from the workplace that bus accidents will sharply increase. Drivers' health will greatly deteriorate, due to loss of sleep, stress, high blood pressure, increased sick leave, family and/or spouse pressures for Drivers to have time away from work which might well lead, God forbid, to violence and alcohol abuse.

It appears that these genuinely proven psychological possibilities are about to be totally ignored by a Nazi style STA management team that has been brainwashed by a government that absolutely HATES its hard working Employees. This erosion of Workers Rights needs to be stopped NOW before it happens. THAT IS WHAT WE PAY OUR UNION DUES FOR!

We pay our Union dues NOT for them to waste on delegate junket classes, NOT for them to waste on Depot BBQ's, NOT for them to hide in the toilet when the STA or the government wave their truncheons at us. NOT for them to cringe when the government threatens them with laws hastily made up to defeat them. WE PAY OUR UNION DUES FOR THE UNION TO STAND UP AND FIGHT FOR WORKERS RIGHTS AND TO PRESERVE OUR HARD FOUGHT CONDITIONS AND NOT TO BE SCARED OF THE LIBERAL PARTY!

In yet another attack on workers, Cleaners and Mechanics have been told by official letters that their services will no longer be required, due to their jobs being privatised. Now what will the Unions do about that? Fight or do nothing?



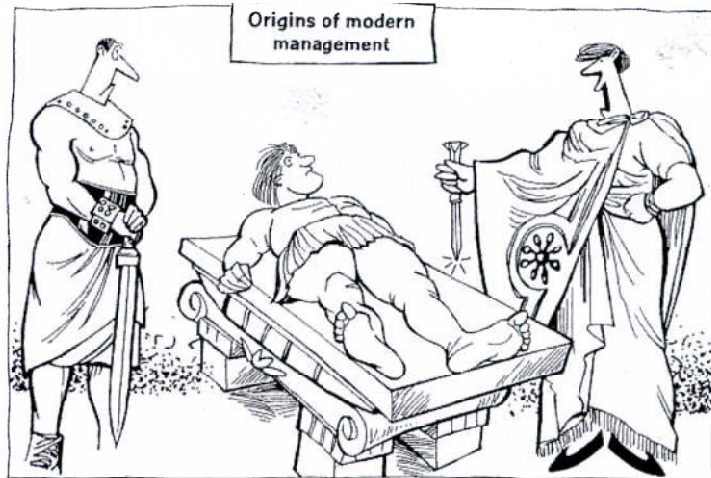


“OPTIMASIA”

After a gruelling week of operating unfamiliar routes and only making it through with the assistance of passengers and narrowly avoiding accidents, one of our Sparks correspondents was desperately looking forward to his day off.

For some light entertainment, he and his family switched on the TV to view a new Walt Disney Movie called “Optimasia”, coproduced with the Transport for NSW Media Liaison Department. They couldn’t believe their eyes, when they saw some familiar menacing faces. It was certainly a very surreal show.

It starred, Gladys Berejiklian, in a see through bikini embroidered with dollar signs as the Public Transport Prima donna and co-starring, as Mickey Mouse, the conductor of the extravaganza, Peter Rowley, STA CEO sporting gold chains, also featuring a dollar signs design. In the interests of common de-



*“Officially this isn't a human sacrifice.
We're simply outsourcing your body parts.”*

