

● All aspects of public transport finances must be opened to public scrutiny. Transport administrations should be run by elected boards representing the travelling public, the employees, and small business. Presently senior transport management is indistinguishable from management in the private transport empires.

● Owner-drivers must be helped by the establishment of viable minimum freight rates in the road industry and access to cheap finance to pay off and maintain rigs.

● The Australian National Line should be expanded. Services to Tasmania should be maintained and extended.

● The federal government should expand transport funding, on condition that the states use the funds to provide better, cheaper services. Priority should be given to sharply reducing fares, and to introducing free travel for pensioners, the unemployed, and the handicapped. Such a policy would greatly reduce dangerous pollution resulting from commuters' reliance on cars.

● New technology should be used to increase standards of safety and comfort, reduce working hours, and — in an expanded transport system — provide more jobs. New projects should be developed — such as the CSIRO's Melbourne-Sydney high-speed train.

● Bus, tram, and rail links to the outer suburbs should be expanded, with emphasis on services between rail lines (radial services). Such expansion would also create employment in areas of great need.

● All transport unions should unite to develop a national transport plan aimed at eliminating the present situation of near-uncontrolled competition, with a rational sharing of work to guarantee the viability of all forms of transport.

Such expansion of public transport would reduce private car use, improve services, and generate thousands of jobs.

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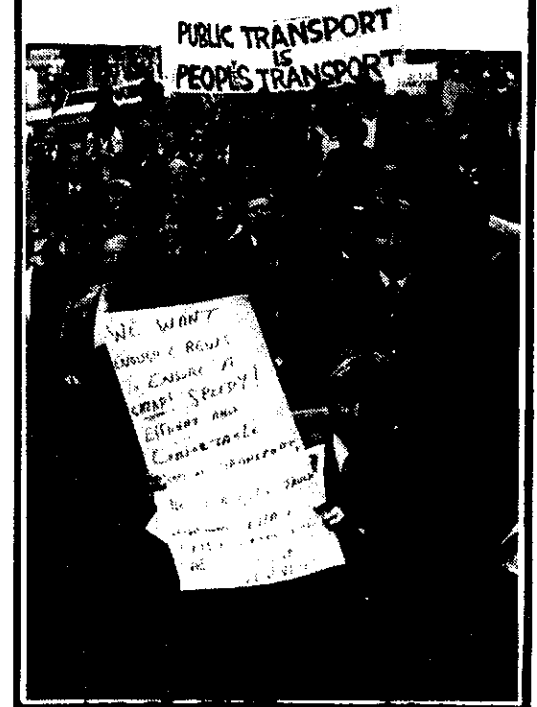
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# vote Socialist Workers Party

## For a national transport plan!



Entire sections of Australia's vital transport industry are in deep trouble:

- If the various state rail managements have their way nationwide employment in the industry will fall by up to 10,000 by 1990. Behind the flashy jargon — "modernisation," "rationalisation," "streamlining" — lies the reality of staffing cuts through reduced train crews, mechanised stations, and line closures. Many bus and tram networks face similar cutbacks.

- The coastal shipping trade, the Australian National Line in particular, is in deep crisis. Services, especially to Tasmania, are being slashed or are under threat.

- Country rail services in all states have been axed or are marked for closure, endangering many country centres and increasing freight costs to farmers. A few new glamor trains like New South Wales' XPT can't compensate for such losses nor for the general decline in track and carriage maintenance.

- Working conditions in the long distance road haulage industry continue to decline as low freight rates force drivers to work longer hours at faster speeds.

- In the outer suburbs of Australia's major cities public transport hardly exists. Those who don't own a car — especially the unemployed, housewives, and pensioners — can find travel nearly impossible. Heavily subsidised private bus companies stick to profitable routes only.

- In times of depression competition between the various forms of transport, particularly road and rail, becomes especially sharp. The absence of an overall national freight plan sees the rail unions and the Transport Workers' Union fighting each other for a dwindling flow of freight.

## WHO BENEFITS?

Someone is doing nicely out of this crisis, but it's not the average transport worker or user.

Sitting pretty are the big freight companies like Sir Peter Abeles' TNT. Australia's is the most monopolised transport industry in the industrially developed world.

These companies can lease whole trains for top-secret super-low rates, manipulate markets, bankrupt owner-drivers or keep them in permanent debt, force rival shipping services to

close, and blackmail or bribe governments.

The railways run at a loss largely because of hidden subsidies to big business. NSW State Rail Authority reports show that 30 per cent of its deficit results from subsidising freight services.

This is only one form of a growing trend towards selling off profitable transport services to private concerns, leaving government to carry the losses.

## LABOR'S RECORD

Although much transport administration is run by the states, the federal Labor government could, if it wanted to, reverse this trend.

But, as in nearly all other policy areas, the Hawke government has essentially carried on with Liberal policy. Under Labor, job-cutting continues. The commonwealth's Australian National Railways vies with its state counterparts in "rationalisation" and privatisation.

In Tasmania federal Labor sat tight while Robin Gray's Liberals combined with Brambles and TNT to cut the state's shipping services.



Previous Labor governments boosted transport, and particularly rail, funding to create jobs. Today Hawke and Transport Minister Peter Morris give the green light to cuts.

Under the terms of the accord a union-business-government transport consultative committee has been set up to "plan" development of the industry. Yet the committee has trouble even meeting! Apparently state transport ministers can't find the time for this "important policy initiative."

In return for the phantom of union "input," transport union officials have signed away their members' rights to fight for better wages and conditions. For these unionists — as for all workers — the accord is a rotten deal.

## SWP TRANSPORT POLICIES

The SWP believes that Australia's transport mess cannot be solved without a big increase in investment in public transport and an end to the disastrous trend towards subsidising the big freight monopolies. In particular we reject the main argument used to justify the present wave of cuts in rail — the size of the rail deficit.

If the rail system is intended to provide a public service there will always be some services, like country passenger lines, that will never break even. Other public services such as schools and hospitals are not expected to make a profit. Why single out rail? In many European countries the rail system is seen as a national asset and the "deficit" is much higher than the Australian average.

Moreover, the present method of calculating the rail deficit always yields an unfavorable comparison with rail's competitors, which don't, for example, have to pay the costs of road maintenance. Yet studies show that when all costs are weighed, rail comes out as the most efficient, least polluting, safest form of land transport.

To begin creating a transport system based on community needs, not the profit-hunger of a few transport barons the following steps should be taken.

- Increase rail charges to the big freight companies. Any company using this as an excuse to sack workers should have its books inspected. If layoffs persist the company should be nationalised.