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# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**ALP Union Hierarchy not providing “Gravy Train” But Mass Sackings & Conditions Destruction Express with Rail EA! Members Voice Campaigns to Fightback for Job Security & Conditions Improvements!**



NSW RAIL NEWS;	RTBU ELECTIONS 2014;
VICTORIAN RAIL NEWS;	STA BUSIE NEWS;
INTERNATIONAL NEWS;	ELECTION CONSULTING;
TRAMWAY EXTENSIONS;	LETTER TO THE EDITOR;

## **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news in the railways lately has been the new EBA. The bosses, the NSW Government and the media have been gloating how the EBA will open the doors to mass sackings and casualisation, part time work and individual contracts for a miserly pay rise. Most notorious being the Telegraph's shrill and vicious "gravy train" article, entitled "Fat cat rail shirkers shunted" 20/9/14, which has caused much anger on the job. Members Voice has pursued an energetic campaign on the job against this brazen cave-in by the ALP union hierarchy to the Govt. and bosses' agenda. (See article page 3.) One of the highlights was the Members Voice agitation leading to the holding of a mass union meeting of train crew at Central in late Sept. over the EBA. The first such mass meeting for many, many years. In stark contrast, certain union "dis-organisers" have suddenly been energized from their slumbers, around election time, for some contemptible, pathetic "whispering campaign". This seems the way, they earn their keep! We challenge them to assist the grass roots in the fight against the bosses!

In the STA, some of the most important news recently has been the plans for tramway extensions in the Eastern Suburbs and the construction of the tram line down George Street. Associated with the extensions in the Eastern Suburbs will be a reduction in demand for bus services and could lead to the closure of Randwick depot. (See article page 8.) Another hot issue in the STA, has been an "invisible wave" of mass sackings, with AM drivers being forced onto part time work and facing major pay cuts and so being driven off the job. The union hierarchy's "legalistic" approach being ineffectual in dealing with their plight (See article page 13.) The ushering in of the new EBA into the STA has seen a vicious new attack on older drivers. Out of the blue their jobs are being subject to much scrutiny by the bosses to either fit them up for the sack so as to put on more "cheaper" trainees or casuals, try on a bit of intimidation or pinching a slice of their pay. Grassroots industrial solidarity is vital to help out these workmates. (See article page 14.)



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

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## N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

### Setting the Scene for Another R.T.B.U. Election

*The time has come once again to choose our Rail Tram and Bus Union representatives and leaders. The pattern is a familiar and well trodden path. There is always an Enterprise Agreement which delivers a small pay increase just before, or during the vote, which possibly ensures that the incumbents fall across the line. A sweetener in the form of a back-dated payment is almost always the enticing icing on the cake during the election. It's all so predictable.*

One could be branded a cynic for questioning the changed expiry date of future enterprise agreements. The next EBA expires on September 30 2017 rather than the usual April. An expiry date of September would coincide with the union election cycle around November. Office terms are also now set at 4 years duration.

As we approach the 2014 R.T.B.U. election day we find that public transport in N.S.W., is going through an unprecedented reform process..

Speaking at the conclusion of negotiations over the 2014 Rail Enterprise Agreement, Mark Morey, an assistant secretary of Unions NSW, says "It's not a perfect deal by any means because people are being asked to give up conditions."









"But having said that, in the context of where we are industrially.....and the pay rise and concessions we have been able to get out of the rail entities, we just felt we got to a stage where members should have a vote on whether to accept it."

Some rail workers also wondered what those "concessions" might be, since they were more like holding ground till 2017 on most issues. We actually won bugger all as far as concessions go. After the most concerted campaign by management for a vote in favor, there was eventually a vote in the affirmative for the agreement however.

According to Jacob Saulwick, transport reporter, for the Sydney Morning Herald, this was a vote where rail workers were "set to decide between better pay and job security". It seems rail workers struggling with mortgages and rising costs have decided to go for the money. The issue of a pay rise though is not relevant if you do not have a job 12 months down the track.

The vote came after a concerted campaign by the union leadership to subtly try and convince members that this was the best deal possible. This is the first time in living memory that the NSW Secretary of the union sent out a recorded phone message on a weekend during the voting urging people to vote, hopefully from his point of view, for the Agreement.

"We came to a belief, at this point, this is the best deal on the table that the state government has put to us." –Mark Morey, NSW Unions.

2014 ARTBU ELECTION	
During the last 3 years these jobs were lost.	
	Station Support Officers GONE
	Booking Clerks GONE
	Transit Officers GONE
	Cleaners GONE
	Some Maintenance and Infrastructure GONE
	Station Managers (Masters) GONE
	Admin Staff GONE
	Who's Next ?

**We Can't Afford Four More Years of This!**

The operative word being 'we', when, "We" were not consulted about the path that negotiations were to take, when to stop negotiating or much else.. However negotiators see nothing wrong with this undemocratic and non-consultative bargaining, NSW Unions style.

The happiest person implementing the new Enterprise Agreement was Liberal Transport Minister, Berejiklian, who in a press release skites about "\$20 million annual savings and the end of bad work practices in rail" she says the "the deal can now scrap a number of historically outdated work practices, including a "no forced redundancy" clause, that meant a "jobs for life" culture."

It depends where you work in the Rail Entities as to whether the agreement was good for you or not. In the long term though I don't think that it is not good for anybody except the transport ministry which is trying to reduce costs, privatise whatever it can and cut jobs. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, "The vote is a major industrial victory for Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian".

Those that are going through the reform process or are facing the prospect of being "excess to requirements" will feel the full brunt of the removal of conditions within the EBA. For many part-time workers, especially students looking further afield and who are not looking at a full time career in the railways, it will make minimal difference, so they should welcome the extra money.

Perhaps the best summation of the Agreement, as viewed from the standpoint of those in power, comes from the Melbourne Age newspaper.

"The multiple unions that represent rail workers did not formally endorse the EBA, but they might as well have. The unions thought this was the best deal they were going to get, and did not believe in a public fight with the government was worth the cost of trying to get more. - Melbourne Age.

They then went on to congratulate the Libs in N.S.W. for cracking workers heads and calling for greater reforms. She can now no longer blame the Unions, as the Minister has struck her deal for the changes that were so desperately needed to gut the workforce. It remains to be seen whether this will bear fruit for her and the Liberal Party.

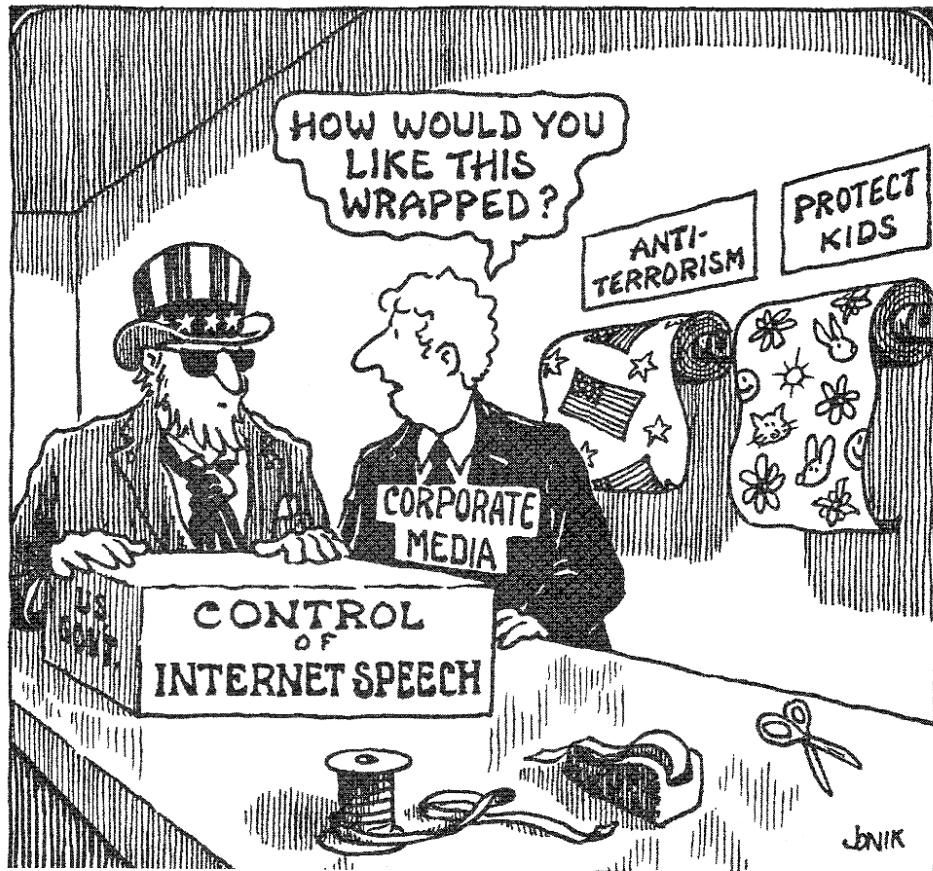
I don't agree with that newspaper article, but there is no doubting that a lot of union members believe that their union leadership is gutless. There was an expectation during the agreement that they might be called out for some form of industrial action. Members were ready for it. Normally if the employer is getting it all their own way, the best way of forcing a realistic bargaining position, getting some real concessions and god forbid, some items from your own log of claims, is to use the real force that lies with the membership. That means taking some sort of action that makes the stand of the employer untenable.

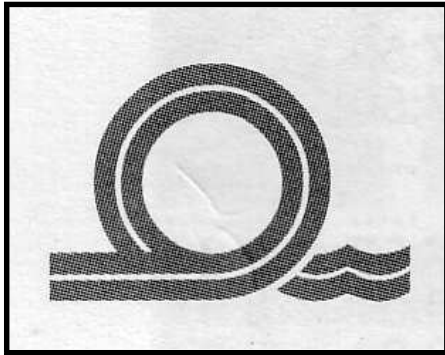
During our R.T.B.U. Election campaign we do not aim not make any grand promises that will dash your expectations. We do, however, aim to build a fighting union that puts all members at the forefront of everything we do. The changes we wish to make will be difficult, but they are very necessary to democratising our union.

The world is changing. Working people are standing up to bureaucratic hierarchies that are inefficient and self serving. People more and more want the chance to be involved in the move-

ments and organisations which affect their lives. That means also being involved in their trade unions.

If our Members Voice candidates are elected we will work towards giving you a voice in the union and on the job. We hope that you take up that offer, if and when the chance arises. Nothing will change though unless you support our candidates.



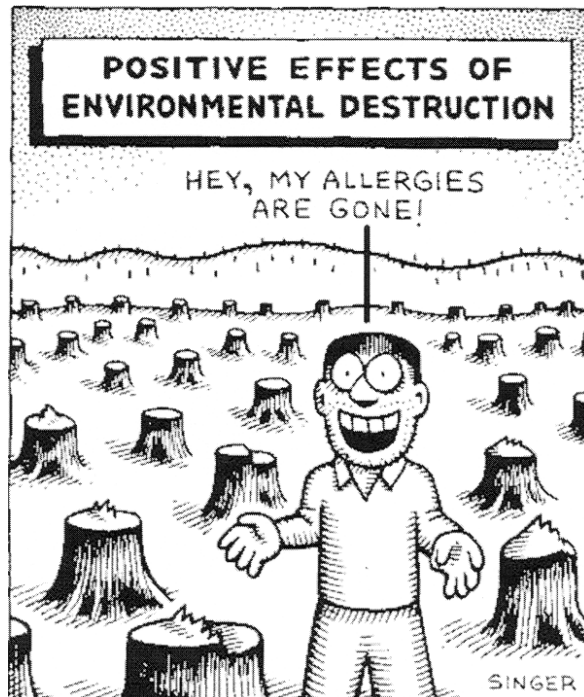


### **“Don’t you worry about that...”**

*Recently our spy 007, who was impersonating a Murdoch Press Journo infiltrated a Transport for NSW press conference held at the new headquarters, near Randwick Racecourse conveniently overlooking the proposed light rail extensions, and secured an exclusive interview with Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian. Following making some favourable remarks to Gladys about her new very expensive, glittering Opal necklace and dollar sign embroidered see through outfit.*

**007:** According to information I have received, STA management and the union hierarchy are showing a devil may care approach toward breaches of Occupational Health & Safety regulations, particularly with Optimisation and the lateness crack down. It’s greatly intensified the speed up in drivers jobs. As Minister responsible, why are you allowing this illegal situation to proceed?

Minister Berejiklian: In my “Team State Transit”, as part of the greater Mike Baird’s “Team NSW”, and the even greater Tony Abbott’s “Team Australia” everyone from CEO Peter Rowley down to depot managers, depot admin. staff and drivers, are en-



thusiastically playing the game. No complaints have ever been presented to me! Drivers are just doing their fair share of the “heavy lifting”! So don’t you worry about that!

**007: There are rumours circulating that Newcastle Buses are to be privatised after the coming NSW State Election. Can you confirm whether this has been decided?**

Minister Berejiklian: A certain cashed up British corporate cowboy has been observed salivating over the prospect. However, I cannot confirm or deny the story. So don’t worry yourself.

**007: Gladys, our recent research has revealed that you have been losing heaps of money on the new Opal system. Can you confirm this information?**

Minister Berejiklian: The Opal has not become the gold mine, we and our business mates expected. We were a bit over enthusiastic with all our corner cutting in the STA, chucking out even the good people such as inspectors to save cash. Unfortunately, we now have no follow up for drivers when the system malfunctions, which is quite common. Luckily for us, Peter has advised me recently, that drivers are absolutely delighted to do a bit more of the heavy lifting! So as to make our Opals glisten with revenue and fatten our business mates bonuses and their Liberal Party under the counter donations! So don’t you concern yourself.

**007: Our Randwick readers have complained that light rail extensions in the area are being used as a pretext for huge numbers of shady trees to be destroyed to facilitate massive real estate developments along the tram line. Whilst it has been rumoured you will be the proud owner of a luxurious penthouse in one of the blocks of units. Is this information correct?**

Minister Berejiklian: Where have you heard that? I’m too busy watching one of the races below now, to bother answering any more of you baseless allegations. However, I heard from horse’s mouth that our Liberal supporters in the real estate world have certainly backed a big winner with our Government in NSW!

## S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

**Sparks: What have you heard regarding the Baird Government’s plans to extend the tramway system in Sydney?**

Waverley Busie: There is definitely a sting in the tail of the tramway. As part of the extensions in the Eastern suburbs, the Govt. is intending to cut down a huge swathe of trees along Alison Street Randwick to the top end of the race course, all the way to the square near the Royal Hotel and east of the Prince of Wales Hospital. Sections of Anzac Parade could also be affected. The car park near South Sydney Juniors in Kingsford, which also provides for a local market, will be used as a tram shed for the line. Local people are extremely angry over the move. As part of their protest they have tied coloured ribbons to the trees targeted for culling.





A lady, who is a resident in the area, I was speaking to recently, mentioned that associated with the tramway extension are plans to construct blocks of home units along the line. So the tramway extensions are not really about improving public transport, but are a pretext for the Liberals to help out their real estate developer business mates. Recently, some drivers have suggested that the extensions could be used as a pretext for the Govt. to close Randwick depot. It currently operates 100's of runs a day to Central, the Quay and NSW Uni. Certainly the tramway will cut the demand for these bus services. With the closure of the depot, the Govt. could sell off the land which is extremely valuable. It could be worth a considerable sum given Sydney's notoriously expensive real estate market.

Recently there has been the announcement of the construction of the tram line down George Street. Where is the traffic management plan which needs to be provided to all the depots? Will all the buses have to go down Elizabeth Street? I don't think the tramway is a good idea. It's now been 50 years since we last had them and times have changed. It will be horrible! It will be too demanding for the city. Where will all the buses end up? Where will the bus services terminate? The trams will just greatly contribute to the congestion already caused by thousands of vehicles of all types going through the city. However, the demand for bus drivers is likely to be reduced.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the Baird Govt?**

WB: I have noticed over the last 3 months ever more revelations of corrupt activity involving high up Liberal figures. The new ICAC commissioner appears to be taking his job much more seriously, than his predecessor. Lately this spider's web of corruption has involved Sutherland Council and the mining millionaire Tinkler. With the Govt's likely move to flog off Randwick Depot, ICAC needs to look into every aspect of it. Anything goes. No one knows how much corruption there is in NSW. Lately I have even noticed in my suburb, 2-3 old houses, possibly heritage listed, being bull dozed to gain access to the land for development. One of them had originally been a sanatorium, and subsequently became a hostel. Whilst I have noticed in my area, a large council car park has been subdivided into 3 parcels of land and flogged off. Could this also involve the web of Liberal corruption? For the Liberals, money talks!

**Sparks: What's the latest with the Opal Card system?**

WB: The Opal definitely has a sting in its tail. Particularly hard hit are those who only casually use public transport and make less than 8 trips a week. These commuters will find the Opal very expensive. Also what happens when a commuter gets sick and has already paid for a \$46 top up on the Opal for the week? It really needs to be low cost to encourage more public transport usage. Another issue with the Opal system is that it's based on a GPS system and works differently on buses in comparison to the railways. We have noticed that it doesn't work on certain parts of routes and bus stops. Consequently, when commuters tap off when alighting the bus, at certain stops, the Opal doesn't work, resulting in wrong fares. We are being relied on to press the right button, to tap off the commuter's Opal. In the case of a commuter failing to tap off, they face a massive hike in their fare. With the system not working in certain areas, no fares are charged. Consequently, drivers at the depot have been saying the Government and its business mates must be losing quite a lot on the Opal. The STA needs to be respectful to drivers in regard to the Opal Card. It's a new system, but the bosses have provided us with no follow up. We were given a brief introduction and a small booklet. With the bosses' mania for corner cutting to allegedly save money, they have cut out most inspectors who could provide follow up with the Opal. Again we see the STA's contradictions. We are told by the Radio Room not worry about the Opal malfunctioning, but due to our interactions with commuters, we are under extra pressure to do more of the dirty work.

Another problem is that there is a high rate of faulty cards being issued, which won't allow registering to the Opal system involving 2 out of 10 cards. In future, there will be ever more frustration and dissatisfaction with the system amongst both commuters and drivers.

**Sparks: How are things with the uniform?**

WB: The STA has allocated \$3 million for provision of the uniform. However only \$100,000 has been spent so far. It seems the bosses don't want to spend the money. As there are constant delays in providing pieces of the uniforms. Some drivers at the depot have even been waiting 5-6 months to get parts of it. This weird miserly approach of the bosses' in regard to issuing items of the uniform, flies in the face of their stipulation that we must wear the uniform! We see again the contradictions in the STA. It seems that this stalling is all a game.

**Sparks: What are the latest developments with the bosses speed up drive?**

WB: One new weird prong has been the move to relocate bus stops, which creates greater distances between bus stops. I have particularly noticed it on the 422 route. Associated with this relocation, the bosses hope to get faster buses on routes. On a recent ABC program on the issue, a lady interviewed advised that she indeed had noticed that buses had become faster. However, commuters are being screwed as they now have to walk further to bus stops and may be discouraged from using public transport. This whole weird initiative seems all about the bosses getting more bickies, rather than making a serious effort to improve services and introduce more realistic bus running times and timetables.

**Sparks: How are you finding the depot Admin. Staff?**

WB: Lately I have noticed that they have an over enthusiasm when a driver has some foul up on the job, which is out of their control. They seem to be having difficulties in acquiring rele-



vant information from the computer system and cameras about these incidents. Whilst there appears to be a lack of coordination between them.

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

WB: It was recently put up to vote on and 90.34% voted in favour. It provides an alleged pay rise of 2 ½ % per year for 3 years. However, inflation is running at approx. 3% pa. So in fact we are facing another pay cut. With our job becoming much worse as a result of Optimisation and the lateness crackdown we deserve a much greater pay rise above inflation. I have not noticed any obvious nasties. Although there could be in the fine print. Certainly, we need an analysis of the document by an industrial lawyer to understand its aspects and ramifications. We can't just rely on what union reps, the union hierarchy or management say about it. The importance of such an analysis was highlighted to me recently when I spoke to some rail workers. One of them was extremely upset about their recent EBA. He said that in exchange for the \$600 or so pa provided by the EBA, rail staff got shafted. It removed important entitlements. Particularly, he focused on the removal of salary maintenance in the case of jobs being abolished and doors opened to mass sackings by the EBA.

## **LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What's the latest with the Opal system implementation?**

Leichhardt Busie: At the depot there has been an Opal fiasco. In early September only half of the fleet has been adapted for the Opals. However, throughout the Inner West, bus stops had the Opal ready sticker. As a result, more work was being put on us. As we had to cope with angry commuters, who expected they could use the Opal on all buses. Latest news is that by early Oct., all of the fleet has had the new system installed. We were experiencing some teething problems with both the Green Machines and Opal system not working on occasions. Lately these problems seem resolved.

**Sparks: What have been the ramifications of the privatisation/outsourcing of the mechanical section?**

LB: It has created quite a bit of havoc with bus services. Associated with privatisation, the number of mechanics has been reduced, affecting the efficiency of workshop operations. On one morning some weeks ago, there was 7 of us waiting for buses to start our runs. Whilst many buses are breaking down during runs.

**Sparks: How is the bosses' lateness crack down progressing?**

LB: If we are late at the end of a run, we have to ring the radio room and explain the situation. However, ironically in doing this we become ever more late in our work, as we may have to wait on say 20 minutes, to make contact. Whilst the radio room often asks stupid and irrelevant questions, like where on the run we were late. Despite it being peak hour with massive traffic congestion in the city.

Running times continue to be totally unrealistic. Nothing is being done by management or the union hierarchy regarding the resulting savage speed up in our jobs.

**Sparks: What are the latest developments with the boss's part time push?**

LB: All on the AM shift have been pushed onto part time work. Many on the AM's can't change to other shifts, as they have kids and have to travel long distances to the depot. However, I have noticed many part timers are leaving the job, as they can't cope with the low wages. As a result, they have been effectively sacked, which the union hierarchy with its legalistic approach to the issue has been totally ineffective. I have also noticed many trainees are leaving the job. They can't cope with the harshness of the job, unlike us "hardy" people. Consequently, lately there is an astronomical number of DOC's at the depot. It seems to me that the bosses would like us all to be pushed into part time casual employment. However, this strategy isn't working and its likely they will have to put on full time permanent drivers.

On another associated front, the union hierarchy is trumpeting the success of another court case, which allegedly will ensure that we keep our RDO's and our overtime can't be farmed out to the casuals, and that we keep our existing conditions for the next 3 years.

**Sparks: How are you finding the bosses?**

LB: Lately, they have been keeping themselves busy with a ludicrous "security push". They have been splurging a large sum on new alarms and putting up signage. However, anyone can get on a bus when we are doing our runs.

## **BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: How is the situation with the part timers developing?**

Burwood Driver: This is the major issue at the depot at the moment. It appears the STA is keen to get as many part timers on the job as possible. Only amongst those on these shifts is there permanency in regard to lines of work. In the case of other drivers, they are being put on the relief and losing portions of their lines of work. Whilst others are being sent to other depots. We have heard nothing from the union so far about the case, they are pursuing in the industrial court on the issue.

**Sparks: How is the new Opal system working out?**

BD: As in the case of other depots such as Waverley, we are experiencing considerable problems. The green machine tickets operate on the G3 system. Whilst the Opal operates on the GPS system. These two systems are not properly integrated. Consequently in certain areas they won't work. This has been noticed along Parramatta Road in regard to the Opal. Whilst, the green machine has been noticed not operating at Victoria Park. At our depot there are also buses which have had the Opal installed, but it has never worked. Other news is that the Baird Government is still wanting to impose \$80 fees on us, as they say we are involved in childcare. The union says they are fighting the issue. Latest news from the union is that some higher organisation than the union is taking up the issue, as it doesn't just affect bus drivers.

## Letter to the Editor

### “The Kindergarten Cops or Baptism of Fire”

Dear Sparks,

*Since the new EBA has commenced, I have noticed a tightening up in the STA. With different schedules, less auxiliary staff and less proper inspectors. Whilst you have to pay, for to and from work insurance, and the bosses can be unwilling to pay if you have an accident. There has also been a new nefarious push of the STA bosses. Behind this move are unseen transport bureaucrats, who are dictating to the bosses. Putting pressure on them to “perform”. When they “perform”, they do some silly things! They can be very cunning. Whilst, their attitude seems, “if it goes wrong, it goes wrong”. Anything can happen. They are lacking in responsibility.*

*They are putting a lot more pressure on the older drivers. These drivers are finding this unwelcome attention to be very emotionally draining. They are being put on the firing line, with their jobs very closely scrutinized and suddenly running the gauntlet. This approach is totally unwarranted. Certainly, the older drivers could benefit say every 2 to 3 years with a couple of hours of training to modify old habits, which get in the way of coping with new initiatives like the Opal system. However, this new attitude of the bosses appears to be about setting them up for the sack. So they can be replaced with trainees, casuals and part timers. It seems the bosses have run out of ways to “up front” save dollars, so they have adopted this new “back door” strategy.*

*With their new “master plan”, they are causing the older drivers a lot of anguish and to scratch their heads. Asking what have I done wrong? In cases where drivers have been submitted to this intense scrutiny and they have been unable to establish grounds for the sack, they are facing suspensions, pay cuts and demotions or just a bit of intimidation. It seems, we are going back to the days of the Greiner Regime, notorious for fining drivers of between \$10 to \$100 over petty matters. Its Greiner’s “punishment code”, but on “steroids!” These drivers are in urgent need of our industrial solidarity, via a union meeting, to get “the Kindergarten Cops” off their backs!*

Concerned Driver

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In this issue of Sparks, we will report on the dismissal of a long serving conductor for defending himself from an attack by a gang of youths. In this issue Drivers, Station Staff and Staff from Head Office will discuss the issue. As in previous issues, names have been changed.*

**Sparks: How long was this conductor employed by the railways?**

Sheona: Forty years.

Clarence: May we introduce you to two employees, who work at V/Line, who have come forward to discuss the sacking of this conductor.

Dexter and Dimity: We will not say where we work in V/Line, but we are devastated over this long term conductor being terminated.

**Sparks: So not say what your positions are, as we don't want Human Resources tracking you down.**

Sheona: Human Resources hates Sparks, because it reports on issues affecting V/Line. They want you to believe that V/Line is UTOPIA.

Dexter: The Conductor was stood down for standing up for his rights. He was being assaulted on the train and he had to obtain the assistance of Police at Bollan to remove a gang of youths. The youths would not buy tickets and were uttering racist remarks to Asian passengers.

Dimity: Police awaited the train at Bollan and while the conductor was walking up the front of the train, he was assaulted by one of the youths. He defended himself and another conductor assisting on the train, assisted him and he too was assaulted. Police arrested the youth, after using capsicum spray.

Rastus: This happens all the time and managers know what conductors put up with. Some of our drivers have also been assaulted. V/Line expects that staff to be a discontented passenger's punching bag.

Dexter: The conductor submitted an Incident Report. Three weeks later he was called into the office of the Conductor Manager and was told by both him and Human Resources, that they did not believe his story.

Clarence: The next day, the conductor reported for his rostered shift and was told by the staff clerk to report to the Conductor Manager and was told, he was suspended from duty, pending an enquiry and was told not to discuss the matter with other employees.

Rastus and Roscoe: When the drivers found out he was being stood down, they told fellow employees. As for the Conductor Manager, we, drivers have had issues with this person. We dislike him and we think he hasn't the guts to stand up to Human Resources.

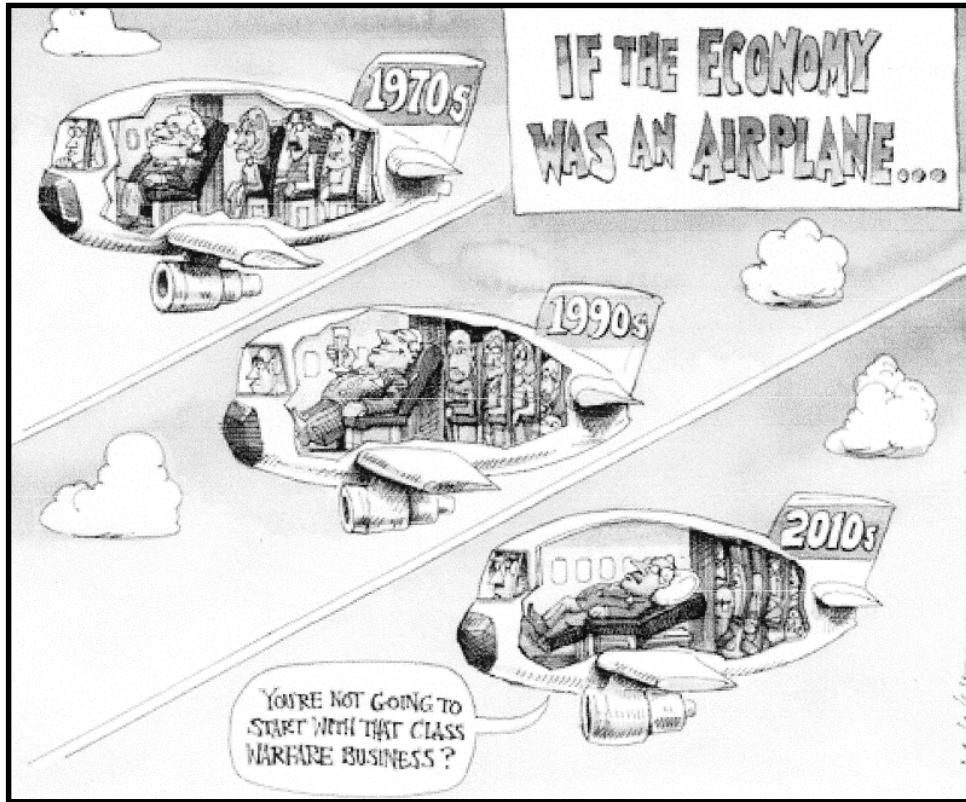
Dexter: One of the conductors was discussing the conductor's suspension and was called into the office of a Conductor Service Manager. Where he was informed that if he spoke to conductors over the suspension, he would front Human Resources.

Rastus and Roscoe: You know what the drivers, think of C.S.M's. They are supposed to help conductors in difficulty. In fact some of them, are known to pass snide comments about conductors.

Clarence: The way C.S.M's were selected is still a sour point amongst V/Line Staff.

**Sparks: If you want to read about C.S.M's refer to Sparks issues 130, 132 and 134.**

Rastus and Roscoe: Related to this, office walls have ears, as a number of drivers at a training course heard a loud argument. We don't know what the issue was over, but we know a person from Human Resources stormed out.



Clarence: Some staff signing on heard the stoush. We understand if it was the issue of the stood down conductor, perhaps the matter will be discussed in a future issue of Sparks.

Rastus: Also a number of drivers discovered a conductor laying in other conductors to the manager. These drivers were disgusted that some of the conductors would lay in their work mates.

Sheona: This is the type of culture these days at V/Line.

Dexter: It took V/Line four weeks to notify the conductor of the charges he was facing, but he received a letter outlining the charges he was facing. Yes four weeks. During this time V/Line did not contact the Police, nor the driver of the train. The conductor was not allowed to watch the CCTV of the incident.

Roscoe: You could see it was a set up. They wanted to hang the conductor.

Clarence: The conductor was defended by an organiser from the Union and whilst the conductor was waiting by the office for the organiser to show, some CSMU walked by and ignored the conductor.

Dexter: This is disgraceful, as we thought the C.S.M's would offer the conductor support.



Sheona: They had a hearing that day and said a decision would be made within the next week. It seems funny, but V/Line management says they want to save money, but whilst this conductor was stood down, look at their overtime budget. It seems they don't worry how much they spend, but they want a result of their liking.

Dimity: The decision was handed down and the conductor was told he was dismissed. He was devastated. He had done nothing wrong and was never given a final warning during his forty years of service.

**Sparks: Why was he sacked?**

Dexter: To show Human Resources were running the show. You see the conductor has put in for a number of salaried positions and was not successful. He wrote to the previous Chief Executive and said the selection policy was corrupt.

**Sparks: From that day, Human Resources had it in for him.**

Sheona: The other reason is they have what is called a talent pool of applicants for conductor's positions, so sack a conductor and replace him with a person from the talent pool. It seems a coincidence that long term conductors have had to face Human Resources on minor issues.

Clarence: The next day the conductor was informed that they expected him to hand in his uniform at the end of the week.

Rastus and Roscoe: They were out to humiliate the conductor. Think of the stress on the conductor's family.

Dexter: The union on behalf of the conductor lodged a claim of unfair dismissal with Fair Work Australia.

Dimity: The same time, a petition was taken up by V/line workers in support of the conductor. Guess what? A number of workers would not sign the petition. Also a number of conductors and station staff spread rumours that the conductor had hit the youth.

Rastus and Roscoe: You would expect this from some of the crawlers who work at V/Line.

Dimity: The union went to the Chief Executive to ask him to reconsider the conductor's dismissal.

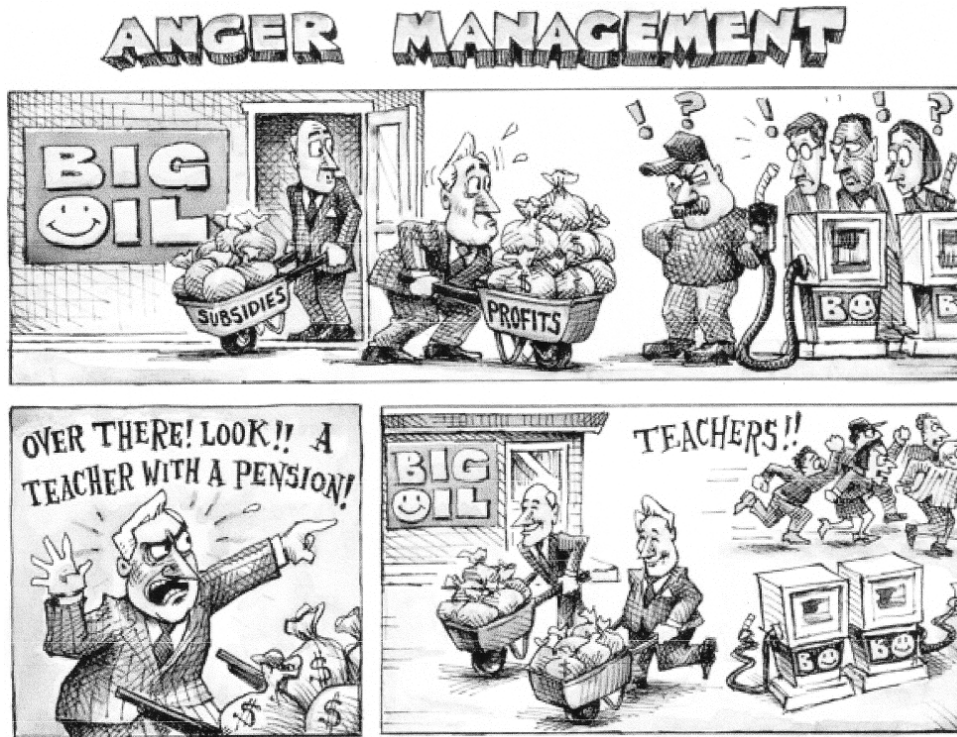
Dexter: The Chief Executive replied that the dismissal will stand. Forty eight hours later the union delayed a Geelong train for forty minutes in protest at the conductor's dismissal.

Rastus and Roscoe: Due to other lines being shut down to Regional Express networks, buses were replacing trains. So buses could not be obtained to replace the delayed train.

Sheona: As a result of the Geelong train's delay, the media was alerted and the day's Age ran a story about the sacked conductor.

Rastus: The same time, the union was going around Spence Street talking to railway workers. You could see the tension around the place. Managers not knowing what would happen next. A rally in support of the conductor was to be held on the steps of Spencer Street.

Dimity: On the Monday before the proposed rally, the V/Line chief executive met with the union and a confidential settlement was negotiated. As a result of the settlement, the sacked con-



ductor was given another position within V/Line. One of the terms of the settlement is he is not allowed to comment on the dispute. As a result, the proposed rally was called off.

Rastus: The conductor maybe gagged, but we are not.

**Sparks: This dispute was caused by Human Resources, so as to frighten other employees. They did not estimate the support this conductor received around the rail industry, plus the media. In future V/Line will not be game to sack another long serving employee. Finally, we thank you Dexter and Dimity for coming forward.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In concluding, this long term conductor was treated terribly. As for the conductor manager and conductor service manager, you know what the drivers think of you. As for the conductors who crawled to the manager to try and undermine support, you are just scum. Finally, as for Human Resources, you are as we said in Sparks issue 134 BLUDGERS and PARASITES.

## **Election Consulting P/L: Is your vote being manipulated?**

**Voting is undergoing a technology transition that opens up some very big questions as to just how fair the voting of the future will be. Naturally your vote is fairly worthless anyway, but most people expect that elections are at least not rigged.**

Electronic voting is something governments have been after for some time (mainly to cut costs). To this end the NSW government put the idea to tender for the 2011 election. Electronic voting was used in remote locations in 2011 with plans to expand the system called eLect in the 2015 NSW election. The company responsible “Everyone Counts Pty Ltd”, through its NSW subsidiary “Election Consulting” at Edgecliff is now also conducting voting electronically for Enterprise Bargaining Agreements.

Indeed it seems the Labor Party is something of a friend of EC, they were used during a glittering 2012 party function surrounding the US election to carry out an unofficial ballot before the actual result was announced (Obama was re-elected).

Everyone Counts Pty Ltd is a US company based in San Diego (with offices in Canada and the UK) which boasts as its Chief of Products and Partnerships Aaron Contorer a former executive of Microsoft. Everyone Counts other clients include the United States Department of Defence and the United Kingdom’s Ministry of Justice. In Australia the company operates out of a post office box at Carlton North in Victoria. Election Consulting lists this same PO Box as its Victorian office.



In 2012 the Everyone Counts electronic system was selected for electronic voting in the Oscars. It was developed in Partnership with Price Waterhouse. You would think therefore that it would be pretty much beyond reproach. However in 2013 there were serious concerns raised about the system as people couldn't log in and it was felt that the technology would significantly decrease voting as older voters would be detracted from using it. There were also considerable concerns about hackers compromising the system.

Prior to use in the 2007 NSW election the eLect system was audited by BMM Australia, an audit that some commentators at the time criticized as containing broad factual errors and oversights. It was claimed that an electronic system would be vulnerable to constant security threats and flaws.

These examples pretty much demonstrate that there is little point in hiring one corporation with vested interests to check another. History has shown that the auditing of corporations by other corporations produces flawed results, therefore for electronic voting to even begin to become viable it must be subjected to vigorous transparent public scrutiny. Without it we are looking at a brave new world where the rich and powerful in our societies simply decide who holds office, or whether working people accept or reject Enterprise Bargaining Agreements.

There is also the risk that individuals at the IT company hosting the system (not audited in anyway) use administrative passwords to simply alter data. Election Consulting uses an off-shore owned hosting company ozfrontiers which is owned by webvisions from Singapore.

Election Consulting makes it sound like common sense: internet cloud-based voting for efficiency, but this all begs another question - what if this large corporation (or any other performing the same duties) simply decided to skewer the results based on an agenda put forward by their various shady clients? There are very real concerns that a corporation with its various divested interests is placed in a position to influence the outcome of elections.

Electronic voting does nothing to benefit the working class, its use only makes life easy for the ruling classes and the bosses who really don't want us to have any say at all - there is a very real risk that the influence of corporations in elections may become much more direct because of it. Sean

## INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS NEWS

### **INDIA – MASS STRIKE AGAINST RAIL PRIVATISATION**

The new Modi government in India is intent on privatising state assets and using public-private partnerships to develop future infrastructure (listen to radio interview [here](#)). On 19 September an estimated half a million workers stopped work to protest the government's plans to privatise the railways. The International Transport Federation has committed to fight

transport privatisation around the world. Korean workers are also fighting against the privatisation of their railway system.

*Thanks to Australian Asia Worker Links*

## GERMAN TRANSPORT STRIKES

**BERLIN (Reuters) – 7/10/14 Strikes by train drivers' and pilots' unions over pay and conditions in Germany are expected to disrupt travellers and freight inside and outside the country from Tuesday evening.**

Train drivers' union GDL has called for a nine-hour nationwide strike starting on Tuesday evening. Pilots' union Vereinigung Cockpit has announced a two-day strike at Lufthansa's freight arm starting at 0100 GMT on Wednesday.

The strike by drivers, which runs from 1900 GMT Tuesday until 0400 GMT on Wednesday, follows two three-hour strikes in recent weeks. It will predominantly affect morning commuters plus freight transported at night in almost 5,000 trains.



“Strikes in rail freight can affect production after just a couple of days, because goods transported by rail often cannot be swiftly shifted to road or sea,” Achim Dercks, the deputy head of Germany’s Chambers of Commerce, told Reuters on Tuesday.

GDL is seeking a 5 percent pay rise and a two-hour shorter working week of 37 hours from employer Deutsche Bahn, the state-owned rail operator.

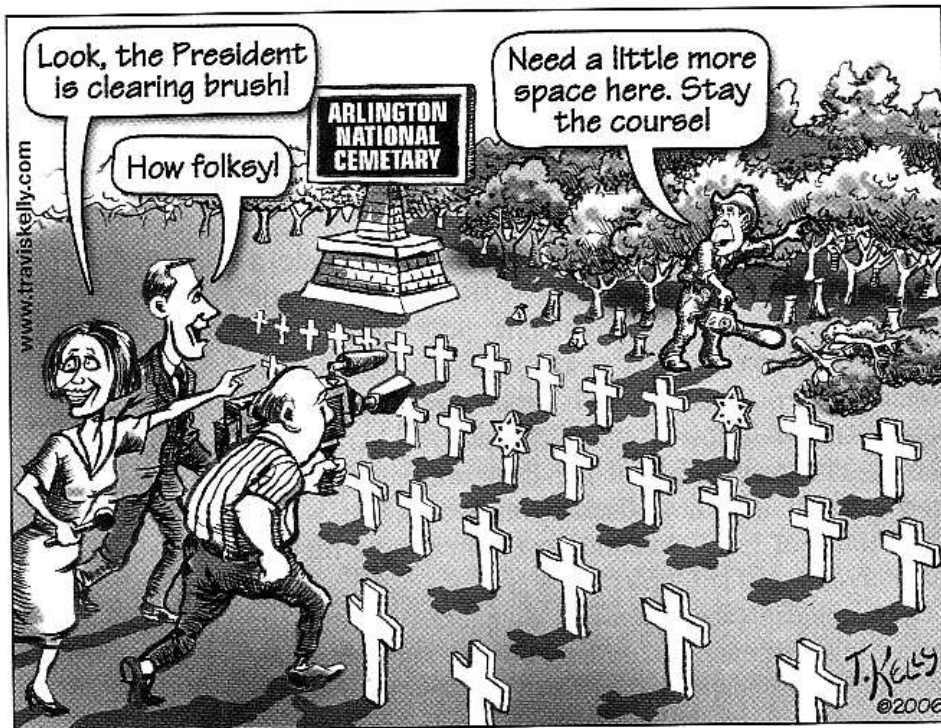
The union is also seeking a mandate to negotiate for train guards and other personnel. Deutsche Bahn has rejected this.

Deutsche Bahn had proposed halting the pay dispute until the government had passed a law on standardised wages, which would see the wage deal for the union with the most members in a company apply. GDL has refused to wait.

Deutsche Bahn criticised the decision to widen the strikes and said it may take until Wednesday midday before trains return to normal. It said it was prepared to negotiate at any time.

## CARGO STRIKE

The train drivers’ walkout will overlap with the two-day strike by pilots at Lufthansa Cargo.



That strike will be the sixth this year by pilots' union Vereinigung Cockpit, which is pushing management to retain a scheme that allows them to retire early at 55 and still receive a portion of their wages.

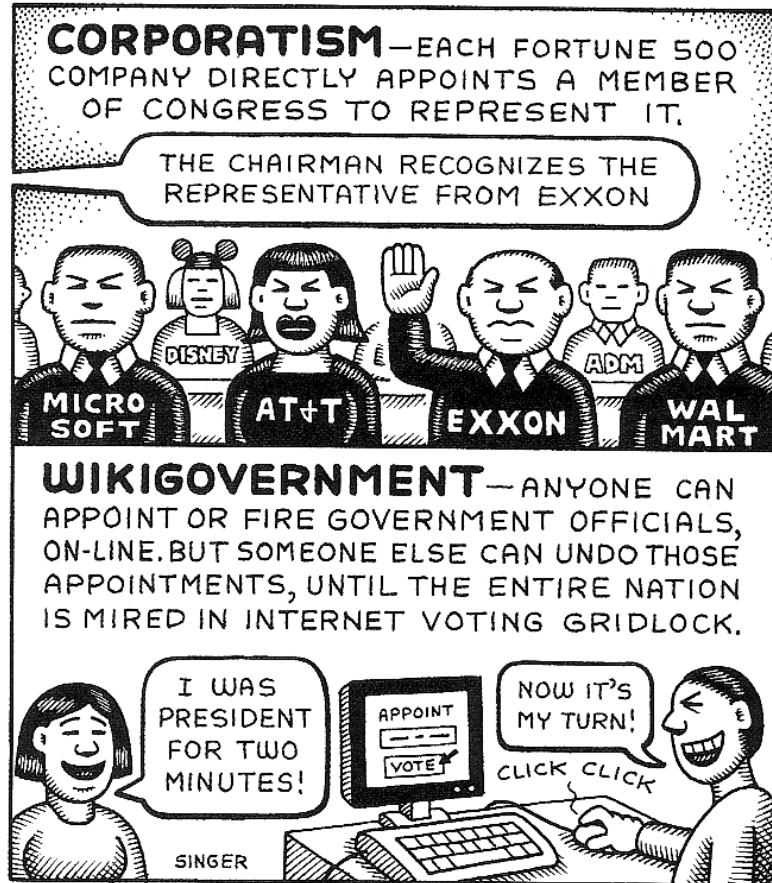
Lufthansa has estimated the strikes have cost it around 70 million euros so far. The walkout will not affect passengers.

Lufthansa Cargo, which normally carries out 21 freighter flights during the strike period, said the walkout would have little impact and that it expected to carry out all flights. Two flights will depart outside of the strike period, it said.

Several pilots had volunteered to fly, a spokesman said.

The pilots union said an end to the row was not in sight and more strikes could come. "Next time we could hold a strike at Lufthansa's main passenger airline business or Germanwings," VC board member Joerg Handwerg told Reuters.

### *ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT:*



## 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.













# What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic