

No.147

Nov. - Dec. 2013

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**O'Farrell Govt, Rail Bosses & the Union  
Hierarchy prepare for a sizzling performance  
of the New Enterprise Agreement Conditions  
Stripper Show! Unite on the Job to defend  
and improve conditions and achieve wages  
justice!**



NSW Railway News;  
Victorian Railway News;  
"No Place to Hide!"  
Optimisation Push;

STA Busie News;  
International News;  
Bus News;  
London Underground;

## **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news in the N.S.W. Railways currently is the upcoming enterprise agreement negotiations, involving the ALP Union. Hierarchy, the O'Farrell Govt. and the rail bosses. The current EA has seen the loss of many conditions and jobs. Much more savage attacks are likely to be in store with the next EA. Unless the grass roots unite on the job to push for a log of claims which improves conditions and achieves wage justice, backed by direct action on the job. Rejecting the "smoke and mirrors" selling technique of the union hierarchy, the bosses and the media. (See article Page 3.)

In the STA, the most important news lately continues to be management's push for "Route Optimisation" which is creating much turmoil on the job and the wrecking up of bus operations. Underlying this push is the O'Farrell Government's privatisation by stealth hidden agenda. (See article Page 10.)

Whilst many are being bulldozed by the "Optimisation" push and associated overwork, we at Sparks have also been busy. One of our moles has been quietly beaver away and burrowing into the inner sanctums of the Transport for NSW bureaucracy and even the STA. In this edition we publish his story of adventure and intrigue involving exposing a nefarious plot against the grass roots in the buses, and the role of certain Peter Rowley, STA CEO, in orchestrating it. (See article Page 8.)

**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

## In Agreement for 2014

*By Crimson Coconut*

The time has come once again for a new workplace agreement. The old 2010 agreement expires in April 2014. To understand where we are going with the 2014 EBA it is worth looking back over the period of the last EBA.

It was under the current 2010 agreement that:

- \* Station Managers lost their jobs and were replaced by highly paid bureaucratic bean counters.
- \* Cleaners were taken to the cleaners and delivered to the private sector or lost their jobs altogether.
- \* CSA's were shuffled between stations and shipped out of their workplaces.
- \* Signalers came under the control of Shift Managers usurping the power of Network Control Area Managers.
- \* The door was also opened allowing Casual and multi-skilled Part Time Workers to flood into the organisation while permanent positions remained unfilled.
- \* It became easier to sack you. Your right of appeal through the Transport Appeals Board was removed (and the Appeals Board disbanded).
- \* Journey claims under workers compensation were removed. If you get injured, assaulted, have a car accident going to or from work you effectively cannot claim workers compensation. Return to work plans for injured workers became harsher, to the point of harassment.
- \* Shift Managers were introduced to the Train Crewing area. Crews were broken up into teams. Various ways of working were introduced by management that were often opposed because of their vague nature or because they were unworkable.
- \* Many staff are doing the work of those of higher grade and yet are not properly compensated. The distinction and boundaries between grades have become blurred.
- \* Leave and flexibility became harder to get. It was left to the whim of the local manager whether he/she would grant leave or not. Then there was always the excuse of being short staffed, even though this was no fault of the worker who applied for leave.

Some rail staff are saying that they are prepared to stay at the same pay level rather than lose anything else. We should not entertain standing still. Given the chance, the O'Farrell Government not only wants to reduce wages but also to attack working conditions. The point of view that we sacrifice nothing for nothing is exactly what they want you to think. It is not realistic.

In most cases those that are denying us a pay rise have a wage that is 5 to 10 times what we earn. Some corporate CEO's earn hundreds of times what their employees earn.

Also the cost of living is not neutral and continues to spiral upwards. We all have rising water, gas and electricity bills. Rents, tolls, fares and the cost of food continue to rise. So if we just maintain our present rates of pay we will still be going backwards.

Politicians have no such qualms about granting themselves a generous pay rise whenever they feel like it. It's not like they are feeling the financial heat in the same way that we do.

Before coming to power Tony Abbott voted himself a pay rise of \$1766 per week, (2012). That's more than what we earn in a week. Julia Gillard on other hand gave herself an extra \$2500 per week in 2012. I guess that might help with the living expenses seeing that she did not have to pay for transport to or from work, did not have to pay rent living in The Lodge, electricity or much else.

We did not share in any of the rationalists savings over the last 4 years that they were able to make by downsizing, by changing work practices and general penny pinching.

We deserve and need a pay rise. How much we get above O'Farrell's wage ceiling of 2.5% will depend on how we go about fighting for it. As a guide, workers on the Airport Line just signed up for increases of 4% PA over 4 years. Whether they had to give up anything to get that I do not know.

However most Public Transport workers are adamant that there should be no "trade-offs" at any stage of EBA negotiations this time round.

After counting the losses of the last agreement, what are some of the things that we would like to see in any new agreement? Here are some suggestions.

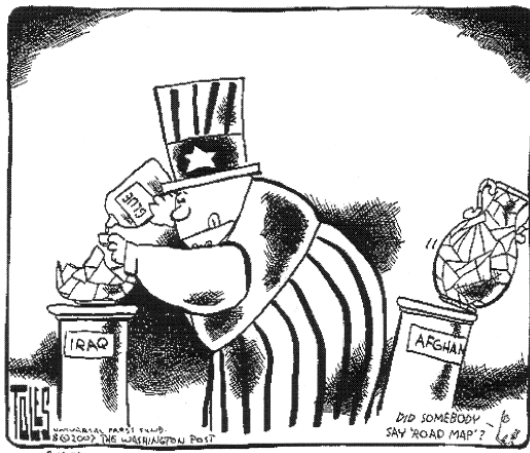
\* Of course a pay rise is the most obvious thing we would like to see. Arbitrarily this should be set well above the government ceiling of 2.5% (which by the way we are not obliged to agree to). The actual figure should be agreed by rail workers before negotiations start. I suggest that a 5% PA raise might be a starting point taking into consideration that we are up against a government and management that is hostile to workers. Any agreed figure should be contingent on losing no conditions.

\* Limitations on the numbers (as a percentage) of part-time and casual workers replacing full time workers. The "filling the gaps" clauses in previous agreements should be replaced by definitive figures. We should also put a time limit on the length that a person serves in a part-time position before being converted to full time work. That does not mean that there should be any clauses about suitability for conversion to full-time work. This should be available for everyone that so desires. There may be some people for whom part-time is preferable for whatever reason. They of course should continue to be allowed to work part-time if they wish.

