

Lindsay
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Rep. 3/18

CAMBERWELL DEPOT NEWSLETTER

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ROSTER, TRANSFERS, ETC.

The new roster has at last been posted, and it remains much as the traffic dept. wanted it; when our delegate met with Mr. Drummond he had the Award thrown at him...so that we still have shifts over 8-hours, excessive time on the road, etc.

Details of the roster are still on the Notice Board. Needless to say, about 30 of us are transferring to other depots, mainly to Siberia (i.e. Glenhuntly) Kew & Malvern. Most are hoping to return, some have decided not to, while many of us remaining will miss friends that have been forced out. With the retirements & promotions coming up over the next few months the absence from Camberwell for some will be short.

Over the next few weeks an excess of staff due to no-one much being on holidays or off sick will mean that some will be asked to go to one of the southern depots for the odd day or week(s). At present all those going have volunteered; if you're interested see the D.M. About a dozen are needed.

Again we remind those transferring to put in a yellow when they get to their new depot requesting a transfer back to Camberwell at the first opportunity; if you strike any snags get onto the delegate about it.

DEPOT COMMITTEE As a result of two members of the Depot Committee being transferred out and one having left the job to drive steam engines in Queensland there are vacancies on this illustrious body...see Jack Russell for a nomination form.

THE TRACK DISPUTE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The recent dispute with the Board over its attempt to weaken the conditions of employment of the track construction gangs has wide implications for all of us.

Looked at in isolation it appears initially as a fight by the track to retain conditions existent under a two-year old agreement with the Board, the mobilization of the traffic staff in support and the eventual gaining of most of their demands.

Unfortunately it is not that simple.

We presently live in a country where the central government has embarked on an ideologically-motivated policy programme involving an active redistribution of the nations wealth from the bulk of the population, the ordinary wage and salary earner, to the wealthier sections of the community.

This manifests itself in many ways: government expenditure in numerous areas that benefit the average person or family has been slashed as part of the dismantling of every major initiative of the Labor Government.

This is all part of a so-called "fight against inflation"...unfortunately WE are the casualties.

Also bearing the brunt are the state governments. State Liberal administrations do not have many qualms about this: ideologically such spending cuts fit in well with their philosophy. Politically they can blame Canberra, thus re-directing the opprobrium to the Federal government.

But as a result, state instrumentalities are having funds slashed. For instance the Board of Works has had its capital works funding programme slashed and to find the extra money they need will increase rates by over 100 per cent over the next couple of years. Meaning that we get slugged.

In the case of the Tramways the solution has been to make cuts

in every area. By getting the track blokes to sign on "on site" or at the nearest depot rather than down at Hanna St. was an attempt to save money.

The fact that washing and changing facilities would be incredibly primitive, that their employees might have to travel clear across Melbourne to get to work bothered the Board not one bit.

Well, in this case we might have won the battle, but have we won the war? Not so.

For instance members may have noticed how, when clocks stop or get smashed they stay that way for weeks on end - no maintenance, and when there is any it is little and a long time coming. Look how long it took to get a new basin in the women's toilets, at the condition of the tracks on the depot fan. And where are our new mess-room tiles, promised 12 months ago.

The cuts in the Civil Branch will mean that points, crossings and overhead will go longer without maintenance or replacement, that the condition of the track work - traditionally a strength, in relation to the parlous state of the rolling stock - will gradually deteriorate to a point where it is beyond the resources of the Board to replace it.

Instance the number of badly broken rails at present going unrepaired, or the state of the depot fan, where the track is so bad that derailments occur with monotonous regularity. The process of physical deterioration of the system is already well under way.

As a result of further manic cost-cutting measures, night-time and week-end services are to be slashed; how long before late night week-end services are eliminated altogether?

Two years ago nobody would have believed that VicRail would ever cut their night-time and Sunday services, but they did... from 20 minutes to 30 and 40.

That the Saturday afternoon service will be cut to 15 or 20 minutes, the night service to 30 or 40 and the day-time to 15 is inevitable. Also foreshadowed are cuts to the peak services.

(You may scoff, but it happened in Brisbane. Their weeknight and Sunday buses run every 55 minutes; on Sunday nights there is simply no service at all. Yet 10 years ago their night trams ran every 12 and 18 minutes.)