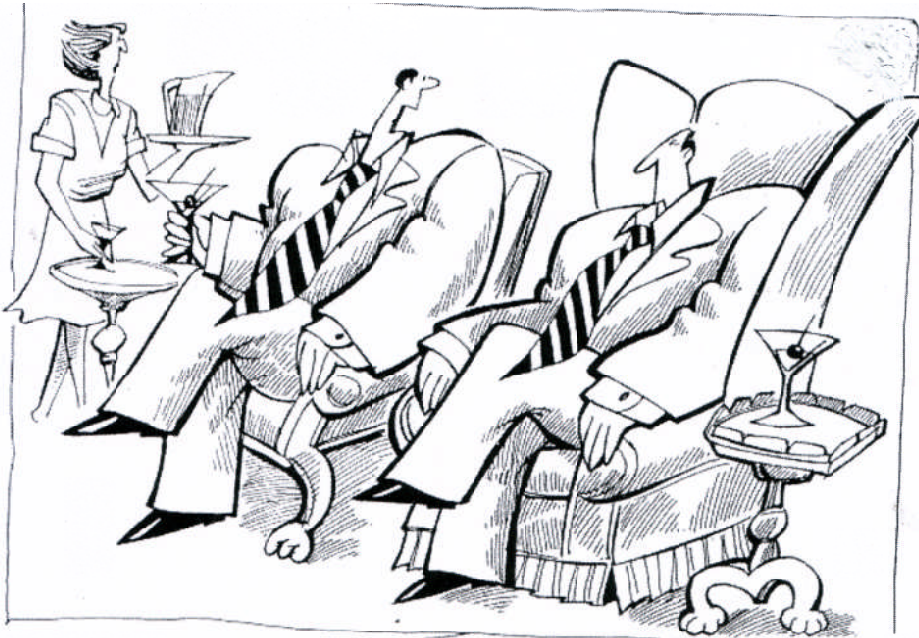
cency, steamy corporate clinches between Gladys and certain romantic CEO's from Veolia and Trans Dev, with only privatisation on their minds were censored! Depot management wild animals played supporting roles, baring their teeth and showing their claws on disciplinary issues, to target drivers who are close to ten years on the job, to avoid paying their long service entitlements.

It involved dream like sequences of the bosses conjuring up lunatic schemes to supposedly save money. Whilst they grasped greedily at \$100 bills of fat bonuses, which floated down on them like confetti! Their orchestration and discordant symphony of fast buses on unfamiliar routes to meet unrealistic timetables, getting out of control and rivalling the mayhem of speeding and colliding police cars which featured in the Blues Brothers movie.

There was excitement galore for the audience, but not so for the highly stressed and over-worked bus drivers. It was all about the fantasy of Optimisation. The bosses looking good and not looking bad. Whilst wrecking up bus operations and the job. Cutting out useful jobs such as the inspectors, whilst creating phony jobs like roster schedulers.

After the interval, a ghostly figure appeared, like in the movie "Amadeus". A symbol of the death knell of the job. Meaning privatisation and the grabbing for profits of the large corporations, who avoid tax and screw everyday people.

What's the way to stop this fantasy world of the bosses and get back to reality land? We need to elect our own managers and sack the existing lot, who have done their worst against us.



*"If your conscience is bothering you...
How much would it cost to have it removed?"*

Our correspondent was expecting some wholesome family entertainment with the movie, but it turned out to be “A Nightmare on George Street!”

S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What’s been happening on the road?

Waverley Busie: On New Year’s day afternoon, there was gridlock on Vacluse Road near Strickland House involving a build up of a host of cars. There were 2 buses on each side of the road, blocking the 325 route, due to a medium 4 wheel drive being parked in a non stopping zone. It took 45 to 50 minutes, for a tow truck to show up. It did a 10 point turn and towed away the vehicle. Consequently, passengers had to get off and walk. I observed no inspectors intervening. Again we see the short sightedness of the bosses’ cutbacks and the mayhem it causes. Whilst I didn’t notice any police response to this serious traffic problem. Again we see a case of poor liaison between the STA, the police and workers.

Sparks: How have bus services been faring over the holiday period?

WB: There is an open question, whether with an eye for a bigger bonus, local management cut Eastern suburbs bus services to save some dollars during the Xmas/New Year period, or was it just a matter of mindless general corner cutting by higher STA bosses? Causing thousands of people to be waiting for buses.

I noticed that buses coming out of the city to the Bondi Junction Interchange, were constantly full. I was dismayed to see a huge crowd of passengers milling around in the interchange waiting for buses to Bondi Beach. We were unable to help them. Where were the extra X81’s to meet this increased demand?

Many of the angry commuters complained to TfNSW and the STA has subsequently focused more attention on the interchange. Resulting in increased services to Bondi Beach and even queue conductors. This latest episode exposes how the bosses corner cutting can backfire on them.

Spark: How are you finding “Route Optimisation”?

WB: Around the holiday period, I was doing a 370 and despite 30 years plus on the job I was unfamiliar with this route to Leichhardt. Passengers provided me with some help and I was able to complete the route. I was also lucky it wasn’t peak hour and was in the holiday period. However, it was a very stressful experience and would have been much worse under normal conditions. I was recently speaking to a private bus driver who mentioned, they also are facing “Optimisation”. Whilst, their jobs are continually put up to scrutiny.