\* Fair processes for acting in Higher Grade. Currently there are blatant abuses of process when people are seconded or extended periods of time (often without the requisite competencies) to positions graded higher than their normal duties. This gives the acting person a massive advantage when the job is finally advertised. Seeing that we have so many people acting-up these days, guidelines for acting up should be incorporated into agreements so that they have a legal basis.

Preferably, vacant positions should be filled with full-time workers through the normal contestable process. Many appointments to acting higher allow several grades to be jumped – this

disadvantages those that may have a higher grade than the appointee but are never give the chance to hone their skills. Time limits for acting in Higher Grade should be imposed to ensure that others get the chance to improve skills. Where this is not possible a time limit should be set before advertising and filling the position. This is the most contentious area where accusations of favoritism often come to the fore.



- \* Remove any clauses pertaining to Sydney Trains/ NSW Trains management or government being able to restructure, provide a mechanism for ongoing change, commitments to financial responsibility, or commitments to continuous reform. These are the clauses which they used to hang us last time.

- \* Remove any clauses which require us to “avoid industrial confrontation and any associated disruptions to operations or services.”

- \* Allow reasonable access to leave without having to provide a reason. Often the reason of “staff shortages” is used to knock back people applying for leave. This is not the employee’s fault . Managers should not be able to knock back any reasonable request for leave.

- \* Wages grades to have same conditions and receive the same penalties as Salaried Staff.

- \* That any work or overtime for a particular grade be offered to people within that grade before seeking someone from another grade to perform the work. There are instances of staff from lower grades being used to lower the overtime bill by performing the work of higher grades. Lower graded workers and part-timers are unwittingly being used as a wedge to lower conditions and access to equal work.

- \* That Salary Maintenance be paid indefinitely for any person who is displaced or had their job abolished if they forced to perform a lower graded job. In such cases the skills acquired to perform the former job are not lost. It is no fault of the employee that restructuring or workplace reform abolishes a position that is held. The remuneration that they received was recognition, not just of the tasks that were performed, but of the competencies needed.

Before any negotiations are to take place, meetings should be held in all workplaces with union members. This is necessary to talk about the upcoming negotiations and to ascertain and to pass motions on a log of claims from the shop floor. Sadly this hasn’t happened yet.

This agreement is critical. We have to get it right. We have a hostile State Government and an Abbott Government in Canberra that is looking to curb wages and to cut many entitlements that we now enjoy. Unless we mobilise the whole workforce in a united campaign around is-

sues, that we have to agree on, then we will fall short in the negotiations and will get an agreement that will be worse than we sought.

It's up to our union representatives (which are not elected in any way, but appointed - to the detriment of democratic representation) to take back to the negotiations the wishes and aspirations of those in the front lines. When they meet obstinate management that makes demands for take-backs, those same representative are expected to go back to the members to explain and seek a way forward.

They should always be guided by the wisdom of those on the shop floor This has never happened yet in all the years that our enterprise bargaining has taken place. We are not holding our breaths this time either.

Ordinary union members on other hand are expected to actively participate in negotiations by supporting union negotiators, at the same time holding them accountable for undemocratic behaviour and the failure to represent members interests.

United we can achieve a better than reasonable agreement. This will take all of our skills, cunning and muscle to make it a reality. This can only eventuate if the Rank and File are considered to be actively part of the process. It is up to us to ensure that we are!

## **Is it fair to bargain with a Government that sets the rules ?**

The recent briefing by Management on the NSW government's position during current EBA negotiations sets the terms of reference around which bargaining can begin.

Management and the NSW Government has set a number of business oriented goals that are generally not worker friendly. However is it really bargaining when we are negotiating with a Government that is all powerful? Government's create the laws which govern us in the workplace as well as being the employer. They have the ability to change laws to suit a particular political agenda.

So while the Government is Lawmaker, Judge, Jury and Executioner they enjoy a power that many private corporations do not. Negotiations under these conditions is akin to dictatorship rather than bargaining in good faith. They have the complete upper hand and workers enter the wrestling match with their arms already cut off at the elbow.

At this stage the Government's wish list, as outlined in the RTBU Bulletin No2 is vague at best.

\* Statements such as "Agreements to aligned with organisational arrangements" could mean anything. But will the flesh be put on the bones as the agreement negotiations roll out? Will we get a clearer picture of what they are on about? That will depend on how the union leadership communicates the process to their members.

\*There are some statements that should cause us concern. This one:

"Rostering and utilisation aligned with customer and organisational

*See Page 23*

## BUS NEWS

*By the Transport Scrutinizer.*

**Many things are happening in the bus industry. The more notable are as follows:**

**1. ROUTE OPTIMISATION.** Yet another Management blunder. Bus Operators were told that this was introduced to eliminate Special working from point to point. Now more than ever there is plenty of dead running from point to point. The only reason the route optimisation concept is in force is to confuse Bus Operators at the behest of management and those inept useless so called schedulers. The whole setup is a farce!

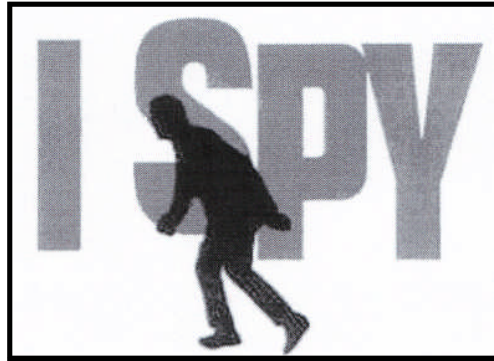
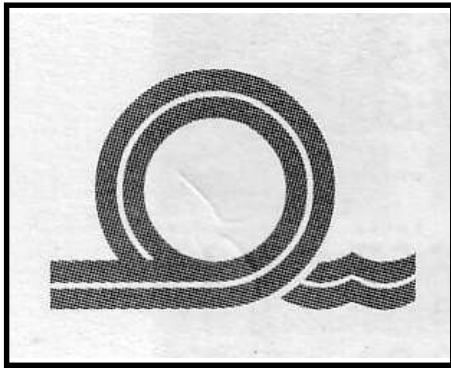
**2. Waverley Bus Operators - Burwood 400's.** Yet another way of management forcing a totally unpopular route on Bus Operators that vehemently oppose this work. It is odd that this garbage is being offloaded onto standard rosters on the weak excuse that Waverley does not have 14.5 Scania's so 400's need not be exclusive work. 200's to Chatswood have always been worked by standard type buses yet the work remains exclusive. The general consensus of Waverley drivers is that the vast majority **DO NOT WANT** Burwood 400's and would rather see the run go to private operators than be forced on them.

