

# SPARKS

No. 22 24th January, 1990.



If the Met gets  
up your nose,  
Picket!



**SPARKS** is now into its 5th year. We are open to any transport workers contributions. Send us your poetry, graphics, articles, comments, etc. to: **SPARKS**

P.O.Box 1066,  
Nth. Richmond, 3121.

We also require help with distribution. Take a bundle down to your depot, station or canteen. Help give the boss a headache!

**SPARKS** has financial problems. If you like the paper - or you don't like the paper but want to read what we are writing about - why not take out a subscription?

\$10 will get you 5 issues

\$20 will get you copies of back issues.

Money orders /cheques can be made out to **SPARKS** or ANAR-CHO-SYNDICALIST FEDERATION.

Thanks to the following for donations or subscriptions: Mick V. \$10; Brian M. \$30; Rob G. \$1; Mariano \$5; Footscray Institute Student Union \$100; Brendan B. \$10; Tanya H. \$20; Mohammed S. \$10.



**SPARKS** is produced by transport workers who are (mostly) members of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation. The ASF believes in worker-community initiative and control. For a world free of bosses, bureaucrats and other assorted power junkies!

# JANUARY 24th

Twenty four days since we took over the trams and the depots! Phew - who would have thought?. And we've still got a way to go to win.

Community solidarity has been amazing. People hate the scratchies and love trammies. Money, food, ideas, posters have been rolling in. There's been civil disobedience actions, tram fiestas, benefits planned, plus all the day to day of maintaining pickets, cooking food, etc., etc., etc. And a 90% vote to say 'Stick It' to the government's offer.

But the dispute is not without its problems. There is a risk that we will get 'done' in negotiations. The government might try the heavy hand with the cops at the pickets and the depots.

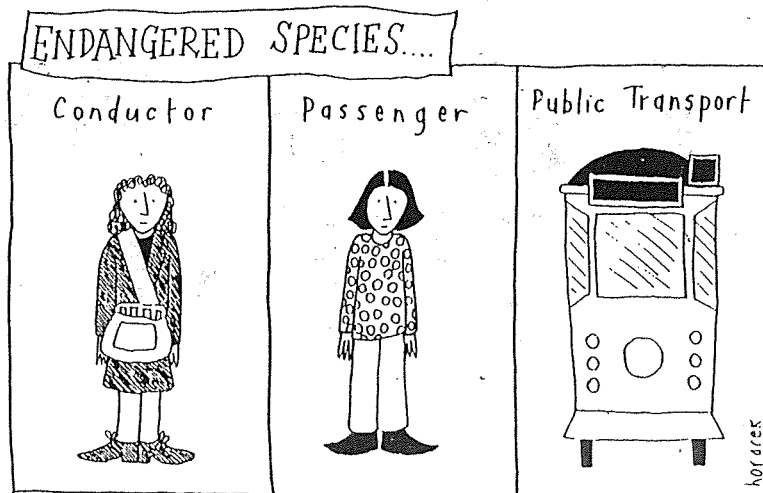
It is disappointing too that our comrades on the busses and the trains have not been out with us - if they had we might be still getting over the hangover from the victory party rather than still locked out.

We've got a lot to fight - DOO, the government's image, Kennan's ego, the ALP's plan's for 'restructuring'. But we've got a lot to win - our jobs and those of lots of other transport workers.

The trammies need to stay strong. And we need support! More community support and INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT!

This doesn't have to be all out strikes - there are other ways if finances and the union bureaucracies block all out action - see the Roll Up, Roll Up, Roll Up article. But the trammies need it, we all need it, now!

**SPARKS MOB.**



# ROLL UP, ROLL UP, ROLL UP

It was bitterly disappointing to have our own union members on the buses go back to work after 4 days. At least they went out again on Jan. 15 along with our railworker friends. But token stoppages are not enough. We urgently need lots of action happening across the industry, and if possible, beyond the industry. Our success or failure rests with others stepping in and placing pressure on the connie-killing ALPe. If Action doesn't start happening, and the government sits us out, then the financial and emotional strains will wear many of trammies down. That has drastic consequences for every worker in the public transport industry, indeed for workers across the country.

