



RAIL, TRAM & BUS UNION
Tram & Bus Division

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20th October, 2011

Mark Lennon
Secretary, Unions NSW
Level 3, Trades Hall
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Dear Mark

This week STA bus drivers in Sydney made a strong stand to defend the safety of their passengers, after video footage came to light showing an STA gas-powered bus exploding near Port Botany on 29 July 2011.

The RTBU has made a number of enquiries to STA over the past ten weeks regarding the incident. Once the video footage, which was taken by a member of the public, came to light, it was clear that the incident was far more serious than STA had previously admitted.

On Tuesday bus drivers took the difficult decision to withdraw STA gas buses from circulation until assurances could be given that these buses were safe. Despite the inevitable political backlash, drivers felt that this was the only responsible course of action they could take.

The Industrial Relations Commission later directed drivers to return the gas buses to service, but also directed STA to form a working party to address our safety concerns and to report back to the Commission next Tuesday.

We are extremely pleased that this vital issue of public safety is now being taken seriously.

The State Government has publicly vilified drivers for their actions to protect passengers. We will not be intimidated, and we will continue to put safety first on the public bus network.

Yours in solidarity

Chris Preston
Divisional Secretary
RTBU BUS AND TRAM DIVISION

Gary Way
Divisional President
RTBU BUS AND TRAM DIVISION



ELECTRICAL TRADES UNION OF AUSTRALIA, NSW BRANCH

www.etunsw.com.au

SECRETARY: Bernie Riordan

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Dear Mark

I write to you regarding the alarming tone of recent statements made by Premier O'Farrell in relation to unions. Whilst few in the union movement would expect Premier O'Farrell to be a friend of working people, I think many are surprised by the extreme nature of his recent rhetoric.

Speaking on radio Tuesday morning the premier said:

Whenever any government, state or federal, tries to do something sensible with industrial relations... suddenly the unions, suddenly parts of the Labor Party (describe it as) WorkChoices

He went on in the interview to describe unions as a form of McCarthyism in this country.

Later that day Premier O'Farrell variously referred to the industrial action taken by RTBU members in aid of safety as "union thuggery", "bastardry" and "guerilla-style behaviour". These comments were published under the headline "Furious O'Farrell vows fight to the death with union guerrillas" in an article for the Daily Telegraph written by Andrew Clennell.

Aggressive statements likening policy debates around industrial relations to the cold war politics of the 1950s and likening bus-drivers concerned about burning busses to guerrillas are absurd.

This over-the-top rhetoric is absolutely counterproductive. Glib throw-away lines do nothing to enhance the debate around productivity nor do they address the very legitimate concerns bus drivers have for the safety of their passengers, and indeed themselves. The premier's rhetoric simply detracts and distracts from the issues at hand.

It has become quite clear that whilst unions want to engage with the government on these and other issues, the Premier prefers to take an adversarial approach best illustrated by his invocation of war-like metaphors and his very real actions in trying to cut the wages and conditions of public sector workers with his new industrial relations laws.

When it comes to industrial relations Premier O'Farrell is not a moderate. Not even by Liberal Party standards. His sustained attacks on working people and the language he uses when it comes to unions show that Premier O'Farrell is an extremist.

Yours Faithfully

BERNIE RIORDAN
SECRETARY



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