

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**WILL THE PENALTY RATE CUT FLOW-ON TO  
RAIL & STA 2017 EBA'S VIA "SECRET"  
NEGOTIATIONS? ONLY A GRASS ROOTS  
CONTROLLED CAMPAIGN BASED ON DIRECT  
ACTION CAN SECURE THE GOODIES &  
AVOID THE NASTIES!**



|                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| NSW Railway News;            | STA Busie News;      |
| Beating the Heat;            | STA's "Dirty Dozen"; |
| "Top Secret" EBA 2017 Talks; | International News;  |
| Vic. Rail News;              | "The Big Gamble"     |

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

### **“Top Secret” Rail EBA 2017 Negotiations**

Some of the most important and sinister news “behind the scenes” is continuing secret negotiations conducted by the union officials and management over Rail EBA 2017. The union bosses have brazenly thrown out the window their usual fake consulting with the grass roots ritual and log of claims which gets rapidly disregarded. These secret meetings take place on a regular basis in Pitt Street (Transport NSW Office). Why not visit them en masse and demand a full report? Why be kept in the dark? One certain item on the agenda which has met massive opposition amongst drivers in the Loco union section in NSW Trains is DOO (Driver Only Operation) on the new interurban trains to be introduced in 2019. Other likely items are the watering down of redundancy provisions pointing to big job losses with many on a trip to the dole queue and the trimming of penalty rates. (See article page 8.) A possible dirty trick of the union officials as part of the railroading of the EBA is the provision of only selected sections of the EBA document, rather than the full doc. prior to any ballot due to the “explosive” nature of some nasties. An important precedent is a similar trick played by the NSW Teachers Union officials in regard to that union’s EBA last year.

This treacherous “back room” sell out wheeling and dealing and likely nasties in the EBA and the openness of any internet ballot to rigging via hacking, lack of independent scrutineers, no name check off, etc highlights the importance of a grass roots campaign based on direct action to secure some goodies. The last Sparks presented some good ideas for a log of claims. An important precedent is the campaign based on direct action waged by “Drivers for Affirmative Action” in March 2004. It secured large bonuses without any giveaways. In the context of such a campaign, there needs to be an eye for setting up a new union based on grass roots control principles (See back of Sparks.) It would inspire and link up with other such initiatives in other sectors.

In the STA, the most important news has been the restructure affecting office staff. However these changes are likely to hard hit drivers. (See article page 11.) The worsening speedup in the STA associated with tightened running times is resulting in drivers facing traffic infringements and fines and ultimately the sack due to the loss of licences. In this edition, we provide some ideas to tackle the problem apart from emphasising the importance of direct action to improve running times. (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](http://www.sparksweb.org)**

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# N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

## **BEAT THE BOSS TO BEAT THE HEAT**

**Another extremely hot year, in fact one of the hottest on record. Yet public transport workers toil in unbearable conditions and do their best to keep trains, buses and trams running.**

While bosses were cool in the comfort of their offices, staff were running around putting their bodies on the line in a genuine effort to get customers home. Trains, buses, trams and other infrastructure fail in heatwaves but workers are not allowed to fail? However is it right to continue working in such overheated condition? Is it right for your boss to expect you to perform miracles when you are heat stressed?

### **Safety Ignored**

It is well known that people are more likely to commit mistakes of judgement and for accidents to happen when they are under stress.

“A NASA study concluded that when the temperature is 95° F - (35 degree celsius) for an extended period, people can make 60 mistakes per hour – without realizing it. When the ambient temperature reaches 95° F, almost half of the blood moves to the skin to produce moisture (in the form of perspiration) to naturally cool the body. The heart is pumping up to 150 beats per minute with less volume to get the blood to the skin. That means the rest of the organs, including the brain and muscles, are only operating on half the blood they normally need. This interferes with cognitive thinking skills and can provoke emotions such as anger – and even combative behaviour” — — (<http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/effects-of-heat-stress-on-workers-2>)

Of course shift work and the inability to sleep due to high temperatures exacerbates errors of judgement. If there is a prolonged heat wave over several days or weeks the accumulated effect will make things even worse.

### **Clothing**

For a couple of years N.S.W. public transport staff have raised issues with management about the inadequacy of the uniform provided. The unbreathable, clingy, polyester shirts/blouses and long trousers are totally unsuitable for the the work performed in them. The supplied clothing make employees uncomfortably sweaty and hot. Some people have developed rashes as a result. More importantly unsuitable clothing raises the body temperature of a wearer and puts them at risk.

### **Health Effects on the Body**

A human body's internal temperature is something close to 37 degrees C. When the body's temperature varies by even 1 degree major changes take place that puts a person's metabolism and biochemistry into a spin.

People who are made to stand excessively will experience dilated blood vessels that cause blood to pool in the ankles and lower limbs causing swelling to the extremities. Blood pooling is the body's natural attempt to rid itself of heat but it is not a natural healthy condition.

Confusion and dizziness are symptoms of heat exposure along with muscle cramps. It soon leads to the affected person losing their ability to do mental and physical tasks safely. Overweight people are more prone to the effects of heat stress and may become physically sick because of it.

The extra strain on hearts can cause palpitations and affect the ability to work. Have no doubts about the seriousness of heat stress, it can and does kill. If in your opinion a colleague is suffering from heat stroke call for first aid or where there is none apply your own skills to cool them down. When it is serious and the person can't function, has vomiting or diarrhea, call an ambulance.



### **Customer Service or Employee Punishment?**

Management's imposed unrealistic work program does not allow workers to adequately make effective decisions about their own health and well being, let alone that of the public. Bosses are usually thought of as fools and their directives should be ignored where possible.

The directive to have employees on stations stand for the duration of the shift is cruel and unusual punishment, especially in hot weather. It leads to well documented illnesses and physical and mental pain for most employees.

Likewise the removal of control rooms on some platforms, where an employee could rest at intervals, is an act of bastardry that is unparalleled. Here the employees had the ability to safely and securely discard clothing as the day heated up or store some water for a water break when needed. This is now, in the interests of "Customer Service", not possible. In fact employees are "bunded" with "please explain" notices for not being at their "point of duty" despite the needs for refreshments from time to time.

It's so bad that employees have to contact a Duty Manager before they go to the toilet rather than making a judgement themselves about a convenient time to go.

There are still plans afoot to demolish most control rooms on platforms as far as I know. Management has been banging away for some time now about the need for employees to stand out

in the public arena on the platforms for the duration of their shift. So far most attempts at getting employees out of suburban station control rooms have proved impractical for operational reasons. In summer being able to retreat to an air conditioned control room where there is water and a comfortable environment is a sensible policy that offers a chance for employees to recover from the extreme heat. Employees still go out to despatch trains and give passenger information and perform duties as they see fit. So what more do they want? On platforms where the control rooms are removed, or forbidden to be used, there is no respite from the intense heat.