Times may be tough... they'll get even tougher unless we win this one. 'Lose' a bit now and the rewards will be apparent when you seek the support of trammies in any future dispute in your workplace. Maybe a general strike sounds out of the question at the moment - although it would certainly lead to a quick resolution. What about weekly or twice weekly strikes; no fares - to keep the passengers happy until you are stood down like the trammies; stoppages or stop-works generally. Mail to the PTC could be lost by postal workers; telephones, lifts in buildings could remain unrepaired. Fuel deliveries for MET vehicles stopped. Place some bans on, picket the nearest Met-ticket outlet. Do Something.

Pete, Brunswick Depot.

(P.S. Great to hear Footscray Depot busworkers are to go out for 24hrs once a week).



# TRANSPORT CUTS COMPROMISE SAFETY THE WORLD OVER!

SPARKS has built up contacts with rank and file transport workers across the world. When Melbourne's trammies took over their depots and ran the trams into the city we got in touch with our brothers and sisters in London and asked them for some supportive action. On Jan. 15th thirty rail and bus workers plus supporters demonstrated outside the London office of the Victorian Agent-General.

Carrying placards and banners, they distributed leaflets to passers-by then gave the Agent-General a letter condemning the actions of the Victorian Government in removing conductors.

SPARKS has since contacted transport workers in Spain, Brazil, France, Italy and the U.S.A seeking similar supportive actions. We hope to have photos in the next issue.

STOP PRESS: Messages of support have come in from the National Labour Confederation of Spain; the National Labour Confederation of France and the Direct Action Movement in Britain- all are members of the International Workers Association. These organisations are sending protest letters to the Vic. Government and are organising protests outside embassies and Australian businesses. A demonstration by members of the Workers Solidarity Alliance is planned in New York for Saturday 27th.

● MELBOURNE'S tram dispute has taken a bizarre twist and moved offshore — 20,000 km away to London.

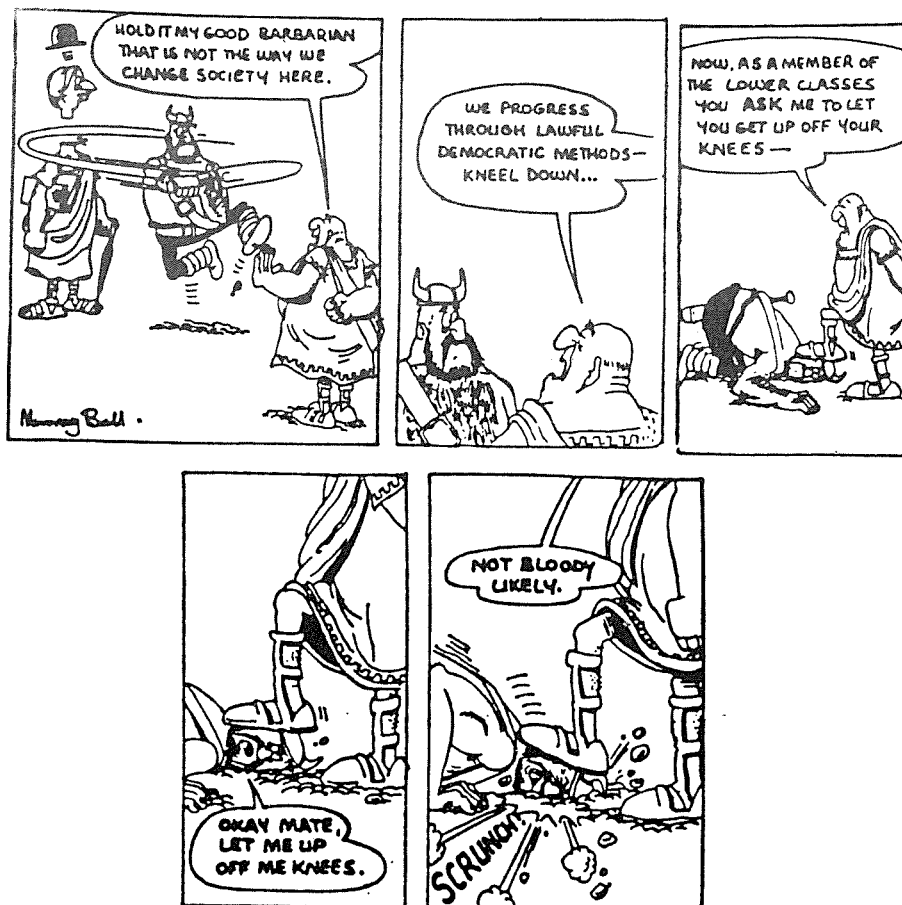
Trammies and supporters tomorrow plan to picket the Australian High Commission, based at Australia House in The Strand.

