



# **TRAIN TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION**

**Annual General Meeting**

**June 1981**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

SECRETARY'S REPORT



# Train Travellers' Association

**President:** Dr. Charles Sowerwine  
**Secretary:** Ken McIntyre  
**Treasurer:** David Bowd

61 Leila Road  
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Annual General Meeting 18th June 1981

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1980-1981

Your Association has been particularly active this year, not so much by choice as by necessity: for the first time in Victorian history, the Government has ceased to make even the pretence of honouring its election promises to improve public transport and has instead mounted a sustained offensive to dismantle even the existing public transport system. In the face of this offensive, your Association has found unexpected sources of support.

The first of these is the public and the great influx of new members. I want to thank all members, new and existing, for their active participation, but I must also call them to renewed action: financial renewal as soon as possible, active support through one of our committees, recruiting of new members, letters to your local MP, the Government, and local press, and whatever else you can do. All this and more will be needed from all our members if we are to prevent the wholesale destruction of Melbourne's public transport.

We have so far fought the Government and the motor lobby to a standoff, but the latest indications are that the present country closures are only a prelude to the closure

of five suburban electric lines scheduled for 1st August. If the Government gets away with this, and if it is re-elected next year, how long will the Alamein and Sandringham lines last? And how long before the renewed cry of "deficit" leads to the dismantling of eight tram lines also foreshadowed in the Lonie report? How much trust can we put in a government promise that these cuts will be the last?

I have on my desk a response to a TTA questionnaire from the Hon. Morris Williams, MP, Doncaster, which endorses cuts to rail services on the ground that "only 10% of Melbourne's population" use them! Heaven knows where Mr. Williams gets his figures, but you can be sure that as soon as his government has prevented more people from using public transport the ensuing reduction will be used as a justification for more cuts.

Our campaign so far has included constant representation at all levels on behalf of public transport in general and members' problems in particular. This takes a great deal of energy, particularly from the Secretary, although it is not visible in public.

Another side of our non-public action has been our efforts to respond to the statements of the opponents of public transport. Much of our work during 1980 was our submission to the Lonie report and our harrowing three hours of testimony, during which we realised that Mr. Lonie and Mr. Underwood (senior engineer with the CRB) had been chosen deliberately to begin the campaign against public transport. This was followed by a series of fruitless representations to the then Premier, Mr. Hamer, requesting him to call off Mr. Maclellan's anti public transport campaign and by our successful exercise of riding the trains with the two opposition leaders.

We have also begun to make representations to the federal government concerning its energy policy (which accepts the unquestioned use of the automobile) and concerning its cut of the urban public transport grants. We have also replied to the distorted attack on public transport in the March issue of RoyalAuto, though our reply was not printed.

The lies told about public transport are endless and Hydra-headed. I will mention just one more. Mr. Maclellan recently appointed a new Director of Transport who was quoted in 'The Age' as saying that "70% of trips to the City are made by car". My reply was printed in 'The Age'. I pointed out that the new Director had got the figure backwards! I sent a copy to

the new Director, who, however has not deigned to reply.

Of course we have been more active than ever in public. We conducted a highly successful meeting in the Assembly Hall in December and a major demonstration upon the opening of Parliament in March. These received significant radio and television coverage, although 'The Age' did not deign to mention them.

The second unexpected source of support was in local government. Several dozen municipal and shire councils came to our aid to support the publicity campaign preceding the public meeting. We were thus able, despite our limited financial resources, to run three large ads in 'The Age' and one in 'The Sun'. These were imaginative graphic exercises done for us by Mr. Rod Bryant with text by Mr. Ivan Powell (both of whom are standing for the TTA Council for this year and from whom I look forward to more help).

The task for 1981-82 is daunting. We must not only stop the government from closing suburban public transport and important country services, but also positively get our message across so that a positive programme for public transport can at last begin. Our message is that public transport needs a fair share of funds. It has been starved for fifty years while roads have been given almost unlimited funds. All we ask now is a fair go.

Public transport is always presented by the forces opposing it as a drain on the public purse. But Mr. Maclellan and his allies exercise a hypocritical double standard about costing. Even in their own terms, costs for roads are ignored and those for rail and tram emphasised.