Although water in bottles is provided in hot weather to commuters, management has always frowned on the practice of providing water bottles to employees. Sure employees know where and how to get their supplies of water, but there have been times when the powers that be have put locks on the fridge.

Management has made no contingency plans for heat breaks or water breaks during the high temperatures of the afternoons, which regularly coincide with the afternoon peak transport period. As the temperature gets higher during the day breaks should become more frequent and of a longer duration.

The UNIONS SAFE pamphlet recommends that at a temperature of 32-32 degrees a 10 minute break every hour is probably adequate for heat stress recovery. While at 32-35 degrees 15 minute break is required. Any temperature above 35 degrees would in all likelihood require a 30 minute break every hour depending on the workload and the environment that the work is performed in. This strategy to promote good health and combat heat stress is never considered by public transport management.

### **Why Damage Your Health?**

It's your health and it's up to you to protect it. If you become ill through continued heat stress you will get little sympathy from management. They're best at counselling you for "time lost" and "Return to Work Plans". They are not interested in your reduced tolerance to an abnormal heat that you must bear through their unnatural work practices and bullying.

Exposure to long term heat can cause lasting deleterious health problems long after the heat has gone. Fatigue and real physical problems may not be recognised as being related to the the stint of work that you did some time ago during a heat wave.

More importantly, why should you damage your health when the Boss has a legal obligation to ensure your good health. You and your colleagues have the right to approach your manager to help maintain a healthy workplace and a healthy body. You should never be expected to put your health at risk simply because your manager or the public requires it of you.

Meet with other work colleagues doing similar work and come up with a ways of make sure that you are not continually under heat stress. Collectively you will have more power and influence over bad management decisions.

### **What to Do?**

While other unions, such as the building unions, suggest that their members stop work when the heat gets too much, the public transport unions have never made the information about heat stress available to their members.

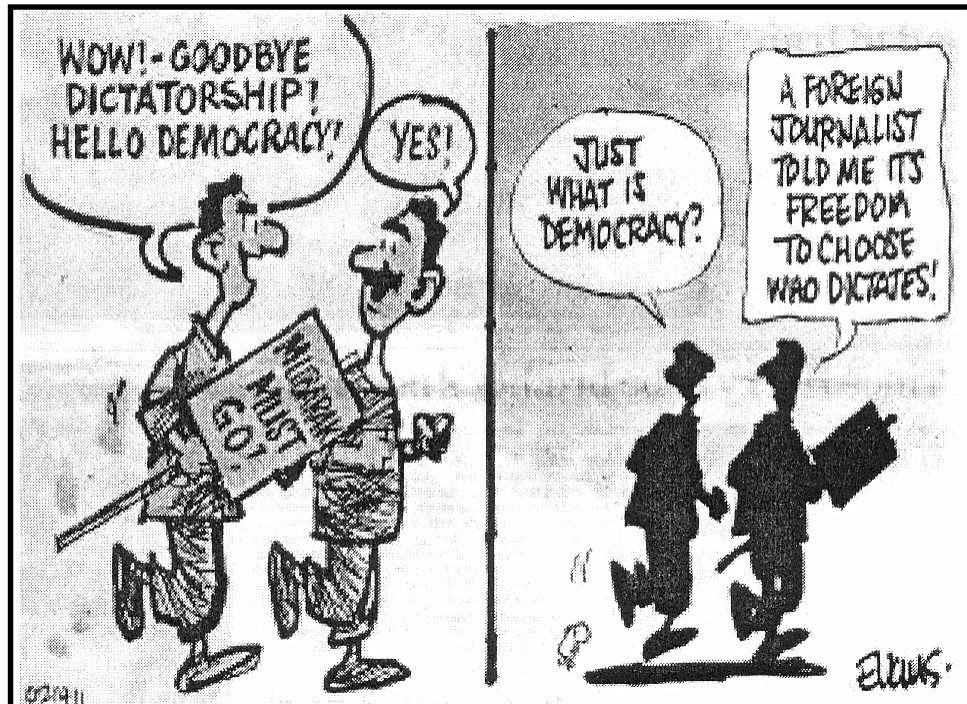
An old UNIONSAFE pamphlet from 2013 is instructive on workers rights under the OH&S provisions of the law in N.S.W.

“Section 8(i) of the NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 states that an employer has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. If workers are suffering from any of the above symptoms, then it is clear that your employer is not complying with the law. But the law does not state any precise temperature at which workers should stop work, or any specific actions that must be taken by the employer at certain temperatures. “

Therein lies the dilemma for workers. There is no legal definition of unbearable heat, at which point workers should stop work for their own health and safety. The conditions or temperature at which workers are to stop work are also not generally included in enterprise agreements.

Considering all of the facts, including the work to be done, the work environment, the temperature and humidity, the age of workers and other relevant factors, workers have to make their own assessment about when to stop work. Hold an impromptu meeting with your comrades on the job then decide what you want to do. At least this will pressure management to provide the necessary facilities, water, rest breaks and so on.

At this time they couldn't give a shit about workers except to say "job well done". Blood sweat and tears are expected from you no matter the cost to your health. The accolades of "job



well done” are empty phrases which reinforce the job that they expect from you time and time again.

As Climate Change increases temperatures into the future this type of decision making is going to become more critical to maintaining your health and that of your fellow workers. Don't expect your boss to protect you, even though it is their statutory obligation.

One positive aspect of the “Stop Work to Beat the Heat” campaigns is that they affect the bosses and business owners who worry about the loss of productivity. These campaigns can also bring power to bear on politicians and business owners to help stop climate change, particularly when we refuse to work in the extreme temperatures. “Stop Work to Beat the Heat and to Stop Climate Change” I say.

Management has an obligation to protect you during hot weather. You have an obligation and a right to work in an environment which does not harm your health or that of anyone else. You need to insist on a few things.

Get your manager or OHS reps to regularly take temperature and humidity readings in various parts of the workplace during the day, recording them in a log book. This will aid your case for proper and safe work practices as well as better amenities. It also aids the case for stopping work when you can prove that it is just too hot to work.

Get used to writing in the OHS Incidents Register any symptoms of fellow employees or near misses that are related to heat stress. Note the time and temperature carefully.

Insist that air conditioned control rooms and rest centres be kept or supplied where they are currently not provided. That also means negotiating regular recuperation breaks with the boss. This may mean that job rotation becomes an option. Call your union for support in the negotiations when the going gets tough.