Sparks: What are your views on the new ticket inspectors?

WB: They are possibly not employed by the STA or Transport for NSW, and are employed by a private company on a contract. Do they get reimbursed by TfNSW if they are unable to fund their operations from revenue raising? However, the areas on which they focus their pa-

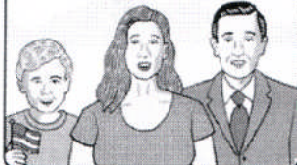
THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

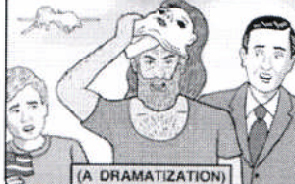
THE N.S.A. COMES CLEAN



IT'S TRUE--THE N.S.A. HAS BEEN SECRETLY COLLECTING YOUR PERSONAL DATA FOR YEARS! BUT IT'S BEEN FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!



AFTER ALL, YOU NEVER KNOW WHO MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE A SCARY TERRORIST!



HOWEVER--WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME AMERICANS FEEL THEIR PRIVACY HAS BEEN VIOLATED.

I HAVE A LIST OF THEIR NAMES RIGHT HERE.

HEH HEH, LITTLE SURVEILLANCE HUMOR THERE.



BUT SERIOUSLY--THE N.S.A. IS HERE TO HELP! THAT'S WHY WE'RE INTRODUCING OUR NEW OUTREACH PROGRAM--PRISM PLUS!

IT'S THE CLOUD BACKUP YOU NEVER EVEN KNEW YOU HAD!



ACCIDENTALLY DELETE AN IMPORTANT EMAIL? FORGET WHAT YOU SAID IN A PHONE CONVERSATION THREE YEARS AGO?

OUR TRUST-WORTHY LOW-LEVEL ANALYSTS HAVE ACCESS TO IT ALL!



AND THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY--YOUR DATA IS SAFE WITH US!

I MEAN, SURE, THERE WAS THAT TIME WE GOT CAUGHT EAVESDROPPING ON THE PHONE SEX CALLS OF AMERICAN TROOPS IN IRAQ--

--AND, WELL, PASSING THEM AROUND THE AGENCY FOR LAUGHS--*

*ALL TRUE.

--BUT THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN! YOU HAVE OUR WORD!

HAVE WE EVER LIED TO YOU?

I MEAN, IN THE LAST WEEK OR TWO?

THAT YOU CAN PROVE?



REMEMBER--WE'RE THE N.S.A.--AND WE'RE WATCHING YOU!

D'OH! I MEAN WATCHING OUT FOR YOU!

I ALWAYS GET THAT MIXED UP.



trols is determined by TfNSW bureaucrats. Apart from the buses, they are also deployed in the railways to check tickets. I have noticed them patrolling such places as shopping centres, railway stations, around universities and in the poorer working class and middle class areas. They gave the impression to me, that they are very dogged in the pursuit of their prey. Whilst, they have no affiliation with us and don't take account of our suggestions. It seems that the TfNSW bureaucracy has determined that well off areas such as Edgecliff, Rose Bay and Vacluse are a no go zone. Is the reason for this discrimination, that the TfNSW bosses who control the inspectors don't want to upset people in Liberal Party electorates with \$200 fines and face retaliation by Liberal politicians?

Sparks: What's the latest at the depot?

WB: In recent weeks, a notice has appeared in the depot, stating that children of drivers' families are prohibited from being on the premises. This is quite a change from the previous policy, which encouraged the depot to be a family friendly place. I remember this policy was in

place until at least Chris Mansergh, who had been elected as union rep at Port Botany was sacked, due to a fit up by the bosses and the union hierarchy. This hard line approach by STA CEO Peter Rowley, indicates to me, his ever increasing moves to gain absolute control over our conditions and undermine our morale.

Sparks: What's the difference between Tony Abbott and Vladimir Putin?

WB: There is none! They present themselves as bare chest guys who claim to have everything. Both are bullshit artists, who just look after big business. They both take a hard line on industrial relations issues to favour Big Business. Both disregard environmental issues. In the case of Putin, he had environmentalists arrested, who were protesting oil exploration in the Arctic. They were facing the very serious change of hooliganism, which can result in 20 to 40 years in gaol. Is Tony Abbott living up to his reputation, as he is going to ignore environmental issues?