Simply to widen six (6) kilometres of the Nepean Highway between Elsternwick and Moorabbin will cost at least \$46.6 million, or \$7.75 million per kilometre. How many people use this service? The CRB claims 35,000 vehicles a day, which would mean 38,500 people given average Melbourne car occupancy (1.1 persons per car). Now by a strange coincidence, the five suburban electric train lines which Mr. Maclellan wanted so desperately to close account for a total of 27,800 ticket sales a day. Ticket sales are the only figures VicRail have; they exclude all the passengers outward bound, which represents a considerable traffic, such as people going to work at the Ford plant. So the total number of users affected by the proposed closures is probably roughly equivalent to those using the small stretch of the Nepean Highway.

But the car drivers get a gift of \$46.6 million just to enable them to go faster while the train users are to be forced onto the road. There are of course no figures on the "savings" expected from the rail closures - even the Lonie report attempted none; the real reason for the

closures is to weaken public transport, not to save money - but no one would seriously pretend that the "savings" would amount to a fraction of the costs involved in the one stretch of the Nepean Highway.

Moreover, if this is the order of cost involved in widening 6 km of highway for this number of motorists, what will be the ultimate cost of driving the same number of persons out of trains onto roads which will then need to be widened?

The concept of a public transport deficit is only possible through such blinkered perspectives as that which ignores the cost of providing roads and attempting to reduce pollution, pay for the road toll, etc.. Would there a real overall saving if we continued along the path outlined by Mr. Maclellan and supported more Nepean Highway widening, more Hoddle Streets, and more Eastern Freeways? On the contrary, the overall outlay would increase. In our September Newsletter I argued that costs associated with road transport would reach \$1000 million for 1980-81; no one has contested this figure, nor has anyone objected to my point that the petrol taxes due to the import parity pricing system would largely disappear by the mid 1980's, when we have become dependent on imported petrol, so that the costs of the road transport system will become a huge deficit in the sense that roads will generate only a fraction of tax revenue compared to their associated

costs.

The concept of a public transport deficit is only possible through accounting which also overlooks VicRail's different cost structure. If railway stations, signals, signalmen, level crossings and track were all paid for by government and VicRail given a free ride, how much deficit would remain? That is the situation of VicRail's competitors. Who pays for airports and air traffic controllers? The Government has given up any pretense of "user pays" in that regard. Who pays for road repairs, traffic signals and police? All taxpayers and all levels of government bear the cost, but these costs remain hidden.

The fact is that the "deficit", even under present narrow accounting procedures, has been drastically reduced in real terms since 1974-75. 'The Age' of 13 March 1981 reported that the 1979-80 "deficit" of \$160 million represented only 4.04% of the state budget as opposed to 6.3% for the 1974-75 "deficit". What 'The Age' did not go on to say was that the 1974-75 "deficit", had it kept pace with inflation, would have amounted to \$204.5 million; against that figure, the actual 1979-80 deficit represents a decline of 21.8%!

This may not be a good thing: it means reduced service, and poorer service, and that in turn means fewer passengers, hence more cars, more road toll, more pollution, more

petrol consumption (and this at a time when cities from Sydney to Paris are registering constant gains in public transport ridership). The point here, however, is that Mr. Maclellan and the motor lobby deliberately hide the facts about the deficit. They claim that the deficit is increasing and use this claim to justify cuts in service which then become self-justifying as fewer people are using the remaining services.

True, Mr. Maclellan loves to talk about taking from "transport rich" areas to give to "transport poor" areas and to portray those of us who use public transport as fat cats (easy to do from a chauffeur-driven limousine). The facts are different. Not only do all members know just how poor a deal they are getting, especially if they have been overseas or interstate recently, but also Mr. Maclellan is taking from the poor, not the rich, and he is not giving anyone anything.