They already have the support of Tubewatch, a pressure group which fights cost-slashing staff cuts on London's buses and underground rail system.

Victoria House, the offices of the Victorian Agent General, Mr Ian Hay, adjoin Australia House and he will be able to watch the proceedings from his window.

Australia's envoys are accustomed to political demonstrators, who make their various points on the wide pavements surrounding the building.

From  
The  
SUNDAY  
SUN



## TRAIN DRIVERS GET READY TO FIGHT

The Jolimont branch of the train drivers union the AFULE, have taken the first step down the road to supportive action for trammies. Recognising that Cain's attempts to confront trammies with contract labour, casual employment, loss of seniority, etc. is a threat to every transport worker's job security and conditions, "Sparkie" drivers at a special meeting on Jan 19 voted by a 3 to 1 majority to give their union executive the power to pull them out if the executive deems necessary.

Let's hope that if the trammies are going down and the AFULE executive DOES NOT DEEM IT NECESSARY TO STRIKE, suburban drivers will take the matter into their own hands. How many days do the trammies have to hold out before they get some solidarity action?



# *BRUNSWICK BUILDS BRIDGES*

Brunswick Depot has had a steady stream of workers coming in from different industries to give talks and/or show videos about disputes/strikes they've been involved in.

- \* An Australian Nurses Federation member talked about the 50 day nurses strike in '86 and showed "Running Out of Patience".

- \* Two ARU guards talked about the Xmas '87 Guards strike

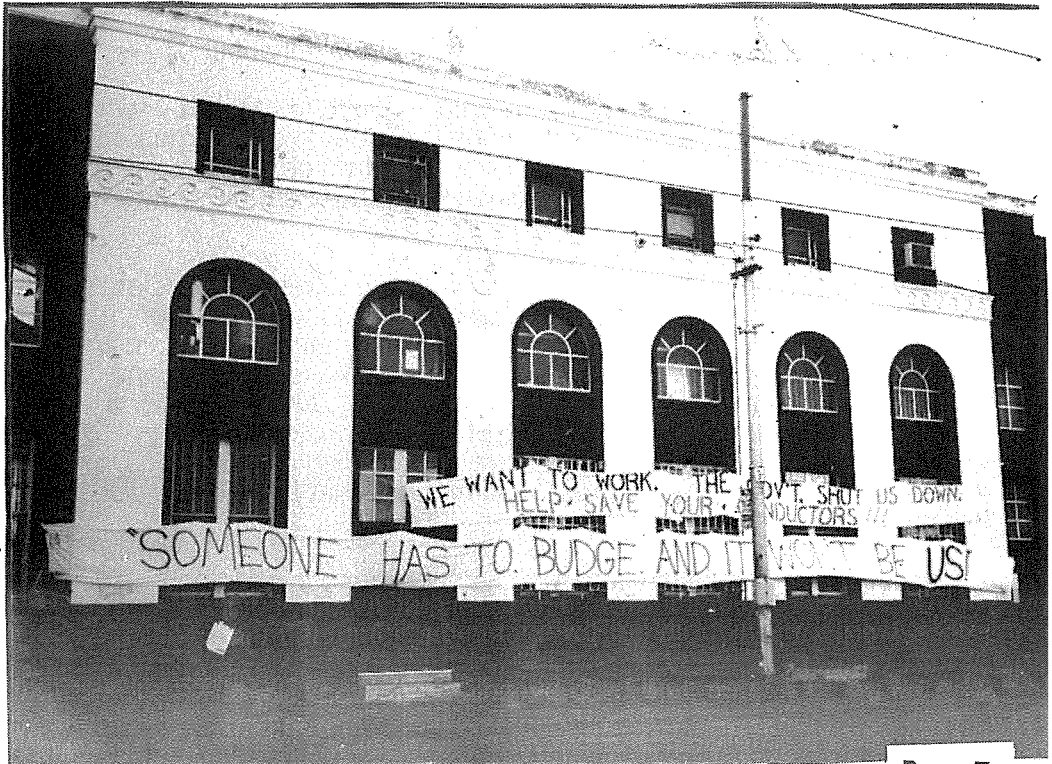
- \* A Pilot's Federation member spoke about the pilot's dispute