Sparks: What's new on the union front?

WB: Recently, we received a pathetic pay rise of 3.75% pa. This is the last rise until the next EBA is in place. Latest news, is that TfNSW bosses had reneged on this rise for productivity. However, the Industrial Relations Court over ruled this TfNSW decision. The TfNSW are up in arms over the court's action.

Another issue on the union front is the changed role of union reps, I've noticed over the years. In the 70's and 80's union reps exerted a leadership role on the job in the fight against the bosses. Chris Mansergh, who was elected by 200 or so drivers at Pt. Botany was a very good example of this type of union rep. Whilst, one of our previous union reps, Zivko, at that time, was known as a fighter. Now many union reps seem to me to be playing just an advisory role, particularly in regard to what we can't do! Certainly, a factor intimidating many from taking effective action is repressive changes to IR legislation. One way to change the role current reps to be more effective in the fight against the bosses, would be for shop steward training courses which emphasise a leadership and pro-active role in the workplace.

“Here I sit. Here I preach. Here I lay. Here I lie!”

Sparks: How have you found the situation with the bosses, since O'Farrell and Abbott have come into power?

WB: I have recently come to the conclusion that our jobs are on the line, with Tony Abbott and O'Farrell and other staunch minded liberals in power. There is now a big shift in the bosses' thinking about workers. We are the pariahs of the world, and are not entitled to a living wage. We are looked upon as taking away income from the Government, so it's unable to provide jobs for others. I have noticed that the outlook of the STA bosses toward us has worsened. There are very few in management who acknowledge our concerns. The rest are definitely out to destroy our conditions and have no connection with us.

This situation was highlighted to me recently in a number of ways.

When I was down at the Quay. I met a group of newly employed Ferry workers. They mentioned to me, the outrageous situation, they are now in. On being employed in the Ferries, they expected to get permanent, full time jobs. However, since taking up the job, they are being employed as part time, casuals for one day a week and are at the bottom of the list for more shifts. They don't even earn \$1,000 per week. No one can survive on their wage in a city like Sydney.

In the STA, the bosses appear to be getting up to the same caper. On buses lately, they have put up posters for hiring part time and full time drivers, with the emphasis likely to be on part time. Will these drivers be faced with similar below the poverty line wages with few shifts offered to them, when called into work?

Whilst, recently cleaners in the STA have been given their marching orders. In typical vicious, neo-liberal style, the bosses have out sourced their jobs to a private company.

On a personal level, my other half who works in a Government department in the health field, has noticed the tactic of restructuring by stealth, as is occurring with us. The organisation in which she works is being successively hollowed out and reduced to a shell and ready for privatisation.

The Manus Island detention centre situation also highlights the rightwing shift. With the contract for its operation, previously held by the British based G4S, now being given by the Abbott Government to Transfield. To make profits, such private concerns will be encouraged to ensure there is a never ending flow of detainees.

Sparks: What difficulties do you see in fighting the Government and bosses attacks today?

WB: Since George Bush invaded Iraq, I have noticed a big secrecy push and secretive mentality amongst politicians on the right side and management circles. This approach was highlighted to me recently in the case of Australian spying on East Timor and Indonesia, with Abbott lying in public about it. With all this deceit by the Government and bosses on different levels, and the willingness of the bosses to tell great lies and steal whatever they want from us, it's going to be an uphill battle for a group of 3,000 workers like us in the STA.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks : What have been the effects of the October change in timetables?

Leichhardt Busie: The most significant effect has been our running times becoming much tighter. As a result there is constant late running and trips cancelled. I understand, that private bus companies are fined for trips cancelled, but unsure whether this also occurs with the STA.