In what is a rerun of a past issue and what still remains a recurring blockage from management, that most of you are fed up with, you need to keep asking for suitable clothing for the high temperatures. Ones which allow for evaporation (not nylon) are needed to take heat away from the body.

Make sure everyone in the workplace is familiar with the signs of heat stress and how to deal with it.

When it comes down to it you need to protect yourself. The OH&S Acts gives some protection from harm during hot weather. Generally though the law does not give you definitive protection. That's where it comes down to you. You either put up with poor working conditions which damage your health or insist on your rights to work in a healthy environment.

You are unlikely to be dismissed for walking off the job with your colleagues when temperatures in your work environment are extreme. If you plan carefully and have the ambient temperature records, times, and the duration for which you are exposed to extreme heat (depending on the job), then what is there to stop you and your colleagues from protecting your well being? Building workers and others do it when they need to, why can't you?

## Penalty Rates Under Attack

**So the Fair Work Commission decided that Penalty Rates should be cut for some sectors of the workforce. Mostly the cuts affect the lowest paid and most precarious of workers which make up a substantial proportion of the workforce. Women and young people are the main victims of the stolen wages decision**

In his public address about the changes Iain Ross, Fair Work Commission President, announced that there may be a further review into the possibility of extending cuts to penalty rates beyond just the hospitality and retail sectors. The recent decision is only the thin edge of the wedge that they have on their wish list to reduce wages and costs to business.

This has significance for all of us working in the Public Transport Sector since overtime makes up a substantial proportion of our take home pay. Because we work weekends, public holidays and out of normal work hours any cuts to penalties would lead to a reduction in take home pay of anything up to 50%.

Now Pauline Hanson (a racist Liberal Stooge) has proposed penalty rate cuts “across the board”. So much for standing up for people with no voice! Turnbull and Co love to hear this type of talk and are trying to ride on her supposed popularity by co-opting her support for an attack on workers for the bosses. The bosses of course are always sharpening their knives against workers and will not miss any opportunity to cut wages. They see this as their chance to plunge in the knife.

If ever there was a time that the Union Movement as a whole should have come together and taken some action on the decision to pare back wages in the form of penalty rates this was it. What could be worse than taking wages from your members? Alas there is nothing but a whimper from the unions with murmurs of a strategy leading up to the National Election. They are encouraging you to vote for a Labor Government. Is that all there is?

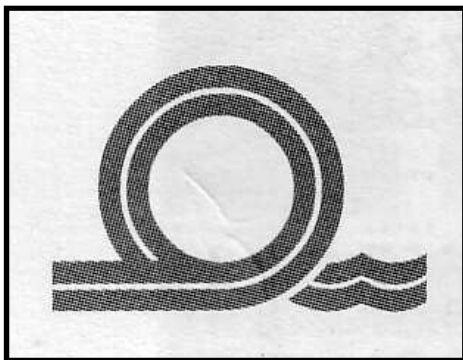
A general stop work meeting with national strikes would have sent an immediate message to the Government not to mess with our pay. Without such a strategy we are all vulnerable.

The pressure will now be on to alter existing Enterprise Agreements seeking cuts to penalty rates and to employ more part time and casual workers rather than hire full time workers. After all Unions such as the S.D.A. have already set a precedent by bargaining away the penalty rates of retail workers who have been working weekends and public holidays without adequate penalty rates for some time now. This had some influence on the outcome of the Fair Work Commission’s determination.

We have to be on our guard against such clauses in any new proposed E.B.A. Many Enterprise Agreements are up for renewal in 2017. Will there be attempts to tinker with our penalty rates?

Make your voice heard during the bargaining period. Let all and sundry know that you will not accept changes to your wages and conditions. We also all need to insist that full time work remains as the dominant and principal type of work.





## “The Big Gamble”

Recently one of our correspondents for some relief from the rigours of ex-CEO Rowley’s “Brave New Sydney Buses World”, attended with his family, the Illawarra Folk Music Festival. Expecting some old time folkie hits and labour protest songs, he and his family were startled by the appearance of a new retro “neo-Liberal” band with lead vocalist former NSW Premier Mike Baird and assistant vocalist and new NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian produced by the neo-Liberal policies of ALP Governments with the collaborations of the union hierarchy.



Prior to the festival and his retirement from politics, Baird’s “neo-liberal” band had been practicing in the “austere” conditions of his garage on weekends. At the band’s premier at the Festival, it was now belting out the Abba group of the 1980’s hit “Money, Money! It’s a rich man’s world!” Both Baird and Gladys and other band members were glittering in gold dollar sign emblazoned top hats and sequins. In sharp contrast to the other Festival acts which protested the ravages of the bosses and corporate greed, Baird’s band was enthralled with money

making and corporate profiteering. Gladys' hugely expensive to tax payers Opal necklace glistened in the revolving strobe lights.

Unlike, other bands which received a warm and enthusiastic applause from the folkie audience, Baird's "neo-liberal" band performance received a hostile response. Baird and his group rapidly disappeared from the scene chased

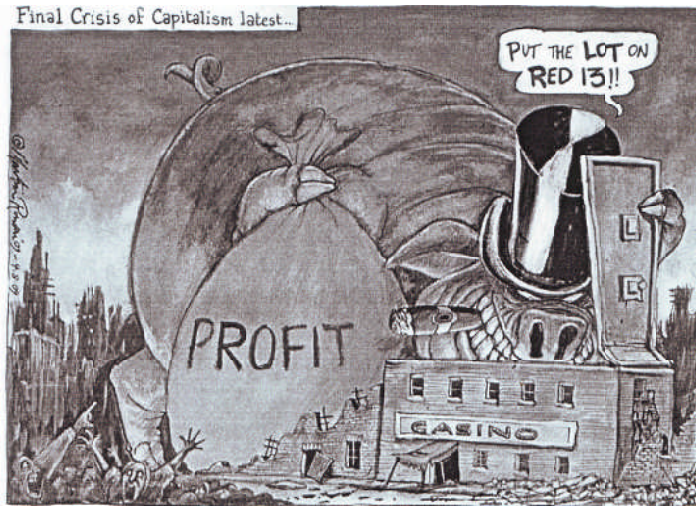
by an angry mob and made a bee line to the nearby Liberal Party electoral office and business club to recover and relax with some gambling.

All that was available for Baird's crew in the club was a row of old style "one arm bandits" around which they made themselves comfortable. Listening to their favourite Abba hit "Money, Money it's a rich man's world" piped on the muzak.

Then their fun began, but not our fun. As each lever was pulled on the pokies ever more jackpots were won. Mike won the first jackpot when three tollways shot up on the rotors. Mike jumped for joy as now his career post retirement from politics was assured as the top level executive of the National Australia Bank. It has money to burn to invest in lucrative tollways. Not so lucky are the hundreds of thousands of commuters paying the high tolls, due to the lack of public transport.

