

No. 177

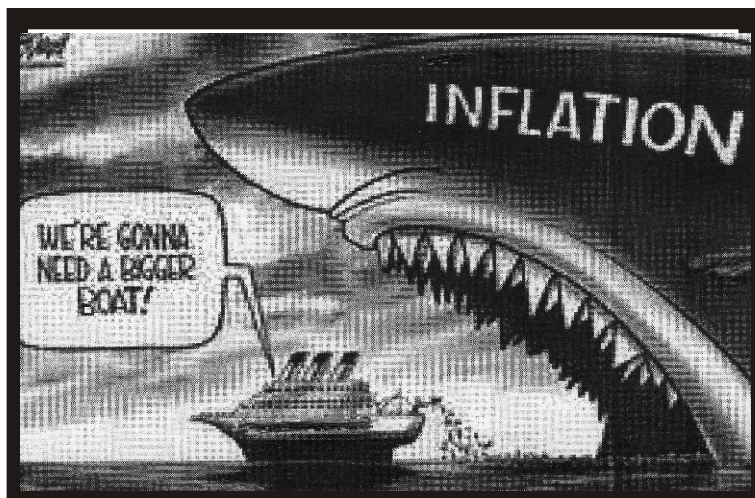
Sept.- Oct.2024

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**The Combined NSW Rail Unions EBA Campaign: Not another re-run of the failed Rail EBA 2022 Campaign? Nasties ahead in the clauses, below soaring cost of living wage rises and camouflage for new DOO with NIF push late Nov.-Dec!**

**Establish grass roots committees to seize the driver's seat of the campaign to build a united campaign across public transport for the "Real Demands!" Heavy Rail for the Bankstown Line!**



NSW Rail News P.3; Fee for Service Unionism P.3; Victorian Railway News P.18 ; Sydney Buses News P. 15 ; New Zealand Rail News P. 26; Scottish Rail News P.24 ; Letters P. 10 ; "Young Man, There's Room at the Top...." P.11 ; Rail EBA Campaign P. 7 :

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

### Combined NSW Rail Unions EBA Campaign

Some of the most important news is the "NSW Combined Rail Unions EBA Campaign," It has already commenced with a regressive note with the union officials refusing to call mass union stop work meetings to discuss the log of claims and industrial action, to head off consideration of opposing the closure of the Bankstown line and its conversion to a Metro and the bogus NIF (New Intercity Fleet) Deed. In this edition we throw much light on the back ground to the new EBA campaign and the below soaring inflation demands. We also put the spotlight on a range of "nasties" in the fine print of the EBA clauses. Adversely affecting train crews and station staff. An important likely hidden agenda of the EBA campaign is to camouflage and to divert attention away a new DOO (Driver Only Operation) push with the NIF (New Intercity Fleet) later in the year opening the floodgates to the generalisation of DOO on other train types and privatisation.

Rather than a rerun of the failed 2022 EBA campaign , "grass roots" committees could be established to help build a united campaign across public transport: Rail, Buses, Trams & Ferries, to achieve the "real demands." (See articles pages 7 and 10.)

Another important issue we are focusing upon in this edition is "Fee for Service Unionism". We expose it as a ploy to further finance the union hierarchy, maintain a passive defacto union membership and the destructive impact of "enterprise bargaining". (See article page 3.)

In this edition we focus on how in Sydney Buses in Region 6, anger is building up over an important outcome of EBA 2023 and the associated "RTBU/TWU Parity Agreement" - the new merged rosters and management's new savage "Optimisation" corner cutting drive. Setting precedents for EBA's in other regions. Why not a united campaign with other public transport sectors to tackle this issue and others? Meanwhile we also focus on serious on-the-road problems and an important corporate hidden agenda associated with the new Rozelle Interchange and congestion on Oxford Street. (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](http://www.sparksweb.org)

To subscribe, the damage if \$5 for a year's sub. Please make out postal orders to Rebel Worker. Sparks is published by the Sydney Local of the Network for Democratic Unionism. To subscribe to Rebel Worker. Paper of the Network for Democratic Unionism, subs are \$12 pa. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007

**SPARKS WEB SITE: [www.sparksweb.org](http://www.sparksweb.org)**

## N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

# Why “Fee for Service Unionism” is a Terrible Idea

By Crimson Coconut



Newly non-elected NSW RTBU Secretary Toby Warne announced publicly on radio that the union had recently gained agreement from the Minns Labor Government at the last State Conference, amongst some other progressive concessions, that they would support charging a fee to non-members who wished to receive wage rises or improved conditions arising from an agreement with the union.

The Fair Work Commission’s Act would contradict this position for obvious reasons.

I quote:

“Bargaining Service Fees

1. An industrial association, or an officer or member of an industrial association, must not:

- 3. demand; or
- 4. purport to demand; or
- 5. do anything that would:

- 1. have the effect of demanding; or
- 2. purport to have the effect of demanding;

2. payment of a bargaining services fee.

3. A bargaining services fee is a fee (however described) payable:

- 1. to an industrial association; or
- 2. to someone in lieu of an industrial association;
- 4. wholly or partly for the provision, or purported provision, of bargaining services, but does not include membership fees.

5. Bargaining services are services provided by, or on behalf of, an industrial association in relation to an enterprise agreement, or a proposed enterprise agreement (including in relation to bargaining for, or the making, approval, operation, variation or termination of, the enterprise agreement, or proposed enterprise agreement).

Exception for fees payable under contract

6. Subsection (1) does not apply if the fee is payable to the industrial association under a contract for the provision of bargaining services.

What is the protection?

An industrial association (such as a union) cannot charge non-members for bargaining services in relation to a proposed enterprise agreement which will also cover the non-members.”

It’s not that we necessarily agree with the Fair Work Commission, however it would require a change of legislation to be able to charge a fee. So statements about State Government support don't have much meaning.

However there are more compelling arguments for not accepting bureaucratic fee-for-service unionism per se.

One of the arguments put forward by the union for the fee are the “countless hours” that the union puts into bargaining process. They say the union should be compensated in monetary terms for this time. Let me say at the outset that organisers and officials are already paid well above the median wage of the people that they represent and in most cases work less hours. As workers we don't begrudge them that. Often though these are non-elected officials that are paid.

Our idea of unionism is not about how much money the union takes in, even though it is essential for day today functioning, but how well it prepares it's shop floor members to stand up and fight back. How effective it is in bettering their members lives and communities, how those same members and communities interact with the Union and feel as they are part of it matters.

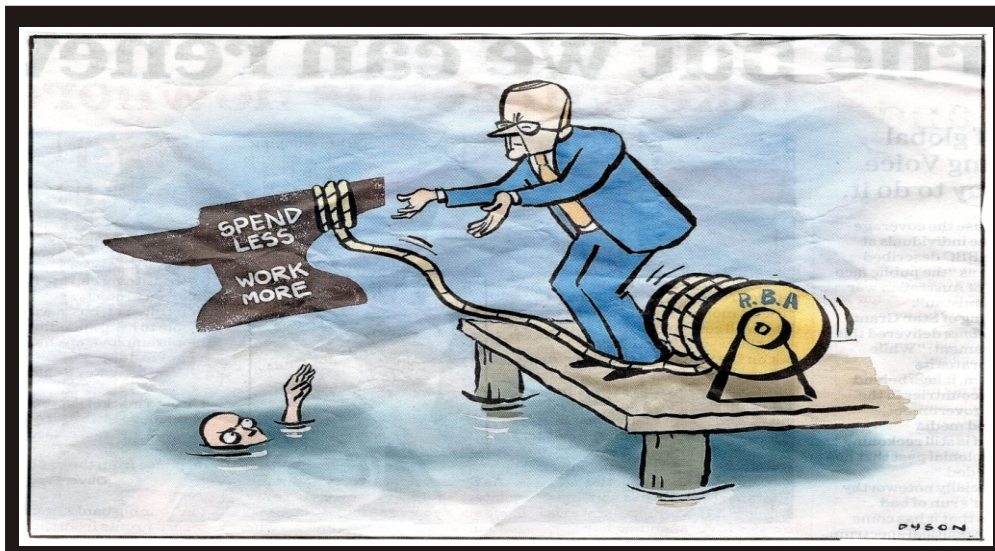
Fee-for-service unionism is the opposite of that. It says to workers, you pay your fees, we’ll provide a service by trying to get the best deal for you. It's exactly how the union hierarchy want it. It provides no incentive for fee paying non-members to lift a finger to help themselves, their union or their fellow workers. The union on the other hand can go about it's secrecy and dealing without having to consult members and non-members alike.

The idea that non-members are somehow “free loaders” on the Union are absurd. Everyone should have the choice to join or not join whatever organisation they wish. It would also be prudent for non-members to join unions based on their class consciousness and their commitment to their collective power with fellow workers than any monetary reward they might receive for paying the fee. This would make it a very uncommitted undemocratic Union, which would just be a shop front selling a particular product, i.e. “bargaining for you”. A bureaucratic shop front collecting the rent perhaps?

But unions should be much more than that. They should be inclusively educating the non-members on workers struggle, solidarity, openness and democratic organising. Unions also have a duty in the larger community to improving the lives of all working people, not just members. By doing this non-members would see the moral imperative to join and partake actively in unions.

There are many other reasons why non-members are non-members refusing to pay a fee. There have been people in the past that are not members due to being expelled from the union, had disagreements with the union bureaucracy, or had policy differences for whatever reason. They should not be punished monetarily for their beliefs. It does not help the union to grow anyway. The fee would be just a monetary book entry, it shows no commitment to either membership or unionism. We can't change the world like that.

Members also have no say over where their money goes. Affiliation fees are one thing that is unavoidable but donations to political parties are another. What for instance can you do about money that is donated to a party that you don't support.( For example, the ALP that continues to support genocide against Palestinians.) Basically



it is taken for granted that money is raised and spent propping up political tyrants without any discussion or input from members.

How much input would a fee paying non-member have in the bargaining process anyway? Even members decry the fact that they are often dismissed during the bargaining process.

The whole process of selecting delegates to take part in Enterprise Bargaining Agreements is fraught with undemocratic decision making anyway. There is no formal election process to select delegates to take part in bargaining, consequently we may not be getting the best representation for the workplace. Often those at the shop floor have a better understanding of the issues in the workplace than many of the toady representatives that cosy up to the union leadership. So the outcomes are often less than the expectations of those punters at the shop floor who are largely ignored.

Union agreement proposals and MOU's are often drawn up by public transport bureaucrats at the behest of Government rather than the union. It is management's task to seek agreement for any particular proposal. The union is just the bargaining representative. Union hierarchy takes the edge off particular management proposals moving them in their favour, however at the end process there are usually pay rises for trade off's and compromises.

Workplace change such as privatisation, new deleterious work processes, job losses etc. are usually contained and retained in agreements. Historically workers have never ever been better off after the implementation of an agreement which always favours the corporate body.

It also makes no sense in implementing a fee for non-members while the State government still has a salary cap in place. The Government sets the boundaries for EBA's not the union.

So it is ridiculous to agree to limited pay rises while the Government pulls the handbrake on them. It is a fee with limits to what you can achieve by paying it.

Under the Fair Work Commission's Act the union does not necessarily have to be the bargaining unit. Any one or group can form a bargaining unit for the purposes of negotiating an Enterprise Agreement. Sure the union has a massive membership, the experience, and skill, to negotiate on your behalf. In truth the power of the membership is never mobilised.

However what happens when there is no compunction on behalf of the union hierarchy to negotiate a reasonable and better deal from an agreement? (Usually for political or economic reasons). There is little to stopping the disaffected non-members from seeking a better deal by forming a bargaining unit outside of the unions involved. This of course would not be preferable to Management as they would much rather bargain through one entity, i.e. the union. They could attempt to sabotage an independent bargaining unit. However, depending on the skill, militancy of the formed unit, it remains to be seen what could be achieved. Done

well, as the Shearers Union did in the past, outside the formal structures of the industrial system, a more democratic and useful agreement could be struck.

All in all, the fee-for-service bargaining model is undemocratic and more like a ransom for a payment. It does little to further the understanding and solidarity within the union. The union instead should be decentralising power out to the members so that they own and decide the decisions that are made, whether they be right or wrong. The reason that unions are losing membership and hence membership money is that the union leadership has lost touch with it's base. Quite a lot of members don't understand the functioning of the unions, they feel alienated from it and feel as if they are on their own. That has been proven by some opinion polls of workers who have been found to just change jobs when the going gets tough rather than fighting back. This is a failure of organisation within the union movement. A bargaining fee won't help, but it may bring in a bit of money in the short term. Although non-members will expect a return for the money out laid.

Link to the 2GB interview.

<https://www.2gb.com/forced-unionism-non-union-members-face-paying-levy-if-labor-backs-rtbu-push>

## **NSW Rail Unions EBA Campaign**

**Sydney rail workers to vote on industrial action against Labor's wage cuts**

**WSWS Report by Martin Scott**

**25 July 2024**

Passenger railway workers in Sydney and throughout New South Wales (NSW) will soon vote on whether to take industrial action, after the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) applied to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) for a protection action ballot order last week.

Sydney Trains and NSW Trains workers are opposing a real-wage slashing enterprise agreement offer from the state Labor government, in line with its broader attack on public sector spending and wages.

The Labor government, led by Premier Chris Minns, is proposing a 3.5 percent nominal pay rise this year, with an additional 0.5 percent "for workers who have not received structural adjustments in the past 12 months, provided agreement is reached in a timely manner." In other words, some workers would receive a small bonus if the offer is rammed through quickly without any disruption from strikes or other industrial action.

This would be followed by 3 percent increases in 2025 and 2026. Employer superannuation contributions would increase by 0.5 percent in each of the first two years, as is required by federal legislation. The offer also contains a so-called "cost-of-living protection" measure, a one-off payment of \$1,000 in any year that the

consumer price index (CPI) exceeds 4.5 percent.

This arrangement would deliver an immediate real pay cut to rail workers. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) monthly inflation data show that the CPI rose 4 percent in the year to May, a figure that has increased each month since February.

In a video posted to the RTBU's Facebook page earlier this month, bargaining delegate Brendan Robinson noted that official inflation figures only tell part of the story. He said: "Australian rents surged 11.5 percent in 2023, and by as much as 15.6 percent in 2022," and noted: "Sydney's house prices have increased by 97 percent in the last decade."

The RTBU has advanced a demand for a four-year agreement, with 8 percent (or CPI if higher) annual increases to pay and allowances. Even taken at face value, this falls far short of what is necessary to keep up with the soaring cost of living, let alone make up for previous losses.

The RTBU, which has brokered one wage-cutting deal after another over more than a decade, will not lead a serious fight even for this inadequate figure.

Robinson presented the wage claim in almost apologetic terms, repeatedly describing it as "modest." In what amounted to a celebration of previous sell-outs, he bragged that the RTBU had "never made an outlandish claim." He noted that, in the most recent (2021-2022) enterprise agreement (EA) negotiations, the rail unions had "asked for a mere 3.5 percent."

In fact, the union bureaucracy repeatedly strangled any attempt by workers to fight for even this meagre sum. One planned industrial action after another was called off, and those that did proceed were brief stoppages limited on each occasion to different sections of the rail network.

In 2022, the NSW Liberal-National government came under immense pressure from public sector workers, with well over 100,000 nurses, teachers and others carrying out multiple mass strikes. The RTBU bureaucracy ensured that rail workers a powerful section of the working class were completely isolated from these disputes, and complied fully with then Premier Dominic Perrottet's demand that there be no industrial action that would "inconvenience" passengers.

In early 2023, with inflation well above 7 percent, the RTBU rammed through a deal containing a pay "increase" of just 2.53 percent for 2022 and 3.03 percent in 2023. The bureaucrats claimed the pro-business Fair Work Commission (FWC) would award a substantial pay rise through arbitration, to begin after the agreement was signed. Two months later, this amounted to a meagre 1 percent per annum above the existing deal.

Inadvertently pointing to the inadequacy of the previous RTBU-Government deal, Robinson said: "In 2022, inflation went up over 7 percent, this year it is still over 4.1 percent. Rail workers' pay, over that time, only went up by 7 percent. In addition, our members have had to put up with pay freezes both before and after this EA and the previous one."



The 2021-2023 RTBU sell-out operation was not the exception, but the rule. In 2018, the RTBU rammed through a regressive deal for Sydney Trains and NSW Trains workers in the face of substantial opposition. In exchange for a meagre 3 percent per annum wage rise, workers were forced to accept numerous attacks on their conditions, including increased scrutiny of sick leave, reduced notice periods for redundancies, and consolidation (i.e., job cuts) of signaling operations. In direct opposition to an overwhelming strike vote by workers, the RTBU carried out a campaign of isolation and suppression engineered to wear workers down in a drawn-out series of toothless sporadic work bans until they begrudgingly accepted a rotten union-management deal. In an attempt to sweep these and other previous experiences under the rug, Robinson, serving as the mouthpiece of the RTBU bureaucracy, insists that the declining wages and conditions of rail workers are the result of, “over a decade of trying to bargain under the previous government’s austerity pay cap.” The message to workers is that, under a new, Labor, government, things will be different. This is fraudulent on multiple counts. While legislated by the O’Farrell Liberal-National government in 2011, the 2.5 percent pay cap originated as Labor Party policy. In fact, in 2008, the RTBU was the first union to agree to the cap, paving the way for its broader application. Furthermore, despite the nominal removal of the pay cap, since coming to office in March 2023, the Minns government has slashed real wages throughout the public sector, in line with the austerity agenda of Labor at federal and state level across the country. The claim also ignores the historic attacks by Labor governments on rail and other public infrastructure. From 1995 to 2011, successive NSW Labor governments closed dozens of rail facilities, including maintenance workshops and track repair divisions, and slashed thousands of jobs. This was part of a broader program to sell-off large sections of public infrastructure, including the state’s electricity distribution network. The passenger rail network is the only mode of mass transit in NSW still under public

ownership. While there is no evidence of immediate plans to sell off the trains, privatisation is being carried out by stealth. Virtually all expansion and modernisation of Sydney’s railways is part of the Metro project, a privately-owned service that uses automated trains, eliminating the jobs of drivers, guards and many station staff.

The decimation of public transport in Sydney and throughout Australia could not have been carried out without the complete and ongoing collaboration of the union apparatus.

These experiences underscore that rail workers cannot advance a struggle for real improvements to wages and conditions from within the stranglehold of the RTBU bureaucracy.

To avoid yet another sell-out, workers need to take matters into their own hands. Rank-and-file committees, led by workers, not bureaucrats, must be built in every workplace as a venue for workers to democratically prepare a fighting plan of action to achieve demands based on what workers need, not what the government or the union says is possible.

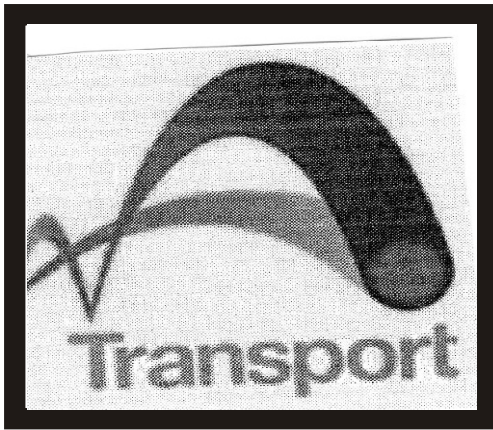
Through these committees, rail workers can link up with the hundreds of thousands of public sector workers across the state, who confront the same assault on the wages and living conditions, along with other transport workers and broader sections of the working class.

Defeating this will require a political struggle with the Labor government, to which the RTBU and other unions are intimately tied.

**LETTERS**

Dear Sparks  
 The worker lost big time in the last EBA and will lose again in this EBA. Train Crews will be screwed with electronic Transposition slips and Electronic time sheets. Also trains will be pre prepped in the yards, therefore train crews will lose prep time. As when train crews turn up, the trains will be ready to go. Station staff are also to lose qualifications. Therefore the death of the salaried station duty manager position. It will be replaced with a lower paid team leader position.  
 Railway Johnny

Dear Sparks  
 We are waiting for for details of the new restructures including management in Sydney Trains. The big question for us, is will the NIF (New Intercity Fleet) trains run guard less?  
 In regard to the new EBA. Its already 4 months late as management is delaying its approval.  
 Railway Jeffrey.



**“Young Man, there’s room at the Top…….”**  
**Warning: Political Satire**

At 10 am on Thursday 3rd December 2023 Alex Claassens RTBU NSW Secretary was interrupted during his speech at a union executive meeting. He had been extolling to the meeting the excellence of his record as State Secretary. In particular his brilliant performance with the smoke and mirrors technique during the Rail EBA 2022 campaign. Achieving the harmless letting off grass roots anger over spiraling inflation with the half hearted token EBA industrial campaign set up to fail

David Babineau from the Bus Division, had grabbed Claassens's mobile and interrupted his spiel, telling him, “Alex, your boss Jo Haylen is on the line and urgently wants to speak to you.” Claassens left the conference room, and got on the line to Haylen. He was stunned by Haylen's shrill and angry tone of voice. At their last “touch base” secret weekly meeting in the Minister's office, Haylen had been effusive and fawning. Praising unctuously his professional union leadership skills and handling of the membership, heading off real wage increases with his magnificent performance during the 2022 Rail EBA campaign. According to Haylen's spiel, it had just been a bit of bad luck, that he had failed to get the NIF (New Intercity Fleet) introduced with DOO (Driver Only Operation).

Transport Minister Jo Haylen abruptly cut to the chase, and shrieked “Alex, you're in super big trouble now. I have received alarming reports about how you are handling the union and a major upsurge of anger about you in the Loco Division. It would upset my Government's plans for privatisation of the NSW railways. We've already spent multi millions on all those station upgrades as part of the agenda. I have arranged an

urgent meeting for you to attend with apart from myself, Transport CEO's, your union boss colleagues and the ALP godfathers. It will commence from 10am sharp tomorrow at the conference room in the Transport for NSW Head Office.”

**Meeting at Transport for NSW Head Office**  
**Conference Room Friday 4th Dec. 2023**

The meeting was attended by the usual suspects, Transport Minister Haylen, Claassens, David Babineau from the Bus Division sheepishly clutching a brown paper bag concealing a half drunk bottle of rough red, Mark Moray Secretary of Unions NSW, Richard Olsen NSW TWU Secretary escorted by their new outlaw bikie gang security guards, Josh Murray Secretary of Transport for NSW, CEO's of Sydney Trains and NSW Trains and various bus companies, Transit Systems, Trans Dev, Keolis Downer, various high up ALP big wigs. The Bikies even provided a guard of honour for the ALP Big Wigs and CEO's as they trooped into the conference room.

Minister Haylen opened the conference where she denounced Claassens for losing control of his members and anger building up over DOO with the NIF and the Bankstown line closure. She demanded that he needed to be urgently replaced in the job. Mark Moray Unions NSW Secretary, agreed with Haylen. He demanded that Claassens have a “rest” with Babineau from the Bus Division taking over as NSW State Secretary and then from 1/7/24, a “young boy” Toby Warne would be “parachuted” into the State Secretary job, as he lacked Claassens “baggage” which was enraging members. Then Claassens would be kicked upstairs to the National Secretary job as a “golden handshake”. With our current “rough diamond” National Secretary going on to greener pastures.

Claassens was flabbergasted. Then he was bemused and stunned. Speechless with rage, following Haylen and Moray's spiels. After a few minutes of ominous silence, he had composed himself. He then rose from his seat and roared, “Toby's an innocent, naive young boy! He's an innocent lamb! He'd be a babe in the woods of Sydney Trains, NSW Trains, Trans Dev, Transit Systems and Keolis Downer. He'd have a heart attack if he heard about the skulduggery needed to be practiced with the State Secretary job. He lacks my finesse with “sleight of hand” and “smoke and mirrors” techniques with the EBA's and DOO. How would he cope with the rigging of union elections and EBA ballots with our ALP mates in the AEC(Australian Electoral Commission) like with the 2014, 2018 and 2022 union elections and the union real estate scams. If he heard about it, he'd drop dead from shock and you'd have to find a replacement! I don't trust him. He's too honest for the job! I wouldn't

be surprised if he started writing articles for that underground paper that gets around. That underground mag might even start a “Toby's Corner” or a “Mr 50c for Driverless Trains” Corner for his contributions. Needless to say our Loco Division members would be avid readers!

### **“An Unorthodox Merger, but a Sign of the Times.”**

Claassens continued, “He might start spilling the beans about the back room deals we do with the Minns Government and Sydney and NSW Trains Bosses together with the private bus company bosses. Not to mention our planned upcoming merger with the Bkie gangs out West. We'll be needing a big slice of those dodgy construction/real estate development deals they are involved to help with our declining finances and ALP elections slush fund. We won't get enough with the levies on non union members the Government is intending to impose for us. We'll be desperate for the extra funding with all the membership and dues losses associated with DOO on the new trains and Metro conversions. What will happen if the Sydney Morning Herald stumbles on the story? Or our new “Top Secret” Training Courses: “Ice manufacture and distribution made easy” for our loco reps run by our “outlaw bkie” business associates to help boost their wages. As a result of the below spiraling inflation EBA 2022 and upcoming EBA 2024 pay rises with concealed nasties in the clauses. We have to keep them sweet for DOO on the NIF late November, early December this year and the



Bankstown line closure and metro conversion. God forbid if this juicy story finds its way into the SMH with towering, blazing front page headlines! You could end up with an “independent administrator” paid twice as much as I get. Perhaps my illustrious, old boss Gladys Berejiklian or her controversial politician, ex-boy friend Darryl Maguire will be running the union! Gladys is certainly well qualified for the top job. She's even been certified by an ICAC investigation as corrupt and a liar!”

Mark Moray Unions NSW Secretary reassured him, “Don't you worry, Alex, we'll have the youngster trained up about the dark arts of professional union leadership with the aid of our American friends. We are intending to send him and Babineau from the Bus Division on an overseas junket costing only over \$30,000 each. It will particularly feature attendance at the CIA's Harvard School trade union officials training course. However, we'll be keeping them on a tight leash while overseas. The boys will be chaperoned by ACTU Queen Sally McManus and her bevy of beauties while in New York and other parts of the USA. The gals will be giving them a supervised tour of their “establishments.” If Warne is caught engaged in sadomasochistic orgies in New York city dungeons, Sally will have her gals haul him out in his leather attire kicking and screaming! In the case of Babineau, if he is found merry during vintage wines tasting events, lurking around wine bars or prowling the precincts of wineries, maybe even hijacking a bus and wildly careening at top speed through New York City streets to revive his bus driving skills when sozzled or lying on the pavement in Skid Row worse for wear, Sally's gals will come to his rescue!”

Claassens joked, “Boys aren't you worried? You're going to have ASIO's CEO Mike Burgess and his gum shoes coming after you with their brand new ASIO-AFP Foreign Interference Task Force. With all this “Foreign Interference” by Uncle Sam in the Oz trade union movement, involving Toby and Babineau's hi jinks at this Harvard School course, Moray and the rest of you could end up in some show trial Burgess will be organising!”

Mark Moray, continued, “Alex mate, unfortunately we need a new fresh youthful face in the state secretary job. You've come to the end of your use by date. We need the young fella for the upcoming Combined Rail Unions EBA campaign. We've had our marching orders from Premier Minns to get through all these nasties in the fine print of the EBA document. Alex mate, you'll make a great scapegoat to divert anger from the members over the failed EBA 2022 campaign, the cave-in to DOO with the bogus NIF Deed and the Bankstown line closure and Metro conversion. You'll have to take it on the chin. Warne will be blaming you for everything and help get through our agenda on these issues.”

## SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

### Leichhardt Depot News

#### Sparks: What is the latest with the meal rooms?

Leichhardt Driver: We are continuing to have serious problems with the Bondi Junction meal room. As part of the bosses' "Optimisation" push, using existing rules to corner cut and tighten the screws on our jobs and conditions, they are now having Waverley drivers sharing the meal room at Bondi Junction. So they can save a meagre 5-7 minutes on rosters/runs. Not many use the meal room. So the problem is bus parking due to meal breaks. There is congestion at Bondi Junction without these added 50 minutes to the equation. In early July the power was down at the Lee Street meal room. However later the radio room advised that power had been restored. Subsequently when Leichhardt drivers came to this meal room, they found Port Botany drivers there sitting in the dark. As a result the Leichhardt drivers had to return to the depot for their meal breaks, resulting in the cancellation of runs. In mid July there has been another development, the roof fell in at this meal room. Again resulting in drivers having to take their meal break at the depot and cancelled trips. The roof also fell in at the Campsie meal room.

### Rozelle Interchange: Corporate Hidden Agenda & Continuing Traffic Congestion

#### Sparks: What's happening on the road?

LD: We are continuing to have problems with the Rozelle interchange traffic congestion, delaying our runs. However the congestion has improved somewhat since the opening of the Interchange. Due to Victoria Road Tunnel to Anzac Bridge signage saying "Toll Free".

According to the SMH 24/4/24 "Rozelle traffic woes known in advance": "Motorists using Victoria Road and other local streets have endured major delays while vehicles exiting the WestConnex tunnels from the spaghetti Junction enjoyed clearer runs onto Anzac Bridge during morning peaks. It has sparked concerns that vehicles from WestConnex tunnels have been prioritised over motorists using local routes such as Victoria Road.

A likely significant contribution to the traffic congestion associated with the Interchange according to a NSW Parliamentary Upper House inquiry, are the ramp meters & traffic lights that allow one or two vehicles to pass at a time installed on Victoria Road, the City West Link and the toll free Iron Cove Link but not the West



Connex Tunnels Exit, which motorists pay to use. There are concerns that these meters which Transport for NSW operates are designed to give priority to West Connex tunnels traffic over other vehicles. Also there is no merging or metering for traffic exiting the tunnel.

The Government inquiry into the Rozelle Interchange has heard evidence that the traffic forecasting undertaken for the planning application was manipulated to underestimate the volume of surface traffic entering the interchange from City West Link. To achieve this deceit, the traffic modelers assumed that Parramatta Road which feeds City West Link has only four traffic lanes. We all know it has six. NSW Planning approved the project, despite being informed of this egregious fraud.

Sydney's Inner West residents and small business owners have for months vented frustrations at the chaos caused by the spaghetti junction and dissatisfaction at the transport agency's response. The opening of the WestConnex motorway interchange late last year caused severe congestion on roads in Rozelle, Balmain, Drummoyne, Lilyfield and Annandale as motorists struggled to navigate multiple-lane merging."

### Oxford Street Traffic Congestion

However, we have been affected by another trouble spot with Oxford St. Traffic can be backed up to Victoria Barracks. The single lane westward is from South Dowling Street to College St. on Oxford St. from 10am till 6am following morning when the



Clearway begins. For some time now, there has been quite a bit of road work on Oxford Street to construct bike ways. Now at peak hour, we are facing the situation where only one lane is open for traffic inbound (west) Oxford Street past Taylor Square, but two lanes are open in the other direction in this area. Overall creating tremendous traffic congestion and delaying our runs with the 440, (333, 352, 311 Waverley, etc.)

**Sparks: What is other news with Transit Systems?**

LD: The Minns NSW Govt. is forking out more than \$73 million to Transit Systems for replacement rail buses for the planned closure of the Bankstown Line which the Government is now talking about commencing from late Sept. In line with plans for the conversion of the line to a Metro. This expenditure on rail buses will cover three quarters of the required services for the 60,000 commuters inconvenienced by the line closure and the 200 drivers needed to operate 100 buses for the services. As part of the deal with Transit Systems, the company has offered to buy 60 diesel buses to be built in China for “dedicated use” during the line closure. But where will the drivers come from as 300 are not employed in Greater Sydney currently (deficit) i.e. existing jobs are vacant.

**Tempe Depot News**

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the new merged rosters?**

Tempe Driver: Since the introduction of the merged rosters last year associated with the “parity” agreement between the RTBU and TWU and the outcome of EBA 2023, we have been facing severely worsening conditions. We have particularly been experiencing big cuts to layover breaks. Previously layover breaks were much more generous allowing 10 to 20 minutes, now they been cut back to 5 minutes. If you are late running you don't get any break. You don't even have the time to go to the toilet! Its all rush, rush, rush! With the rosters the bosses have seized the opportunity to squeeze in more trips into runs. In the case of the 430 to Sydenham, the bosses have now increased the number of trips per hour from 4 to 6 trips. From speaking to drivers in other bus companies, drivers in these companies are all facing a similar worsening situation with their jobs and conditions.

**Randwick Depot News**

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the impact of privatisation?**

Randwick Driver: I definitely don't consider it was a good idea. Under State Transit, the buses were a community service, now its a business. We have been hard hit with the new profit making push associated with the private owner. They are desperate to save any few dollars through cutting minutes from our layover breaks. We are particularly angry with management constantly pushing to attack our amenities such as the removal of our Home and Duty Opal.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the routes?**

RD: We are being confronted with a completely new dynamic in the buses with the

light rail and now the Metros. As a result of the Metro introduction our routes are being affected such as the 320. It has been affected as now its not going to Artarmon. With the introduction of these different modes of transport replacing bus routes, particularly disabled commuters are likely to be very adversely affected.

**Kingsgrove Depot News**

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the new merged rosters?**

Kingsgrove Driver: At the depot we are all angry with the new rosters. However we all voted for the EBA in 2023 and the associated “Parity Agreement” between the RTBU and TWU which created the basis for the new merged rosters. With the new rosters the bosses have seized the opportunity to savagely attack the running times of our trips. Significantly cutting back our lay over/rest breaks at the end of runs. Causing a new speed up in our jobs. We need to approach the union to fix up our concerns with the rosters.

**Lane Cove Council Invites Bus Service Complaints**

There has been reports of long waiting times for buses at Lane Cove following bus routes cuts for the new Metro.

Lane Cove Council has invited local commuters to report problems with the buses. “Have you experienced bus cancellations or significant delays in Lane Cove?” The Lane Cove Council Web Site asks.

“While bus services are not operated by Council, we are currently collecting information to help stay updated on how changes to bus services are impacting our community.”

The Council will share feedback with Transport for NSW and other relevant stakeholders to advocate improvements where possible. To report experience of service issues to the Council, visit the Lane Cove Web Site “Have Your Say” page.

**VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS**

*In this issue of Sparks, conductors, drivers and station staff will discuss the new Rail Operations EBA. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.*

**Sparks: What is the current situation regarding the EBA?**

Florence: After seven stoppages a satisfactory result has been achieved.  
Fergus: As a result of a proposed stoppage on the Monday before Easter and Easter Thursday, the State Government had enough. The stoppages were called off. The negotiations were held over six weeks with an Arbitrator appointed from the State Government resulting in an in principle agreement reached in early May.

Forsyth: RTBU delegates had voted overwhelmingly in support of the proposed deal. The deal will be put to members over the next few weeks before settlement.

Clarence: The main points are:

(a) Industry standard pay increase of 17%. This is made of 14% over four years plus a 3% Modernisation Allowance which will continue until the agreement ends in 2028.

(b) An additional one off cash payment with 2% of the employees aggregate earnings for the financial year ending in 2023.

Jethro: Improved leave entitlement:

(a) Bonus days additional to current leave entitlements applied no later than the fourth year of the agreement.

(b) Improved parental leave.

(c) Trauma leave Paid as per roster including any previously agreed overtime and applies for all emergency call outs.

(d) Natural Disaster Leave. This is a new clause with up to 20 days paid if impaired by a Natural Disaster such as a Bush Fire Damage, Storm Damage, Earthquake. Paid as per roster.

Cedric: Job security -locked in protections provided for conductors, station staff, authorised officers, shunters, yard masters and Train Controllers.

(a) No closure of Booking Offices.

(b) Conductors must be on every revenue service.

(c) Yards must be controlled and operated by shunters and yardmasters.

Archie: With regards to job security most V/Line employees regarded this clause as the main issue in the EBA. Many employees remember what happened in January 1993 when the Kennett Government wanted to cut a large number of V/Line services (also Metro Trains and Trams). A fair number of employees lost their jobs. At last job security is now written into the EBA.

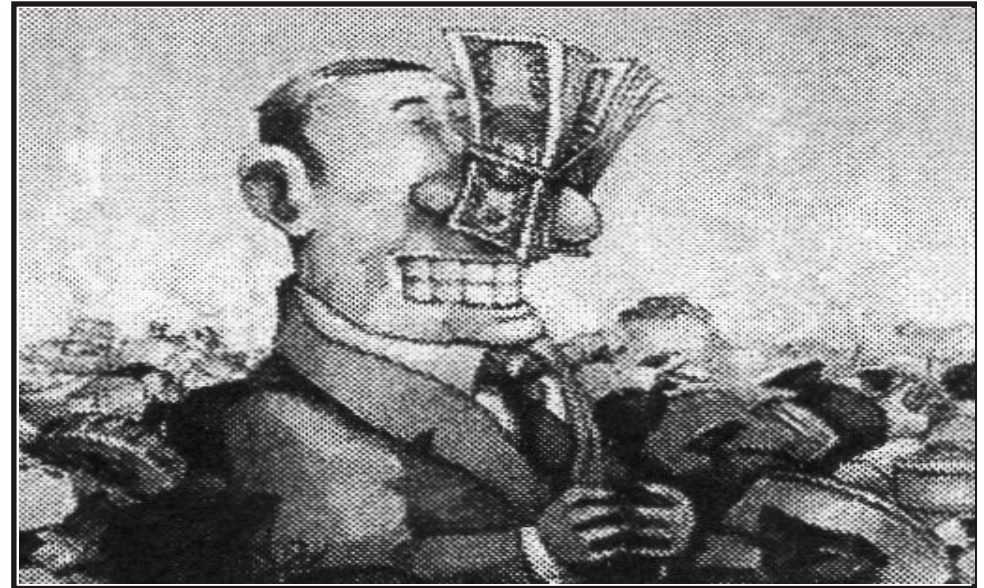
### **Sparks: What are some of the other results of the EBA?**

Clarence: There is a Redeployment Agreement through retraining opportunities and a tighter requirement for redeployment.

Rastus: This clause was an old clause updated. This came about due to a campaign by drivers in the early 1970's. In 2008 a V/Line conductor was terminated as medically unfit. The conductor due to union pressure was retrained for the Booking Office but on completion of training had to compete with 17 other applicants both internal and external. As a result the conductor was unsuccessful and was terminated. The union was able to get the conductor a position as a Booking Clerk with Metro Trains. This shameful treatment of the conductor was discussed in Sparks issue No.136.

Archie: Part time employees are now guaranteed minimum hours of 16 hours with an option for a 24 hour minimum. In other words the practice of an employee at a Country Location working 8 hours per week has ceased.

Roscoe: The Retired Railway Pass has been reinstated. All employees with 20 years service regardless of starting date with continuous service will receive a retirement



pass. Originally the pass was 15 years service but in 1993 without consultation with the union was extended to 20 years. With Privatisation in 1999 only employees with 20 years service to 1999 were to receive the pass. This was altered to employees who commenced service after 1979 but before 1999 receiving the Retirement Pass as it was a condition of employment.

Clarence: Internal Recruitment and Transfers: Guaranteed opportunities arising from vacancies for part time to full time, location transfer and internal recruitment requirement.

Cedric: This has taken years to achieve. With regards to conductors if a part time employee applied for a full time position, they had to compete with an outside appointee. The same if a conductor wanted to transfer to another depot. They had to compete with an outside appointee. This issue caused a fair amount of tension over the years. Human Resources would not compromise over the issue. This has been reported in previous issues of Sparks.

Clarence: Improved roster change process. This allows members to design their own rosters. This was attempted over the last 18 years but management would not compromise. At least we will now have rosters that are family friendly.

**Editorial Comment:** It seems workers are being bribed with a sort of bonus to sign the EBA off which would provide wage rises below soaring real cost of living levels. The bonus would be affected by income tax. Also the increase by 2% of Super contributions must be taken into account. Also a common technique with enterprise agreements, some seemingly ok clauses are used to divert workers attention from other seemingly benign clauses dressed up with legalese which can

have seriously adverse consequences. An experienced industrial lawyer independent from the political establishment and the union hierarchy needs to make an interpretation of each clause. Job security can only be preserved with direct action or serious threats of it. Not by duplicitous pieces of paper written in legalese!

**Sparks: What about non unionists?**

Florence and Fergus: We have worked at V/line for a number of years and we are upset that these individuals refuse to join the union, yet they reap the benefits.

Rastus: Some of the excuses these non unionists use for why they refuse to join the union:

- (a) Some have a grudge against the union.
- (b) Will affect their career paths in the railways.

Roscoe: What these individuals don't realise is management sees these people as being weak.

Fergus: It costs the union a fair amount to negotiate the EBA and these persons expect the union to negotiate for them.

Florence: Most reported for work during the stoppages but what disappointed myself was the union members who worked during the last stoppage on March 8th.

Rastus: Management will know who to rely on if a future stoppage occurs. They will regard these people as weak.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. The membership at V/Line should be commended for the industrial action that was taken.**

Florence and Fergus: In having the final say we regard the individuals who worked during the stoppages as SCABS.

*In this issue of Sparks we will discuss West Coast Railway from 2000 to 2002. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.*

**Sparks: What was the situation in Victoria in 2000?**

Clarence: V/line had been franchised and operated by an English Company National Express. West Coast was operating a Saturday Steam Train every Saturday from April to November, leasing Locomotives to various freight companies.

**Sparks: What was West Coast's marketing for the Warrnambool line?**

Ichabod: West Coast Railways marketing was superior to V/Line in many ways. They sent their employees to various schools, clubs, Pensioners' Organisations and various Chambers of Commerce promoting the services on the Warrnambool Line. In August 2000 V/Line Travel Business was shut down. The closure of V/Line Travel was condemned by various groups and V/Line training. West Coast was successful with their day trips. Their trips to watch the Whales in the winter months were successful.

**Sparks: What was West Coast's operations in South Australia?**

Rastus: West Coast with the break up of Australian National purchased a number of carriages. This train was to be called the "Murraylander" which was to operate from

Adelaide to the Tailm Bend. A locomotive was painted in Murrylander colours. This venture never got off the ground and the carriages were once on a special train from Adelaide to Gladstone.

Roscoe: By the end of 2000 local governments along the Warrnambool line were asking when West Coast were going to obtain new rolling stock. West Coast was hoping to obtain a grant from the Government so as to build these carriages. Drivers heard the rumours West Coast was to obtain via a leasing company former Australian National EL Class locomotives. It was rumoured the Government knocked back this proposal.

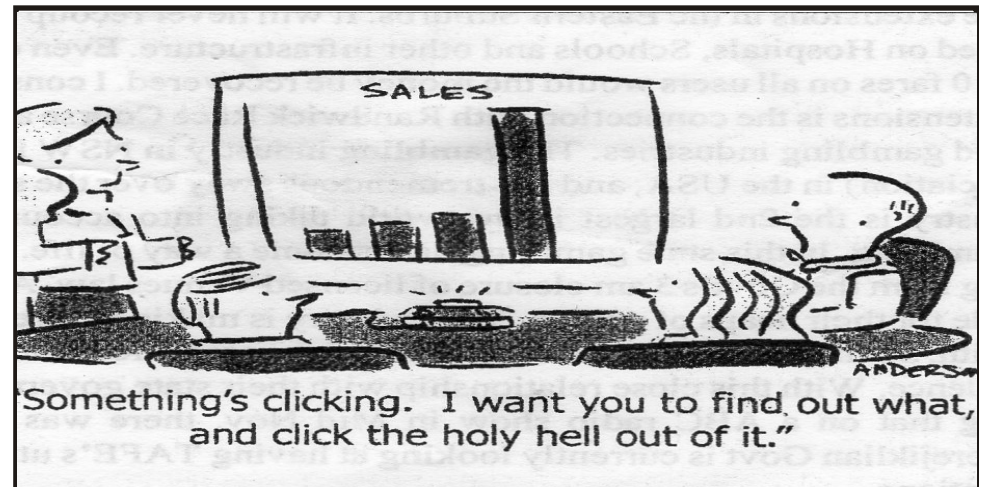
**Sparks: What were the West Coast operations in New Zealand?**

Clarence: West Coast Railway entered into an agreement with Toll Holdings who owned New Zealand Rail to operate Inter City Passenger trains. A Railway Company was set up 50% owned by West Coast Railway and Toll Holdings. The Company acquired all Intercity Trains except Auckland to Rotorua, Wellington to Napier and Christchurch to Dunedin. These trains were discontinued because they were competing with Buses which were deregulated.

**Sparks: What about Saturday afternoon services from Warrnambool to Melbourne?**

Ichabod: From October 1981 the last train out of Warrnambool on a Saturday afternoon departed from Warrnambool at 1.00 pm instead of 4 pm. By this method extra crew with the train was eliminated. Despite approaches from Local Governments in South West Victoria, the times of this train were not changed. The authorities refused to alter the times of Saturday services. This discouraged day trippers.

Rastus: In 1998, 1999 and 2000 an extra train was operated leaving Warrnambool at 5.05 pm. This train only operated when the steam train ran.



Archie: In February 2001, West Coast decided to introduce a new train on Saturday. This train departed from Melbourne at 12.20 pm returning from Warrnambool at 5.05 pm. This train was a stand alone operation as it was not subsidised by the Government. The train proved popular with day trippers and it was operated all year around.

Roscoe: The train was operated by Loco crews employed by West Coast Railway, all other trains were operated by V/Line crews. West Coast crews operating this train, on other days, operated transfer trains to Bathurst from Geelong or Melbourne plus Heritage trains. From January 2001 West Coast operated all Heritage trains on Broad Gauge Lines throughout Victoria. This came about because V/Line withdrew from Heritage Trains. This was because when a Heritage Train was late it could delay trains thus V/Line operator National Express would be fined due to on train performance rules. West Coast was not covered under OPR rules.

Forsyth: Towards the end of 2001 a new investor bought into West Coast. The investor was rumoured to be Connex.

**Sparks: What was the story about the Victorian Government financing the modification of Carriages for Mobility Aides.**

Forsyth: In the middle of 2002 the toilets in the first class carriages were modified to take wheel chairs. Over the years complaints were received from people with disabilities that there was no provision for toilets for disabled passengers. These modifications were paid for by the Victorian Government.

Ichabod: In early 2002 it was reported to the Rail Union that a labour hire company was being used to supply labour. This came about because West Coast covered labour shortages by using members of their family as Conductors. They were sons and



daughters of the director plus the staff from Head Office. These employees who were employed by labour hire companies were not allowed to work public holidays due to costs.

Rastus: The union had this practice stopped and labour hire employees were offered jobs with West Coast.

Roscoe: The steam train did not operate from 2002. This was due to two reasons. The first because the new Directors said that the running of the train was not a core business. The other reason was one of the Directors passed away. This Director was a Rail Enthusiast and the Steam Train was his project. With his passing the Steam Operations ended.

Ichabod: In early 2004 the Company hit hard times. The employees were worried about the company's future. Their contract was due to expire in 2009. The signs that changes were not too good was that drivers of replacement coaches were informed they were not to drive the buses over "City Link" due to road tolls.

Also new employees were issued with used uniforms. These uniforms had been dry cleaned or mended.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. In the next issue we conclude the story of West Coast Railway.**

**International Transport Workers' News**

**SCOTTISH RAILWAY NEWS**

**Dozens of trains cancelled due to lack of trains amid pay dispute**

Around 80 services affected as drivers chose not to work extra shifts. Rail union has said it is considering balloting members as pay row drags on. 9/7/24 Train passengers faced widespread disruption as dozens of ScotRail services were cancelled because of a shortage of drivers.

About 80 services did not run due to drivers opting not to work extra shifts as overtime amid a dispute over pay.

The disruption to journeys on routes including some from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen followed the cancellation of around a quarter of ScotRail trains on Sunday.

The train drivers' union Aslef told the state-owned rail operator's bosses on Friday that it was going to recommend balloting its members about industrial action.

It blamed the Scottish Government, which it said should have foreseen the driver shortages "a mile down the tracks".

Shadow cabinet secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport, Douglas Lumsden

MSP, said: “The knock-on effects of this pay dispute is the last thing passengers across Scotland need.

They are already continuing to suffer frequent cancellations and delays due to the SNP’s failures since nationalising rail services two years ago.

SNP ministers must get a grip of this situation and fast as rail users won’t continue to tolerate ongoing cancellations and a reduced service.

If they don’t resolve this dispute urgently, then it will make a mockery of their claims to encourage more people to use public transport, and harm Scotland’s struggling economy.”

ScotRail made an offer to Aslef on Friday in line with the government’s public sector pay guidelines in an attempt to break the deadlock with drivers.

A previous offer which would have seen drivers receive a six per cent pay rise over three years and improved maternity and paternity pay was turned down last month.

“Most of ScotRail’s 1,200 drivers are members of Aslef and many have chosen not to work extra Sunday shifts or overtime.

Rail operators have traditionally relied on drivers working extra shifts to cover Sunday services, and the shortages led to 243 cancellations.

A Transport Scotland spokesperson said: “We acknowledge the desire of rail unions to negotiate a fair settlement for their members.

ScotRail, as a public body and the employer, has responsibility and the ability to negotiate within the limits of public sector pay metrics. However, as rail unions have been made aware, any offer beyond these requires Scottish Government approval at senior level following the appropriate process.

We would encourage rail unions to continue meaningful dialogue with ScotRail, so that a mutually agreeable outcome can be reached as soon as possible.”



## NEW ZEALAND RAIL NEWS

WSWS Report: On July 3, the 2022-2024 Multi-Employer Collective Agreement (MECA) covering hundreds of workers on the Wellington commuter rail network expired. The deal was between the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) and employers Transdev and Hyundai Rotem, which are contracted by the Labour Party-led Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC).

The RMTU has been in behind-closed-doors negotiations with the companies since July 11 on a new MECA, with no information about the talks released to workers.

At a stop-work meeting called by the union in April, workers made clear that they are prepared to fight to protect jobs and improve their pay, conditions and entitlements such as retirement, service and allowances. The RMTU, however, has not announced what claims it is pursuing or what the companies are demanding.

A union-management joint statement merely said there had been a “productive” meeting on July 18 and 19 as the parties worked “through the 46 cross-party claims with great discussion taking place.” Workers should demand an end to this secrecy, which only serves the interests of the company. The WSWS warns that behind closed doors, the RMTU is preparing to accept another sellout agreement.

The 2022-2024 contract contained average wage rises of 5.5 percent for most workers from September 2022 to July 2023, with a 5 percent increase in the second year. Train managers received two 7.2 wage increases for the two-year contract, meagre compensation for their shift work and reliance on penalty rates of time-and-a-quarter (on weekdays), time-and-a-half (on Saturdays) and double-time (Sundays).

Workers were also angry that they were only back-paid to September 2022, instead of July 2022 when the previous contract expired. The MECA was ratified in early 2023 through the RMTU’s anti-democratic postal ballot system in which workers who do not return a vote are automatically counted as voting in favour.

Successive wage agreements have driven down costs, cut jobs, and allowed Transdev and Hyundai Rotem to reap millions in profits. Wages have not kept pace with rising prices. Stats NZ reports that the cost of living in 2024 for the average household rose by 5.4 percent in the 12 months to June. In the same period, rent increased by 5.3 percent, insurance by 19.8 percent, interest payments by 26.7 percent, and private transport by 13 percent.

In September 2023 the GWRC, chaired by Labour Party member Daran Ponter, which has contracted Transdev and Hyundai Rotem since July 2016, extended the contract until 2031, in line with an original agreement with the private operators to slash \$100 million in operating costs over a 15-year period. Ian Ladd, managing director of Transdev in Wellington boasted that the “relationship with the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union has also been critical in improving train services.”

Transdev, a French-based corporation operating in 19 countries, which recently made global revenues of €9 billion (\$NZ16.4 billion), has made extensive investments in New Zealand. It operated passenger rail services in Auckland from 2004 to 2022 before losing that contract to Auckland One Rail and owns Mana Coach buses in Wellington and Howick & Eastern Buses in Auckland.

Transdev has achieved its profits by increasing the level of exploitation. During the last two and half years the company suffered severe short-staffing in Wellington, partly because of its own cuts and partly due to workers leaving or retiring in the face of grueling conditions. Train managers have been forced to run six cars with the back two cars locked due to safety requirements, when there are insufficient passenger operators (ticket checkers) to assist on-board. Many workers are compelled to work overtime to supplement their low wages.

Meanwhile the company complains about workers taking increased amounts of “unplanned leave,” often due to illness. This is partly a result of the previous Labour Party-led government’s criminal decision in late 2021 to scrap its COVID-19 elimination policy, allowing the corona virus to infect millions of people across the country.

Employers and unions enforced the reckless policy of mass infection by dropping safety measures such as mask mandates and social distancing on public transport. Many rail workers have caught the virus, taken time off, then returned to work only to catch it again.

Workers are also increasingly being subjected to disciplinary meetings with Human Resources over incidents such as drivers going past red lights, or train managers leaving a station early. Such incidents are linked to short-staffing and the stress of long shifts.

There is widespread bitterness over a decision made during the last Christmas holiday period, when most train services were cancelled for maintenance and replaced by buses. Management forced locomotive engineers (who drive trains) not on annual leave to physically come into work to sit around doing nothing. The union did nothing to oppose this.

The stresses facing rail workers have intensified with Transdev’s rollout of an unpopular sign-in and sign-out system called Mobi-Me. The RMTU collaborated in implementing the system, which adds to the already pervasive surveillance and monitoring of workers’ movements.

The deteriorating state of the Wellington rail network, managed by the state-owned KiwiRail, imposes additional burdens on workers. There are frequent speed restrictions, faulty signals, broken sections of track, problems caused by overheating during the summer, overhead power lines that freeze over in the winter.

The appalling lack of investment in public transport infrastructure was highlighted in a dramatic incident on June 21, when KiwiRail’s ageing Aratere passenger ferry between the North and South Islands ran aground due to a steering failure. Thankfully

## 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.**

no injuries occurred, but the incident could have been catastrophic.

The decades of collaboration between the RMTU, management and the GWRC, to milk the public transport system for profit, poses the need for a new workers’ organisation, independent of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy.