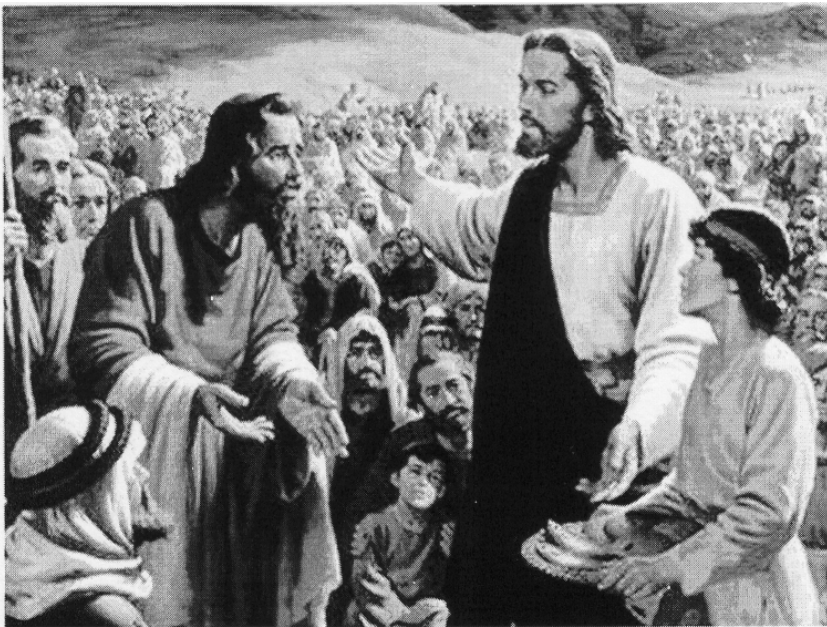
The timetables the bosses have produced have become a fantasy. As part of this late running, the bosses are using it to push more on to part time work. Recently, 5 lines of work for the broken were given to part timers. The AM's are particularly being targeted, as most want to finish early. With more part timers, the bosses are trying to achieve another objective, entailing creating more broken shifts. These shifts aren't popular with many drivers who live distant from the depot, as those on these shifts end up being at the depot and associated work for 13 hours per day.

Another problem with the late running, is that a certain layer of drivers are willing to work the overtime, and don't take account of the big picture regarding the need to resist the speedup and over-work which the bosses are imposing. We need to unite to be effective in defeating it. There continues to be a shortage of drivers, with over time offered to you, whenever you are having a day off. There are casuals, the bosses can call in, but many of these have other jobs, and can't just hang around to get a call from the STA, for some work. So a paradoxical situation exists, there is a constant shortage of drivers, due to drivers being forced off the job through overwork.

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: How are things at Burwood?

Burwood Driver: With the appearance of a new manager and perhaps the result of the holiday period with less traffic on the roads, things were quieter. Whilst people seemed happier at this time. However, there continued to be cancelled trips. I don't know the exact number, as management won't reveal the details. This is also happening at other depots. In the case of Leichhardt, cancelled trips are often noticed. We have noticed that the 440 is supposed to be at a stop at a certain time. However, when we come at this time, all we notice is heaps of people waiting and further along we don't come across the 440, indicating a trip is cancelled. Latest news, is that the new manager is tackling problems, "head-on". Unusually for a manager, drivers are happy with her.



I can't feed these people, It will destroy their incentive to better themselves.

Sparks: What's the situation with the inspectors?

BD: There appears to be an extreme shortage these days, causing considerable problems for us. Many drivers now don't even bother to call the radio room to get an inspector to tackle an on the road problem. Many motorists have the idea, that because of the holiday period, the restrictions on parking in clearways has ceased. During the holiday period I noticed on the clearway around Ashfield, there are constantly cars parked in it. Whilst, there is no intervention by inspectors. In early January, on one occasion, I faced traffic congestion caused by an accident, which I was alerted about by another driver. When I contacted the radio room, I was told just to proceed in the apparent hope, that the congestion would resolve itself. There was no provision of a diversion or an inspector intervening.

Sparks: What are your current impressions of "Optimisation"?

BD: With the constant cancelled trips and late running, customer service continues to go down the drain. However, the bosses claim that with "Optimisation", money is being saved.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of Sparks, we will discuss various changes at V/Line and current issues around the job. In this issue, Drivers, Conductors, Station Staff and Head Office staff will talk about these issues. As in previous issues of Sparks, names have been changed.

Sparks: I hear there has been further belt tightening at V/Line.

Clarence: Yes, you are correct, the first casualties are the V/Line staff magazine which has now gone on-line. Too bad for employees who are computer illiterate.

Jethro: The regional Christmas Parties at the end of the year have also been cut out this year.