Gladys was next to pull a lever and guess what, in good stead had the images of 3 apartment blocks roll up on the rotors of her pokie. She was in a good mood as a fat brown paper envelope would come her way from developers. Transport Minister Andrew Constance was next to score a jackpot with three trams appearing on his rotors. Constance was exited with the prospect of more roads to be uprooted for Light Rail and excuses for privatising adjacent public land and housing, and opportunities for more high rise apartments to fatten the profits of Liberal business mates. Barry O'Farrell pulled the lever on his machine and the images of three bottles of Penfolds Hermitage Grange wine appeared, providing Barry with a very expensive new addition to his cellar. Much more valuable than the bottle of wine which supposedly cost him the NSW Premier job.

While undergoing this "gambling therapy session", Baird's crew became inspired and started composing the lyrics for a song for their appearance at next year's festival in the hope of winning a prize. It started with the line "Money, Money in which off shore tax haven do we launder our Money."



The festivities came to end with the Mike and his crew staggering out of the club arm in arm and escorted to their luxury cars by waiting chauffers. Their fortunes in business, gold passes and fat retirement pensions assured. Unlike the rest of us, who are in an increasingly precarious situation facing spiralling rents and real estate prices, low wages and constantly having to work harder and longer due to speed ups and staff cuts and lack of job security and an assured comfortable retirement.

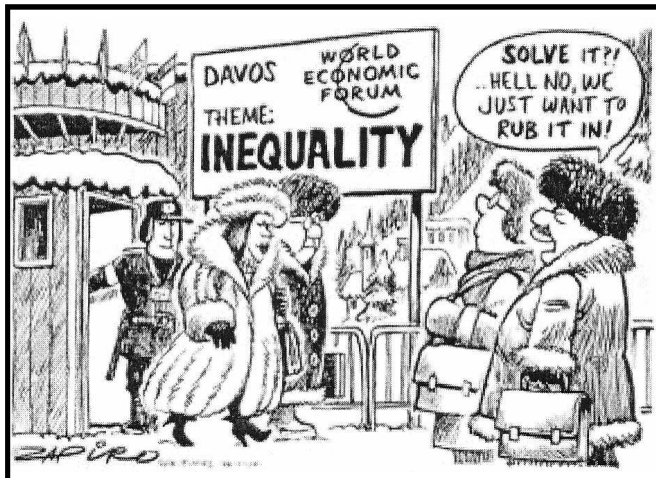
## STA BUSIE NEWS

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

#### **Sparks: What's the situation with the management's cutbacks to mechanical section staffing and plans to cut auxiliary staff jobs in the STA?**

Waverley Busie: The Liberal Govt. is putting pressure on every Govt. department to find new ways to make savings. Associated with the job losses, 1/3 of mechanic jobs at the depots have been lost. Currently at Waverley, the mechanical section area has the look of a ghost town. With mechanical staff struggling to fix problems just to keep buses on the road. Whilst small problems with the buses which aren't fixed in a timely manner due to the staff cuts, will develop into major problems later on. I have also noticed a lot of broken down buses on the road. Some of the thinking by the Liberal Govt. and management behind the cutbacks and the increased likelihood of break downs, is that in comparison with say airplanes, there is little risk of fatalities and associated bad publicity. All that happens with the bus break downs is that the bus stays on the road until fixed or towed away and the passengers get another bus. However, there has recently been some very serious incidents involving 3 buses bursting

into flames. It's likely a major contribution to these incidents are buses overheating due to a lack of adequate air conditioning maintenance. Whilst the modern buses we drive lack windows for passengers to open. Consequently with the poorly maintained air conditioning in much of the STA's fleet and the recent extreme heat wave, drivers and passengers are adversely affected. In regard to these important



OH&S issues we must be prepared to strike to exert pressure on management to resolve the problem. As such industrial action is over an OH&S issue we are covered as “legal” industrial action.

In regard to auxiliary job losses, we have been advised that 200 of these jobs are to be culled. It’s likely to have dire consequences for STA operations.

One important sector being targeted is the roster clerks. At a recent union meeting I attended, we were advised by the union officials that management wants to replace the roster clerks with a computer system. Following being issued with our line of work for the month, if we require swops, we will have to do it on-line. There will be no one we can speak to about it. There was great concern amongst the grass roots that such an initiative will have severe consequences for us, and a willingness to take strike action over the issue. Unless Jamie Sinclair tells us exactly what will happen in the event of difficulties with this on-line system such as computer crashes affecting its on-line operation. Another sector of auxiliary staff being cut is OH&S (Occupational Health & Safety) nurses. In regard to senior management redundancies, Peter Rowley STA CEO has taken a golden handshake. His replacement is likely to be hell bent on further restructuring of the STA for privatisation prior to the upcoming NSW elections.

### **“The Dirty Dozen”**

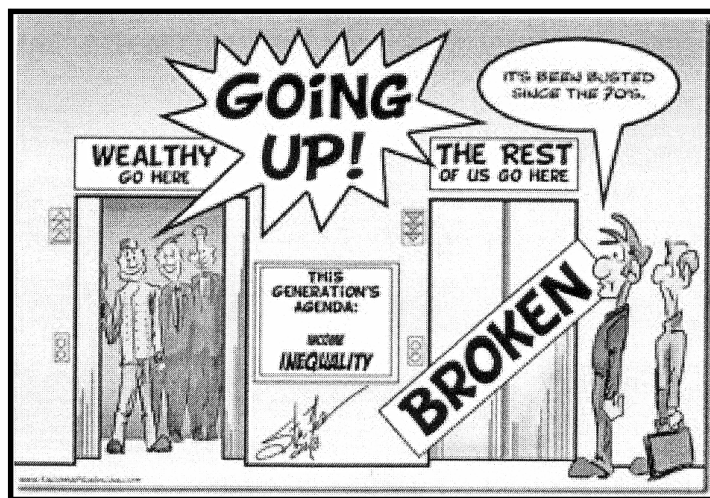
Other news is that our former illustrious leader “Mr Hercules” who relished providing exhibitions of various menacing poses in flexing his super sized steroid enhanced muscles to intimidate a “captive audience” of his underlings and in the hope of appearing in a “beef cake” centrefold in “We are Moving Sydney” magazine, is now a member of a maraudering “dirty dozen” pack of bosses. They have been parachuted into various depots causing a path of carnage and shell shock amongst drivers under the iron heels of their Stassi style jack boots.