The projected closures are all in areas where alternative transport is limited or non-existent. And how many improvements have we seen, let alone increases in service. The government has made drastic cuts in country rail services but has refused to honour its last election promise to build 36 new country carriages for the Geelong and Ballarat lines. These carriages will be built (six are near completion) at VicRail's expense, by leverage leasing paid out of VicRail revenue! The increased

"deficit" resulting will then be part of the pretext for the next round of cuts. Does anyone seriously believe that the savings (if any) resulting from the cuts in service to Healesville, Mornington and Stony Point, let alone the five suburban electric lines threatened, will go to improve transport?

Mr. Maclellan has already told us where they will go: to increased road construction, precisely as indicated in the Lonie report. Mr. Maclellan would like to build an arterial road (like Hoddle Street) on the Upfield railway reservation and use the Sandringham and Port Melbourne railway reservations for a freeway or arterial road connecting the South Eastern Freeway to the West Gate Bridge. The costs involved in these projects dwarf any of those involved in public transport.

The result of all this expense would be a drastic drop in the amenity of Melbourne. By this I mean not only pollution and the road toll, but the simple fact that freeways generate increasingly long trips. Many studies demonstrate, for example, that residents of Los Angeles spend more time travelling than residents of compact cities well served by public transport (see J. M. Thompson, Great Cities and their Traffic). Freeways encourage the spread of industry and housing and result in longer and longer trips. Mr. Lonie welcomed a future Melbourne as the Los Angeles of the southern

hemisphere, but this is not the public view.

We have won twelve months to fight. Mr. Maclellan has made a strategic retreat, but his intentions are unchanged. The closure of the Altona line involves insignificant cost "savings" (indeed VicRail will lose a major investment in the recently rebuilt Altona station), but it is extremely important symbolically: Mr. Maclellan wants to demonstrate that he can and will close suburban electric train lines; even only one is a beginning. The Victoria Government continues to support Mr. Maclellan's policies. Mr. Hamer refused even to meet us to discuss them and both he and Mr. Thompson maintained Mr. Maclellan in the Transport portfolio through Cabinet reshuffles.

To prevent the realisation of Mr. Lonie's Melbourne, we have to fight more and stronger battles in the future. I know that next year's leaders of the TTA can count on renewed and increased support from all members. This is our only hope.

I regret having to end my presidency on the eve of a series of battles that will make or break public transport and indeed the city of Melbourne. My work, however, requires my presence in Paris for the next eleven months. Any members who may be in Europe during this time should obtain my address from the Secretary: we will look at some more positive transport

visions together! And I shall be reporting to our Newsletter on developments in Europe. A high spot will be the opening of the first half of the new Paris to Lyons high speed rail line in October. By 1983 the whole line will be open: a train every hour will travel at a cruising speed of 260 kph, making the 460 km trip in less than two hours.

It has been a great pleasure to serve you as President. My task has been made easy by the selfless dedication of Ken McIntyre and of the other members of the Council, all of whom have pulled hard. I know that Doug Sherman, Ivan Powell, Patrick O'Connor, and Pat Minihan will continue to provide lucid and effective leadership. But members should know too that many

other Council members do an enormous amount of back-up work, largely behind the scenes. I have not space to thank all of them but I must give special mention to Rod Bryant whose designs have helped our meetings and our publicity, to David Bowd who has single-handedly taken charge of both the finances and the Newsletter, and to John Alexopoulos who has assured the printing and distribution of reams of materials, in order to publicise our activities. If you know of the TTA, it is very likely to have been through one of these tireless workers.

We will need not only more leaders like these, but also more support, both financial and direct. Please give a hand.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) Charles Sowerwine  
President 1980-81

TRAIN TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

SECRETARY'S REPORT: 1980/81

Dear Member,

I have great pleasure in presenting the fifth Annual Report of the TTA for the year 1980/81.