Rastus and Roscoe: Not only that, but the annual DINNER to long serving employees has been suspended.

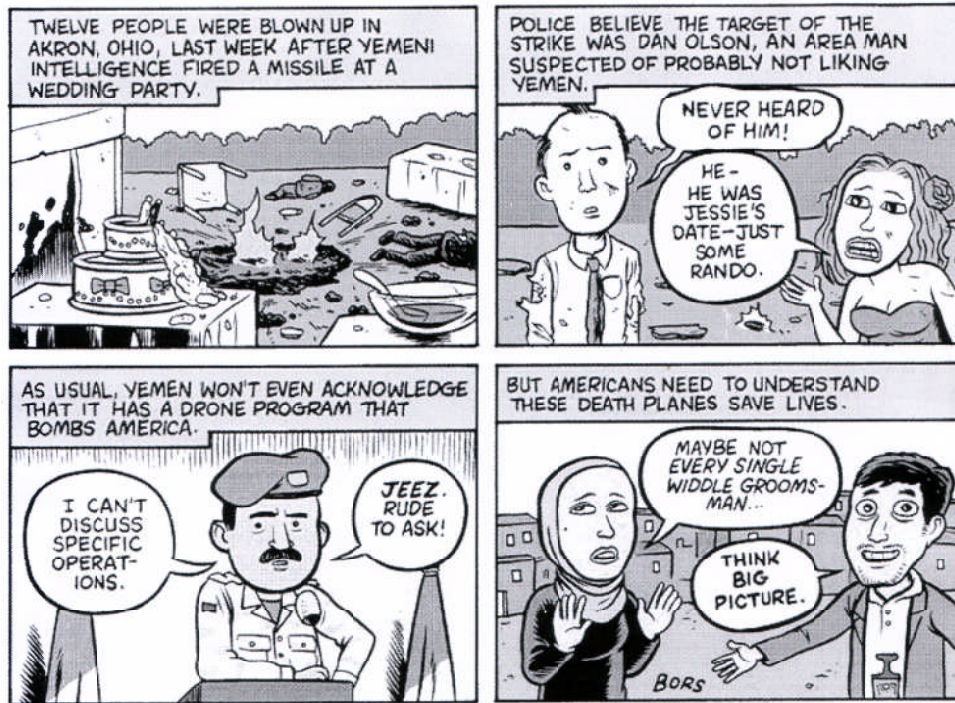
Sheona: This was a function for employees, who served V/Line for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40 and even over 50 years service and it was held annually.

Clarence: A fair number of people were looking forward to this dinner and now this has been suspended, morale will drop in the organisation. At least the previous Chief Executive was appreciative of the service of long serving employees.

Sheona: We wonder if any long serving employee will be presented with an award for long service, now the dinner is cancelled.

Sparks: This new Chief Executive is a GRINCH.

Rastus and Roscoe: You can say that alright. We don't care if the Christmas Function was stopped, as some of the drivers, who went to previous functions saw a number of employees crawling up Human Resources staff at these functions, but cancelling the award function is low.



Sparks: What about the issues of employees on fixed contracts?

Sheona: This issue with budget cuts is going to be an issue which will raise its head with job cuts for employees on fixed contracts.

Rastus: In other words, employees on these contracts will be told their contract will not be renewed.

Clarence: This will happen amongst conductors, as a number of conductors have been seconded on a fixed contract to be booking clerks, staff clerks and movement officers in the CARS office and covering people on maternity leave.

Jethro: A number of people, when vacancies occur in the salaried positions are hoping to find a permanent position. Thus conductors who are on a fixed term contract will obtain a permanent position.

Clarence: Unfortunately, one conductor who was appointed on a fixed term, kept applying for a permanent vacancy and was unsuccessful each time. He had to compete against outside applicants.

Roscoe: This happens a number of times, as when you go for job interviews, if your supervisor has dislike to you, you are out of the interview.

Sheona: Take the case if authorised officers. Over the last five years, a number of conductors have applied for the positions and with one exception, none of the conductors have been successful.

Sparks: Why?

Sheona: I will tell you why. Human Resources reads the resumes and says we don't think these people are any good, so we go to METRO TRAINS or YARRA TRAINS and recruit authorised officers.