**Sparks: What is the impact on drivers of the increased money gouging and speed up in the job stemming from NSW Liberal Govt. and management new initiatives?**

WB: Associated with the deployment of the Opal system and generally ticket less fares, management has seized the opportunity to tighten running times. Imposing a further speedup in our jobs. The union executive is refusing to take any action to oppose this move. The job of the union rep these days seems to just handle drivers’ personal problems akin to a social worker. They don’t seem to do any organising to help us fight these new attacks by the bosses. To cope with the worsening unrealistic running times, drivers are being caught out by the Liberal Govt. revenue raising measures such as speed and red light cameras when speeding and going through red lights. According to latest media reports a new generation of cameras will be deployed by the Govt. later down the track. These cameras are likely to be quite sophisticated being able to focus on separate vehicles going across a bridge. So hold on to your hats. Your job is on the line.

The bottom line should be the imposing of fines and the use of cameras as a safety measure, not a revenue source. If you lose your 14 driving points, you lose your job. Non professional

drivers get 13 points, but as professional drivers we get an extra point. You have no recourse. The union hierarchy washes its hands of you. To get your job back you have to resort to a court case. This recourse can be costly, but if successful you may get some points back and be reinstated on the job. Consequently, a new pressure is being imposed on us in regard to the threat of



losing driving points. Years ago we never faced this problem. Only on rare occasions would you get booked. Now, we are being put in a very precarious situation. We always have to be below 14 points. Let me tell you, you can never be careful enough to avoid traffic infringements.

We are continuously in limbo with our jobs.

**Sparks: What solutions do you see for this problem?**

WB: Some remedies would be to exert industrial pressure so that we can get back our licences and associated points in 2 years. As unlike non-professional drivers, we have driver/instructors who can pin point our driving problems and so help resolve it. Whilst we could be awarded reward points for good driving assessed by a panel which has information about our driving record.

**Sparks: What are the latest developments with the Light Rail Extensions in the Eastern Suburbs?**

WB: The NSW Liberal Govt. is facing more problems with the extensions construction costs. On Anzac Parade, where the extensions are occurring, you can see a maze of plastic pipes, under the Light Rail tracks. There are all sorts of telecommunication cables apart from sewage pipes. Whilst the overall cost of the extensions has blown out by multi millions over budget and growing. At Dulwich Hill the Light Rail is being upgraded. The real agenda for the Liberal Govt. is not the project itself and the millions wasted on it, but hidden spin off's. Already at Pagewood, where the old Leylands car plant was located, Meritons is building a 15 to 30 storey apartment blocks. With the close down of manufacturing in Sydney, various other old factory sites are being developed for Meritons high rise developments. It seems Meritons will have an endless supply of money from the real estate sales. Whilst there will be 12 to 15 storey apartment blocks constructed along the extensions. Each apartment will have a garage and no doubt the residents will buy a car to get around. Particularly due to the inconvenience

of public transport. The Govt. will gain more revenue via car rego and traffic fines. These developments and others such as at Hornsby will contribute to ever more heavy traffic coming through the city. Already on such highways as the Eastern Distributor in the morning its choked with traffic for hours. Making bus drivers jobs ever more frightfully demanding.

Whilst the Govt's business mates in concrete manufacturing and construction will enjoy a major boost to profits. The steel, wood and glass manufacturing sectors will also get a big boost with the expanding demand for apartment structural components.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the NSW Govt's pro-development policies on Sydney people?**

WB: Most low and average income workers are being squeezed out of the city, as they are unable to afford rising rents and spiralling real estate prices, due low wage rises. Even for a two bed room unit, you have to pay \$500 to \$600 rent per week. These people are effectively trapped in Sydney with these spiralling costs. Whilst developers are being assisted by the forced merger of councils, with elected councils being turfed out and replaced by Liberal Govt. mates. All the Liberal NSW Govt. wants to see is more and more cranes, so windfall profits can be made by its business mates before the construction and real estate driven bubble in the NSW economy bursts. According to a builder I spoke to recently and a recent TV news report, the Eastern Sea Board of Australia has now the highest density of high rise cranes in the world. More cranes than a dozen supersized cities such as Shanghai, New York and Mexico City. There seems no stopping the Baird and now Berejiklian juggernaut.

**Sparks: What are your thoughts on the Panama Papers?**

WB: One important revelation which affects Australia, is that one of the Chinese brothers who own Wilson Security based in a tax haven, was gaoled for money laundering. Wilson Security operates security guards, which have more power than police in certain cases on numerous Govt. facilities throughout Australia and overseas such as the Nauru detention centre. Its operations in Australia are worth close to a Billion dollars and growing.

## **BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What's the latest at the depot?**

Burwood Driver: Some of the most important news has been the restructure in the STA affecting office staff. Drivers won't be involved in job losses. So far we have not heard which office staff have been offered redundancies. Latest news is that Peter Rowley who was STA CEO took a golden handshake. Rumour has it that he was forced to take a redundancy. Normally with such a restructure, the big bosses have already decided exactly who will stay on the job and those who will be leaving.

**Sparks: How are the running times?**

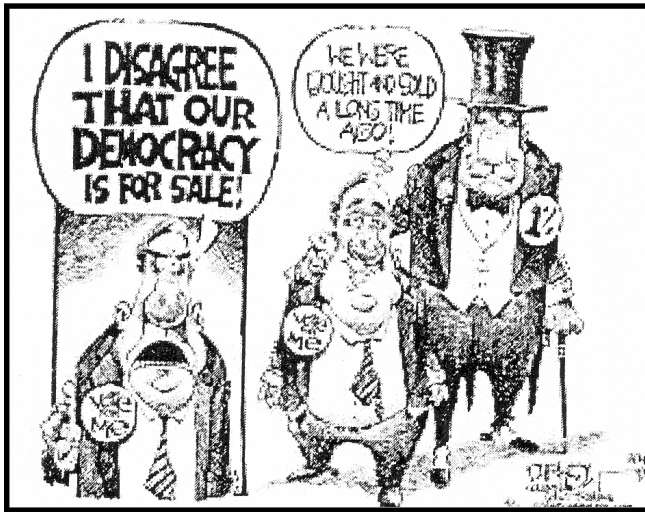
BD: We have not been affected by tightened turnaround times associated with the introduction of the Opal system. In fact there has been improvements to the running time for the M41. However, in the case of this run given its long length its normally very difficult to meet the

time table requirements. So far the union officials have been keeping developments in the negotiations for the upcoming EBA 2017 close to their chests and unwilling to enlighten us.

**Sparks: I understand there has been some “mysterious” developments with the union rep at Burwood?**

BD: Lately, he has disappeared from the scene. The union rep’s roster has been marked “absent” for four weeks. This normally means

he won’t be coming back to the depot. According to a rumour he had words with one of the bosses and had been suspended. In terms of him returning on the job, he was advised that he would have to go to another depot.