**3. Defective buses in service.** Many drivers are being

forced to operate defective buses in service due to mechanical staff being reluctant to effect changeovers. The worst buses in service are the 0405NH CNG buses. These vehicles often stall at any given time and for no apparent reason. Only last week a Waverley gas bus cut out and restarted but rolled backward IN DRIVE GEAR which it should not be possible to do, almost causing a catastrophic accident. This is surely a dangerous defect in an already dangerous lousy excuse for a bus. How much longer must drivers have to put up with these mobile death traps?

**4. The customer is always right!** What a load of nonsense! Recently a driver was suspended for telling a mother to tell her toddler to behave himself. Drivers have a huge task to do without having to put up with whining whinging tantrum throwing children. The child in question is well known for misbehaviour and his mother does nothing about it yet will complain to the media when a driver has the guts to stand up to them. The Union needs to stand up for drivers rights for this and many other matters yet seems to be indifferent. The time has come to stand up and be counted. **WORKERS UNITE!!!**

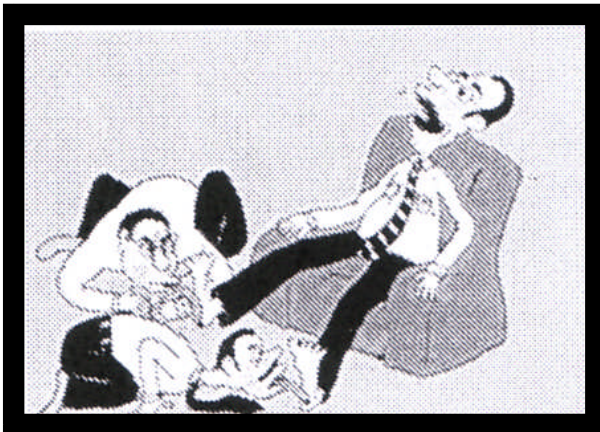




## NO PLACE TO HIDE!

*“Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by evil minded rulers. The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well meaning, but without understanding.” U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Louise D. Brandeis.*

It was a beautiful morning in Sydney. Our Sparks mole in ASIO was bleary eyed after a late night of hard drinking, fast cars and beautiful women, to maintain appearances with his ASIO buddies. Over the years, he had climbed high in the organisation by impressing his bosses with his pretence of extreme rightwing views and support for economic rationalism. However, his bosses were alarmed on occasion by explosive leaks about Government plots, and unleashed mole hunters even on him. Out of the blue, he would be suddenly dragged into interrogations to be grilled. As a result of his superb grasp of trade craft and coolness under pressure, he was always able to out manoeuvre the investigators, and be a step ahead.



Today, equipped with the latest in concealed digital cameras and bugging devices, he was off to a bit of “spying on the bosses” and at-

tendance at a special secret conference at the Transport for NSW Ministry offices, sponsored by the O’Farrell Govt. It was entitled “Privatisation 2013 NSW”.

It was to be attended also by spies from other agencies such as MOSSAD, M16 and the CIA, who were to play a nefarious role in a top secret conspiracy to assist O’Farrell Govt. privatisation by stealth plans for the STA. Others in attendance were Transport Minister,



Gladys Berejiklian, STA CEO Peter Rowley, representatives from Veolia, Trans Dev, the Coach and Bus employers association, the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of Australia and Booz Allen management consultants. These consultants have played a crucial role in drawing up reports to rubber stamp the selloff of government authorities and assets.

The conference was opened by STA CEO Rowley, who was greeted by rapturous applause, thunderous foot stamping and wild yelling of "Heil Rowley!" from all the assorted politicians, fat cats and spooks in the audience, who leaped out of their seats. He is the author of a cheery, slim volume recently posted to all drivers' homes entitled: "My 10 Point Plan for making friends and influencing STA drivers with the gouging out of more productivity and overwork", (it was sent in a clear plastic wrapper, as a clever technique to make it hard for his driver "friends" to return to sender) and his soon to be published autobiography, "My Wicked, Wicked Lies in Sydney Buses".

Rowley in his opening address, gave the low down on the "cloak and dagger" role, the assortment of spooks would play in implementing the nefarious plot. They would be unleashed on the job to create the maximum mayhem. They were to be disguised as mild mannered and seemingly sane depot managers. However, like lightning they would pull on menacing, highly polished 3rd Reich jack books and be transformed into "Depot Fuhrers". They would



incite the “normal” bosses into ever more acts of nastiness. Keeping an eye over their shoulder regarding what viciousness they wreaked on the job to justify their positions and compete with other depot bosses in the mayhem. Ensuring they met the ever demanding requirements of the higher bosses for cracking the whip on discipline, corner cutting and worsening the job for drivers. Ever more targets were to be set, such as eliminating air conditioning from depot meal and roster rooms. STA CEO Rowley has considered this air conditioning to be way too luxurious for drivers! He will not tolerate any “pampering” of drivers in today’s “austere” STA!!!

Our mole felt a sense of disgust at hearing Rowley’s master plan. Rowley took the poison, but wanted his staff to die! He was taking his orders for privatisation by stealth of the STA from O’Farrell and the corporate bosses and awarded large bonuses for meeting their nefarious expectations. Whilst, the STA workforce and operations were being steadily obliterated.

A video/audio of the conference has been developed by Sparks and has been forwarded to Wikileaks HQ for consideration, for placement on their website.

## S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

#### **Sparks: How is the bosses’ “Optimisation push” going?**

Waverley Busie: Now all 3 depots in the Eastern Suburbs are interdependent. To give you an idea of the new routes we have taken on, as part of this restructuring, Waverley is now taking on for example the 394, 301, 373, and 374 extra runs. Whilst, we operate overall roughly 25 new routes. The bosses say it’s all about measures to save money. However, I’ve seen no evidence of any such savings. It seems to me that “Optimisation” is in reality a justification for selloff by stealth. Certainly, the job is being wrecked up, with the loss of many inspectors and mechanics, who the bosses consider to be excess staff. A lot of these experienced staff are now gone.

Whilst, many drivers aren’t coping with the changes to routes they have to operate. Causing them increased stress. They consider the job has now become too hard.

The public is particularly being hoodwinked, by these subtle behind the scenes moves to construct this cluster of profitable routes. With drivers being forced to take on the new routes to destinations, they have never been to before or have in the distant past. For example, in my case, I haven’t been to La Perouse in over 25 years. This confusion experienced by many drivers, has resulted in increased commuter complaints. As buses are stopping at wrong stops for terminuses and taking wrong routes.

The upper crust of management and Transport for NSW bureaucracy continues to see itself looking good. Despite wrecking up the workforce and bus operations in the interest of the privatisation hidden agenda. It appears that if the lower level bosses aren’t doing something to stuff up bus operations, they are seen as not showing some results to upper management to make them look good.