- \* A Wharfie came and left a video about the history of struggle on the waterfront.

- \* Likewise trammies have gone to the wharf, hospitals and to the Colonial Sugar Refinery to explain this current dispute.

Everytime this rank and file contact has occurred there has been a greater degree of understanding and solidarity developed between the workers involved. It's certainly more educational than reading about it in the papers or on the telly and of course it is more accurate and truthful too.

If you want info. about any of the above, contact Peter Riley, conductor, Brunswick Depot, or get in touch with the unions mentioned.



# CALLING ALL GUNZELLS

Gunzells (or people who love and restore dis-used Public Transport Systems) are everywhere! For Melburnians perhaps the best known of their efforts is the excellent Puffing Billy at the end of the Belgrave line; they also showed support for the locked out trammies in Bendigo by participating in the Talking Tram Protest. Gunzells use old VIC-WAIL Guards vans as garden sheds and perfectly kept W class trams as backyard bungalows. Last years visit by the Flying Scotsman was the years highlight for admirers of steam. Thousands of hobby and book stores dot the landscape - their shelves stocked full of model railways, gunzell books, wooden ships, radio-controlled aircraft that fly, Airfix kits and a whole range of mouth-watering goodies too numerous to mention.

Yet as admirable an occupation Gunzellhood may be, there is an apparent contradiction in its pursuit. The question I can't answer is this, "Why go to so much effort to restore the good things of the past but not lift a finger to defend what is worthwhile today?"

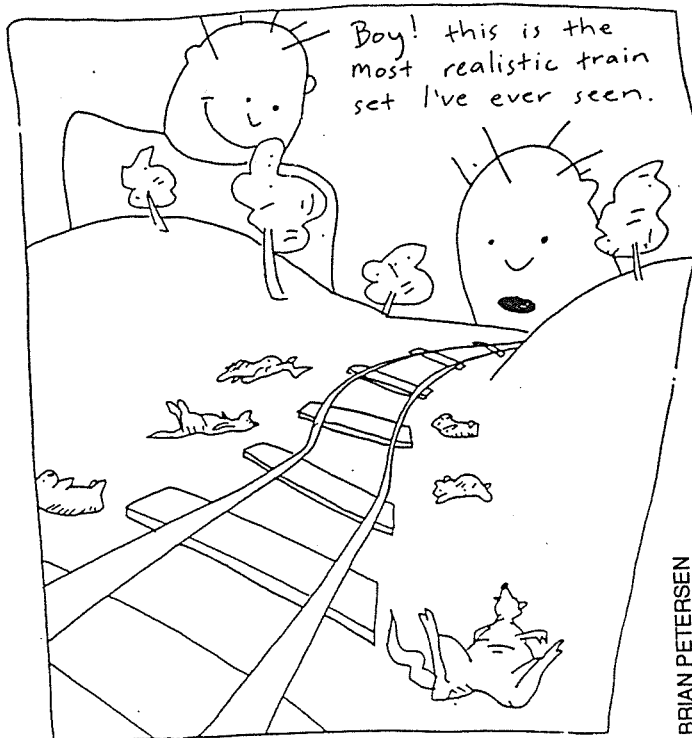
Take the trammies dispute as an example. The Government is flogging off those beautiful "w" class trams for peanuts because it only wants those poxy driver-only new trams. By the time the year 2000 hits us the only "W" class tram Melbourne tourists will see, will be the odd token one or two dutifully run by some understaffed Gunzell outfit.