## **LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: How is the new auxiliary job restructure affecting Leichhardt?**

Leichhardt Busie: There have been some major changes associated with the restructure affecting the STA Administration. 60 STA office staff including the CEO will be based at the management area at Leichhardt. Whilst all the scheduler will be transferred to Tempe. Whilst POD2 which are engaged in training, will now be shifted around to different depots according to demand in regard to training new trainees. Many of us are uncomfortable with this influx of big bosses to Leichhardt and now looking over us. Other news which is of great concern for us, is the widespread tightening of turnaround times on various routes. On a positive note, the depot has been issued with 40 new Volvo buses, which are great to drive.

**Sparks: What is the situation with the drivers?**

LB: During one week in late February 6 drivers resigned at the depot. It is unclear as yet the reasons, but it seems in line with the worsening situation of the job. Associated with the speedup with the job, we are constantly chasing our tails. It just goes to show how the STA bosses are incapable of running a business and are unable to keep long time drivers on the job. None of the trainees last long. What they are told at the induction, is shown to be illusionary when they go on the job. The bosses are running the STA into the ground. Interestingly they can splash out money on our new uniforms, but don’t spend the money to adequately fix the buses.

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In issue 155 an article appeared about Bosses, Bullies and Crawlers. In this issue we will discuss issues facing V/Line employees with these individuals. Once again Drivers, Station Staff will discuss these ongoing issues. Once again names have been changed.*

### **Sparks: What is happening at V/Line particularly Southern Cross?**

Clarence: Due to the introduction of MYKI ticketing extra Barrier Staff were employed to staff new Barriers. Before MYKI was introduced Southern Cross was an open station with ticket checking being conducted by conductors on trains. Barrier Staff have always been employed on Suburban Barriers.

Jethro: At this point two V/Line employees have come forward to talk about these issues.

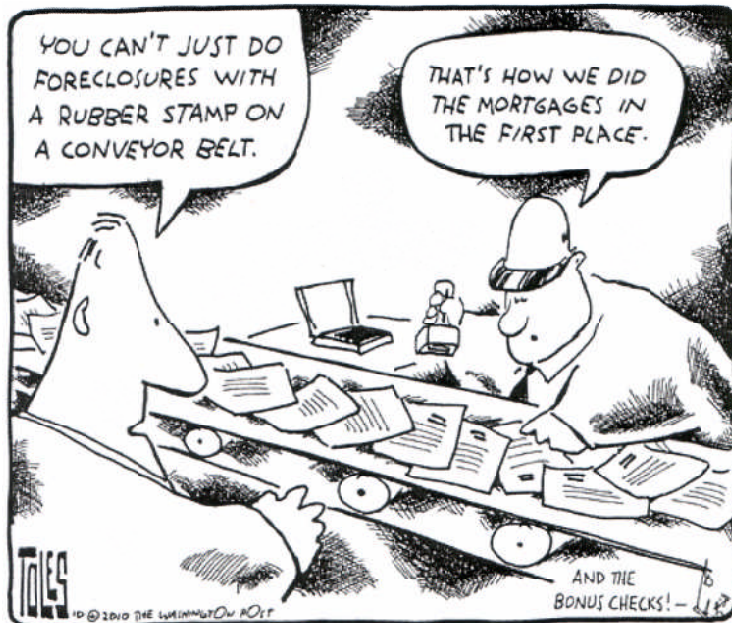
Wilma and Wilfred: We have come forward to talk about the conditions Customer Service Staff have to endure.

Penelope: The barriers were erected on the cheap with no staff protection such as barrier cabins or heaters. Also Race Trains operated by Metro Trains use Platform 8. On these days no extra V/line staff are rostered. Metro Train staff only assist on Platform 8.

Wilma: Due to a tight budget, overtime is reduced and if a staff member is sick, the shifts are not covered thus existing staff have to cover the shift, the best they can.

Wilfred: That is not all. In winter the station can be freezing, so the Barrier Staff go to various kiosks to buy hot drinks to keep warm. In fact the only booth provided for the Barrier Staff is on the west end of the station on the western elevated walkway.

It was only due to the union that a booth was installed by the barriers for shelter for the staff.





Wilma: It was quite cold working at the barrier.

Rastus: We, drivers use this walkway and it is quite cold. We don't blame the station staff having a hot drink.

Wilma: V/Line management does not like staff having hot drinks at the barriers. They say it is not professional.

Roscoe: Management can GET STUFFED. If it is cold and you want a hot drink. HAVE IT.

Wilfred: In one instance a supervisor called a barrier employee into the office and said to this person, "If I see you having a hot drink again, you will be out of a job."

Roscoe: This is bullying, doesn't this slug have any compassion.

Wilma: No he doesn't, you see this station master is only seconded to the position, but is unfortunately in charge of barrier staff.

Rastus: In other words, he thinks that by picking on this employee, he will get a few brownie points in his favour when the position is advertised.

Penrod: As a result of this interview the union has advised employees not to front him alone. Always take a union representative.

Jethro: And that's not all. Some customer service employees have said if he sees staff breaking the rules, he will put them on paper.

**Sparks: At this point could we have a background about some of these employees.**

Wilfred: Some of these employees previous jobs have been in a supervisory role in their previous employment. Because of these backgrounds, they will not join a union.

Wilma: Some of these persons think unions are out of date and think that by not joining the union, they will be not be considered for future promotions.

Rastus and Roscoe: Unfortunately this is the truth, at present times in most industries and in the railways, people will not join a union. What makes us sick is how these people take the benefits fought for over the last 100 years. When wage rises are granted, they put their hands out for all the benefits.

Penelope: It is the same with the conductors. Some of these people's jobs have been managers and these people think they can do without unions.

Rastus and Roscoe: In other words the non unionists are scabs.

Clarence: If they are in trouble, they are quick to join the union.

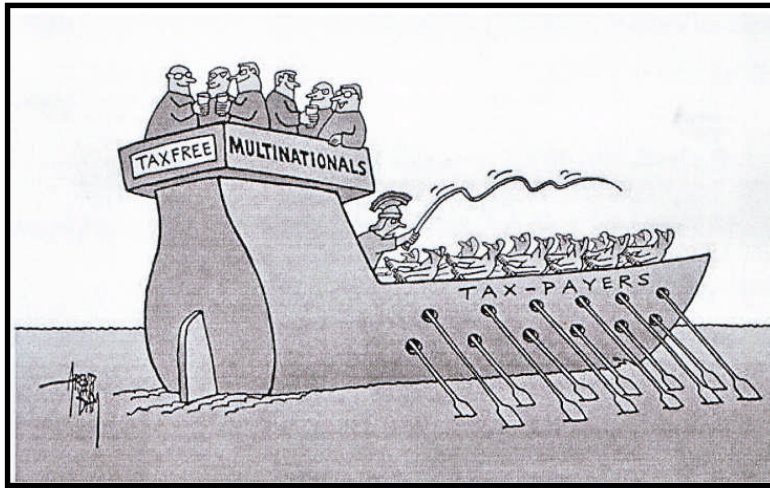
Penrod: They should not be accepted in the union. Let them go to an industrial lawyer. They will learn about the high fees they charge. Their only hope of success would be if a lawyer takes on the case Pro-Bono.

