

SPARKS

PROGRESSIVES

THE BEST UNION OFFICIAL\$ MONEY CAN BUY

Moved Martin, seconded Harper, 10-10-'89
"That the A.T. & M.O.E.A. will
disaffiliate from the Victorian Branch
of the A.L.P. on 1st January, 1990 if
the government proceeds with its
intention of removing tram conductors
and introducing contract work into this
industry."
CARRIED

Australian Labor Party

Victorian Branch

23 Drummond Street, Carlton South, 3053

Telephone: 662 3433

31 JULY 1991 No. 8298

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EDITORIAL

YES FOLKS IT'S CUTS TO JOBS TIME!

The Union officials and PTC Bosses have decided 1500 jobs are to go. 1,000 in the 'white collar' and 500 in the 'blue collar'. The extra bucks to pay off redundancy and superannuation for layoffs in the Public Sector have come through from the Federal Government.

A FAIR DAYS WAGE FOR A FAIR WEEKS WORK?

The strategy goes like this: voluntary redundancy ('natural wastage' (sic), in Service Now jargon) for those with 5-15 years service. As no new people are to be employed we all do more work and CUTS TO SERVICES get enforced. The passengers wait longer, do not get a seat, and pay higher fares for this. Both crews and passengers travel in less safety. Vehicles, tracks, signals get less maintenance and crews are under greater stress.

Meanwhile those in Authority making the cuts do not travel by public transport. The situation is now developing where either the Bosses go or we do.

SERVICE HOW?

294 W Class trams are all the vehicles left the PTC owns. The rest of the rolling stock, and most of the buildings they have sold and lease back spiralling the debt to \$2,000 million a year.

All the Service Now bullshit is based on incompetent Bosses rule which cannot be challenged (scratch ticket stupidity for example). Many usually sensible people return from a Service Now brainwashing eager to give-away hard won conditions and penalties for the good of the PTC (cover-up for stupid Bosses!) No more illness, no more holidays happy everyday miracle.

Already we have cases of shabby types dobbing, informing on co-workers to the Bosses. The aim is to create a situation of insecurity, distrust and fear, rumour and manipulation so we go along with whatever Management wants as 'Boss knows best'. This must be countered with regular workplace meetings, free of Management intimidation, to answer questions and build up solidarity. It is up to each and all of us, not just the Delegate.

For the Open Day on October 20th why not suggest closing down central Offices, sacking Management and running the system under community and workers control on a decentralised basis. We here at SPARKS are planning an alternative for October 20th and will be holding regular meetings and socials for workers and passengers. Look out for details. Meanwhile send us your news, views, pictures etc and any spare cash of course!

The latest scratch ticket has no price and no year, what sort of future 'service' and at what price are the Bosses planning?

PROGRESSIVE TEAM CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Information has come to light that Robert "Pressed Overalls" Ardolic has been double-dipping on union funds whilst receiving a higher than normal pay packet including use of a PTC car equipped with mobile phone.

Between Dec. 8th 1990 and July 6th 1991 Robert Ardolic received from the PTC \$599.93 per week, significantly higher than the normal rate of \$444.70. At the same time Robert Ardolic has received 2.5% union dues commissions and claimed money from the union for lost time and sundries.

Despite no approval at any Executive meeting for any secondment, Robert Ardolic has been receiving a full wage for unspecified duties and then claiming on members funds. Clearly, Robert Ardolic is in breach of Rule 48 and should be expelled from the union. This seems unlikely while Louie Di Gregorio remains as Secretary as it was Louie who got Robert booked off supposedly for work on award restructuring.

These practises raise serious doubts about the integrity of the rest of the Progressive Team considering that ALP affiliation fees have been paid by the union to the Australian Labor Party in clear breach of the Executive resolution of Oct. 10th 1989 (see front cover) which disaffiliated the union from the ALP on Jan. 1st 1990. Who actually paid the fees on behalf of the union is not yet known, but what is known is that this payment does not appear in the Audit of the union finances prepared by accountant Louis Anastassiou dated Aug 13th 1991 and signed by Louie Di Gregorio and Steve Bell as a true statement. If the money has been paid why does it not appear in the books?

Who in the Progressives are not aware of this or directly involved in corrupt practices and abuses of their position? Will well-known Progressives like Sam "I Stand Corrected" Branciforte or Bruno "Sticky Fingers" Rendina feign shock at these startling revelations? What will be the fate of perceived traitors to the gang?

Members with long memories will recall concerns that money raised by the 3CR radiothon and the T-shirt sales took an inordinate amount of time to reach the members (for whom it was intended) well after the dispute was over. Others remarked on the miserly sums distributed.

SPARKS has documentary evidence that these corrupt practices occur and calls for the expulsion of Robert Ardolic and that an independent committee of rank and file members of the union to investigate corrupt practices by union officials (Progressive or not) and that charges be laid under Rule 48 of the union.

**Allan Feast,
Industrial Luxury Officer**

P.S. Thanks for the collection in the union office Marty, see you boys in Noosa.

GOVERNMENT ATTACK ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONTINUES

The Public Transport Corporation has been able to force cuts to all private bus services around Melbourne. Some drivers will be sacked and timetables will be cut. But 3 Bus Companies - Reids, Moonee Valley & Ryans have refused to cut their services. They have protested to the PTC, who want them to borrow money from overseas to pay their costs. Their support for the Bus Campaign in Brunswick and the Community has paid off. The community have joined in sending letters to the Premier.

Already in Brunswick we have the Upfield Railway line cut back with no service after 7pm or on Sundays and no maintenance being done.

Now the PTC is attacking Tram Services in Sydney Road, Brunswick. 9 trams will be taken out of service during peak period which will mean cuts from 3 to 6 minutes (if a tram is missing a wait for 12 minutes...). Tram workers at the Brunswick Depot are getting bloody angry at this latest attack on our rights to public transport.

SCAB PILOT 'UNION' BEING FORMED

Ansett Company (owned by Abeles TNT & Murdoch News Ltd.) have formed a Flying Colleagues Pilots Association at Tamworth. Conditions of employment have been worked out and pilots are required to join this Association.

It is also rumoured that the secret police known as Australian Security & Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) are investigating Australian pilots who are working in Switzerland who they claim are political dissidents.

DIRECT ACTION AT BELL STREET BUS DEPOT PAID OFF

The Bell Street Bus Company, recently attempted to force their bus drivers to work more than agreed overtime and bring in contracts. The drivers refused - all 38 were sacked. A picket line was set up. And when the bosses attempted to take 3 buses out of the Depot so that scabs, waiting nearby could be trained - all hell broke loose - the buses never got very far - they were put out of action. The Boss, Nixon, then capitulated and the 38 drivers were reinstated. Direct action and solidarity won the day.

RAIL GUARDS' JOBS BATTLE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

After a heroic 5 week struggle, Guards remain on suburban trains in Adelaide. Like the Melbourne based 1987 Guards dispute and Conductors in 1990 the union officials and Labour Governments were unprepared for the workers and community determination to defend jobs and safety.

AMALGAMATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

After years of behind-closed-doors negotiation between union officials of the ARU and ATM/OEA they are about to go through the motions of having their decisions approved by the rank and file by referendum either late this year or early next year.

There has been *no* input by rank and file members on questions of how the new "super" union will be structured, who will control the finances, and what mechanisms will be in to protect the rank and file from undemocratic practises? Also, there has been precious little in the way of information or debate about amalgamation and what it means for members. For instance, which sick leave agreement will apply? Does it mean an end to broken shifts for tramways workers? Will taxi vouchers for first sign-on/last sign-off apply across the board? These are just a few of the questions amalgamation raises with even few answers (forth)coming from officials.

Why has amalgamation become an issue only now? The MMTB and the railways were merged into "the Met" in 1984 and there was not a whisper by union officials about amalgamation. The answer is because the push for amalgamation has not come from the rank and file but from ALP/ACTU think-tank documents like "Australia Reconstructed". All negotiations have occurred at the Federal level by faceless union bureaucrats.

TRADE UNIONS TRADING OFF OUR WAGES & CONDITIONS?

The truth is amalgamation is an essential part of the ALP strategy to stay in power, as Paul Keating said in last year's budget speech "the government that controls wages, controls the economy". Here he is pointing out to Big Business that through the ALP, the special relationship with the ACTU can keep wages down and jobs insecure. The ALP is saying to Big Business "We will control the labour market for you". For this is what amalgamation is really all about; control. It is not about better service to members or stronger industrial unions but about the centralisation of power into fewer hands. Needless to say these hands belong to union bureaucrats whose own career path prospects as bureaucrats and power-brokers will be enhanced. One need only look at the career of former ACTU Secretary Simon Crean to see that these new career paths can lead all the way to Cabinet! As more and more power falls into fewer and fewer hands, union officials will become more and more alienated from the members they are supposed to be representing.

Members will lose more of what little control they have over the affairs of the unions. Democratic processes developed at work-place level will be eroded. Members will lose interest in the union from feeling unable to meaningfully participate in the affairs of the unions.

One of the claims being made by the union officials in favour of amalgamation is it will mean a stronger union. In December 1987 ARU Guards went on strike against the imposition of one-person-operation and were all but abandoned by the ARU Executive.

PARTY HACKS

Similarly, in August 1988 South Melbourne members correctly saw the opening of the Met Shop in Elizabeth Street as the beginning of the fight to keep conductors on trams and resolved to stop work and march to the city to demonstrate. The union executive even went so far as to intimidate the South Melbourne delegate into cancelling the stop-work against members wishes. The same will occur with amalgamation - only worse. Amalgamation means weaker unions and stronger union bureaucrats. Lui Di Gregorio and Joe Sibberas have already worked out between them who will be Secretary and who will be Assistant Secretary. What's to stop union officials negotiating sell-out deals behind the backs of members (even the union executive) like Lui Di Gregorio did on January 20-21 1990 with State ALP members to cheat tramways members out of total victory? What guarantee is there that union officials like Di Gregorio and Sibberas) will stop putting the interests of the ALP ahead of the members?

Should, therefore, union amalgamation be dismissed out of hand? No, amalgamation *itself* is not the issue but *how it is done*. Union amalgamation should come from the rank and file not ALP/ACTU power brokers. The structure of the union should be such that their safeguards against further bureaucratisation. Like instant recallability of union officials, limited tenure of office, decentralised decision-making processes where the rank and file controls the union (not the other way around). An amalgamated public transport union should develop organically from face-to-face links between workers across the industry. It should be supported by a free-flow of information that would empower the rank and file and equip it to make the best decisions) not the curtain of silence we have seen for the past few years.

Union amalgamation should not be some deal worked out by union officials at Federal level but by the federation of autonomous work-places committees. Decision-making power should not be distributed vertically but horizontally.

QUESTION AUTHORITY: VOTE NO!

While some delegates are confessing serious doubts about amalgamation to their members they are at the same time conceding an inevitability of force union amalgamation.

But forced union amalgamation can be stopped; as it seems certain the referendum will fail (at least in the tramways union). It won't stop union officials from trying to force their own decisions on the rank and file. What will stop them is determined resistance. Depots could start by passing resolutions with dawning recognition of union officials authority. This has been done before. Rank and File members should insist on safeguards against bureaucratisation in the structure of the union. Members should insist on all information becoming available and thoroughly debated. A good start is an emphatic NO vote in the up-coming referenda - anything less will be a disaster for members.

Vote No to forced amalgamation. Vote Yes to rank and file controlled industrial unionism.

Leigh Kendall, ex South Melbourne

COMMENT. Being proposed is longer terms of office for Delegates & Health & Safety Reps, from the present one year to *TWO YEARS*. South Melbourne depot members sacked the incompetent Denise Stephens as Delegate, to the shocked outrage of the Executive. Two year term power seekers will prove even harder to recall.

Also instead of a *GENERAL STOP-WORK MEETING* overriding all other decisions a "General Meeting of Members": can overrule. A quorum, minimum number of members needed to be present, to *DECIDE FOR EVERYONE* can be as little as 1 % eg. 100 members for 10,000 members!