**Sparks: What's the latest with the bosses stance on discipline?**

WB: I have noticed they are taking a much tougher line on disciplinary issues and constantly more drivers are getting the sack.

In recent weeks, a driver from Waverley in his late 30's who has been on the job for over 10 years and is married with kids, was issued with a final warning. This is extremely serious, as he can now be sacked for even some trivial incident. The basis on which he was issued the final warning, seems quite unwarranted. The bosses say he was going the wrong way, while running as special. Did someone on the job who he had a falling out with, inform on him to the bosses? This over the top approach by management in his case, could also be explained by the restructuring of STA administration. It seems the more level headed and experienced depot bosses are being replaced by gung ho types, who want to impress and look good to the higher bosses, so as to save their jobs.

One of our Waverley drivers, who has legal training went to the union head office to approach the union hierarchy on the issue of this driver and his disciplinary problem. I read the statement he received from the officials, about how they handled the disciplinary case. I was taken aback by the simplistic response. It was so mundane and pathetic. It certainly wasn't written by professionals. It could have been written by anyone. Why didn't the officials refer the case to the union lawyers to have an effective written response to the gung ho management? Why weren't professional people used to provide a professional service?

It was an issue that could have been quite easily resolved favourably for this driver. If the officials exerted themselves. However, the impression given to me, is that they didn't want to be seen as being uncooperative toward management and wanted the whole thing to be washed over. It highlighted to me how the officials aren't doing their jobs. It's just not good enough. We pay them our union dues and we get this grossly inadequate response.

**Sparks: What's the latest with the ferries?**

WB: In late August, I was down at Circular Quay, and I noticed quite a deterioration of the ferries area since it was privatised. The ferries area has become quite rundown and unkempt. The ferries glass barrier approaching the ocean was unclean and the area around the ticketing booths was unkempt, the area looks quite cheaply maintained and dirty. I even noticed weeds growing on the side of the ferries wharf. The whole setup is looking horrible! It was in stark contrast to the railways section. It was very clean and well maintained. With the Quay being seen by tourists as the "gateway to Sydney", a very bad impression is being presented of the ferries and public transport in Sydney and Australia. Whilst there has been a marked rundown of ferry services, since privatisation. With ferries missing runs and going on occasion to wrong destinations.

This decline in the ferries, raises the whole issue of who is now accountable for its operations? I, as a bus driver now feel disconnected from the ferries, as it is now a private operation. The rapport I had with the ferries workers when it was publicly owned, now doesn't exist. Who cares? With privatisation, the ferries are now a completely separate entity, which can be run-down by corporate cowboys, despite commuter needs.

**Sparks: How is the bosses' economy drive going?**

WB: I have heard a whisper that there is a possibility that all auto electricians will be made redundant and all outside auxiliary staff who do such jobs as bus cleaning are to be put on the same treadmill, to save money. Again we have a situation where to look good with higher level bosses, lower level bosses are doing something “nasty” to look good. Creating a vicious circle of cutbacks. Slowly the wheel of economic rationalism is grinding at the Govt. transport sector. Little by little, parts of the STA are being cutback, until we are completely wiped out. Experienced workers who have worked hard in the hope of saving their jobs, are now getting the chop. Currently there is a shortage of full time drivers, due to rapid turnover, associated with the worsening of the job and the bosses crackdown on disciplinary issues. At Waverley, I’m constantly noticing new faces. However, the STA has been doing some bizarre “horse trading” with the advertising for part time and casual drivers! I find this situation weird! In Adelaide, where the buses have been privatised, and casuals and part timers are being employed, the whole system has become run down. Whilst, given the high price of housing in Sydney, part timers and casuals would not be able to meet mortgage repayments with their low wages.

The idea that the new 5 year contract for the STA will save us is bullshit! With all the cutbacks to the STA, its running on the smell of an oily rag! Its living on borrowed time!

Whilst, taking such measures to shave back bus maintenance, cleaning and other sectors to allegedly save money, the bosses are continuing to allow massive fare evasion. Apparently, as they are waiting for the Opal Card. This shows a lack of integrity and accountability by the bosses. It was highlighted to me recently, when someone caught my bus. When I approached the passenger that he was using the wrong ticket for his trip. He wanted to use a 1-2 zone ticket when he got on at Park Street and wanted to get to Double Bay, which requires a 3-5 zone ticket. He mentioned that he had been using this wrong ticket for three years for this trip. This fare evasion would run into a considerable some with many, many passengers doing the same thing for several years.

#### **Sparks: How are the PM shift drivers faring at the depot?**

WB: PM shift spare drivers are up in arms over problems they are having with the 6-7 roster schedulers at Pt Botany. This bunch are messing up their shifts. None of these drivers know what’s going on with their shifts. To save money, the schedulers are cutting their shifts and these drivers aren’t getting their regular amount of work. At the last moment of the day, these drivers’ shifts are being trimmed. They don’t even know whether, they will get a shift the next day. Their shifts are floating around like a cork on a rough sea. It’s unfair to these drivers. They have become irritable with the STA and are demanding that their shifts are not tampered with and there are no more last minute changes. This bullying and harassment has to stop!

#### **LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS**

#### **Sparks: What’s the latest with the bosses’ “Optimisation Rosters” at Leichhardt?**

Leichhardt Busie: The bosses talk that the introduction of “Optimisation Rosters” is all about saving money is proving to be quite a fallacy. In fact most of us are now constantly working more DOC’s and overtime as never before. The reason appears to be that drivers from other depots sent to Leichhardt as part of “Optimisation” can’t cope with it. They don’t know the

routes and are under much more stress. As a result, they are taking sickies, causing more vacancies in the rosters which need to be filled. The high level of absenteeism at Leichhardt is shown by the fact that you can get a DOC on any day you want.

Following on from the Optimisation push, the other key likely big move of the bosses will be the introduction of casuals and providing them with our Sunday work to boost their pay. Where will the bosses get them. Will they steal them from other bus companies?

Other news is that in recent weeks we got a new manager. Whilst at the end of October, we will see the new timetables, which will show the next moves of the bosses. The changes to Rail and Ferry Timetables will have flow on effects with us.

**Sparks: What do you think will be the ramifications of the Abbott victory in the Federal Elections for drivers?**

LB: Despite this being a Federal Government affair, Abbott's plans for massive public service staff cuts will filter down to the State level and even affect us.

### **BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What's the latest developments with Route Optimisation?**

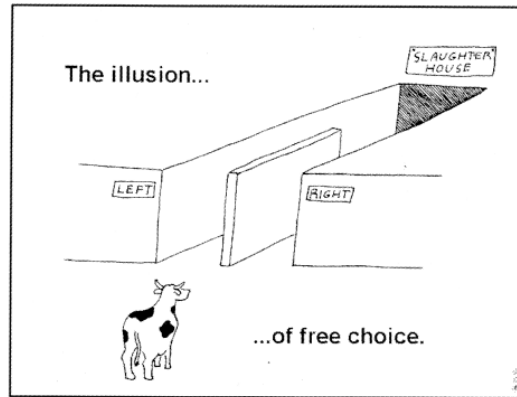
Burwood Driver: Since the 21st October, we have seen the 2nd phase of Optimisation with the further concertinisation of runs. Many of us had considered the bosses' rationale for Optimisation was a move to reduce our pay via cuts to our shifts. However, we have been surprised to discover that our earnings have increased, due to increased DOC's and overtime. Many of us now have little time off the job due to this constant extra work. There has been a marked deterioration of bus services due to runs not being covered due to absences. Whilst in the case of say the 418, drivers have had to use their own time for orientation, when it occurred at 8.30pm.

**Sparks: How are the cleaners faring?**

BD: They have been advised that their jobs have been put up for tender. A private company is to take over the work. Some of the cleaners have been doing the job for 15 years and are up in arms over this threat to their jobs.

**Sparks: What has been the response of the union officials to these attacks?**

BD: They are refusing to do anything in regard to Optimisation or the cleaning outsourcing. They lamely blame the previous union administration for giving the go ahead for these changes. As a result, they say they can do nothing on these issues!



## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In previous issues of Sparks mention has been made of changes in V/Line management and issues of Human Resources picking on employees. In this issue once again drivers, conductors, head office and station staff will talk about these issues.*

**Sparks: I hear V/Line has a new Chief Executive.**

Clarence: Yes, he is from Queensland Rail. He started in May and as this issue was being prepared, he has announced a restructure of upper management of V/Line.

Jethro: Most of the Senior Managers are on fixed term or performance based contracts. If they perform, they get a bonus. If their area goes over budget or does not perform, they lose. In other words, these contracts are not renewed.

Sheona: Being in head office, you can see the tension around the place. People back stabbing others and people worried about their jobs.

Rastus and Roscoe: We hope the tension is in Human Resources, as these people pick on long serving employees. In fact, as we drivers have said in previous issues, this department employs more people than METRO TRAINS, which has more people employed than V/Line.

**Sparks: In the previous issue, mention was made about the person assigned to Spencer Street.**

Clarence: This woman hasn't changed. She still hides behind the curtains spying on employees.

**Sparks: What can be done about her?**

Rastus and Roscoe: We drivers had one woman from Human Resources removed. The conductors and station staff should call a union meeting and tell Management to get rid of her or no trains will run.

Clarence: The problem is we have a number of crawlers who, if we hold a meeting would run to Human Resources and dob people in.

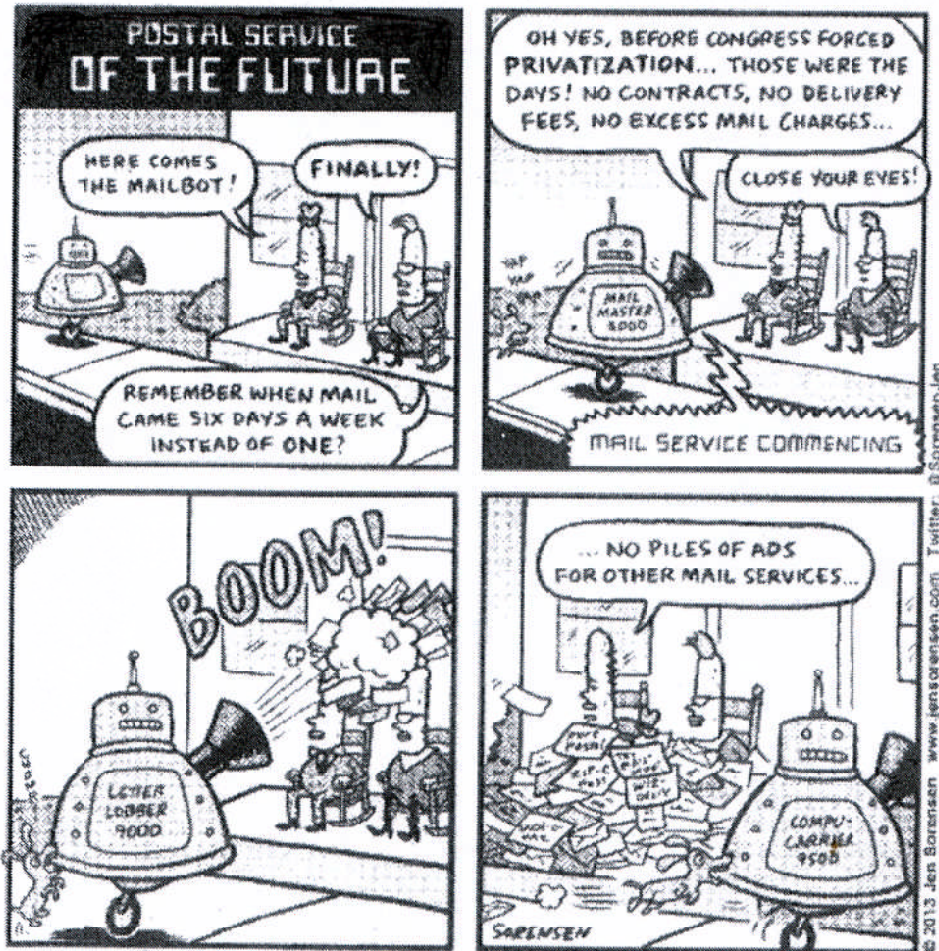
Rastus: Yes, they may, but the drivers would find out and would make it hard for them. Also there are other ways to deal with her via covert action.

**Sparks: How?**

Rastus: If you have to face her over a passenger complaint, appear at the enquiry with your union representative plus a solicitor sent by the union. The solicitor can ask to look at the statement and demand to cross examine the complaint.

Clarence: There is a Bus Company in Eastern Melbourne, where the bus drivers were not in the union. When these drivers received complaints, they turned up with a solicitor to defend them. Once the message got around, the Eastern Suburbs, that solicitors were appearing to deal with passenger complaints, the number of complaints decreased.

Roscoe: The down side was that these bus drivers had to pay their own solicitors' fees. They may have won, but they lost financially. If you are in trouble over passenger complaints ap-



pear with your union representative. If the complaint is serious, then bring a solicitor or the Industrial Officer in the Union, who would have the University Qualifications to match these people in Human Resources.

Sheona: When listening to the Radio or Television, you hear these Industrial Lawyers advertising their services – No Win – No Fee.

Rastus: Yes I have heard these adds, but I would not want to be a Non Union member. Some non union members think they are perfect. In other words, they are never in trouble. BUT. One day you may receive a complaint. WHO will represent you? The union won't and you will have to pay a solicitor. Remember their fees are high, so it pays to be in the union.

**Sparks: We must move on. In issue 142, mention was made of a manager at Spencer Street.**

Clarence: This manager has done a chicken run.

**Sparks: What do you mean?**

Rastus: In issue 143, mention was made about Conductor Service Manager who was sacked over ticket irregularities.

Roscoe: We cannot say why he was removed, as the matter may come to court. Once we know the Court Case has happened, we shall comment.

Sheona: The vacant Conductor Service Manager job was advertised.

Jethro: A number of Conductors applied for the position, but they were unsuccessful.

Clarence: The reason we have said that he has done a chicken run, is because he was on a contract for a fixed term. Whereas a Conductor Service Manager is a salaried position, which pays overtime. The contract doesn't pay overtime and you are on call 24 hours.

Jethro: This manager possibly thought with Job Restructuring, his position would go, so he moved sideways. He deprived another person of a career path.

Clarence: There are Conductors on fixed term contracts. In other words, if a Conductor had have stepped up to a Conductor Service Manager Position, then a Conductor on a fixed term contract may have obtained a permanent position.

Jethro: These conductors as we have said in previous issues replace persons on long term illness, maternity leave and people seconded to other departments. Unfortunately with job cuts and when these people return, then they say your contract will not be renewed. This puts a lot of tension among employees. Due to space limitations, a future issue of Sparks will report on this matter.

**Sparks: Moving on. I have heard management is conducting another witch hunt over Sparks.**

Rastus: You are correct. In distributing issue 144 of Sparks, a number of our drivers were asked who was distributing the issue.

Roscoe: We don't know, but a number of Conductors were questioned.

Jethro: Yes, the issues were discretely placed in the meal room and a conductor saw the issue and took it to management.

Clarence: A conductor was hauled before a manager, who said that Human Resources were trying to find out who was distributing Sparks and this manager said if the person is caught, they will be terminated. The conductor who was questioned walked out. The conductor who the article in the issue was written about was hauled in for questioning and he was asked if he supplied Sparks. He said NO! and walked out.

Rastus: They are trying to frighten people, but the way we report to Sparks, we sit around and listen in meal rooms and around the job to what people say and also if people are victimised by Human Resources, we will report the matter. Remember issue 132. We reported on a Conduc-



tor Service Manager, who bullied conductors. Human Resources carried on. But we were correct.

**Sparks: We have run out of space. A future issue will report on Short Term Contracts for Employees. As regards people, who are not in the Union, join, as solicitors fees are expensive.**Rastus & Roscoe: In having the final say, Human Resources are trying to STIFLE free speech. As for the conductor who took the issue of Sparks to Management, you are a “low crawler”. Remember Sparks fights for the Free Speech and it is the Magazine of the Rank and File.

## INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS NEWS

### LONDON UNDERGROUND TICKET OFFICES CLOSURE

*By James Hatton and Paul Bond*

*3 September 2013*

**Recent disclosures have again confirmed London Underground management is planning to close all its 268 ticket offices over the next two years. Around 2,000 jobs are expected to be lost during that period, with job losses across the rail and underground network rising to 6,000 by 2020. The job losses are part of Transport for London (TfL) and London Conservative mayor Boris Johnson’s £7.6 billion cuts programme to the London transport budget.**

The details were contained in a leaked document issued by TfL, the parent company of London Underground (LUL). The document, Every Journey Matters, is LUL management’s response to the announcement in June of a cut of £220 million in government funding. A BBC report says the document lists “every Tube station in the capital.” Under a “heading that asks if a ticket office is staying open, [the document] states ‘no’.”

To this end, LUL is mobilising selected members of staff, offering them six months’ paid leave to operate freely across the network, going into ticket offices and encouraging workers to support the cuts. Clerical trade union the Transport Staff and Salaried Association (TSSA) has described this as a “ludicrous gimmick” and accused LUL management of wasting money, but neither it nor other unions have sought to mobilise workers against the impending layoffs.

The transport unions are instead using the document as a way of resuscitating the fortunes of the deeply discredited Labour Party. Manuel Cortes, TSSA general secretary, issued a statement with Labour’s London minister, Sadiq Khan, attacking Johnson for “reneging on his 2008 election promise to retain a manned ticket office at every Tube station.”

Cortes urged the Conservative mayor not to bypass procedures on job cutting agreed on by management with the unions: “We have a deal with Transport for London which clearly rules out compulsory redundancies. If [Johnson] tears that up all bets are off.”

The Rail Maritime Transport Workers union (RMT) represents the majority of ticket office staff. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that “government cuts of 12.5 percent to TfL

budgets would result in thousands of job losses and now the numbers are being confirmed we are prepared to ballot across the capital for strike action in defence of jobs and services.”

There is widespread opposition to the job cuts amongst TfL workers. London Overground conductors are facing the elimination of

their grade as the company seeks to impose driver-only operation. They voted overwhelmingly for strike action, and held their first 48-hour strike last weekend.

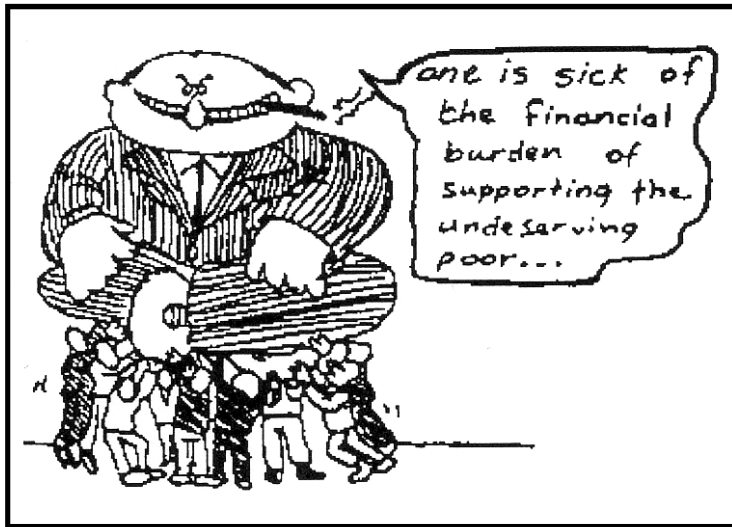
There is also opposition among passengers. According to a survey conducted in July by the passenger group London Travel, there is “overwhelming support for ticket offices in all staffed stations remaining open when services are running.”

All of the transport unions—TSSA, RMT and the drivers’ union ASLEF—have a history of spouting opposition to attacks on the workforce whilst collaborating behind the scenes to implement those very attacks. In 2011, the RMT closed down a series of powerful strikes, helping management to impose 800 jobs cuts to stations and ticket offices across the Tube.

Also, despite the air of revelation, these proposals are not new. They were reported in the 2011 “Operational Strategy Discussion Paper” (OSDP), the contents of which were widely distributed in union publications at the time. The OSDP covered driverless trains and the closure of all ticket offices, replacing them with information centres at the busiest stations and manned by contract workers.

For almost two years, the trade unions have opposed any coordinated offensive against these measures. Instead, TfL is working with the unions as key partners in delivering the reductions demanded by the OSDP, looking for them to “agree to minimum numbers” of workers on stations in order to save “£28m per annum by 2018.”

The trade unions’ campaign against TfL job losses is a cynical political manoeuvre directed at resurrecting Labour. During recent protests and marches against the closure and sale of 12 fire stations, the London Fire Brigades Union (FBU) pushed Labour Party officials and branch banners to the front of their events. This token opposition created the breathing space needed for Johnson to unilaterally impose his fire station closure programme.



In June, the TSSA held a conference on “Winning the General Election for Transport.” Among the speakers was Arnie Graf, a former adviser to Barack Obama who has been advising Labour on approaches to “grassroots and community organising.” According to the TSSA’s report of the event, Labour MP Jon Cruddas spoke about “how adopting community organising can transform the character of the trade union movement and Labour Party so that we are much more closely engaged with the concerns of the community.”

Manuel Cortes then spoke about ending “the madness of privatisation” by appealing to Labour to “put itself firmly on the side of ordinary working people.” This is the party that implemented privatisation programmes in office. While the TSSA speaks of not being “taken for granted by Labour,” the union has a firm commitment to supporting Labour candidates.

The ASLEF, similarly, is looking to shore up the Labour Party. It was a signatory to the all-union “Action For Rail” campaign launched last May in response to cuts proposed from the McNulty <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2012/03/rmtu-m20.html> recommendations. Maria Eagle, Labour shadow transport minister, spoke at its parliamentary launch. The union’s August journal features an article by former GMB union political officer Glenis Willmott, now Member of the European Parliament for the East Midlands. Willmott explains “why the Labour Party needs more ASLEF activists standing for political office” and sets out the support available.

The RMT has posed as being critical of Labour. Bob Crow has repeatedly talked of building “an alternative party of labour.” The models he has championed have been right-wing outfits like the No2EU campaign, which sought to direct opposition to the bankers’ European Union into nationalist appeals for British Jobs for British workers.

Even as he has boasted of the RMT’s independence since its expulsion from the Labour Party in 2004, Crow has made clear it will function as adjuncts of Labour. Last year, the RMT-funded Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) decided not to run a candidate in the London mayoral elections against Labour’s Ken Livingstone. Crow said he had “never been apart” from Livingstone, and offered his campaign the RMT’s financial support. “We have differences like I have with my brother and sister but overall, Ken’s a good bloke.”

Crow had nothing to say of Livingstone’s repeated condemnation of strikes by LUL workers and others in defence of jobs and conditions. He kept quiet on the role he and the RMT played in colluding with Livingstone pushing through the privatisation of the Tube. The Labour Party vastly extended public subsidies to private corporations via numerous Public Private Partnerships schemes. The venture on the Tube, Metronet, ended with the public having to bail out the whole failed scheme when it went into administration.

The result of the unions’ collusion in the privatisation process was a division of workers by Tube line. Increasingly, disputes arising are being balloted and conducted on a line-by-line basis and not in a unified response by the whole workforce. During the previous round of job losses, the RMT accepted LUL’s criteria for conducting a review on a station-by-station and line-by-line basis.

*Thanks to RNIF*

## **U.S.A. - BOSTON SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS' WILDCAT STRIKE!**

**On Tuesday 8/10/13 morning over 600 school bus drivers in Boston took wildcat action. They are angry at the complete ineffectiveness of their trade union (USW) and at the union-busting city administration, and the management style of Veolia, the private company now running the buses. Following an unsuccessful attempt at gaining an injunction, the mayor arranged a city wide scabbing operation by the police. The predictable purge and victimisation by bosses and union bureaucrats has now begun.**

The dispute has been brought to a head due to the knock on effect of the Government shut-down. A dispute had been lodged with the National Labour Relations Board, but as they have not been working the dispute has not been looked at yet. The drivers decide to take matters into their own hands.

A handful of scabs entered the yard and tried to board their buses. As pickets tried to prevent them, police and USC bureaucrats intervened and enabled them to drive the buses out. A shouting match between pickets and bureaucrats ensued outside each of the four depots.

Drivers are furious that there pay is rarely ever paid correctly and can be as much as 40% down, which then takes two months to rectify (affects hundreds of drivers a week). A spokesperson for the city administration said that although he understood they pay-check issues, there are much more important issues at stake (I am sure his pay-check is fine).

Veolia acknowledge that there are problems but blame the drivers for not submitting their hours in the correct manner. Other issues is the bullying by Veolia management, and the use of a GPS tracking system that was intended to be used by parents to see where their children are, but is now being used by Veolia as a management tool to bully drivers.

Mayor Thomas Menino has stated that the action is 'illegal' under the terms of their contracts and that their behaviour will have 'consequences'. His comments have been echoed by the USW bureaucrats. One of Melino's advisors has gone on record to say that the participants in the strike are all 'immigrants' who really do not understand the issues, and have been 'hood-winked' and 'tricked' into taking part. She claimed that they are renegades and intimidators who are breaking the terms of their contract. The average length of service of the 600 drivers is 20+ years, so I am sure they are well aware of the issues.

Steven Kirschbaum, one of the leaders of the action has been the victim of a smear campaign by the local media and the city mayor. Yesterday the Boston Globe published an article about Kirschbaum. They claimed that he had been a member of the Workers World Party, the All Peoples Congress, the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, and that he had been on an anti-KKK rally and protests about school closures and budget cuts. They had even trawled his Facebook account and found a tribute to General Vo Nguyen Giap, the former North Vietnamese military leader who died last week. They had interviewed the city mayor, Thomas Menino, who described Kirschbaum as a 'bully', and the leader of a 'rogue element of renegades'. By rogue element presumably he means the 95%+ drivers who took part.

The court injunction was not granted as the sitting judge agreed with the USC that the strike was the work of one 'rogue employee' – Steven Kirschbaum. Kirschbaum and one other person have been suspended, and a further seven workers are 'under investigation'.

As the issues that led to the walkout have not been resolved, and now participants are being bullied, it is likely that further actions are on the

horizon. The drivers have submitted 16 demands to the bosses. They include, resolving the pay issues, scrapping the GPS system, proper breaks and restrooms, fair benefits, withdrawal of the Veolia employee handbook, and a halt of any action against employees resulting from the wildcat action. It is believed that Veolia will reject the demands, supported by city officials who are putting robust scabbing plans in place for any future walkout.

*working class self organisation's blog*



## **U.S.A. - BART WORKERS' STRIKE**

**BART workers were responsible for their own safety, NTSB says “the person running the train that killed the workers was one of two trainees on board.”**

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-bart-workers-safety-ntsb-201...>

The National Transportation Safety Board's James Southworth, left, is the lead investigator into the deaths of two BART workers who were struck and killed by a train Saturday. (Susan Tripp Pollard/MCT / October 21, 2013)

By Maura Dolan

October 22, 2013, 6:13 p.m.

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. — Two Bay Area Rapid Transit workers killed Saturday during an employee strike were operating under employer rules that made them responsible for their own safety, a federal transportation investigator said Tuesday.

James Southworth, who is leading the probe of the BART accident for the National Transportation Safety Board, said the men who died on the second day of the strike were inspecting tracks under a procedure BART calls “simple approval.”

“The responsibility for their safety is on themselves,” Southworth said.

He said the employees obtain approval from headquarters to be on the tracks, but the protocol does not call for giving them any warning of approaching trains, nor does it require train operators to slow down.

“No, they do not get warning,” he said of the track workers. “They are to expect the train at any direction and at any time.”

Dispatch does inform train drivers of their presence, however.

One worker is supposed to act as a lookout and determine “how and where to move into the clear” when a train comes along, Southworth said. He said the NTSB will examine the procedure as part of its investigation of the accident.

“We are looking at all rules and all operating practices,” he said.

BART was preparing managers to run trains in the event the strike was protracted, and the person running the train that killed the workers was one of two trainees on board.

Southworth said both trainees “shared time in the seat” operating the train while an experienced trainer stood behind them. He said the train was also carrying three others who were not involved in the training exercise.

He said the NTSB has determined that the air horn which the train sounded as it approached the workers, the train lights and its brakes were “operable, without any defects.”



Southworth said he has not yet determined the interval of time between the sound of the horn and the impact. He said at a Monday news conference that the train was moving 60 mph to 70 mph when an emergency stop was executed.

BART train operators said in interviews that a train traveling at that speed cannot come to a complete stop in less than about a quarter of a mile.

The two workers who died were Laurence Daniels, 66, who worked for a private contractor, and Christopher Sheppard, 58, a BART employee doing his regular job. BART has said both were highly experienced.

Train operators say it can be difficult for someone on a track to hear an approaching train. A widow of a BART worker who was killed on a track in 2008 said her late husband called a BART train “a silent killer.”

The loss of two lives helped spur the unions and BART management to return to the negotiating table and settle the strike Monday. BART trains resumed running Tuesday.

BART board President Tom Radulovich said the accident “sobered everybody up.”

“I was actually with one of the union leaders when we heard the news,” he said in a television interview the day after the accident, “and it just struck us we need to end this.”

*Continued From Page 6*

needs” is based around changing work practices could make us quite vulnerable. There have been rumours floating around for some time now about the possibility of split shifts. Working, for instance, in the morning peak then having up to 4hrs off then returning for the afternoon peak to work 4hrs more or less. Is this what they have in mind or do they mean a small full-time workforce supplemented by part-time and casual workers? I don’t think that we can speculate too much at this early stage.

\*The wish list containing “benchmarking against international rail entities and ‘best practice’” and “the need to modernise” is ridiculous to be placed on an agreement with employees. Employees have no control over the work process or how much is spent on infrastructure at all. They are basically told what to do. Most people know that the equipment that they work with breaks down on a regular basis, while software is generally outdated and inadequate.

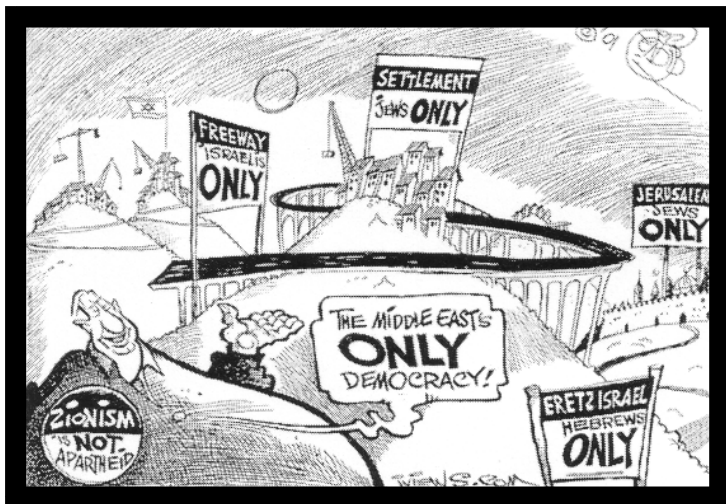
Also considering the disparity in passenger density here in Australia compared to Japan or many other countries around the world, ‘best practice’ is like comparing oranges with a leg of lamb.

Liberal Government’s, in general, are not Public Transport friendly,

preferring instead to fund private toll roads and highways at great cost to Public Transport and to the environment. This impacts on ‘best practice’ which is a ridiculous concept under the current ideology. Railways in particular are massively underfunded and need a huge injection of capital if they are to approach standards that we are going to be compared with overseas.

The new Director General of Transport who hails from Queensland is no friend of public transport and was present when privatisation decimated Public Transport jobs in Queensland. His forte is private toll roads which have become a cash cow for certain companies that have managed to profit.

We all know that what the Government in NSW has put on the table is a wish list. It is far too early yet to make head or tail of their proposal, as the vagueness in which it is framed means little to us. These type of phrases could mean anything, “Adjustments necessitated by NSW government policy”.



## What is Democratic Unionism?

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

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

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

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

*Continued From Page 23* We need to make sure that negotiations do not continue down this obscure line and that simple English be used to fill in the details of each and every proposal.

Negotiations should be halted till management and the Government spell out what they mean by the clauses in the document presented. The proposal should then be put to all members of the workforce for them to decide how to, or whether to, proceed under the terms already outlined. This could best be carried out through mass meetings of the general membership of the unions. Only then, after the approval of the membership should negotiations proceed.

**Members' Voice - Fighting for Membership Control  
of the Union & Direct Action! Website:  
[users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice](http://users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice)**









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