**Sparks: There is a rumour that a conductor dobbed in a driver over a Health and Safety issue to the Internal Rail Regulator.**

Rastus and Roscoe: You are correct. This individual dobbed the driver in over a Health and Safety issue. We will not discuss the Pro's and Con's of the issue due to limited space. It will have to be discussed in a future issue. The driver involved received a final warning.

Penelope: This conductor is a bit of a go getter who thinks that by dobbing the driver in he would get a position.

Rastus: We heard a rumour that V/Line management were hostile at what he did. That is going behind a manager's back. In fact V/Line did not know until they were contacted by the Rail Regulator.



Penelope: This conductor is not game to go to the meal room on his breaks so he sits in the staff clerk's office playing on the computers.

Rastus and Roscoe: If he goes into the meal the drivers will not talk to him. If we do say to him what we think of him, he will probably go bleating to Human Resources.

Penrod: Then Human Resources will send out a letter to all employees about bullying.

**Sparks: Has it come to this, where you cannot voice an opinion.**

Roscoe: Yes. It may be in the workplace, but not in the street off Railway Property. If you see this slug, say to him what you think of him, but in a tactful manner.

Wilma: What upsets us is that one of the barrier staff has made it known that he will dob-in any employee he sees doing the wrong thing.

Wilfred: This person comes from a managerial background and is hated by the barrier staff. He is a go getter and he doesn't care who he treads on to get promotion.

Wilma: One of the employees at Southern Cross stood up to the acting station master.

**Sparks: What did he do?**

Wilfred: He ran to Human Resources and said he was bullied. The employee was given a warning which would be placed on his record.

Roscoe: To be weak. It looks like he cannot make his own decisions.

Penrod: No. He cannot solve problems.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. Unfortunately people on contract or seconded positions think that by dobbing fellow employees they will be promoted. In most cases it does not happen. As management use these people for their own purposes.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say people dobbling in fellow employees are scum. As for the seconded station master go back to your old job, you are not wanted at Southern Cross. Finally if you are dobbled in by a fellow employee, make it known to others and don't front Human Resources.

## International Transport Workers News

### **TAIWAN RAIL STRIKE**

**27/1/17 TAIPEI, Taiwan — The railway scrambled to keep trains on time Friday as hundreds of union members stayed home to protest working conditions, while the southbound lanes of freeways were packed from dawn as people rushed home on Lunar New Year's eve.**

The Taiwan Railways Administration (TRA) initiated emergency measures in response to the strike, including deploying junior level managers to join low-level workers, Director-General Lu Jie-shen said.

Assuring passengers that “every train will depart at its scheduled time,” Lu said he had 100 percent faith in the administration, and added that 90 percent of workers disapproved of the union's behaviour.

The industrial action was taken in retaliation of the TRA's continued refusal to hire more workers in order to ease the burden on its current staff, Taiwan Railway Union Director-General Wang Chieh said.

“The union has received more than 1,000 signatures in support of the campaign,” Wang said, “but because many members were pressured by higher-ups, we're expecting (only) around 400 to 500 staff to no-show from Jan. 27 through 30.”

Officials estimated that approximately 30 percent of Taipei Railway Station staff did not show up for work Friday.

Transportation Minister Ho Chen Tan expressed understanding for the striking workers, saying that “individual labor unions may arrange their own plans.”

However, Ho said, “the transportation business is in the service industry. This is the time of year when commuters need the TRA the most.”

The TRA expects to handle an average of 712,000 passengers daily during the Lunar New Year break, with a surge on Monday to 887,000.

#### Demonstrations Nationwide

While some union members simply took the day off Friday, others took to the streets, with demonstrations in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung.

Protesters chanted and held spring couplets reading “We all need transportation, but TRA workers need labor rights” and “The TRA neglects labor rights, jeopardizes passengers’ safety.”

As well as an increase in hiring, the union is demanding reduced working hours and a guaranteed full day off for holidays.

Current TRA scheduling designates holidays as extending from 7 a.m. in the morning to 7 a.m. the next morning. The union argues that requiring workers to be present at railway stations both mornings makes it practically impossible for them to take a full day off.

Monday to See Worst Traffic

The worst traffic this Lunar New Year will most likely happen Monday, with authorities predicting 70 percent more vehicles than usual will use the country’s freeways.

For southbound traffic, Sunday will likely be the busiest day, the Taiwan Area National Freeway Bureau said, estimating that driving just from the north of Changhua to the southern tip of the county — normally an 8-minute journey — could take up to 40 minutes.

Tuesday is expected to see the most congestion in northbound lanes, with a 15-minute trip taking up to 1 hour and 50 minutes.

- China Post

## **UK: RAIL STRIKE OVER DRIVER ONLY OPERATION**

**Rail Union RMT members who are guards and drivers on Southern Rail went on strike again on the 22nd February 2017 in the on-going disputes over the safety impact of the extension of Driver Only Operation and the removal of guards from services.**

Members went on 1 strike for 24 hours between 0001 hours and 2359 hours on Wednesday 22nd February 2017.

The strike comes after talks between RMT and Southern in the guards dispute with their press announcement saying that ‘we were deliberately wrecked yesterday by the company as they made a mockery of the negotiating process and chose to completely ignore the safety issues at the heart of the matter’

Mick Cash, RMT General Secretary, said:

“The abject failure by Southern Rail in yesterday’s talks to take the safety issues seriously has left us with no option but to confirm further action. These disputes could have been settled if Southern/GTR had listened to our case and given the guarantee of a second-safety critical member of staff on their trains.

“Instead they have shifted the goal posts even further and have now created a “strike breakers’ charter” where one of the numerous new conditions where trains can run driver-only is during industrial action. That is simply scandalous and a measure of the betrayal of our members as a result of the TUC-brokered deal with Southern in the drivers’ dispute.”

“The full detail of Southern’s plan is far worse than anyone could have anticipated. This is dire news, not just for staff, but for passengers who rightly demand a safe, reliable and accessible service. RMT will not walk away from the fight for a railway that puts public safety before private profit.