That would be a tragedy for everyone who is a luddite at heart or who appreciates quality. Obviously it would be far better to all gang up on the government and protect our old trams for future generations. The best way to do that would be by helping Melbourne trammies any way you can, (more on that later).

To prove that Kennan and Cain learnt how to run a transport system by reading too many Thomas the Tank Engine Books I will cite other examples. How about the proposed conversion of the Upfield train line to lie trail. It is all about extending a freeway for trucks so they can follow the Tullamarine freeway all the way down to Dynon Rd. For a start off, semis rolling down the Hume Highway chocka block with goods that can easily be sent by rail are more boring and destructive than the freight trains they replace. (Sorry about that Kenworth truck freaks)

Also destroying the Upfield line is wasteful because it is Melbourne's last decent stretch of double-line block (the best and safest system). As an added bonus it's staff and ticket from Fawkner onwards. It still has semaphore signals, the old hand-gates and gate-keepers huts. The stations have been classified by the National Trust. These historic buildings would probably end up suffering the same fate as St. Kilda and Royal Park stations if Cain and Kennan have their way.



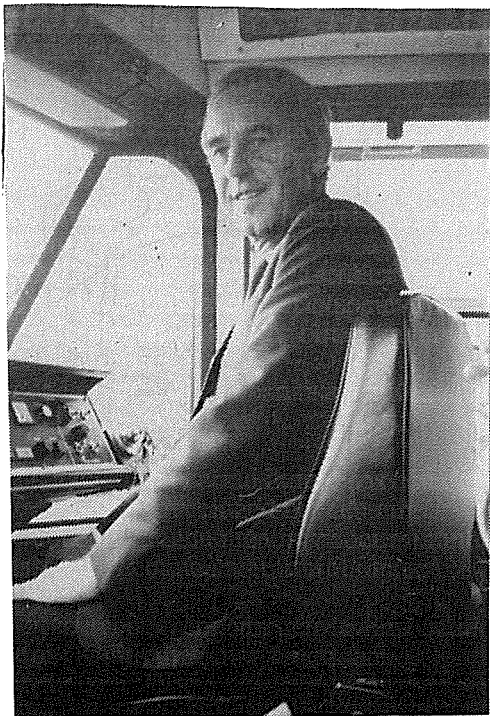


All this is supposed to be called Progress. This progress will see signallers replaced by death orders, today's cowboys (the shunters) disappear under block-trains, station assistants kicked into the pit and suburban guards standing on the 5 foot. Those who want progress for its own sake will leave us living in a dehumanised world with more passengers being shunted off the rails and into cars, trucks, and buses.

Already we can't breathe the air, drink the water, or walk barefoot on the beach. I believe it's time to fight back. Gunzells can play a role in this by fighting to defend Public Transport as it exists today. One good place to start is by defending tram conductors. Those who work in the industry can put pressure on their own union to do something in support of trammies. We can take up collections, visit the pickets at the tram blockade (and bring along your camera).

Visit your local depot and offer support. Stick up a poster in the meal-room. Visit a 7-Eleven or AMCAL and call the staff SCABS if they sell Met-tickets. Public Transport belongs to all of us. The Government started this blue and like it or not we must all do our bit to make sure the connies are retained on trams.

The SPARKS roving eye captures Premier Cain attempting to get the trams moving. When asked by our reporter "What are you doing Prune-face?", the Premier broke down and cried. He mumbled something about "applying for a job with the MET when this is all over". What a joke.



SQUASH  
CAIN  
TOAD

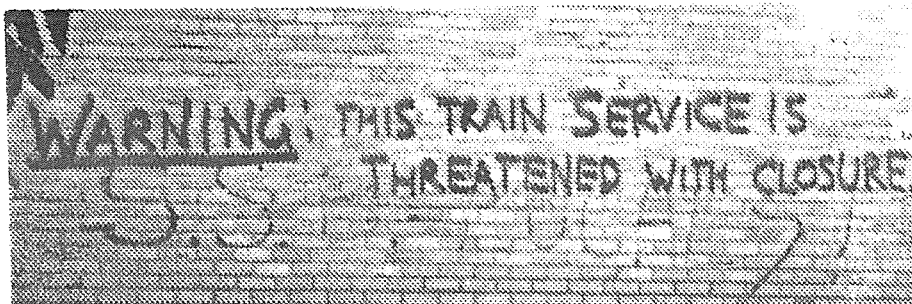


SON OF  
JOH  
TOAD

## Heard it on the Grapevine?

The next issue of *SPARKS* will be a DIRTY LINEN ISSUE. Yes all those juicy little pieces of info. we haven't printed to not give management an unfair advantage will be aired in SPARKS no. 23.

If you know something we don't then send it in- By the way, it's not all bad news!



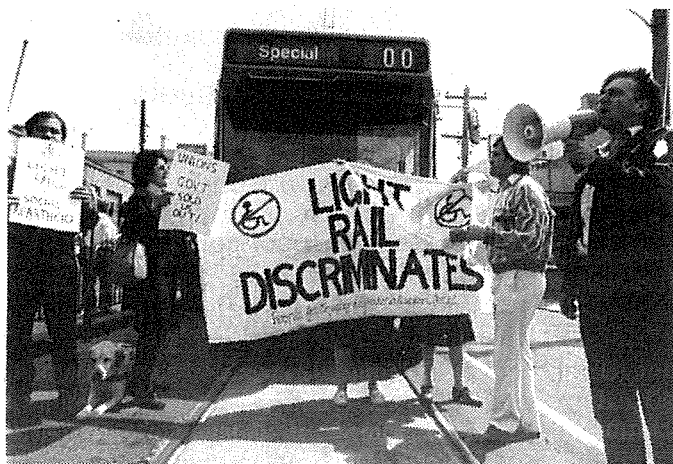
## ***DON'T FORGET UPFIELD***

In case you've forgotten, another major transport dispute looms ominously just over the horizon. High Priest Cain is all set to sacrifice the Upfield train line come June in order to satisfy that very hungry and very powerful God, CAR.

A joint meeting of train drivers and guards at Jolimont Depot in early February will hear speakers from the Coalition Against the Western By-Pass (CAWB) and Save the Upfield Line Campaign (SULC). Both drivers and guards are committed to resisting the closure of the trainline. It'd be a good move if they formed a joint campaign committee - there's no point in fighting a common enemy separately. Such a committee could coordinate and distribute info, liase with community campaigners and trammies (especially Brunswick Depot), nut out an industrial campaign, etc.

Adam Muyt, Guard.

**PROTEST  
AGAINST  
LIGHT RAIL,  
Nov.'87**



# EMOTIONAL SURVIVAL GUIDE

I'm writing this on day 21 of the dispute. I want to describe how I'm feeling in all its contradictions and suggest a few ways for us trammies to maintain our resolve.

I'm a tumble of emotions at the moment. On any one day I can swing through moods of ecstasy and of feeling powerful, to the depths of depression. I'm tired physically but the buzz of activity keeps fuelling 20 hour days. I can let a silly selfish comment go, placing its flippancy in the context of the pressure we're all feeling while the next time someone reacts unthinkingly, I can explode with rage. I'm either giving or selfish; ready to persevere or about to toss the towel in; I'm standing tall with mu depot mates or wishing the whole dispute would end, in any way, as long as IT ENDS; touched deeply with the solidarity people are giving us or driving myself silly worrying how the bills are to be paid. I know what's needed to win this fight but I'm aware of how fragile most of us are feeling...

- \* We have to keep sane. That means knowing when to have a break from the Depot, fundraising activities or picket lines. Clear off for a day or two or three.

- \* Don't bottle up the emotions. Talking to each other about our doubts and problems will let us see we're all under similar pressures. We need to make allowances for each other, while offering emotional support/solidarity.

- \* Keep alcohol away from actions or when planning activities. Leave it for social times.

- \* We could get hold of people with necessary skills to help with counselling. This will be even more important when we go back to 'normal' working situation.

- \* Don't ignore the negatives. There's no point kidding ourselves it's easy. But...concentrate on the good things. What we have done is amazing and I'm proud of each one of us. We have organised all sorts of vital things, from fundraising, to creches, to picket rosters, actions, security, feeds, childrens activities, footy matches, dances, pool comps, screenprinting, leaflet writing, radio shows, street stalls, visits to workplaces. The public is with us. Workers and users have given thousands of \$\$\$\$\$\$, food, material and moral support is pouring in.

We need each other... don't let fear cripple us, STAY SANE

Tramway Annie



# We love Connies!



**STOP PRESS:** Jan 24 the Supreme Court Judge Justice Cummins has ordered the Equal Opportunity Board to hear the case of 9 disabled people who have claimed that the Government's new ticket system, its removal of tram conductors and station staff discriminate against the disabled. Justice Cummins said the EOB shouldn't use petty and pedantic excuses to not deal with cases of discrimination.

During the campaign of the disabled against the Port Melbourne and St Kilda LightRail the EOB claimed it couldn't decide if Light Rail was discriminatory until after it was running.

He also ordered the Public Transport Corporation to pay the costs of both hearings (\$40,000). The PTC tried to get a stay (postpone the hearing) because their argument is that if the new system is running it's too late to change it back. Another good reason for trams to hold out.

# ***SMART ECONOMIC HINTS: INVEST IN WORKERS CONTROL***

Trammies might usually get by on bugger-all money - an average take home pay of \$300 a week- but we can't exist on air! If we are to keep fighting we need heaps of \$\$\$\$ rolling in. Contact your nearest depot or start a solidarity fund at your workplace. Thanks to all those people/organisations that gave over \$14,000 during 3CR's Tramathon on the 20th-21st.

\*Wharfies have given over \$3000

\*Postal Workers from Sydney's Rushcutters Bay Mail Centre have raised \$250

\*Suburban guard's and train drivers have raised almost \$1000 and the guards have directed the ARU to give over a fortnight's union dues to the trammies, another \$3000

\*CSR workers have given \$1100



# RAILWORKERS: YOU'RE NEXT!

If any railworker is under the impression the trammies dispute doesn't have anything to do with them then Cain's ultimatum of Jan. 18 should turn their heads around. The ultimatum shows the government is prepared to smash working conditions throughout the industry in order to create a pliant, "flexible", (and intimidated) workforce. Cain believes that if the trammies are defeated, "mopping up operations" across the rest of the industry will be far easier. All the major points of that ultimatum put to trammies CAN BE APPLIED TO THE RAILWAYS...

\*Abolition of seniority: "Positions would be filled on the basis of performance and proficiency". In other words if you're a good little worker, who does as they are told, you'll move up on the hierarchy. Promotion by suck-tion!

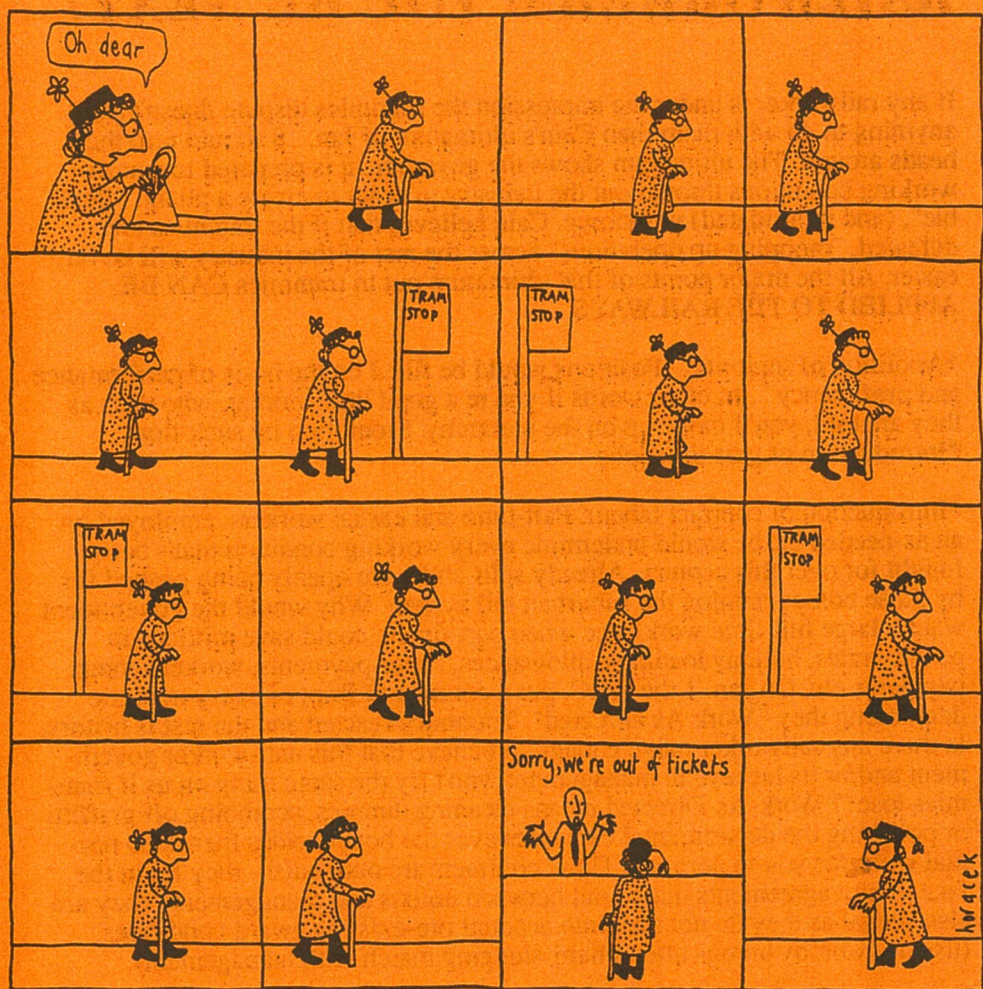
\*Introduction of part-time jobs

\*Introduction of contract labour. Part-time and casual workers, employed on an as-needed basis, would undermine every working condition that's been fought for over this century. Already split-shifts are openly being pushed for by those bosses running the suburban rail system. Why would the government want a large full-time workforce when part-timers could save millions in penalty rates, holiday loadings, allowances, super-payments, workers comp. payments etc. On Jan. 1 the P.T.C. put a contract in front of every trammie demanding they "Work As Directed". Trammies reacted and the rest is history. Is there any railworker naive enough to believe that this anti-worker government and/or its lackeys in management won't try the same thing on us if trammies lose?? Work-As-Directed means cleaning dunnies, scrubbing off graffiti or polishing the departmental cars whenever the boss decides there's no normal work for you to perform. These contracts are outlandish- they fly in the face of any agreements nipped out between unions and management. They are also illegal as they do not take into account pre-existing award conditions (usually won by unions after a hard-slugging match with management).

Let's face it, very few of us believe Labor's done us any good. We're all aware the Liberals don't offer any real alternative. (It's hardly reassuring if you're one of those who seek political/economic/social solutions from those in Spring St or Canberra). Does this mean we let Labor wind back conditions on the grounds the Liberals would be even worse towards us? We need to recognise where our strength lies and build on it. That's why we need to ensure trammies do succeed. Together we have an enormous power in our heads and hands, one capable of defeating the worst despot... (Looked at Eastern Europe lately!?) While it's great to see so much money coming from railworkers to trammies, the solidarity needs to extend to industrial action. Afterall, our future is tied up with the future of the tram conductors.

Adam Muijt  
Guard, ERD





## JOKE JOYCE

**If Jim Kennan, John Cain and John Halfpenny all jumped off a tall building who'd hit the ground first?**

**I dunno who?**

**Who gives a shit!**