Unless, of course, we act to put a stop to it.

And how do we do that?

By a campaign on the part of our union to convince the public that they are the ones who will suffer as a result of such cuts, especially as fuel for automobiles is likely to become scarce and prohibitively expensive.

And through a campaign of industrial action - of whatever means we may decide upon at the time - wherever such cuts are threatened.

Service cuts, for us, mean job cuts and an effective cut in our wages.

Any reduction in night and weekend work as a result of cuts in the service to the public will result in a cut in the level of our take-home pay. As we all know the thing that gives us a decent wage IS NOT our base rate but the fact of ours being an industry where the prevalence of at least one penalty-rate weekend day on our shifts, or most of them, is normal practise.

The policy decisions from above that caused the track dispute mean that it is not an incident that can be viewed in isolation. The current economic policies of our Federal and state governments and their effect on the operations of instrumentalities such as the MMTB mean that in the area of Traffic and Civil Branch cut-backs there is more - and worse - to come.

*****DEPOT COMMITTEE.**

Met last Thursday 26th. , mainly to hear the delegate's report on the meeting between the delegates from Camberwell, Malvern and Glenhuntly and the Traffic Manager, Mr. Drummond.

This meeting confirmed the rumours about cuts in the service and in overall expenditure by the Board. Camberwell was knocked back on just about every complaint it had about the roster, the excuse being that it was within the provisions of the Award and that the tramways was restricted by its expenditure limitations imposed by the State Government in what it could currently provide in the way of shifts.

The Traffic Manager admitted that the depot buildings left a lot to be desired and needed to be refurbished; and that the trackwork at Camberwell needed replacement....but again, no money.

Princes Bridge Suunt

It appears that the Traffic Dept. have made provision for tram-jams in at the Bridge. In certain circumstances 'Z'-beasts will be permitted to shunt on the NORTH SIDE of the platform.

This will occur in the PM peak when there are already a couple of Z's on the South side with a third waiting outside the shunt and blocking the progress of a Prahran. Should this circumstance arise the Z will shunt on the North side and allow the 77 to shunt over.

So that passengers won't have to enter from the roadway, drivers will presumably keep the front door on the roadway side closed. The connie will load the tram from the platform entrance door (i.e. what will be the rear door on the outward trip) until the tram is ready to leave.

The same will occur in the AM peak so as to allow depot cars to get in and unload their multitudes without being kept waiting by the Lay-up car and service car on the South side.

Depot meeting Held Friday 27th.

This meeting mainly dealt with getting authorization for a survey to be carried out by a non-profit group at C.I.T into the effects of shift-work on hours on the health of members. The idea is to use the resulting data in submissions to the Arbitration Court on pay and conditions provisions in our Award. The following resolution was passed:

"We the members of Camberwell request that if it is possible, a survey be taken on the health of crews due to stress and strain caused by shift work. Ways of financing this be investigated".

FUTURE STOPPAGES AND ALTERNATIVES

The resolution passed at the stopwork meeting at Collingwood town hall on July 2 called for, among other things, "a programme of vigorous selective industrial action" combined with stoppages no longer than 48 hours; there is a recognition among the Combined Unions that we could not sustain an indefinite strike, it would destroy us.

Thus the call for short stoppages together with guerilla-type action.

So far only the railways unions have concerned themselves with alternative methods of action: the ARU run pickets at VicRail's freight centres while the AFULE has imposed a work to rules campaign on grain handling at Geelong (page 31/7).

As yet the Tramways Union hasn't followed suit. Admittedly we have had the track dispute to divert our energies. But now we have to face up to the

fact that we are going to have to do something toward the achievement of our wage demands; also we have to campaign against the impending service cuts.

The two types of alternative industrial action usually mentioned are a work to rule campaign and non-collection of fares

How would each type work and what are their prospects of success?

A work to rule campaign would necessitate strong self-discipline on the part of members; whether the current campaign at Nth. Fitzroy will be successful depends on the extent to which members adhere to it. Its effect on the State Government also depends on the amount of backing they get from the rest of the service, which currently doesn't look as though its forthcoming.

Loading and speed limits, full meal breaks, taking your own lay-up, overtime bans (i.e. no over 4.45 etc.), not running vehicles with any defects no matter how minor or insignificant are all part of such a campaign.

Unfortunately there are always those who are prepared to bludge on their mates; this throws doubts on possibilities for success, as does the fact that 'go-slow's and loading limits would be counter-productive with the public, probably discouraging patronage...no matter how often you explained the reasons for it to them

Not collecting fares on a 'lightning strike' basis would get the public on side and also publicize our cause. Done in conjunction with a work to rule or merely a leafletting, newspaper advertisement and press release campaign, it would probably be fairly effective in highlighting our wage campaign and any moves we might mount against the service cuts.

Problem is, would our benevolent employer suspend only those connies they caught, or lock us all out? Even if the MOA (the braids union) - which at present is having its own probs. with the Board - cooperated, there is nothing to stop the senior officers of the Tramways doing any required suspending of traffic staff.

The thing is: WE WON'T KNOW HOW EFFECTIVE SUCH ACTION WILL BE UNTIL WE TRY IT.

We owe it to the the rail unions and to ourselves to at least do something. We can be assured that if non-strike industrial action is handled properly and efficiently by the union officers and the depots it will make the State Government look pretty stupid and petty.

What do you think? Any ideas you may have on tactics for the wage campaign or industrial action in general would be welcomed for the next issue of the Newsletter.

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** MISTAKES AND CORRECTIONS **
** DEPT. **
** (NEW ROSTER) **
** The proportion of **
** straights to brokens . **
** is 70:30 , with 26 **
** brokens and 40 other. **

In the last issue there were a few mistakes and omissions in our account of the new roster.

This was to be expected as the entire newsletter was banged out (two finger) in a few hours the night before it appeared. Nevertheless, we apologize.

The most glaring omission was the numbers of different types of shifts. This was remedied by placing such info on the notice board; for the record

the numbers are

WEEKDAYS :	17	<u>Earlies</u>	26)	<u>Brokens</u>	12	<u>Middles</u>	11	<u>Lates</u>
SATURDAYS:	14	"	-		21	"	14	"
SUNDAYS :	7	"	--		5	"	9	"

**The service from Middleborough Rd. is as follows:
7.3, 8, 13, 18, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 45(ex Burwood), 39, 43, 47,
51, 55, 59; 8.4, 11, 21....The 7.45 from Somers St. is three minutes behind the 7.34 from East Burwood and 2 minutes in front of the 7.39.

**The 8.21 from Middleborough Rd. (currently 57 run, 141 table) still has a 10 minute headway behind the 8.11 and will still get slaughtered. It would probably be worthwhile to request that this be made the 8.19, thus giving the 8.29 - which doesn't carry as many kids - a 10 min. headway. V57 could then be given 2 mins. extra to the Junction (this would maintain the even headways in Riversdale and Bridge Rds.).

**V43 run, that currently departs Swanston & Flinders @ 6.15 AM to make the 7.8 from Middleborough Rd. has had its running time cut. It now, on the new block, has only 18 minutes to get from the Junction to the terminus. This means that it is due out there at 7.00 (instead of 7.04) and will depart on the new roster at 7.03 so if you had any plans to fit in a trip to the toilet and/or a purchase of the infamous Terminus Coffee, forget it!

We all know that the Superintendent of Rosters often catches the 6.49 from Warrigal Rd.; he has obviously observed that the first tram from Swanston St. (junction 6.42) continually runs early to Warrigal Rd. (due 6.55). V43 is often 5-8 mins early at Burwood...and the Superintendent has no doubt concluded, justifiably under the circumstances, that such blatant running ahead of time will allow that shift to leave E.B. 5 minutes earlier than at present.

This is what happens when we run ahead of time - WE GET OUR RUNNING TIMES CUT!

**In the PM the service from Spencer is not as improved as we originally thought: the extra car after 4.00 has resulted in the present service (4.07, 14, 22, 29, 34 etc.) being improved to narrow the gap by 1 Or 2 minutes (i.e. 4.07, 13, 18, 24, 29, 34 etc).

**From the BRIDGE in the PM two cars have been eliminated, the 4.59 & the 5.20, with one being placed on Spencers.

The 5 min. service exists between 4.20 & 5.15, 4 minutes till 5.23 then 5 minutes thereafter.

As the service from the Bridge is at present a good 3 then 4 mins after 5 PM it remains to be seen whether the result of this cut will be excessive loading or not...or a further loss of passengers sick of not being able to get a seat!

**There will be only six Warrigals in the PM: at 3.48, 4.09, 4.20, 4.30, 4.40 and 5.13. the rest have been extended through to Elgar.

**Restive Horses In the last issue we reprinted quaint old rule 207 from the OLD Rule Book relating to trams and unattended horses. This was a sin. The Traffic Manager wishes it to be known that no such rule exists since this revised edition appeared a couple of years ago.

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"TRAM DRIVERS AND THE POLICE"

One man's view.

IN recent months there has been an increase in the frequency and reporting of police action against tram drivers. The police often appear to have little sympathy with the fact that accidents apparently "caused" by tram drivers may be unavoidable.

We have witnessed a case brought against a train driver involved in a level crossing smash last year in which he was powerless to do anything to avoid it. Apparently the police were going to press charges until intervention by the driver's union on his behalf.

At our own depot we had a driver fined as a result of a private individual making personal claims against him for an accident. We have a case at present of a driver who has received a summons to appear in court on a charge of reckless driving almost SIX months after an accident at which the police were not even present to see and hear both sides or to inform the driver that they intended to press charges!

And what of the Claims Dept? The practice of settling cases out of court is often a slight upon the integrity of the driver involved; it implies his or her guilt. If a few more cases were

contested - and possibly won - it would make police and public sit up and take notice of the fact that we can't lift the trams up and fly over errant motorists. In the event of a summons being issued we should have access to a solicitor briefed and paid by the Board.

As servants of a street public transport authority our priority on the road should be undisputed, as it is in Adelaide and Europe. Priority for trams is provided for by Act of Parliament...unfortunately, of late, the road laws are being enforced only against us, not in our favour.

If we are to become vulnerable to private and police prosecution as a result of our chaotic traffic conditions and lack of support from our employer then we should be paid commensurate with that liability.

We have a right to be able to perform our duties in the service of the Board to the best of our ability without fear of prosecution by police who don't understand or fear of persecution by vengeance-seeking motorists who have a bee in their bonnets about "ratbag tram drivers".

Take traffic lights for instance. In a tram you may be $\frac{1}{2}$ of the way through an intersection when the light goes amber and half way across when it goes red.

What're you supposed to do? Stop, change ends and reverse? Sit there in the middle of the intersection till it goes green again? Or proceed? The policeman who stopped a tram and threatened to book the driver for "going through a red light" obviously expected miracles.

If the current spate of prosecutions should turn into a vendetta we will need to remain united in the face of it. Claims that "no-one should be above the law" are all very well when the law works but who ever made that claim for the laws that govern(?) the dog-eat dog jungle of our metropolitan road network?

As for the enforcers, when they stop doing U-turns in front of trams stopping dead in front of trams to do right-hand turns and darting out from kerbs and side streets without any indication, maybe then we won't question their right to book us.

rk (687)

(apologies , article cut for space reasons)

****THE WORKERS COMPENSATION SCANDAL.** The State Government has decided to amend the Victorian Workers' Compensation Act. As usual we, the workers, are the losers. The big winners are the Insurance companies.

Opposition by the THC to the amendments was based on the following:

*workers who suffer heart attacks as a result of their job will be denied compo. as a result in a change in the definition of 'injury'.

*compo for injuries sustained travelling to or from work will now be handled by the Motor Accidents Board, for a maximum of only two years.

*surviving dependants will now be battling to find grounds for a compensation claim.

The Government's aim is to turn back the clock, because until 30 years ago it was almost impossible for an employee to claim that a heart condition, for instance, was a result of his job.

The development of chronic heart conditions, or death as a result of heart attack is incredibly common in jobs where there is an element of stress involved. (tram drivers, for instance... think of the number of people at Camberwell alone who have developed heart disease in recent years; of those who retire and drop dead within six months.)

The Government is obviously more concerned about the profits of the insurance industry than with the payment of just and adequate benefits to sick or injured workers. In the future many will simply NOT BE ABLE TO CLAIM ANY COMPO AT ALL.

The Amendments are an attack on our working conditions by big business and a government not noted for its compassion. They are part of a CONTINUAL DECLINE in our living standards that has been evident since 1976. This latest abuse of them must be prevented.