“It is now down to Southern/GTR to face up to their responsibilities and engage in genuine and serious talks that address our issues.”

In response to the RMT announcement of a 24-hour conductors’ strike next Wednesday, 22 February, Nick Brown, Chief Operating Officer of Govia Thameslink Railway, Southern’s parent company, said:

“We are disappointed that the RMT is going to heap yet further misery and disruption on the travelling public. We aim to run as full a service as we can.”

During the last conductor strike, on 23 January, Southern ran around three-quarters of its normal service. – uckfield

## **ANARCHIST ELECTED TO RMT EXECUTIVE**

**At the beginning of this year the RMT elected Andy Littlechild, a longstanding anarchist and member of the Solidarity Federation (SolFed), to the RMT union’s National Executive Council as its London transport representative. — The role, which lasts for three years, takes responsibility for the entire battlezone of London Underground including trains, stations, engineers, all ancillary staff and contracted companies, along with Transport for London, Docklands Light Railway, Black Cabs and even Boris Bikes.**

Andy, who’s worked for many years as a Tube track worker and union rep, stood unopposed for the position and was duly elected after receiving nominations from every RMT branch in the constituency. His unopposed win was generally linked to Andy’s perceived militancy and non-sectarian approach to organising, which endeared him to RMT’s London activist base and gave him a clear run.

Being elected in this way is not without its downside as it meant there was no election involving the members; and is equally controversial given a general trend of anarchist disdain for full-time union positions, not least within SolFed itself, which bars full-time union officers from membership.

Ed’s note: SolFed, and other anarchist groups, see trade union bureaucracy as taking agency out of the hands of workers and transferring it to people who are not at the site of, or affected by, the struggle taking place. The full-timer’s wages and community ties are linked to a national-level body removed from direct struggle, and their role is therefore based on what’s best for the institution, rather than the workers.

(For more on SolFed and anarcho-syndicalist thinking, try *Fighting For Ourselves* online|book)

Whether Andy’s decision to engage with the RMT’s executive will be productive or not is

yet to be seen. The test will be in how and whether he manages to preserve his class-based anarchist politics in practice against the relentless industrial and political warfare in London, especially on the Tube where he has walked straight into the bitter, escalating dispute and strike activity around staffing stations, as well as several smaller skirmishes which are developing there as I write - and how Andy preserves his politics likewise in his dealings within the hierarchy of the RMT.

One thing we can say is only the RMT would put a known anarchist in charge of London.

Edit: There is one other union which has elected an openly anarchist member to a major position in recent times - Donnacha DeLong was president of the National Union of Journalists from 2011-12 and still sits on its NEC.

<https://freedomnews.org.uk/rmt-union-puts-anarchist-in-charge-of-london/>

## **SPANISH WHARFIES FIGHT CASUALISATION**

6/3/17

**Spanish ports are battening down the hatches, bracing for massive union strikes against a right-wing government determined to impose casualisation at any cost.**

**Thousands of dock workers face the sack, to be replaced by low-paid casuals as temping agencies are allowed for the first time onto the waterfront.**

**“The Spanish government is tearing up the rule book with a callous disregard for Spanish jobs, Spanish prestige and international conventions,” says International Transport Workers Federation leader Paddy Crumlin.**

“Their plans go beyond belief.”

According to the International Dockworkers Council, “their plan is to fire Spanish dockworkers at a rate of 25% of their full strength each year, which means an absolute extinction of their employment within three years.”

Some of Spain’s port employers are already licking their chops, telling PortStrategy.com that under the “free market” system of their dreams they can slash pay in half.

Other employers are less pleased, asking angrily why a full-frontal attack on labour laws is announced just weeks after successful negotiations established a new agreement for the years to come.

Barcelona port worker and IDC Coordinator Jordi Aragunde says “The Spanish government... seeks to make the dockworker profession disappear from national ports.”

“We feel cheated,” says Antolín Goya, leader of the Coordinadora port worker’s union.

Across Spain, mass meetings of dock workers have voted loudly and angrily to resist this attack.

Strike action will hit all of Spain’s ports on the 20th, 22nd and 24th of February.

“Hopefully there is still time for the government to walk away from this rash proposal and instead engage in negotiations,” says ITF maritime operations coordinator Jacqueline Smith.

“On behalf of ITF unions worldwide we counsel it to do so.”

## **What’s at stake?**

**Under the current system, Spanish ports require employers to give preference when hiring to dockers who are part of a local register of qualified workers, known as a SAGEP.**

The SAGEP is funded by contributions from companies providing cargo handling services, who are required to be involved if they wish to use Spanish ports.

Unions work within the SAGEPs to ensure their members have secure jobs and pay commensurate with both their skills and the sacrifices they make working in a dangerous industry.

The proposed changes will replace this system with one in which temping agencies and global corporations compete to lower wages and claw back conditions.

Spanish ports are doing exceptionally well under the current system, with the port of Valencia handling a record 4.72 million twenty-foot-equivalent units last year.

The port of Barcelona increased its container traffic in the same year by 14.5% to 2.2 million TEUs.

## **Why now?**

**Spain is a member of the European Union, which has the power to force policies on member states that override their sovereignty and go against the wishes of their people.**

In December 2014, the European Court of Justice declared the Spanish port employment system is against EU law.

The EU imposed a 15.6 million euro fine in July 2016. Years of governmental gridlock in Madrid had put a showdown with maritime unions low on the agenda.

Since then there have been additional daily fines of 134,000 euros.

*<http://www.nasaships.com/SitePages/NasaNews.aspx>*

Quote: Spanish ports workers have suspended the previously announced strike dates for March 6th and 8th. Strikes action to commence starting March 10th, 2017 as follows:

- Week 10 - March 10th – every other hour starting at 8:00AM
- Week 11 - March 13th, 15th, 17th every other hour starting at 8:00AM
- Week 12 – March 20th, 22nd, 24th every other hour starting at 8:00AM
- Bilbao Port will strike on the above days for 24 hour periods starting at 8:00 AM.

The protests continue to stem from European regulations to reform the country’s port labor system, ending restrictive practices surrounding dock labor.

## 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,

**Members' Voice - Fighting for Membership  
Control of the Union & Direct Action.**

**Web Site: [User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/Members](http://User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/Members)  
Voice Email: [membersvoice2010@yahoo.com](mailto:membersvoice2010@yahoo.com)**

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

### **PRIVATE BUS WILDCAT STRIKES!**

From 8/3/17 for several days, 80 drivers at the Smithfield depot of private bus company Transit Systems held mass sickies affecting 50% of services. Causing considerable chaos. STA bosses have used its buses for strike breaking. The action follows TWU stop work meetings held over the lack of a pay rise for 2.5 years for the drivers .









# What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic