

T.T.A. NEWSLETTER

TRAIN TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 1979



SECRETARY KEN MCINTYRE reports in this issue welcome news of:-

- Another TTA success for travellers - the right to board city-bound country trains, instead of seeing them whiz through, half-empty, while you wait - and wait - on platforms.
- We deeply regret President John Alexopoulos' resignation for business reasons, and welcome new President Pat Miniham.
- Read of our battle to keep the Lilydale/Healesville line and help us, please, with letters to newspapers and the Railways.
- WE WELCOME THE IMPORTANT ARTICLE by new committee member, Doctor Charles Sowerwine, of Melbourne University, on the vital role of trains in the oil crisis.
- WE DEMAND A PUBLIC INQUIRY into Vicrail safety, with passenger representation, of course. Please help us again, with letters to newspapers if you can.
- FINALLY, we appeal to members who have not yet paid their annual \$3.00 membership dues, to do so as soon as possible. We need it for postage and envelopes.

ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR TTA!

VICRAIL has agreed to our request to change its policy which prohibited City-bound suburban rail passengers from getting on Country Trains which stopped at suburban stations en route to the City.

With suburban trains often cancelled, or daily running late, we were obliged to watch helpless as these City-bound Country Trains ran half-empty through stations, while stranded suburban passengers could do nothing but wait and wait - and grumble - as they waited for delayed trains.

We are pleased that the Transport Minister, Mr Maclellan, has consented to allow these trains to pick up suburban passengers, at stations where they have scheduled suburban stops. However, this privilege will not apply in the reverse direction.

PRESIDENT JOHN STANDS DOWN

With deep regret, which the committee members also share, Mr John Alexopoulos has been obliged to stand down from the TTA Presidency because of his transfer to another area.

John has served TTA with devotion and success for three years, including one year as Vice-President, before his election as President at the last election.

We will miss him, and wish him every success in his new district, Geelong.

We welcome our new President, Mr Pat Minihan, who is keen and dedicated.

SAVE THE HEALESVILLE LINE

VICRAIL's proposal to close the Lilydale/Healesville line, and replace the trains with buses is yet another diabolical attempt to let our railways run down and disappear. The line has been allowed to fall into disrepair, causing rail delays. But buses will be even less successful, because they cannot handle the holiday crowds, and will be delayed even more than trains by bad weather and road conditions. It will be a disaster for the local tourist industry and for local residents.

We have joined local residents in a campaign to stop this disastrous move. Please add your protests to help us.

TELL'EM WHAT GOES ON!

Late trains, cancelled trains, half-wrecked and badly lit trains - we've all experienced them! Yet VICRAIL coolly tell us that "THEY DON'T GET MANY PUBLIC COMPLAINTS!" So they say: "It can't be as bad as you say!" So we keep on with our appalling 19th Century railways. Please, travellers, keep a record of train delays, cancellations, and other troubles, and report them to VICRAIL'S TROUBLESHOOTER, on Telephone No. 61001; and also tell our secretary, GPO Box 251B, Melbourne 3001.

FIRST-AID KIT VICTORY

Premier Dick Hamer has promised \$25,000 this year for the first-aid kits we campaigned for on all suburban trains. We were horrified at the makeshift efforts of rail staff to get a first-aid kit for a schoolboy injured on Tooronga Station in 1977. VICRAIL refused our request for first-aid kits in all Guards' Vans, so we had it raised in State Parliament by interested MP's. Result: the Premier's welcome promise of the \$25,000.

Ken McIntyre
Hon. Secretary

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VICRAIL NOT SAFE INQUIRY DEMAND

By TTA Secretary, Ken McIntyre

VICRAIL's rundown 19th Century railways are a disgrace that should be immediately investigated by public inquiry.

If the Government does not act quickly, Victoria may have a disaster as horrifying as that in Granville, NSW, with its huge death toll.

Poor track maintenance, ancient trains constantly being patched-up, signalling and other breakdowns, reveal a frightening picture of a rail service grinding to a halt.

Melbourne claims to be a modern city, yet it has a delapidated rail service which daily delivers its passengers late for work through countless hold-ups.

The alarming lack of safety provisions puts rail staff as well as passengers at risk. Recent fatal accidents to rail staff, and to others working on or near rail-tracks, demand a dramatic safety overhaul.

The Train Travellers Association demands an immediate PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO RAIL SAFETY. It should include representatives of:-

- . VICRAIL
- . RAIL UNIONS
- . RAIL USERS

The Inquiry must study and report on the safety and accident procedures on Vicrail with special emphasis on four areas - policy, training, supervision and application.

Availability of safety and accident educational and training courses for the in-service training of staff; - the allocation and availability of sufficient funds for the conduct of these courses - the effectiveness of supervision of staff in the observance of safety procedures and frequency of checks and inspections - the relationship of the antiquated nature of equipment and rules to the better observance and implementation of safety practices - these are the main aspects that the proposed Inquiry should concern itself with.

The death of a Gas & Fuel Corporation employee after a fatal accident when working on the rail track between Caulfield and Malvern, on August 10 this year, draws attention to the need for proper safety rules.

Drivers on sections where track work is going on should receive WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS advising caution, and indicating the nature of the work and how long it will take. On that occasion, hundreds of passengers were kept in a stationary train for one and three quarter hours on their homeward journey.

The TTA also demanded an Inquiry after a Council employee was killed on the rail track at Surrey Hills, in 1977. We approached the then Minister, Mr Rafferty, and we had questions asked in State Parliament. We STILL await an answer. We STILL await an inquiry into safety rules.

DANGEROUS INCIDENTS occur daily for all to see. At Neerim Road, Glenhuntly manual crossings, the gateman wears no red or yellow "danger coat". Nor does he carry hand signal flags, or lights at night.

It is a miracle that there are not many accidents there. If a car stalled across the track, an approaching traindriver could not easily see the gateman, and the gateman could not show danger signals to stop the train and prevent a possibly fatal accident.

In JOLIMONT YARDS, staff often change brake blocks, or work under stabled "rakes", without danger flags or banners at each end of the line. Points leading to these lines are not locked or clamped, to stop vehicles being shunted on the line where the men are working. It is ANOTHER DEATH RISK. VICRAIL claims that staff ignore safety rules, or it blames the unions. WE BELIEVE it is VICRAIL'S duty to see that safety rules are carried out. We CANNOT even find out if safety rules exist!

Nobody knows what other unsafe practices go on, inside rail workshops and marshalling yards, unknown to the public.

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TRAINS. THE ANSWER TO OIL CRISIS

By Dr Charles Sowerwine
Melbourne University History Lecturer
and expert on transport & urban affairs

The world oil crisis will soon force Australia into drastic changes in the use of liquid fuel.

America already faces enormous social and economic problems due to the oil crisis. The signs will happen here.

We MUST get people out of cars, and especially out of aeroplanes, and into trains, trams and buses, to save fuel.

Transport to work, or for pleasure, takes a very large part of our fuel energy. So we must use the most fuel efficient vehicles.

This means trains, trams and buses - especially trains. Most energy efficient of all are electric trams and electric trains, since they use no liquid fuel.

They use electricity from our almost limitless brown coal supply. Also, they are pollution-free. The only pollution is at the power-plant, which is more easily controlled than on a moving vehicle.

WORST FUEL WASTERS!

Worst fuel wasters of all are aeroplanes. Next come cars as high fuel wasters.

Aeroplanes use three times as much fuel as cars, and nine times as much fuel as buses or diesel trains, to move the same number of people the same given distance, if every seat in each is filled.

Of course, every seat in ANY vehicle is never filled. Most public transport, whether planes, buses or trains, are about 55% seat occupied.

ONE IN EACH CAR!

In Melbourne's peak-hour traffic, cars are estimated to carry one point one persons each - that is, 22% seat occupancy of a five-seater car.

In American inter-city travel, car seat occupancy is estimated at two point six persons for each six-seater car. That is, 43% occupancy of a six-seater car.

Planes, even with every seat filled, are so fuel wasteful that they use more fuel per passenger-mile than cars with average loading.

CAR POOLING DOESN'T WORK

Car pooling has never given significant energy saving. It may reduce the number of passengers entering the city at peak hours - if it is strictly enforced, as in Singapore.

Only modern trains can attract passengers away from cars and planes. Wherever possible, these trains should be electrified.

UPDATE GEELONG TRAINS!

The Melbourne to Geelong rail service, for instance, now takes at least an hour, and frequently an hour and a quarter, for a 73 kilometer trip.

This could easily be reduced to 45 minutes (at 100 kph), which would make the train more competitive and attractive to passengers. If the line were electrified, as it should be, every passenger enticed on to the train would save several gallons of fuel for Australia.

Green trams, according to a Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board, use the same energy as three cars, and the new orange trams, with regenerative braking, use the same as two cars. They move 52 passengers for the same energy used to move eight to fifteen passengers in cars.

PROBLEMS WITH BUSES

The big problem with buses in America is cramped travel conditions. Bus passenger numbers between cities dropped badly in the 20 years, 1950 to 1970, in spite of the fact that interstate highway construction had improved bus services, and that there were drastic cuts in rail services. The drop in inter-city bus passengers revenue in that period was 16.8%.

Bus traffic dropped even in 1971, when one third of America's rail services were cut by Federal laws.

People avoided buses, even when they could no longer travel on trains.

American bus services survive only because they are the only way of travel available to the peer.

No-one who can afford anything else ever takes a bus in America - except foreign tourists. (And the low cost of bus travel is made possible only by payment of enormous subsidies for highway construction and maintenance, and by one-man-operation of buses, which is just as possible with trains).

TRAINS ARE MORE ROOMY

TRAINS have the potential to encourage car and air travellers to use them instead. This is because they can offer more space, armchair seating and comfort. This is still as energy efficient as the more cramped bus seating.

Modern American "AMCOACHES" and French "CORAIL" trains are so comfortable that they have attracted passengers away from cars and planes. The "AMCOACH" service between Los Angeles and San Diego attracted increased ridership of 142%, between 1973 and 1978.

TRAINS FOR SPEED

TRAINS have the advantage of speed, over buses. They can travel at high speed, relatively economically, on existing rights of way, by running modern equipment over improved track with modern signalling. France achieves a cruising speed of 160 kph (100 mph) on large stretches of mainline track in this way.

(Dr Sowerwine, whose experience includes living in New York, San Francisco and Paris, will give us further valuable information in a future News-letter).