Office Bearers:

At the Annual Meeting held on 30 July 1980 in the Victoria Hotel, Melbourne, the following Office Bearers were elected for the year 1980/81:-

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| President:                | Dr. Charles Sowerwine  |
| Vice-President:           | John Alexopoulos   |
| Secretary:                | Ken McIntyre   |
| Treasurer:                | David Bowd   |
| Public Relations Officer: | Patrick O'Connor   |
| Council Members:          | Pat Minihan<br>Dr. Douglas Sherman<br>Barry Gray<br>Lynne Thompson<br>Steve Howard<br>Robin Vowels<br>Alex Boyne |

Administration:

To ease the heavy workload on the Secretary and Treasurer and to utilise the talents of Council and Ordinary members, a start was made during the year to conduct the administration through a sub-committee structure under the over-all liaison and control of the four key office bearers. The following sub-committees, each with

their own Chairman and members were formed:-  
Membership;  
Newsletter;  
Publicity;  
Line Co-Ordinators;  
General Affairs.

With greater co-operation and interest from members, we look forward to a more successful implementation of this system in the year ahead.



Meetings: (Council)

The Council met on eleven (11) occasions during the year. There was an average attendance of 9 out of the 12 Council members at each meeting.

A pleasing feature of these Council meetings was the attendance of an average of 10 Ordinary members. All members are welcome to attend these meetings and participate in the deliberations. Due to paucity of time to cover a full agenda, the venue of these Council meetings was changed from the premises of the Commercial Travellers Club to the Masonic Club, at 164 Flinders Street, Melbourne.

Meetings: (Public)

The TTA organised a mass public meeting on 26 November 1980 in The Assembly Hall to protest against the Lonie Report recommendations. The guest speakers were the Leaders of both Opposition parties - Mr. Frank Wilkes and Mr. Peter Ross-Edwards. The meeting was attended by about 1,000 people.

The TTA organised a joint Rally on the steps of Parliament House on 11 March 1981 to protest against the proposed cuts in rail services.

During the year the President, Secretary, Public Relations Officer and Council Members Pat Minihan and Dr. Douglas Sherman were guest speakers at public meetings in Ballarat, Healesville, Kilmore, Sandringham, Hampton, Kew, Greensborough and Williamstown.

Secretary Ken McIntyre was a guest speaker at public meetings organised by the Henry George League and at the Trade Union Training Authority's training session for Rail union members.

Membership:

The year started with 343 members and during the year, we are proud to announce, that membership increased by over 198% with 1024 effective members on the rolls at the end of May 1981.

We even have the rarity of a resident of Canada joining the TTA!

Thanks to the "looney report" and the great increase in public awareness of public transport matters, cuts and closures, which we have generated, we have increased our membership. However, we are far from happy and would like to number every train traveller as a member. In order to carry weight with the Government, we need the numbers behind us.

We appeal to all existing members not only to renew their membership, but to actively recruit more members to the cause.

Branches:

We are proud to announce the formation during the year, of two Branches of the TTA.

The first branch was formed in Bendigo and the second in the suburban city of Sandringham.

The formation of these branches will enable members

to concentrate on matters of local interest and concern to them within the over-all plan and interests of the TTA.

We wish the Office bearers and members of these two Branches all success.

We would welcome the formation of other branches, especially in Country areas.

#### Activities:

Our main activity throughout the year was the continuing campaign against the Government decisions to close down and cut rail services in the State. Our activities centred around attendance of protest meetings, support and Guest speakers at such meetings, and assistance to local organisations with literature on the issue. A Petition signed by over 15,000 people protesting against these cuts was presented to Parliament at the March Rally.

In December 1980 we appealed to all City and Shire Councils in Victoria and interested organisations, for financial assistance to conduct a publicity campaign against the Government decisions to cut rail services. We received overwhelming support and contributions totalling \$3765. The funds were used for a series of newspaper advertisements in THE AGE and THE SUN in March, highlighting the damage to the State's economy that will result from the Government's transport policies.

A study by us and the Victorian Employers' Federation published in the City press and media in July 1980 revealed that as a result of the daily late running and cancellations of suburban trains in Melbourne over 12 months, workers lose over \$90 million in wages and the State suffers over \$450 m. in lost production and sales. Six days after the publication and after receiving a personal copy, the Premier Mr. R. Hamer made a public confession that "VicRail Is A Mess":

Despite a long-standing and repeated invitation to him and the Transport Minister to travel the trains with us or visit Flinders Street station in peak hours, neither has had the courage to accept the invitation and personally witness "the mess" they have created!

We are pleased to report that both leaders of the Opposition Parties, Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Ross-Edwards, travelled the suburban trains with us in peak hours in July 1980 and had a first-hand look at the problems and inconvenience experienced by train travellers daily.

#### Newsletter:

Our informative Newsletter, published quarterly, has served as the means of communication with our members and as a source of information to the general public and the media, of our campaign.

Each issue of the Newsletter

has received wide coverage in the daily press and by the radio stations. Articles have been reproduced by other papers and organisations in their newsletters.

Members are reminded that the basic membership fee of \$3 barely covers the cost of printing and mailing the Newsletter and essential operating expenses.

We welcome articles and contributions of matters of interest from members for publication in the Newsletter.

#### The Present:

Even the most ardent supporter of the State government will have to admit that the rail services today are a shambles and a disaster. Not a single day passes without dislocations and delays to the services due to shortages of trains, defective trains or shortages of qualified staff.

The continuous denial of adequate funds by the Government for more trains and staff, inadequate and inefficient services, poor management, low staff productivity and morale and the threat of closures and further cuts in services and staff have reduced the level of our rail services to its lowest in service standards and efficiency, in the history of the State.

The State government seems determined to proceed with its plans to close down suburban rail lines and also Country lines and replace them with bus services. It fails to

provide the public with the basis of its information on which such decisions are made. Despite all the social, economic, energy conservation, pollution, political facts and arguments provided, the Government seems determined to carry out its plan to destroy our rail system. More than ever, must all right thinking sections of the community join us in our campaign to defeat the Government's intentions on rail destruction.

#### The Future:

The year ahead will be the most crucial and decisive for rail and public transport in Victoria's history.

Faced with the Government's policy to close and cut services, and the continued imbalance of funding for public transport compared to roads, the TTA faces an uphill task to create a greater degree of public awareness and knowledge on these issues.

Before the next Annual Meeting, Victorians will go to the polls to elect a new government. The TTA must conduct a vigorous campaign to ensure that the political party elected to office at that election will support, legislate and act to improve, expand and upgrade rail and public transport in accordance with our aims and objectives.

Irrespective of which political party a candidate belongs to, no person should be elected to the State Parliament, who has not, or does not support our aims for

better public transport. It will be our task to remind voters that how they vote at the next election will decide for ever, whether there is to be a future for public transport in the State.

We have addressed every sitting Member of the State Parliament calling on them to declare their stand on our policy and will be advising voters on the replies received.

Acknowledgements:

In a year of disaster for public transport but of achievement for the TTA, I thank our President Dr. Charles Sowerwine for his invaluable leadership and assistance in guiding the TTA through a difficult year. Charles will be leaving Australia to take up an overseas appointment for a year. We wish him all success and will look forward to him resuming his activities with us next year.

With such a dedicated band of Office bearers it would be unfair to single out individuals, but I will be failing in my duty if I do not pay special thanks to John Alexopoulos, David Bowd and Patrick O'Connor for their valuable assistance in the administration of the TTA.

The TTA acknowledges the continued support of the City's daily newspapers and the interest and support of their Transport Reporters.

We thank the two Sunday papers and the many Country and suburban newspapers for their coverage of our campaign. We thank the 4 city television stations also, for their support and coverage of our activities.

Special thanks go out to the Australian Broadcasting Commission, radio stations 3KZ, 3DB, 3UZ, 3XY, and 3CR for their numerous interviews of our Office bearers, news items, reports and coverage of our campaign during the year.

We thank the City and Shire Councils, organisations and individuals who contributed funds, obtained signatures for our Petition and supported our publicity campaign on the rail cuts.

We thank the officials and staff of the Commercial Travellers Club and the Masonic Club for their courtesy and assistance to us at our monthly Council meetings held in their Club premises.

Finally we thank all our officials, members and supporters, without whose interest, support and financial assistance we cannot exist.

We look forward to your continued support and renewed interest in the year ahead, to enable us to achieve a better deal for public transport users in the State.

Ken McIntyre  
Hon. Secretary  
18 June, 1981