Rastus and Roscoe: One conductor told us about this and he said no wonder morale is low. Also V/Line thinks they can save money as training an Authorised Officer is expensive.

Clarence: If a number of conductors had been accepted as Authorised Officers, then a number of vacancies would have occurred, then a number of conductors on fixed terms would apply for permanent positions.

Sparks: Back to the conductors who was applying for a full time position.

Clarence: This conductor was told his contract was not going to be renewed, as there were no vacancies.

Sheona: Mind you at least five more conductors were appointed on fixed term contracts to cover conductors, who were being retrained for the MYKI ticket system which was being introduced at the same time.

Jethro: The conductor became a platform supervisor on a contract at the Platform Supervisors rate of pay.

Sparks: At least he had a job.

Clarence: Yes, but eventually, he obtained a position full time, at a country location.

Rastus and Roscoe: The conductor had to go to a country location to keep his job. What chance has he got to return to Melbourne?

Sheona: He will have to apply again and go up against outside appointees.

Sparks: Are these fixed term conductors still on the job.

Clarence: Yes, but some conductor who is a whizz kid had bright idea about how these people on contract can keep their jobs.

Sparks: What did he do?

Clarence: He went to management and suggested they get rid of long serving conductors and station staff, saying these people were not part of the team. In other words, if these people were dispensed with, a person on a contract would be offered a permanent position.

Roscoe: How low can you go?

Rastus: This is the kind of person being employed in the industry. Selfish with a don't care attitude toward others.

Sparks: Finally, we must move on.

Rastus: Have you heard of the \$100K club?

Sparks: What's that?

Rastus: One of our drivers who was at a training course at Spencer Street, overheard a conductor crawling to a Staff Clerk for overtime. He was disgusted to see this person asking for overtime.

Clarence: This person is always asking for overtime. He hates the union and he thinks he is better than the other conductors. In fact, he says some conductors are not pulling their weight.

Rastus and Roscoe: Do you have an overtime roster?

Clarence: In theory yes, but in practice, no. In fact with the running of Heritage Trains, a number of people who are trained for them, get all of the overtime. The rest of conductors miss out. When V/Line regained the running of Heritage Trains, management promises that all conductors, who wanted to run the trains would be trained. It has not happened.

Jethro: In fact, some conductors who come off this job at say 10am in the morning are known to have worked until 7.00 pm in the evening. This has happened during shutdowns due to track work. Also it has happened in reverse where some conductors have commenced work at 12pm, then gone on a next job where the sign off at the Country Destination is at 10pm.

Sparks What is the Union doing?

Clarence: The delegate, when he heard, went to management and they promised to stamp out this practice.

Jethro: Some of the STAFF CLERKS ignore the management direction. Yes, the ones who are anti union do. The way it could be enforced is conductors and STATION STAFF monitor the sign on sheet. If this particular STAFF CLERK tells the conductor to move, ignore it. This practice has to be stomped out.

Sparks: We must conclude, but you can see there are problems over contract employment. This could be solved, the following way. If the person cannot be employed at the end of the contract. Then if a vacancy occurs for a conductor's position, then this person be offered the position. It is wrong that the person has to reapply for a job, that they have performed for the term of their contract.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the fixed contract system is immoral. People on these contracts should not be put under stress come option time. As for the conductors in the 100K club, YOU ARE A GREEDY AND SELFISH GROUP. The same for the conductor, who went to management suggesting long term employees be terminated. As for the cancellation of the long term employee dinner, we won't comment, as our readers will judge for themselves.

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS NEWS

LONDON TUBE WORKERS STRIKE

5/2/14 Our first two-day strike has got off to a cracking start, with management unable to run even the limited service they promised. With another 36 hours to go, the overtime ban ongo-

ing and revenue action to come, and another 48-hour strike next week, management and the Mayor are under real pressure to back down.

Depots and other workplaces have seen dozens-strong picket lines and mass stay-aways. Station staff have been picketing in large numbers - it looked like there were more staff outside Victoria station picketing than there usually are inside it working! And at the depots on the east end of the Central line, station staff and drivers picketed in significant numbers together, helping to ensure that at least some ASLEF drivers didn't go in. Let's hope this nails the mischievous and inaccurate rumour that station staff expect other grades to fight their battles for them.

The vast majority of Tube workers have seen through management's spin and have joined the fight to beat the devastating job cuts that we face.

Pickets report enthusiastic support from passengers, and even media coverage has been unable to hide the serious level of public support that our struggle has. People do not want ticket offices to close or staff to disappear from stations - and they don't want cuts to maintenance or service control, or driverless trains.

The handful who have broken the strike have chosen to take management's side and will have to live with the consequences. the rest of us need not be demoralised by their actions. Of course, it's disappointing when a service runs at all, but we still have the age-old problem of being divided into different unions, with one union in particular, ASLEF, acting as though drivers are immune from job cuts and no other grade matters.

From Tube Workers Blog

Update: Following a 48-hour strike of thousands of London Underground workers last week, the RMT and TSSA unions have suspended further industrial action following management agreeing to withdraw notice of 953 redundancies this year. However, management is not backing down from the cutbacks in jobs its demanding.

KOREAN RAIL STRIKE

J.Woo 17/1/14

A standoff between the South Korean government and railroad workers intensified over the weekend as police forced their way into the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions headquarters to arrest a handful of union leaders.

On Sunday morning, violence erupted as police tore down the front door of the 18-story building and sprayed water and tear gas over protesters who confronted the police, arguing that forcible entry wasn't legitimate because the court had issued an arrest warrant, not a search and seizure warrant. Police hauled away around 140 union members on charges of obstruction of justice. But despite a nine-hour search, the union leaders, as it turned out, had already fled the building.

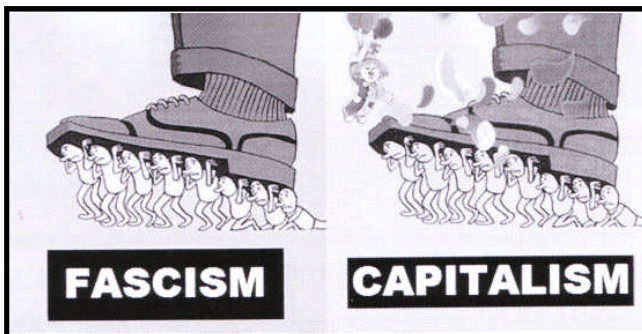
The country's railroad workers have been waging a sit-in since Dec. 9 against Korea Railroad Co.'s decision to establish a separate company to run a new bullet train line, which they

fear would lead to privatization and layoffs, a claim flatly denied by the government. The sit-in, the longest ever for the country's railroad, has caused a major disruption for commuters and for cargo transportation, in particular. Korail has said, as of Monday, the frequency of cargo trains has fallen to 55% of its normal level, while the frequency of passenger trains has dropped to 66%.

In a statement released on Sunday, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, which is in charge of the railways, defended the forcible entry as justifiable law enforcement to normalize railroad services. Land minister Suh Seoung-hwan reaffirmed that the government wouldn't privatize the Korail unit and said it would add a legal clause under which the unit could lose its license if it sold a stake to a private company.

Opposition parties denounced the police crack-down and called on the government to negotiate with the protesters.

"It is the epitome of the government's lack of communication with the public over the past year," said major opposition Democratic Party leader Kim Han-gill on a visit to the KCTU building on Sunday.



Some lawmakers from the ruling New Frontier party suggested the government soften its stance, considering the protest could spill over to a wider cross-section of society, as demand for railroad transportation jumps during the year-end.

"The prime minister and ministers (have) said numerous times that the government won't privatize Korail but the public isn't buying it," ruling party lawmaker Chung Woo-taek said. "Then the only solution is for the president to talk to the people face-to-face and make sure it won't happen."

The two sides, however, are likely to be locked in an impasse for some time to come.

On Monday morning, President Park Geun-hye said: "We won't be able to promise a future for our economy and society if we compromise on principles just because it is difficult at this moment," suggesting that the government won't back down on its position. Also, Korail said this morning that it would hire hundreds of temporary railroad workers.

For its part, the KCTU on Sunday labeled the government's uncompromising position as the "declaration of war" against all workers and vowed to wage an all-out strike on Dec. 28.

That strike could potentially affect services beyond the railways. The KCTU is the country's second largest labor union with more than 690,000 members in 2,000 affiliated unions that range from the construction to public transportation sectors.

Korea Real Time

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:

- I. 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
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What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic