

Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

ALP Flunky Warnes wins fake EBA victory with new Regional Trains Entity - pahway to privatisation! Wages legalistic, on again, off again, campaign set to fail! Grassroots action since 2016 wins functioning guard's compartment on N.I.F.! Seize the driver's seat of the campaign with grass roots committees! Red light! Jan. Bosses' down time ahead!



NSW Railway News p.3; ALP p 7; Letter p.9; Independent Administrator p.10; Sydney Buses News P.15; Canberra Bus News p. 18; Tas. Bus News. P. 20; Victorian Railway News p.21; Bowen Train News p.8; Light Rail News p.27;

Editorial

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Toby's Dodgy EBA Victories! Would You Buy a Used Car from Toby?

The most prominent news in the NSW Railways is the current Rail EBA campaign set up to fail. In this edition we look into the background in the ALP of RTBU NSW Secretary Toby Warnes and his role in the EBA campaign involving securing bogus victories and pursuing weird stunts such as the 24 hour running of trains to help out the ambitions of the Big End of Town. One bogus victory Warnes achieved has been the folding of NSW TrainLink into a new regional trains entity. An SMH article 23/11/24 "Concessions made to avert rail shut down," hinted darkly that this so called victory would be a restructuring for a privatisation push. It also referred to another bogus victory. It was a "transmission of business" clause in the EBA which the SMH falsely claimed would "protect" workers' wages and conditions in the event of privatisation. This is a brazen lie! This clause has been a standard feature of all NSW Public Sector EBA's since 2002, it certainly does not protect workers' wages and conditions after the corporate carve-up. In the case of drivers at Leichhardt Bus Depot following the privatisation of Region 6 and outsourcing as a franchise to Transit Systems, many former STA/RTBU member drivers faced massive cut backs to wages and conditions. As reported in Sparks at the time, involving their displacement from their normal rosters resulting in massive wage cuts of \$20,000 to \$30,000 pa!

We also look at the legalistic and "On and Off" industrial action mishandling of the campaign. One likely possibility is to lure workers into taking industrial action during the upcoming holiday period of January/February to also let off some steam and be ineffectual in exerting pressure on the Minns ALP NSW Government and its Business Mates. As this period is traditionally down time for many business operations. An important overall objective of this "playing to lose" strategy and "method in the madness" would be to demoralise the grass roots to cave-in to privatisation. Its vital to establish grass roots committees to seize the "driver's seat" of the campaign to achieve the "real demands". (See article page 3.)

We also look at the growing pro Corporate orientation of the ALP over the years, particularly culminating in the big crack down against the Building & Construction

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Changing Positions or Shuffling the Deck Chairs in NSW?

By Crimson Coconut



2024 has been a confusing year for most people, a year of upheaval and conflict. On the NSW Railways and in the other private and public transport entities it's been a turbulent period. In the new Enterprise Bargaining year there has been lots to think about, a lot to change and a mountain to understand.

In the middle of the year, (June), the National Secretary of the RTBU (Mark Diamond) resigned unexpectedly to take up another position outside of the union. The NSW Branch Secretary of the Union, Alex Claassens was then catapulted into the National Office's Secretary position leaving his position in NSW vacant. He was appointed to the position by the National Executive. No matter what the union rules say, it can be seen as undemocratic.

Enter Toby Warnes, drafted into the RTBU NSW Secretary's position of the Union.

Once again no election to the position took place. Although he was a Labor Party functionary, having once stood as an ALP candidate for the NSW seat of Ballina, Toby has brought a youthful and more progressive outlook into the union, wanting to extend public transport services at a time when the privatisation push is in full swing in the NSW Government. In some aspects this has seen his vision be at loggerheads with the NSW Minns Government agenda. Armed with a law degree and some experience in the Trade Union bureaucracy Warnes has been hurled head first into Enterprise Negotiations with Sydney/NSW Trains.

Despite this progressive outlook, Warnes has taken a legalistic approach to the industrial struggle. While many of the points in the Log of Claim, such as the 32% wage rise over 4 years, new leave provisions and penalty rate rises are welcomed, can they be achieved by legal means? Once again it's a very top down process that does not involve those at the shop floor level, except when they are called to take part in industrial action. We believe that more involvement, discussion and decision making at that level is something which could help the process. In the past union leadership's acquiescence to the Fair Work Commission's rulings took industrial action off the table. It was welcomed in some instances with a sigh of relief by the union bureaucrats who didn't have to organise in any way.

NSW President of the RTBU, Craig Turner, talking on a 2GB radio interview says that the union has delivered \$650 million in savings to the NSW Government, yet those savings had not been passed on to workers in the form of increased wages. I can also remember previous EBA's where there was a clause promising to share the spoils of costs savings and efficiencies. Over the decades of Enterprise Bargaining these benefits have never flowed onto workers in the industry. This is an indictment of the union position. A position that sometimes paid lip service to the agreement, however it was never pursued. In the workplace we have opposed these trade-offs because they always left us worse off. But they went ahead anyway. Despite the loss of over half the workforce, the privatisation and outsourcing of services such as ticketing, cleaning, information, maintenance etc union members were subjected to a salary cap and a more intensive workload.

Meanwhile large parts of the suburban rail network are being privatised by Metro, the multinational overseas company. The leadership of the union movement has failed to mount an effective campaign against this privatisation which has caused massive job losses on the affected lines. There was also an ineffective campaign against bus privatisation which has now led to substandard services.

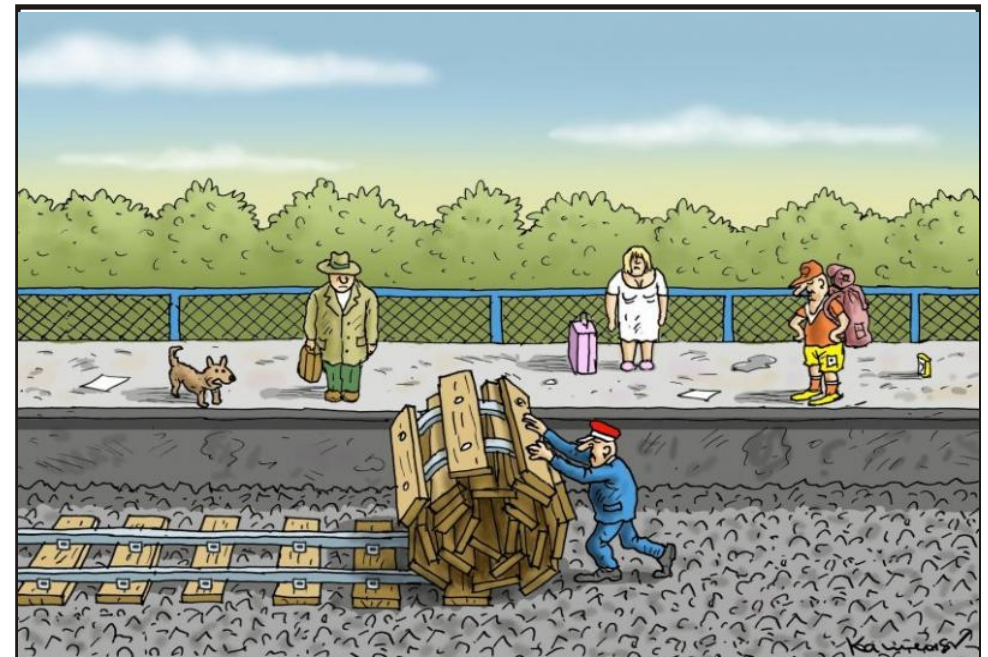
So what has really changed in the RTBU NSW Branch Office? The union calling for

24hr round the clock train services might sound progressive on the face of it. In reality it would mean members working out of normal hours, affecting their health, disrupting circadian rhythms and putting them at greater risk of assault. Speaking publicly Toby Warnes said that the Business Community and the Union had proposed this extension of services around the clock. Do the people of NSW really want 24hr workplaces, 24 hr shopping and dining. I can't think of any rail network around the world that operates around the clock. Even China with its never closing cities uses the 11pm shutdown to maintain networks and trains. For obvious reasons, namely cost, the NSW Government torpedoed it anyway. Maybe in the future with decent investment in rail it may be possible.

The RTBU has also agreed in principle to the re-amalgamation of NSW Trains and Sydney Trains. The agreement also recognises the job losses that will follow from this efficiency drive. These two corporate entities have been separated and amalgamated several times over the last few decades. The Government should have realised by now that railways will never run at a profit in NSW. It is both a service to the people of NSW and a massive boost to retail businesses, conveying workers and customers to their shopfronts. The utilisation of train services are at record levels. Intercity and country trains are overflowing, often being booked out some days. They provide a valuable mode of transport for those on concession cards or those that are sick or too old to drive long distances. Improving these services with better infrastructure, more frequent services and faster trains should be an urgent task which would attract full fare paying passengers. Merging these train services into the Sydney Trains again might save the Government some budget money but will it be more efficient? The loss of jobs as a result of this decision is forecast in the current EBA.

During this EBA Bargaining Period the intransigence of the NSW Government which is declining to meet or to make calls to the union is despotic. The last Enterprise Agreement expired in May of 2024. Pleas to the Fair Work Court in order to take Industrial Action has led to off-again, on-again stop-start action. This has frustrated and confused union members. It's still a top-down process with the union bureaucrats taking sporadic and haphazard actions which have had minimal effect on the NSW Government so far. Every day that goes by without an agreement saves the Government money and the workers holding out for a pay rise are falling further behind in the cost of living battle.

On social media, in the press and workplace the rank and file of the RTBU have expressed outrage over the stubbornness of the NSW Government to agree to negotiate. The Minns Government has turned to the money barons to try and rewrite industrial legislation that would thwart the union and halt decent pay rises. This will



have implications for all unions as the government could veto agreements and simultaneously stymie industrial action. \$millions have been saved in the public sector while there seems to be no end in sight to their generous handouts to the private sector.

The huge break with the usual protocols of union leaders condemning a Labor Government in power has been broken by Toby Warne as he threatened in a public interview to withdraw funding for Labor in NSW. Forget the fact that most funding for affiliation and the ALP is allocated from the National Office. The condemnation by the union rank and file of the ALP in NSW, an ALP which appears both anti-worker and reactionary at best, has possibly prompted the Secretary to make this statement. Something that previous Secretaries dare not do.

Only a few weeks ago pictures appeared on social media of RTBU President Craig Turner shaking hands and being congratulated by a senior figure of the Masons in Sydney for the RTBU's "keeping the trains running in Sydney" and not striking. Basically keeping businesses open. How times have changed since then.

What happens now is anyone's guess. Delays in getting an EBA settlement are

hurting low paid members holding back decent pay rises. They are angry at the Government in NSW and will not take kindly to any retreat by the RTBU Leadership.

Toby Warnes, while previously serving as an ALP apparatchik, is either totally disillusioned with the ALP in NSW or there is another agenda playing out which will be hard to sell to the members. He is definitely an ambitious type. Some of the moves could be about shoring up his place in the line up to a power position in NSW. After all he would have had to get the nod from NSW Unions for the position he now holds. Only time will tell whether the job losses and further privatisation in the pipeline will hurt him.

One thing for certain is that he can't win the battle for hearts and minds through the courts. The membership must be better informed and organised and be part of the solution. Only through a mobilisation of the general membership will pressure be applied. Let's hope he and the other union executives do that. We will have to wait and see which way the leadership jumps. Will they back down and do a compromise deal with the ALP in NSW or will they mobilise the membership and go all out, creating a stronger, more democratic union with better paid and appreciated members. Or are they just stalling for time and playing politics as it's always played in NSW? Industrial action is currently taking place as I write this, but it is haphazard and localised. When will all members take to the streets? They will need our help to win. This will show whether there has been a change.

The ALP has abandoned the Working Class!

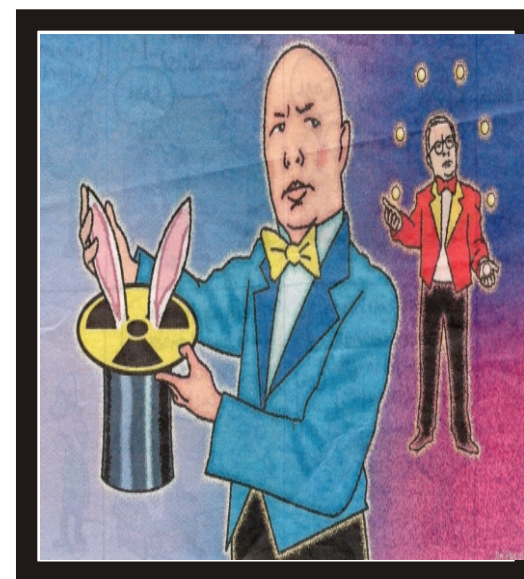
The Minns NSW government legal action to stop industrial action by unions, due to ongoing disputes over pay and conditions seem out of character for the ALP. And so it would seem that the ALP has abandoned the working class. Why? The relationship between the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and trade unions has experienced some turbulence in recent years. Historically, the ALP has been closely aligned with unions, which have played a significant role in shaping the party's policies and providing support during elections. However, this relationship has faced challenges due to various factors. One notable incident was the ALP's decision to cut ties with the CFMEU's construction wing due to allegations of corruption. This move highlighted the party's efforts to distance itself from unions that could potentially damage its reputation. Additionally, the decline in union membership has weakened the influence of unions within the party, leading to a shift in the dynamics of their relationship. Despite these challenges, unions continue to play a crucial role in the ALP's decision-

making processes. The party relies on union support for mobilizing voters and advocating for workers' rights. However, the evolving political landscape and changing priorities have created a rift between the ALP and some unions, leading to tensions and disagreements.

Overall, while the ALP and unions remain interconnected, their relationship is marked by ongoing challenges and adjustments as both entities navigate the complexities of modern politics.

And what are these modern politics? And the answer seems obvious!

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) has increasingly embraced environmental issues, partly due to the influence of the Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN). LEAN is a grass roots network within the ALP that advocates for strong action on climate change and environmental protection. This shift has sometimes created tension with the party's traditional working-class base, particularly in industries like mining



and manufacturing, which may feel threatened by environmental policies. And it looks like it's the turn of transport workers to become threatened! The ALP doesn't support working people any more and hasn't for a while! The time has come for us to no longer support the ALP!

By Railway Jeffrey

Bowen Coal Train Drivers' Campaign

Bowen Coal train drivers in Queensland commence industrial action for new work agreement

WSWS Report: 14/12/24 Over 40 members of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Engineers (AFULE) from the Bowen Rail Company (BRC) have put in place a ban on working overtime and additional shifts. The AFULE claimed that

BRC is attempting to slash wages and conditions in a new enterprise agreement. One hundred percent of members who participated in a ballot on November 26 approved taking industrial action that could include bans on roster changes and overtime, and indefinite stoppages from one minute to 24 hours duration. Bowen Rail Company is a bulk carrier of mineral resources from mines in Queensland to North Queensland export terminals. Its train drivers and engineers are covered by the AFULE (44 members) and the Rail Tram and Bus Union (56 members).

LETTER

Dear Sparks
 We are all waiting on the outcome of the RTBU's EBA campaign fiasco. Other news is that Sydney Trains customer service is now joining train crewing. It's now called Suburban services.
 Railway Johnny

Editorial Continued from page 2

Division of the CFMEU. (See article page 7.)

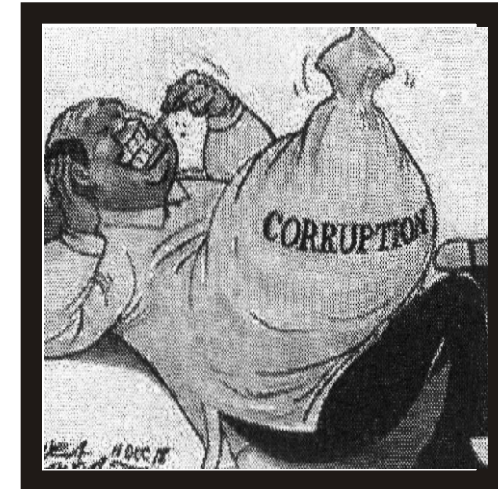
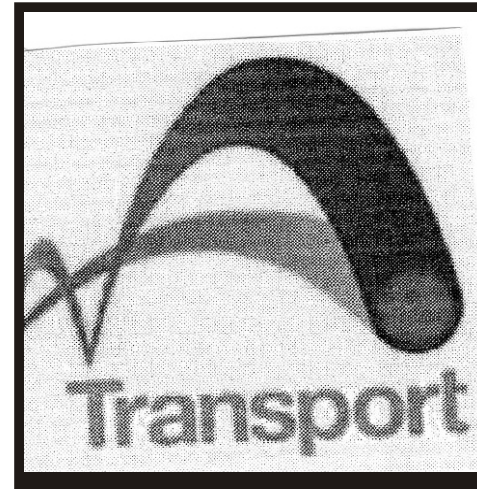
In Sydney Buses we look at the continuing worsening conditions associated with the Merged Rosters associated with the TWU/RTBU Region 6 "Parity Agreement" and EBA 2023 causing a worsening speed up in drivers' jobs and savage cut backs to layover breaks. We also look at problems drivers are having with their pay. We also look at changes to Inner West routes and restoration of the Balmain East wharf ferry service. (See article page 15.)

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

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SPARKS WEB SITE

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Unbelievable! An "Independent Administrator" imposed on the Union!!!!

Warning: Political Satire

On the morning of Monday 7/4/25 the corporate print and on-line media exploded with towering and blazing headlines together with TV, and radio coverage with "Shock Jocks" expressing outrage about massive rorts in the RTBU. There were 4 page spreads in the SMH and the Telegraph print media. The media frenzy intriguingly portrayed a certain "saintly" and heroic RTBU National Secretary Alex Claassens as a whistle blower who courageously spilled the beans on the rorts. He blamed a certain Toby "the 24 hour rail service & 5 minutes strike stunt man" Warnes NSW RTBU Secretary and David Babineau Secretary of the NSW Bus & Tram Division as the evil masterminds behind it.

The "saintly" Claassens was quoted in the media reports, "As you should know my members always obey the law of the land. They were outraged and couldn't believe how corrupt the union had become as a result of the machinations of Toby and David. They were behind union real estate scams, the ripping off members union funds such as surpluses from the Bus Drivers Traffic Fine and Picnic fund for a slush fund and a vintage wines collection and cellar at the union office! Plus innumerable other rorts.

The most expensive vintage wines had even been air freighted from the most ancient and illustrious vineyards and wineries in France. Costing the members \$3,000 a



Secretary Warnes, in big trouble! Snapped on his way to face the wrath of “Independent Administrator” MaGuire and a change of uniform!

bottle! Its unbelievable what's been going on! The branch officials had inexpensive “beer tastes” before David became Bus Division Secretary. Since taking office he led Branch officials astray. Resulting in them acquiring sophisticated palettes. Craving the constant tipping of expensive vintage wines. Threatening to bankrupt the union! David has encouraged union officials attendance at wine tasting events and hanging out at exclusive wine bars. They have had little time for union stuff such as helping get through DOO (Driver Only Operation), privatisation of the railways, speed ups and job losses through productivity gains and generalising the new merged rosters/Optimisation in Sydney buses from Region 6 to all other Regions. I never trusted them.

I couldn't believe that Toby could be slotted into such a prestigious and powerful position as NSW State Secretary of the Union. When Toby first became a Branch official I thought he was a naive, innocent lamb. Now I have been horrified to learn, he was a wolf in sheep's clothing! Toby can't even give a masonic handshake. Both of them should be locked up with the key thrown away for their crimes against the

members! No more fancy, expensive wines at the members' expense for Babineau!”

Other media outlets also spoke darkly of the rigging of RTBU union elections from 2014, 2018, and 2022 by certain union officials and ALP networks in the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission).

A Controversial “Independent Administrator” is Appointed!

The Albo and Minns Governments were galvanised into action. Bizarrely they appointed a certain Darryl MaGuire colourful politician and business personality as the “Independent Administrator”. Gladys Berejiklian was slotted in as his girl Friday, administrative assistant and corporate/neoliberal muse. They had some black marks in their records but were viewed as having turned over a “new leaf”.

Members were stunned by the news of an “Independent Administrator” being imposed. They never suspected the union office could be involved in all manner of “illegal” activities and rorts. They thought the union always “obeyed the law of the land”. They would never take any “illegal” industrial action over enterprise agreements. Secretary Warnes had organised a 3 minute rail “strike” to protest the imposition of the “Independent Administrator”. He had even pledged that his members in the NSW railways would be delighted to work 24 hour shifts without penalty rates, meal and rest breaks as they had become acclimatised to 12 hour shifts as a “temporary” measure for the 2000 Olympics. They could obviously cope with longer shift lengths in exchange for the Government backing off with the union takeover. However to no avail.

Union Reps have nasty surprises at the Union Office

When coming to the union office for the monthly union executive meeting some weeks following the “Administrator” takeover, union reps were stunned to see luxurious renovations to the entrance. Featuring ultra expensive Carrara marble stairs and columns with costly wallpaper featuring gold thread and the finest of Persian carpets. The reps expressed delight at the Administrator's wise expenditure of members' funds and dues on the expensive renovations. They were then astonished to be greeted by new look David Babineau, former NSW Bus & Tram



Division Secretary at the door way. He was attired in a doorman/commissionaire uniform and hat, dripping with fake gold tassels and epaulettes. Bizarrely he was also holding a sandwich board, announcing “Grand Opening of New Union Casino!” He had been sacked on the spot by the administrator following the union takeover, but as a result of an ALP godfathers' deal he had been slotted into a lower echelon position on a much lower level of remuneration. Requiring him to moon light in his old job as a bus driver, now in Transit Systems Region 6. He had been absolutely delighted with 4 am starts and the new optimised merged rosters. Courtesy of the RTBU/TWU Parity Agreement and EBA 2023.

Babineau had displayed a fawning and obsequious attitude to some immaculately attired sleek fat cats sporting \$5,000 business suits who had preceded the reps into the building. However, his attitude abruptly changed when confronting the union reps. Brazenly barring their entrance with the sandwich board!

“Boys, you'll have to make a U-turn!” He yelled. “The “Independent Administrator” has ordered that you now have to access the union office, by the “tradesman entrance” now! This entrance is only for your betters and high rollers for our new “24 hours

opening” RTBU and Crown Casino jointly owned venture, such as the likes of Gina Rinehart, James Packer and their retinues. “Independent Administrator” MaGuire has converted most of the union office for a Casino with a roulette room. He has even leased out space for a new fully owned ACTU subsidiary run by Sally McManus, “24 hours Opening Corporate Gentlemen's club and escorts for every corporate occasion”. He says the union's broke from all the rorts by Babineau and Warnes, requiring urgent extracurricular income streams!”

When the reps had marched through the “tradesman entrance” they were confronted by another bizarre sight. Toby Warnes, of all people attired in a swank croupier's outfit! No more a drab uniform emblazoned with the RTBU Logo! Like Babineau he had been sacked on the spot as RTBU NSW Secretary as part of the “house and corruption cleaning”, by the newly appointed Administrator. Unlike the “saintly” whistle blower Alex Claassens who was allowed to remain as RTBU National Secretary. On account of his public spiritedness as a whistle blower and notoriety in the media he had even been tapped on the shoulder by ALP Godfathers for a safe ALP parliamentary seat. Warnes had wriggled back into the union organisation but at a much lower “slater” level. However, he required moonlighting as a station assistant in the railways to maintain his mortgage repayments. He confronted the reps, in the stairway. Telling them, “boys, the new Administrator has now directed that union executive meetings have to be held in that dingy, dark alley at the back of the union office. If it pours with rain you'll just have to put up some umbrellas!” The reps were outraged about being excluded from the traditional venue of the conference room and started threatening to cause a riot. “Sorry boys, “Independent Administrator” Maguire has had the conference room converted into the roulette room. Its all “completely legal!” Warnes yelled over the loud cursing and swearing by the enraged reps.

Ugly Confrontation between Union Reps & New “Independent Administrator” in the Union Office!

Darryl MaGuire had been enjoying a “fringe benefit” of his new job, provided by one of Sally's nubile gals and overheard the commotion. He hurriedly became attired in his expensive business suit with holstered gun and rushed out of his office to confront the reps surrounded by security guards in case of a “bikie blow back”. MaGuire started yelling at the reps, “Boys, haven't you heard I'm running the union now? Don't think I've been bludging since being appointed as Administrator! I've been working my guts out! I've had to put in 24 hour shifts without meal breaks,

rest breaks, layover breaks and penalty rates to clean up the all pervasive rorts, corruption and feather bedding in the union office. Like Toby here, was proposing for his members in the railways to make Sydney City of Business! Your days of slurping expensive wines and roses at the members' expense are over! I've put a new broom through the union office, sweeping away the rorts and feather bedding!"

He continued, "I'm calling the shots in the union now! If you don't like it, you'll have to launch a High Court Case to get Babineau and Warnes back in the union saddle. It'll cost the members multi millions for the legal eagles. Perhaps on your days off, you could help Babineau and Warnes with doing some busking and pan handling around Central Station and Sydney and Newcastle bus depots. Maybe even heading off to Unions NSW offices in Sussex Street, where you could way lay ALP Godfathers for a few dollars. Go to Crown Casino and the Sydney Opera House to put the hat around for kindly billionaires and CEO's to raise hefty donations for the legal expenses. Perhaps even with a sandwich board sign "Can you spare a few million for hard working "law abiding" former Trade Union Officials down on their luck?" What about Babineau pulling his weight in the campaign? Surely he would be delighted to have his precious collection of expensive vintage wines raffled for the cause?"

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

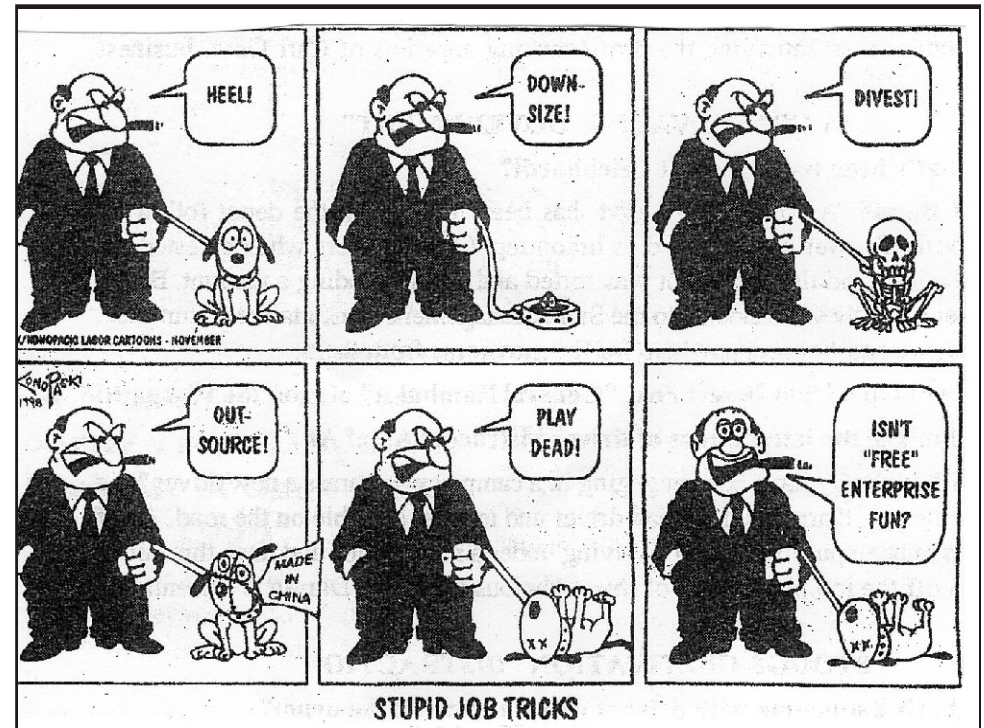
Leichhardt Depot News

Rabid Behaviour

In 2024, one of our drivers has taken it on themselves to regularly report self observed traffic infringements by other drivers to management. These are then followed up by checking bus cameras. Whatever is motivating this person is beyond us. BUT IT IS A MASSIVE DOGACT!

Pay Problems

Pays at Leichhardt are regularly topics in the (depot) lunch room. Recently long service non accrual was discovered. Then eventually fixed. Also some drivers weren't being paid their bendy (Artic) allowance. One driver was told to get his old pay slips and go through them on his own time. Really?! He objected and all drivers pay have to be looked at.



Rotten Food Episode

The great rotten food saga of 2024 (out of depot meal rooms and no cold storage in the bus) has finally been solved by management (9 months late). We all got a cold storage bag and cooler brick under our Christmas trees from Santa (aka management).

By Mr "On the Buses"

Burwood Depot News

Sparks: What has been the situation with the merged rosters associated with the RTBU/TWU "parity agreement" associated with EBA 2023 at the depot?

Burwood Driver: In late November, everything here with the rosters is up in the air. Drivers have generally been kept in the dark. The introduction of the new rosters seems connected with a replacement to the current HASTUS computer system which was introduced in State Transit many years ago. The bosses seem to be constantly putting back and putting back the implementation of the new rosters and

the new computer system. Drivers have been told by management that with the new set up they won't be issued with daily journals with their roster. They may have in mind putting up the rosters in the depot like was done for many years when we were under State Transit. Today, I don't think such an approach will work due to many sudden adjustments to drivers' rosters. I have heard the duty officers are unhappy with the new rosters/set up. Many drivers are hoping the new system/rosters is never implemented. Part timers won't be affected with the new rosters system.

The plan of the Government/Transport for NSW is to set precedents with the new merged rosters in Region 6, then generalise it to other regions. They intend to standardise conditions/rosters through out Sydney Buses.

Sparks: What are your thoughts on the Minns ALPNSW Government?

BD: I have been impressed in one area, Minns promised as part of his party's election campaign to maintain our "home and duty" Opal which was under threat. Since being elected, his government has not welched on this electoral promise.

Kingsgrove Depot News

Sparks: What's the situation at the depot since the implementation of the Merged Rosters associated with the RTBU/TWU "Parity Agreement" and EBA 2023?

Kingsgrove Driver: Since the implementation of the new type of rosters, many at the depot have been extremely angry over them, particularly in regard to the time frames of their rosters and being compelled to work longer shifts. As a result of many unable to cope with adverse affects of the new rosters, we have been seeing many leaving and an influx of new drivers. A constant passing parade of new faces.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the situation with the lay over breaks since the implementation of the new merged rosters?

KD: Its an absolutely terrible situation we are facing with the layover breaks now. Prior to the new rosters, for the run to Drummoyne we had a 20 minutes layover break at the terminus. Now we only get 8 minutes. In the case of the run to Bankstown, we now only 5 minutes at the terminus for our layover break.

Tempe Depot News

Sparks: What is the situation at the depot?

Tempe Driver: We are continuing to be hard hit by the new rosters and changes to runs. Particularly inadequate running times and layover breaks for routes and the unevenness of run lengths. I've noticed more short tuns. Particularly, this situation is manifest with the 430. It previously went from Sydenham to Martin Place, now its just goes to Railway Square. Its a round trip with out provision of adequate layover

breaks.

445 Bus Route to Balmain East Wharf & Balmain West Ferry

Since the former government cut the 445 bus route to Balmain East in 2019, peninsula residents have been left with unreliable services and poor public transport connections.

Thanks to pressure from our community, the NSW Labor Government has committed to reinstating the 445 bus to Balmain East. They have opened public consultation on four options to help make this happen. Option A is to restore the 445 route to operate to and from Balmain East Wharf together with route 442.

This is a huge step in the right direction. Community pressure has moved them this far, now we need to see this through.

Balmain West Ferry will return to service in mid-2025. This is a huge win for our community and it wouldn't have been possible without your support. I've been working closely with residents to push the NSW Labor Government to keep their promise and return this ferry for our community, so it's fantastic to make this long overdue announcement.

When this ferry is up and running again next year it will help relieve congestion from the Rozelle Interchange and ease local traffic. K.Shetty

CANBERRA BUS NEWS

Wildcat Strike at Canberra Buses

15/11/24 Canberra bus drivers walked off the job in a snap strike on Friday, leaving morning public transport users stranded at bus stops.

The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) said the unprotected strike action was due to a high number of assaults against their members.

Transport Canberra said light rail and special needs buses would run as normal, but the strike could last all day.

Late in the day, the ACT government said services would return to normal on Saturday, November 16.

"A hearing was held with the Fair Work Commission this afternoon where the Transport Workers Union has agreed for its members to return to work from tomorrow," the statement said.

"While no bus services will be operating tonight, Transport Canberra's transport officers will be working across the network to provide assistance to customers.

Transport Canberra would like to express its sincere apologies and acknowledges the inconvenience felt by many in the community today."

TWU ACT Sub-Branch Secretary Klaus Pinkas said at least 40 assaults on drivers were reported each month and the strike action was a cry for help.

"Drivers are getting assaulted on a daily basis," Mr Pinkas said.

"We have drivers having Coke cans thrown at them, we have drivers getting punched, we've got drivers getting spat on.

"Just yesterday afternoon a driver had a bag of fish heads poured on them which is new to me, but these sorts of things are just ongoing and there's no response and nothing done from Transport Canberra management."

Transport Canberra operations manager Ian McGlinn apologised for the disruption to commuters and said the ACT government had been working to advise schools and other people dependent on the services about the snap strike.

"Until we can get into the Fair Work Commission this morning and seek an injunction, or some orders, best plans today are there will be no bus services," Mr McGlinn said on Friday morning.

Callers to ABC Radio Canberra said some cars had pulled over at bus stops to advise people waiting for buses of the strike.

'It's disappointing': Steel

ACT Transport Minister Chris Steel criticised the strike on Friday and said Transport Canberra had been looking at all options to get buses back on the road.

"It's disappointing that today the many Canberrans who depend on bus services to get to school or work are being left behind," Mr Steel said on Friday afternoon.

"I've asked Transport Canberra to pursue all options available, including through the Fair Work Commission, to restore bus services and to ensure that they remain reliable."

Mr Steel said the government was committed to improving safety of bus drivers, including through the introduction of transport officers with powers to address anti-social behaviour.

"Everyone deserves respect at work, and the government is committed to ensuring safety for all drivers and passengers," Mr Steel said.

"ACT Labor committed at the election to introduce a new team of transport officers on our bus routes to promote safety and we will deliver that commitment.

"We developed that commitment after meeting with drivers to hear their concerns. We also committed to review legislative powers for transport officers to address anti-social behaviour."

Some drivers left town

At a Fair Work Commission hearing on Friday afternoon, TWU legal officer Sophia

Nasser said the "stoppage" was not industrial action, but a strike based on fears about the "imminent and serious risk to employees".

WSWS Report 23/11/24

The government had said it would commit to installing cabin safety screens in all buses, provide de-escalation training and increase the number of transit officers who will maintain a visible presence on buses and at interchanges.

Tasmanian Bus News

Tasmanian government bus drivers begin industrial action for pay rise

WSWS Report: More than 200 bus drivers from state-owned commuter service Metro Tasmania began protected industrial action on October 10 in their campaign for better pay and conditions. Members of the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) put in place a "work-to-rule," meaning they are not performing extra duties, along with bans on attending supervisors' meetings and various paperwork. A union spokesperson said the action will continue indefinitely and be escalated if negotiation with the state Liberal government fails to make progress.

Drivers are concerned that low pay has led to a shortage of drivers, resulting in the permanent cancellation of dozens of bus routes in August last year. The government issued a temporary 10 percent pay rise outside the enterprise agreement in September last year. While this stemmed the exodus of workers, it did not boost the workforce.

Workers are demanding that last year's temporary pay increase be locked into the new agreement and increased, along with improved safety.

Metro Tasmania bus union calls off strikes in return for talks

WSWS Report: The Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), representing bus drivers at the government-owned Metro Tasmania, called off 2-hour strike action planned for Wednesday and Thursday at Burnie and Launceston respectively, after the state Liberal government agreed to re-enter wage negotiations

Bus drivers in Metro's northern and southern networks are opposed to the government's proposed enterprise agreement which they said would see them

working longer for a sub-inflation 2 percent pay rise. The current consumer price index (CPI) rate is 2.8 percent.

The RTBU wants the government to address the chronic driver shortage, increase wages, improve driver safety and give an assurance that the public-owned bus system will not be put in private hands.

Drivers have imposed various work bans, including working in full compliance with policies and procedures, not attending meetings with operations supervisors, not attending meetings in personal time and not completing various types of paperwork.

Metro Tasmania drivers on strike again to demand better pay and conditions

WSWS Report: Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) bus drivers from the government-owned Metro Tasmania struck again this week to demand an improved pay offer in the government’s proposed enterprise agreement. Drivers in Launceston and Burnie stopped work for two hours on Wednesday and drivers in Hobart held two-hour stoppages at 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Friday.

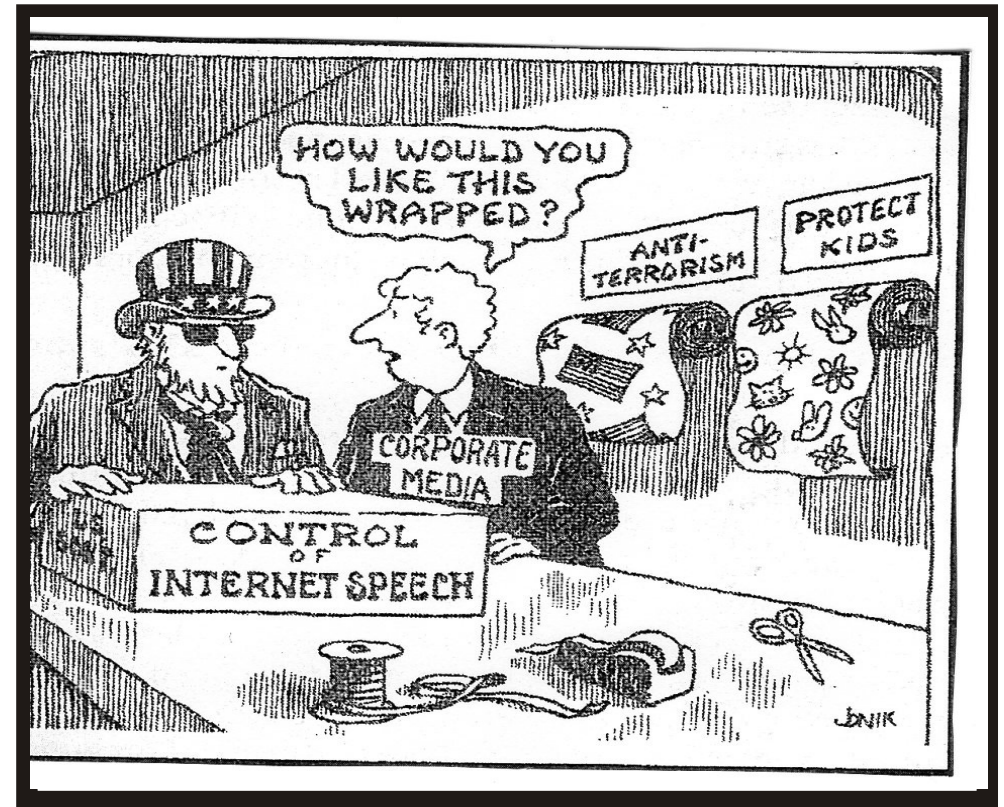
Over 200 drivers began industrial action across Metro’s networks on October 10. They put in place indefinite work bans that include a “work-to-rule,” meaning they are not performing extra duties, along with bans on attending supervisors’ meetings and various paperwork. They held limited two-hour strikes on October 24 and November 8 but called off strikes planned for last week while negotiations continued. The drivers have rejected the state Liberal government’s proposed work agreement, which they say would mean longer working hours for a sub-inflation 2 percent pay rise. The current consumer price index (CPI) rate is 2.8 percent. The RTBU wants the government to address the chronic driver shortage, increase wages, improve driver safety and give an assurance that the public-owned bus system will not be put in private hands.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of Sparks we conclude our story of West Coast Railway. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Sparks: What was the situation regarding West Coast Railway in 2014?

Rastus: By April 2014 with new trains being built for V/Line, local committees on the Warrnambool line were asking when West Coast were going to build new trains. The answer was NO. West Coast would have to obtain a Government Grant or obtain



finance to build new rolling stock. In 2009 it was planned to have one operator operate all Country trains in Victoria.

Ichabod: V/Line had returned to Government ownership and the main lines in South Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon were being upgraded for new services which were to commence in 2006.

Roscoe: In May 2006 the Victorian Railway Regulator grounded West Coast Mainline Locomotives.

Rastus: Their mainline locomotives were former Victorian Railways S and B class locomotives which West Coast purchased in May 1993. Cracks had been discovered in the locomotives which had to be repaired. V/Line had A class locomotives as well as Freight Australia of a similar design. These locomotives in V/Line and Freight Australia were examined and were fit to operate.

Clarence: As regards West Coast Railway, with one exception it replaced the passenger trains with Buses.

Ichabod: The one train which operated was the evening train to Warrnambool and

morning train from Warrnambool to Melbourne. This train operated using V/Line equipment with V/Line staff. Later this service was changed to the morning train from Melbourne with the locomotive return.

Ichabod: It was rumoured the West Coast approached the Government to see if the Government would finance repairs to their locomotives. The Government refused. West Coast told the Government, they would hand back the contract at the end of August 2004.

Clarence: The Government announced that V/Line would assume operations of the service from September 1. The Government also announces the operating staff would be offered positions (subject to suitability) at V/Line. Length of service would be from commencement of service at West Coast.

Sparks: What were the issues with Head Office Staff and Drivers?

Ichabod: Problems arose as it was discovered that some Head Office Staff used to be Conductors during busy periods. These people were also taken over by V/Line.

Roscoe: The Drivers employed by West Coast were employed by Freight Australia who was acquired by Pacific National. Some of these Drivers have since been employed by V/Line.

Clarence: Maintenance Staff at Warrnambool and Ballarat were absorbed into EDI. Warrnambool staff had to transfer to Ballarat or Melbourne.

Rastus: New Zealand operations were absorbed by Toll Rail who resumed operation of Inter City Trains. In 2024, these trains are operated by Kiwi Rail which is a Government Operation.

Sparks: What was the situation with Hoys?

Clarence: Hoys announced they would hand the Shepparton operation back to V/Line in July 2004. Hoys staff who were trained by V/Line had to do a half day course where they were issued with V/Line uniforms and from July 1 were V/Line employees. Same seniority from when they commenced employment with Hoys.

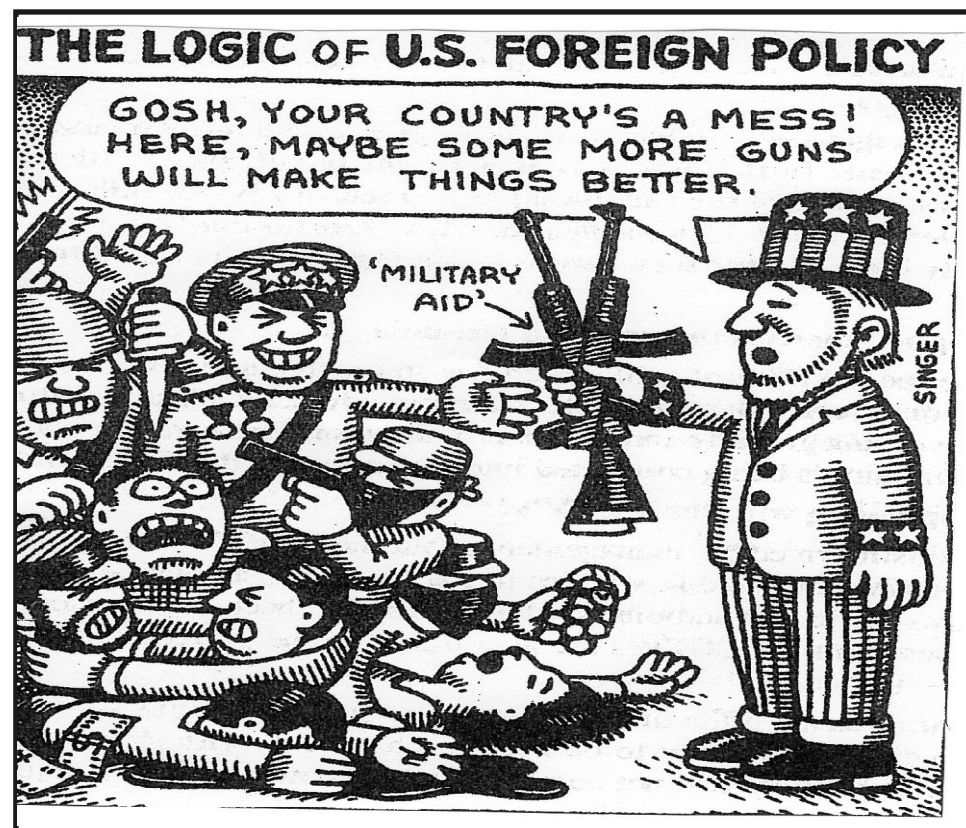
Ichabod: All West Coast staff who operated trains had to return to Conductors class, for a four week training course to be brought up to V/Line standards. West Coast Conductor Training was four days.

Clarence: The result was V/Line took over the remaining trains for one month before the official handover date.

Roscoe: Due to shortages of rolling stock, the evening service to Warrnambool with the return morning service was combined with a Geelong service. This arrangement was to continue until August 2006. The mid afternoon train resumed the second week of September 2006.

Rastus: One locomotive was handed over to V/Line in June 2006. Given an overhaul and resumed service on the line.

Ichabod: Five carriages including the carriages modified for mobility aides were handed over to V/Line.



Roscoe: All remaining rolling stock were sold to various Railways with carriages acquired by some Vintage Railways and Freight Railways to be used as crew relay vans. Locomotives went to various leasing companies and can be seen today running around on freight trains

Sparks: What is the situation with the Warrnambool line in 2024?

Ichabod: Warrnambool yard has been remodeled due to Velocity trains taking over the service in the next twelve months. There are four trains a day in workshops with three on weekends.

Rastus: Beyond Geelong a number of level crossings have been eliminated. The track has been upgraded with two automated crossing devices installed. The West Coast carriage workshops have been demolished. They didn't last ten years. Freight trains operate there weekly.

Clarence: West Coast Railway was used by the Liberal Party when in office to promote privatisation. West Coast were excellent with promotion and marketing of

the service. V/Line has since copied some of West Coast marketing. Finally V/Line supervises the accreditation and operation of Heritage trains.

In this issue of Sparks, Drivers, Conductors, Station Staff will discuss current events at V/Line. As in previous issues of Sparks, names have been changed.

Sparks: Can you explain to members V/Line policy regarding Social Media?

Fergus: One word, no discussion on Social Media about V/Line or talking to fellow employees and contacting Radio Stations.

Florence: V/Line was embarrassed when a report about twelve Velocity trains being withdrawn from service due to drinking water problems occurred.

Rastus: This report appeared on 3 AW news a few weeks ago. I heard the report on the 5pm news one evening, but it was quickly removed.

Clarence: No other details were reported, but pictures of Velocity trains operating around the system were circulating on Local Media with masking tape covering the drinking fountains. A report on these trains will be reported in a future issue.

Sparks: What is the situation regarding trains on the Shepparton line?

Roscoe: Given the last four years a fair amount of upgrade works are being carried out on the line. A new bridge has been constructed at Stratford and there have been a number of level crossings removed in the Metropolitan Area, as well as a new station at Pakenham East.

Rastus: Velocity trains are now operating all trains to Bairnsdale. Locomotive hauled trains no longer operate. The Velocity trains do not have Buffet service. The only Velocity trains with Buffet facilities operate on the Albury line.

Florence: Recently the matter of Rail Shut Downs was raised in State Parliament by the local Member of Parliament for Gippsland who is a member of the National Party.

Fergus: The National Party member said because of the various occupations Gippsland line passengers are raising a fair amount of objections.

Sparks: Where was the National Party in 1993 when the service was cut back to Sale?

Roscoe: They were no where to be seen. In 1993 you did not have a word from the local National Party Member for East Gippsland over the closure. Despite objections from Branch Members at the time, this Member did nothing. In 1999 local branch members tried to remove this person from Parliament. It failed.

Archie: At the 1999 State Election an independent member defeated him. The other issue that removed him was "compulsory competitive tendering in Local Government." You see Local Government employees did not like their jobs being tendered every four years.

Florence: As a result of Independent Members of Parliament holding the balance of power in State Parliament in 2001, it was rumoured that Passenger Trains to

Bairnsdale would return. This was achieved in 2004.

Sparks: What is the other issue regarding these occupations?

Rastus: This the issue of closures on weekends due to the running of test trains for the new Metro Tunnel.

Roscoe: The tunnel will be open in 2025 and it runs from South Yarra to South Kensington. There have been a number of weekend occupations over the last twelve months resulting in the closures which affect Gippsland services.

Archie: The lines affected are the Sunbury line from North Melbourne to Sunshine and the Dandenong line from Caulfield to Melbourne. When testing occurs buses replace trains from North Melbourne to Sunshine. V/Line trains to Bendigo can still operate as V/Line has its own line to Sunshine. With V/Line Gippsland Service trains terminate at Pakenham East with Buses to Melbourne. This is what's making passengers upset. Due to the removal of point work on Caulfield V/Line, services cannot operate. They used to operate over the Frankston line if occupations were on the Dandenong line to Caulfield as well as Pakenham Cranbourne trains.

Florence: Suburban passengers are able to travel to Caulfield where they change to a Frankston train to continue their journeys. Some of our V/Line employees who live on the line when traveling from Caulfield to South Yarra have noticed no test train operating. Another complaint from these employees is no notices are placed at stations on the Cranbourne Pakenham line.

Archie: The notice maybe over their mobile phones but there are passengers who do not use a mobile phone and are not on Social Media. Because there is no bus replacement it is not deemed as an occupation. You only find out on the day of travel.

Fergus: There are fourteen trains each way on both Saturday and Sunday so why doesn't V/Line Management negotiate with Metro Trains by arranging for V/Line trains to operate over the lines between tests? This could be worked out as it is an hour between trains. A path could be arranged.

Florence: This solution may work. We do not know of signaling issues. With the tunnel due to open next year, there will be future closures before the opening. Why doesn't V/Line do a leaflet drop on the Gippsland trains explaining these occupations? We wonder?

Sparks: What about Retired Employees Paid Travel?

Fergus: As a result of the EBA being signed off, any employee who started after August 28, 1999 is now entitled to a Retirement Pass as well as their spouse or partner, after completing 20 years service.

Florence: If an employee started at Metro Trains or Yarra Trams after 1999 and transferred to V/Line after a few years is entitled to a pass after 20 years service.

Sparks: Once again we have run out of space.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say. The restoration of the Retirement Pass corrects an injustice to employees who commenced service after 1999. If you want

to comment about V/Line management and their injustices just send a letter to Sparks.

Sydney light rail workers impose bans in pay dispute

9/11/24 WSW Report: About 250 Sydney Light Rail workers are taking industrial action in their dispute with light rail operator Transdev for a new enterprise agreement. Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members imposed a 10km/h speed limit on all light rail services from Monday. The RTBU said the speed limit will be lifted if the state Labor government cut passenger fares to 50 cents. The current minimum fare is \$3.20.

The action follows a 24-hour strike in June and peak-hour strikes in July after 18 months of negotiations with Transdev failed to reach agreement. Workers want a 23 percent pay increase over four years and an additional five days' sick leave. Transdev has offered an 18 percent pay increase over four years. The union has called on the NSW Labor government to intervene, claiming that Transdev has refused to hold further talks.

Sydney light-rail workers strike again for pay increase

WSWS report 27/7/24 : RTBU members, employed by commuter transport contractor Transdev, which operates Sydney's light-rail network, began a week of stoppages on Monday as part of their campaign for a pay rise. Workers stopped work for three hours each day during the morning and afternoon commuter peak hours.

The action followed a 24-hour stoppage on June 12 after rejecting Transdev's pay offer of an 18 percent pay increase in a four-year agreement only 4.5 percent annually. Workers said the offer did not compensate for huge increases in the cost of living and want 23 percent over four years, plus an additional five-days sick leave. An RTBU spokesman told a Sydney radio station, however, that the union was willing to negotiate a deal if Transdev made a revised pay offer of 20 percent.

Sydney light rail union suspends pay dispute industrial action

WSW Report: 16/11/24 The Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), representing 250 workers at Sydney Light Rail, suspended industrial action planned to commence on Monday after the state Labor government did a temporary deal with the union. Workers had intended to impose a 10km/h speed limit on all light rail services to force the government to intervene in their dispute with their employer Transdev over its

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: That no person employed by the union should earn more than the average income of the membership.

1. The Spokespeople should have no executive power f all decisions should be made by the union membership in the course of mass meetings.

2. The Spokespeople have no executive power f all decisions should be made by the union membership in 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.

proposed enterprise agreement.

The union said the 10km/h would be lifted if the government cut passenger fares to 50 cents. The current minimum fare is \$3.20. The government agreed to give passengers four days of free travel from Monday (November 11) if the union suspended industrial action and restarted negotiations with Transdev. RTBU and Transdev met on Wednesday without coming to an agreement. According to the union Transdev has refused to lock in another meeting.

Transdev and the union have been in negotiations for a new agreement for over 18 months. The union claimed that Transdev broke off negotiations three months ago.

Workers want a 23 percent pay increase over four years and an additional five days' sick leave. Transdev has offered an 18 percent pay increase over four years.

RTBU announced on Thursday that members were taking part in partial work bans that will not disrupt tram operations. The union said Transdev responded by issuing workers with lockout letters.