ALP MACHINE MEN COUP?

These sort of 'stacking meetings' numbers games are routine to Australian Labour Party "numbers men" like Di Gregorio & Sibberas. Pre-selection of Party electoral candidates and decisions on 'issues' are decided by factional numbers delivered as 'block votes'.

The Federal (ALP Senator Cook) Industrial Relations Minister has declared the State wants to speedup centralised amalgamations by imposing legislation *outlawing* unions with less than 20,000 members.

In Britain the workers suffering under the Conservatives for more than a decade have also seen 'their unions' amalgamated..of here is the news that the National Union of Rail-workers has amalgamated with the Seafarers Union. Will we be merging with Seafarers(Seamen's Union here) too? The Australian Labour Party is affiliated to the Socialist (social-democratic) International which demands the International Labour Organisation affiliated unions support their local Labour Party. The present move to amalgamation, centralisation is International policy to ensure funding and numbers for future careers in the State. Whether in Government or Opposition the Labour polities & Union Bosses need to show they can control the workers for the bosses.



COODE ISLAND

While we await the Official State Enquiry (cover-up?) run by John Landy we, as transport workers and residents of Melbourne, should make our own. Some residents in Footscray sick to cancerous death of 54 preventable 'accidents' in recent years set up the Hazardous Chemicals Action Group (tel. 6899754).

The present \$20 million clean-up over the next 6-12 months and disposal of the toxic sludge has bypassed local health workers concerns. The HCAG has set up a health register for all those who got symptoms poisoning, sore eyes, throat, cough, rashes, etc. so later birth deformities cancer developments etc. can be compared to exposure.

While public transport was running, 'our' bosses, union bureaucrats, politicians all left town or stayed indoors with their air conditioning off. When those learning train driving nearby walked off, Footscray Bus, Brunswick, Essendon, North Fitzroy & South Melbourne ran their trams in and refused to go near the fire site the union bosses reappeared to assure us all we could be exposed safely....

All clothes worn by the firefighters were removed and one cop died of a heart attack after being near the fire for two days, another was hospitalised. Just what the chemicals were apart from Benzene (known to cause cancer) was kept quiet for

'security' (if not ours whose?) and 'trade secrets' by the Port of Melbourne Authority.

The Companies who have gotten away with ignoring health and safety, storing dangerous explosive containers of LPG, poisonous chemicals so near the City and residents must pay the clean up bill and be forced to decentralise storage to Areas clear of population centres, move it only by rail include:

APOCALYPSE WHEN?

Terminals Pty Ltd. Bulk Liquid Storage, Mackenzie Rd. Footscray
Tel 689 2344. Terminators (oops) Terminals have 99 tanks on Coode Island. Theirs was the site of the fire which razed 12 tanks.
Powell Duffryn Pty Ltd. 70-78 Mackenzie Rd. Footscray
Tel 689 5411. Have 91 tanks on Coode Island.

Mobil Oil Australia Ltd. 2 City Rd. South Melbourne. Tel: 6173111 They have 12 tanks.
BP Australia Pty Ltd. 1 Albert Rd. South Melbourne. 268 4111. They have 9 tanks.
The Port of Melbourne Authority, corner Flinders and Spencer Streets, City, Telephone: 611 1777. The PMA

CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN

This has been a problem for years and the Union has been sitting on its hands for years. The most recent committee focussed on North Fitzroy during the last push. Tired of waiting for Officials and other Depots to stir it up Brunswick has taken a survey of members and the results show a great need. This survey is available for other Depots to undertake as are speakers from Brunswick Childcare Committee.

Trades Hall and the ACTU's childcare Officers have provided help and the Minister Spyker and his advisers have all the info in front of them. One likely site, cheaper than renovating the derelict properties owned by the PTC adjoining North Fitzroy Depot, is the old Clifton Hill Cable Tram Depot. It is listed with the National Trust, has potential space for 60 children and is accessible to Brunswick, North Fitzroy, Preston Depot & Workshops.

Presently used for Bussies lay-ups and training, storing furniture it can be fixed up without wrecking its character. Ceiling insulation (cooler in summer, warmer in winter) window double glazing (for insulation and cutting down traffic noise for sleeping little ones), wheelchair and pram access instead of stairs. Space allocated for a quiet room, Nursing-feeding babies room, toddlers, early school and later school age groups, outdoor play equipment and shady trees as well as many more functions have to be decided on by us the parents & workers as it is our centre.

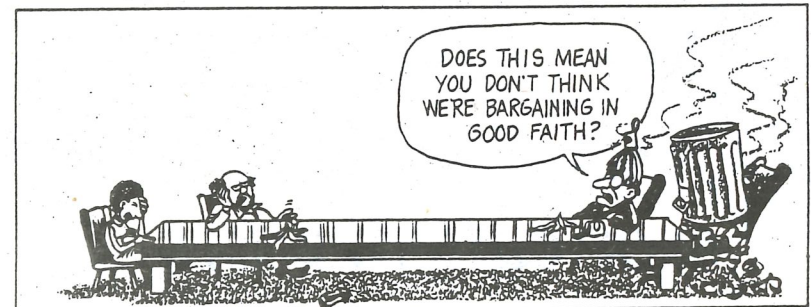
Also needed will be a small bus to pick up

and drop off kids at the Centre from Depots, as a rostered duty by drivers probably from North Fitzroy.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Get involved by encouraging a child-care committee at your Depot, get leaflets & information about, get speakers along to the Depot meeting, do your own survey, check out PTC owned sites suitable for childcare centre. Go for it! If the North East Depots get there first it will help make it easier for all, for your Depot to get access or its own if you push enough. Let's get behind this long overdue battle.

Contact: **Glennis Murie, Brunswick Tram Depot, Sydney Road, Brunswick, 3056. Tel.: 3841025.**



If you're still using your old private bus timetables, you could be missing something

From 29 July most private bus companies will have been forced by the Govt to cut services. If you take Public Transport for granted then you could miss your bus.

Met private bus timetables will be easily remembered, as there will be fewer buses.

For further information regarding cuts phone the Minister for Transport, Mr Spyker on 5844013.

So tell Mr Spyker we dont like the new timetable, we miss our buses.

The Met.

UNNING PUBLIC TRANSPORT DOWN

TAKE A STAND ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

STOP CUTS TO BUSES



PLANNING MISMANAGEMENT?

A tram terminus is to be built for the Swanston Street entrance of Melbourne University. Three possible sites are:

- In the University itself.
- At the top end of Swanston Street.
- In Faraday Street.

20,000 people go to study or work at Melbourne University. Even the Federal Government admits there will be 10% unemployment for at least the next 2 years so Study remains a popular option. They cannot all go by car let alone park the autos. The place needs public transport. When the 'decision-makers' do not know anything about the service and never travel on it you get chaos. Why was there never a tram terminus built at the University before? Why, when the rail Loop was constructed, was there no Station built to service the Womens Hospital-Melbourne Uni-Lygon Street shops-Princes Park Football Ground?

With staff cuts reducing the crews available to do University services the work load is to be spread onto the crews of Southern Depots (not just Brunswick & South Melbourne Depots) by the new terminus. The old Victoria Street terminus with its five shunts was closed by the State Coroner after a fatality when a passenger running for a tram was hit and killed.

The 'temporary' safety zone between Queensberry & Victoria Streets where so many trams are 'turned' by the Inspectors (delaying packed Uni & North bound trams) was installed after protests by crews who nearly had accidents just like in the original Victoria street incident!

Do we, the crews and passengers, get any say in where the terminus will be and how soon it is constructed? If the present mis-Managers get their traditional way...no. Let's not delay, protest today!

EXTENSIONS & NEW ROUTES

There has begun an extension on the Camberwell Depot crewed route and talk of making a tram route to the Tullamarine Airport; along Spring Street for a city circle; to Docklands...the opposition to the Eastern Freeway has promoted a rail link direct into the City Loop...the planned mall or half-mall in Swanston Street from Flinders to La Trobe Street...all emphasis on not just defending but extending public transport has to be encouraged by worker and community control of the service across Melbourne.

ARE YOU MANAGEMENT MATERIAL?

Question 1. *The Victorian State Labour*

Government has changed the Minister of Transport portfolio like a hot potato from Crabbe to Roper to Kennan to Spyker. What difference has this made to your ability to ignore the public passengers, the workers, any one who questions the mess?

Answer carefully:

- A: None.
- B: Some.
- C: Lots.
- D: There was blood in the corridors, coups, scores settled, a power struggle for top jobs, bigger salaries, more perks...but who gives a shit about the lower orders!

Question 2. *The Victorian State Opposition Liberal Party has Alan Brown as Transport Minister. If elected what difference will this make?*

Answer very carefully:

- A: None.
- B: Some.
- C: Lots.
- D: As Brown lost the Leadership to Kennett he got the 'hot potato' and has to prove himself now to get the faction numbers up to get the Leadership back. In Liberal run New South Wales, cuts to jobs and services were achieved without any fight from union bureaucrats there.

Question 3:

The workers at their Depot decide they don't want bosses, don't need you and get together, occupy the place, evict you and try to run the service themselves....Do you :

- A: Call in the Government Minister to order them to behave, work as bossed normally or not get paid, sacked.
- B: Call in the Police to restore Law & Order, protect those who want to work as instructed, arrest and jail troublemakers.
- C: Call in the Religious Authorities to point out that workers control is a sin and that it is the way God planned it for there to be order givers and order takers.
- D: Call in the Union Officials to get everyone back to work, go into negotiations and stop being lead astray by 'ratbags' about not having bosses.

Question 4: The Public Transport Corporation is being privatised sold off. To make this possible new, more efficient, ways of working have to be sold to the passengers and workers as 'progressive'...The Service Now programme is one such strategy. When asked what is Service Now do you say..

- A: It is a way for all of us to get-together as a team, so we can become leaner and efficient, share in some of the wisdom of Ian Stoney whose light shines everywhere even in our darkest moments and whose brilliance mere words cannot do justification to describe etc.
- B: A bit like the religious experience of prayer, looking inwards to serve the great needs of life in times of problems.

Question 6: *A member of the travelling public complains about a worker blaming 'incompetent bosses' for the transport mess. What do you say?*

- A: Can you describe the person, what time of day was it, what was the tram route or number of tram its destination etc. Assure them the trouble-making bludger will be sorry they spoke out.

Question 7: *The privatised sale of Met-tickets as 'scratch-style' in retail outlets of VANA newsagents, AMCAL Chemists etc has not been as efficient as planners hoped. Problems with the disabled minority taking a legal case of discrimination also disrupted the scheme. Do you:*

- A: Set up a Met-ticket taskforce to stall abolition calls.
- B: Redesign the scratch-tickets without a year or price so they can be sold indefinitely. Redesign the weekly & monthly tickets so forgeries are less common and the media can blame vandals and forgers for the losses.
- C: Ignore passenger and worker protests after taking the details, petitions, phonecalls etc.
- D: Increase the price of all tickets to set the Australian highest standard.
- E: All of the above.

Question 8: *The annual memo comes down encouraging all Management to use public transport do you:*

- A: Ignore it and keep your PTC car.
- B: Wait once at an unlit, unsheltered stop without a seat on the day the media turn up like the other Managers, get your photo taken with the smelly public and workers then take a long lunch and drive home.
- C: Wear a disguise and travel for a day to spy on the bludging workers, dob them in so they get panelled for SMOKING, not collecting fares, driving through redlights, not picking up passengers, leaving earlier than tables specify etc.

ESSENDON RESIGNATIONS

In the old days you could question the Delegates who had to collect union dues directly from members. Now Management deducts your dues to the union for you and you have to wait for Depot meetings or being on a break when the Delegate is about. Officials of the paid variety are even rarer to see except at Election time or when they come to sell to you what the Boss wants as a victory for you! If the members take wildcat 'unofficial' action then remarkably the Union Bosses show up to try and get everyone back to duties as usual, while they talk to the other Bosses for you behind closed doors.

Now what happens if members decide to not have the Boss take their union dues direct from the pay for the Union Boss? Well at Essendon Depot it meant Lui di Gregorio, Secretary of the ATMOEA, formerly the Delegate at Essendon, had to turn up at his old Depot to see if anyone still remembered who he was and pacify the pissed off 'resignations'. Civil Branch were called in to renovate (enlarge) the doorways so Lui could get his head inside the Depot though.

Seems Lui keeps avoiding South Melbourne Depot where a lot of members are daring to question Lui's Authoritarian style of Leading us into Amalgamation without any debate in the *Tramway Record*, on the Union Executive etc. Perhaps a few more 'resignations' will do the trick and bring him down to earth from King Street, Unity Hall, Trades Hall, Transport House, Parliament, Federal Ministers offices, the Airways of Australia or wherever it is he floats above the members everyday workplaces.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

An answer to the financial dilemma of the PTC - which has resulted in job cuts, less frequent tram and bus services, with stress to workers and hardship for community users? *SPARKS* answer - for your discussion and if you agree - some action:

The abolition of the huge explosion of administration in the City. There is no reason why the centralisation of administration should not be replaced by more smaller local administration based on the Depots. Maybe a central banking body to collect the money from the Depots might be needed. Such local bodies would be soon familiar with the community problems - resulting in more efficient service - with no further fare increase and no loss of jobs in the Depots.

Again the Union organisation should be based on the depot - doing away with the present bureaucrats, result: more direct democracy. Of course a bit of workers control, like January 1990 would be needed.

Maybe Mr. Sibberas, Mr. di Gregorio, Mr. Hussey, Mr. Stoney & Mr. Spyker would not think much of these ideas - but what do *you* think is important.

CROSS CITY LINKING

Peter Parkinson, former Trades Hall Boss sold out completely and became a PTC Boss last year. He has taken up what was originally pushed in 1986 METPLAN as a way to save South Melbourne depot through cross city linking. Having more depots go across the City was originally discarded as Tramways Union members wanted to work their side of the city more and have breaks in their own Depots. To have it come from Management now, at a time of cuts to jobs and services stinks of 'restructuring', we trade off ourselves like slaves to get the \$12 increase of accord Mark 6 awarded earlier this year.

TICKET VALIDATING MACHINES & FARE INCREASES

Having already pushed up fares 25% the PTC/State Government want another 6% hike. Yet the rip-off scratch-ticket system continues to waste money. The latest variety have no price and no year of issue printed on them! Some community and passenger groups are calling for a civil disobedience campaign to protest the increased fares for reduced services.

Workers, connies particularly, should get behind the protesting passengers and ask them to also protest about the full range of tickets not being available on board vehicles. . . for example: short trip tickets outside the City Business District and 10 short trip cards, 3 Zone 3 hour & concessions...

On top of the usual bureaucratic waste a scheme to bring in ticket validating machines is being cooked up. How much will it cost? Why waste more on such a ridiculous attack on the jobs of conductors and station assistants with the end goal of giving vandals some new targets?

If the PTC gets away with correct-fare only machines passengers will miss their ride or face increased fines (\$500 is being proposed!) if they ride without a ticket. If the PTC gets away with ticket-validating machines 'operated by staff' on buses, then railway station assistants and tram conductors will lose their jobs. Driver only trams travelling in the middle of the road mean reduced safety for the driver and passengers. Railway stations without assistants are also unsafe.

Answers from page 13

ANSWERS: If you answered yes to any of the questions you are already a long way towards being a parasite. If you answered D often and took a combination strategy you certainly have Big Boss < Order Giver Supremo potential & are Prime Management material. If you cannot sleaze your creepy, crawly way into a top PTC role of power over others then there is always the Union Election racket which likewise promotes liars, corruption and the rewards the ability to control others.

RANK RAP

This is the first of many articles that will appear in *Sparks* to do with the taxi industry.

The taxi industry is possibly the most under-represented industry in the work force. Drivers are theoretically members of the T.W.U. (Transport Workers Union) if they pay their dues.

The TWU representatives are *never seen* anywhere. The most we get is a poster on a depot window during union election time. (Not that this is too abnormal, being standard practise in what passes as 'democracy' in this country.)

Coupled with this lack of power or some sort of voice, the fact is that cabbies are over-worked, under paid, have no form of sick pay, holiday pay and very little compensation from injuries received, in a job where every weekend a cabbie is bashed and murders are common. We are also at the mercy of owners, some of whom give us shit cars, two-way radios which don't work; tell us to work and when we get there often find there is no work. When we do work they expect miracles and never seem happy with the takings.

As cab drivers we have to start fighting back, for instance it is a known fact that owners pass around an information bulletin (usually via computer) which lets them know which drivers they consider 'bad' and not to be employed. (How they define 'bad' remains a mystery.)

Why don't we start up a similar thing where we pass around information:

- on arsehole owners who lie to you, run un-safe cars, rip you off,
- have driver contracts which specify in the small print that should you have an accident then you pay for it, (I know one owner like this.)
- dock your money if you don't turn up for work, then if you turn up for work and there is no car as promised they just smile at you and tell you to fuck off.

Apart from arse-hole owners there are other aspects of the industry which need some debate, for instance:

- the new computer system being installed in all cabs,
- dress regulations (there is a proposal afoot that we all wear uniforms, complete with epaulets. I for one don't want to drive looking like an airline pilot);
- security,
- treatment of women cab-drivers, (which is abysmal)
- the treatment of prostitutes by cabbies, (which is disgusting),
- the existence of the cabbie who picks up young drunk women and rapes them. (A western suburban cabbie by all accounts).

Other issues are

- taxi-watch,
- how we can contribute to the control of AIDS,
- the appeals mechanism with the R.T.A.,
- smoking in cabs,
- the filth,

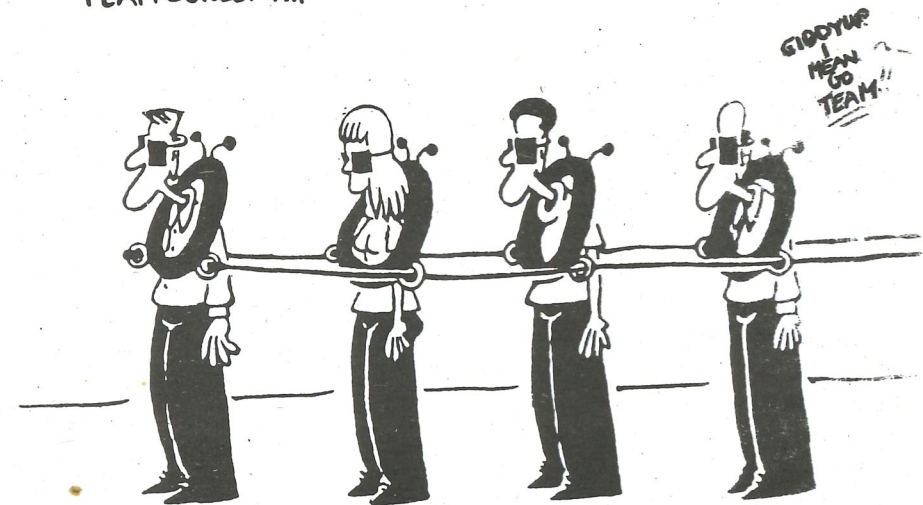
- R.T.A. cowboys, grey ghosts and other revenue-grabbing scum,
- the driver-operator relationship,
- the best coffee shops in town,
- taxation etc.

These are things that I have thought up and I'm sure there are a lot more that I haven't thought about but would like to hear about. (In other words contribute because I can't do it myself.)

I enjoy driving cabs and like the industry, but there are problems which have to be fixed and the R.T.A-VIC. ROADS., the government, the V.T.A. (Victorian Taxi Industry) are not going to do anything about them as they are either causing the problem or just don't care about them.

It's up to us to instigate some action. We're the drivers and we know what's going on more than anybody else does. We have to act before we find ourselves working in an environment that we can't tolerate. Contributions are more than welcome and are in fact necessary so please contribute by writing to the address on the back of *Sparks*. Be warned though, I've talked to some other cabbies about organising and they claimed that they tried and the R.T.A grabbed them, hauled them before a committee and told them that if they continued they wouldn't work again. So keep those contributions anonymous.

TEAM CONCEPT...



SOMERVILLE SERVICE ?

Recently I returned to my old hometown Somerville, which is about half an hour from Frankston in the other direction. Somerville is "serviced" (for want of a better word) by the Frankston /Stony Point line, with a grand total of one diesel car train going back and forwards. More on that later.

Anyway I was surprised to see that at the rail crossing near Sammy Station they've actually built gates and fences. I say surprised because since time immemorial that crossing has only had the two lights to warn drivers and pedestrians that the train is coming. It isn't always possible for the train to stop in time in case of emergency, and as a result, people have died.

I'll never forget the day I saw the aftermath of one accident. A mate and I were going to the chemist when we heard about a crash, so we ran to the crossing to see what we could do. As it turned out, nothing. I saw the ruined car, and the ruined body. Enough of that.

Sammy isn't the only place that's had problems. On a stretch of road between Sammy and Baxter stations there's a crossing that's had its fair share too. As far as I know nothing more substantial than lights are there.

My point is that what is needed is boom-gates on crossings to keep that rail line completely safe. It's too late for some unfortunate people. So the sooner the better.

But Frankston/Stony Point is a shitty "service". I can remember when I was living out there when they cut the whole train line altogether, as they did with the Mornington-Baxter line. It didn't last long, and now the train runs still. But looking at a recent timetable, they've cut a couple of times so now the "service" is more limited than before. We're looking at one train every hour, sometimes every two hours. Last train to Stony Point at about six, nine on Fridays. Four trains run on Sunday. There is a private bus line, but that's been cut to shit too.

The really stupid thing is that the towns that rely on these "services" are growing all the time. Always, more houses, shops etc. Yet the powers that be continue to cut public transport. And they wonder why there's such a high unemployment rate! All right for the various councillors, majors, polities and rich scum who can afford air-polluting cars, but for the rest of us it's tough, innit?

At one stage, construction began to extend the Melbourne-Frankston electric train rail, out to Stony Point, so you have a non-stop (well, apart from stations) line from Stony Point to Melbourne. They never even got quarter way, ran out of money or something. Mmm, make you wonder where your precious taxes go, if they can't afford to provide you with a basic service.

Right throughout the state, the whole country, communities are affected by inadequate or nonexistent public transport. Public transport is one of the most vital services that people can and should expect, but alas, our society has more important things to spend money on, like AIDEX and sport. Perhaps if we the people were running our own show, things would be better.

SAVE FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL.

Fairfield Hospital is an essential health facility. It is the largest centre of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere with internationally renowned expertise in the diagnosis, treatment and research of infectious diseases.

The State Government wants to shut Prince Henrys in St Kilda Rd and disperse the patients currently treated at Fairfield to other hospitals. This is crazy Fairfield is the health facility best equipped to look after these patients and the future needs of all Victorians with infectious diseases.

Protest to *Maureen Lyster, Minister of Health, c/- Parliament House, Spring Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000.*

Contact the *Save Fairfield Hospital Action Committee, Fairfield Hospital, Yarra Bend Road, Fairfield, 3078 Telephone: 280 2574.*

VICTORIAN STATE LIBRARY IS ON SKIDROW

Not many workers use the Library these days. But students are flooding in. Shortage of staff causes queues and longer waiting times for books. The Government is restricting financial support. Library workers are protesting. Support them by your protest to the *Minister for the Arts, 2 Kavanagh Street, South Melbourne.*

MORE NOT LESS CAMPAIGN

Public and community sector service workers (members of the Australian Social Welfare Union) and users have begun a campaign to reject government funding policies on social services. If you want to join in contact: *Collective of Self Help Groups at PO Box 159, East Brunswick 3057.*

CONCESSIONS PLEASE!

Public transport should be free. So should a lot of necessities (food, housing, tampons, clothing etc.) But of course it costs dollars to run a public transport service and thus it's us who foot the bill. Fair enough (well, not really). But perhaps it would make sense to have a service that at least is affordable to all members of the community. Not if you're unemployed, with the pittance that refer to as "income" you're expected to make your way around on a few dollars a day. So it follows that concessions are made for dolees, health care recipients, single parents etc.

What they used to do was give you a concession card from the train stations. You took your health care card to your local Station & they stamped an annual card that got you concessions on public transport. Of course, the idea made too much sense so it was scrapped. Now your health care card is also your transport concession card, which means wear & tear on the card, resulting in a shorter life-span. Due to the efficiency of the bureaucracy at Department of Social Security, the health-care cards only come from Melbourne, not your local DSS, and if they are behind you could go a while without a health-care card & thus without concession on public transport (not to mention concession on health care).

Now, should you lose your health care card it's possible to pick-up something called an "interim voucher", a flimsy piece of paper that doesn't even last the fortnight it's supposed to. This voucher serves the same purpose as a h/c card except for one minor detail..it does not get you concession on public transport.

According to a poster/leaflet put out by the Public Transport Corporation & signed by Joseph Caruso (info officer). "The interim voucher does not entitle the holder to any transport concessions."

OK, so one day I lose my h/c card in the washing machine (come on, we've all made that mistake!) and pop down to my local DSS in Dandenong to get a replacement. They normally come out in a couple of days, but in this case Melbourne has apparently fucked up & printed a batch of bad ones, so it'll be a few weeks. Good one DSS, another fucking beauty! So they give me an "interim voucher" to tide me over.

I'm a bit reliant on public transport. So imagine my disgust when I start having problems with getting on buses for 60c instead of \$1.20. I mean, it helps to make ends meet if you only pay \$2.50 for a daily travel card instead of seven dollars or whatever it is! I manage a bit of ranting and raving and that gets me concession (it even worked with a ticket-inspector on a bus one time) but hell, it doesn't work all the time.

I went to Dandy DSS twice and both times they assured me that they have spoken to the local Bus Depot, Grendas, (who I believe gave support to Bell Street during their strike) & Dandy station, and told me absolutely that the interim voucher was applicable for concession. The second occasion I asked

for a written confirmation, which they 'couldn't' (ie. wouldn't) give. But they told me there was no reason to be denied access on buses.

I then went to Grendas and spoke with Karl Knudsen, the boss, who assured me that there was *no way* the buses could give me concession on the interim voucher. He gave me a photocopy of the Joseph Caruso leaflet to prove his point.

Meanwhile I had to trek an hour from Dandy to my home in Doveton in the rain because I couldn't afford the fucking fare!

The thing is that Dandy station, (and a few others, like Box Hill, that I've used) have allowed me to use the voucher. Karl Knudsen told me that Oakleigh Station at least refused to. So what we find is that there is no united agenda on the use of interim vouchers for concession on public transport. But fuckit, there are many people using these things who are being fucked not only by DSS bureaucracy but public transport bureaucracy as well! Hilarious stuff eh?

For now, I would like to ask transport workers to please accept these vouchers as concession cards, it makes it a lot easier for us welfare recipients to get about.

UNWAGED WORKERS ATTACKED

The Federal regime has instructed the Department of Social (in)Security and Commonwealth Employment Service to force the unemployed to sign a *contract you can't refuse*. You must do whatever the State wants if you want any money when out of work. In Albury-Wodonga the local DSS-CES forced local unemployed to scab at the local meatworks, cross 5 month old picket lines.

Even though you paid your tax when you had a job you are not entitled to get anything but a job search allowance. The fact there are more unemployed than job vacancies does not see the State hassling people less. You have to retrain at what they decide is best and the Department of Employment, Education & Training has issued a Job System ID card to be carried by you at all times....

The model that has inspired these attacks is New Zealand where they have cut the dole by \$40 a week and begun on pensioners now. Those still in work have to sign new 'contracts' to opt out of unions and Award wages and conditions if they want to keep their jobs. **BOSSSES ARE LAUGHING ALL**

THE WAY TO THE BANK!

After the Federal and State Budgets offered no relief to the unwaged the Victorian Trades Hall finally, late as usual, noticed its affiliated unions memberships falling so organised a protest on September 10th. BUT did not encourage a stop work of course...will it take 20 or 30% out of work before industrial action erupts? As always it is up to us rank & file to organise and to find out more info, get a speaker to your workplace, local area, group of friends from the **Unemployed Workers Union, Ross House 247 Flinders Lane, City 3000 Telephone: 6504890** or by mail at **PO box 1127, North Fitzroy, 3068.**

OVERSEAS NEWS

FRANCE

During May-June this year all RATP (Paris public transport) went on strike. They were protesting cuts to services and jobs. Ground staff and flying personnel of the Air France group (Air-France, Air Inter and UTA airlines; air traffic controllers; public tv channels Antenne 2 and FR3; dock-workers; printers; post-office workers; nurses and doctors; insurance companies staff; Paris daily newspapers and Agence France Press printers also struck. Calais harbour engineers took 'go-slow' industrial action.

The British based media Tycoon Robert Maxwell laid off printers and staff from a news paper he bought which motivated those sacked to march through the Channel Tunnel. British cops stopped their progress and so they had to get a ferry to make it to a picket outside Maxwell's London offices HQ.

Saint-Etienne railway workers went on strike. SNCF (National Railway) staff who had been blockading the Marseille Saint-Charles Station railways during a two week occupation were expelled by riot police by order of the regional management.

USR/RUSSIA whatever..

A year before the August coup attempt some public transport workers began to organise independent unions. Those who initiated the autonomous struggle were sacked by Management and persecuted through the KGB. Protests, pickets, hunger strikes evolved to combat the State harassment. As the major means of transport in the Union of Republics it has been "illegal" to take industrial action or form workplace groups not under Party domination since Lenin & Trotsky put military discipline into the industry. Stalin and his heirs continued the bureaucratic totalitarianism.

The Barricades in Moscow were made principally of PT buses. Trains halted too. In Petersburg formerly Leningrad, the largest tramway system in the world blockaded the City.

The real alternative to State bureaucrats or proposed Private exploiters (who will cut jobs and services in the interest of Road Corporations like TNT poised to 'invest' there) is of course **workers control**. Not since the early months of the

1917 Revolution finally crushed out by the Bolshevik State at Kronstadt in 1921 have the working people had this chance at running their own lives and communities. Various isolated rebellions arose and were smashed in the past decades but the struggle for workers control remains. We will publish more news as it comes through.

SEE BACK PAGE

For more info, contact the PASSENGER SUPPORT GROUP at Box 210095,

San Francisco, CA 94121-0095

MEANWHILE BACK IN THE USA

On August 22nd, at lunchtime, using the slogan **WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE WORKERS IS GOOD FOR THE RIDERS** Bay Area Rapid Transit workers and passengers came together to protest BART General Manager Frank Wilson's refusal to bargain. (The protest occurred before the New York City IRT No 4 express crash on August 28 killed five passengers and injured 200). More on that next issue. We reprint part of their leaflet here:

Dear BART Rider,

We, like you, depend on BART to get us to and from work everyday. A system-wide shutdown would be a disaster for all of us. Yet the current stalemate in labor negotiations threatens us with just that. That's why we're asking you to join us in our efforts to resolve the impasse.

We must persuade BART management to begin bargaining in good faith with their workers. As commuters, we resent the District's efforts to squeeze concessions from their workers at a time when the District is experiencing unprecedented expansion. It is we, the system's passengers, who will most directly suffer from lowered worker morale and safety conditions.

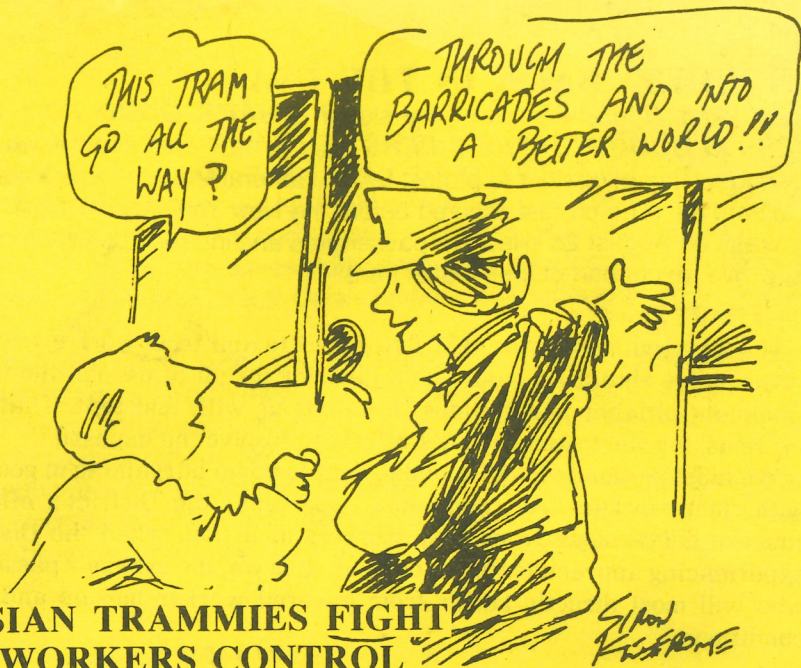
Some of the sticking points in the current labor negotiations are:

1. Mandatory Overtime: The District wants to save money by having their Train Operators (T.O.s) start running three loops (roundtrips) a day. Currently T.O.s only run two loops every shift. This proposed change is a danger to the public and will result in more accidents. Do you want a burned-out operator running your train just so the District can save a few bucks?

2. Cost-of-Living Wage Increases: The District has so far refused to offer this to its union workers. We wouldn't mind so much if BART's General Manager Frank Wilson hadn't just received a 16% salary increase, boosting his annual income to \$126,000 plus perks. If the District wants to save money, we suggest they slash or eliminate some of the six-figure salaries currently spent on dozens of high-level managers, before they begin lowering the real wages of their frontline, blue-collar workers.

3. Media Manipulation: The District has taken out full-page ads in the local papers in which they exaggerated their workers' wages by as much as 30% (by including overtime wages earned during the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake). These distortions have angered BART's workers, poisoning the atmosphere of the negotiations and making a compromise agreement harder to reach.

We hope you'll join us in our efforts to prevent a strike. Please call the Board of Directors listed below and encourage them to begin negotiating in good faith. Together we can convince these elected officials of ours that a good contract for their workers is in EVERYONE's best interest.



RUSSIAN TRAMMIES FIGHT FOR WORKERS CONTROL

For many years, workers at the interurban Moscow-Tverzh tramway terminal have been labouring hard but not efficiently: workplace problems have been building up. The depot management 'works' on enough to keep the higher authorities happy, with no regard for the concerns of the workers. We decided to get some changes made using direct action. A group, 'Workers Initiative', in which anarcho-syndicalists also take part, has brought together a majority of the workers. Our 26 demands, in essence being to have the depot run by the workers via a depot committee, have been ignored.

As a result a strike took place on August 26, 1989. Then, when Transportation Vice-Minister Bulko asked us to stop the strike, we went back to work since we realised what serious consequences the strike had for the travelling public. A commission was set up and the administration promised to satisfy our just demands. However, the anti-strike law promulgated by the Supreme Soviet had brushed all that aside. The new director of the depot feels he has a free hand and has cancelled meetings with our strike committee. They have started penalising strikers.

We have been fighting against the threats of firings. In all, the terminal itself now functions even worse than before due to the apathy of the workers and the conviction of many among them that they can do nothing to make changes.

Nevertheless, we say we won't give up and we are not willing to be dealt with at the whim of management. We are a real force and are calling them to account. It is unlikely that our letter to the Supreme Soviet will make any difference. But let everyone be aware: we are getting ready to strike; we will keep on fighting for a better life

A.N. Ivanov, worker (train coupler) member of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Confederation, President of the Strike Committee.