

Edited by Authority of the Unions Defence Committee, Sydney

THE STRIKER

SYDNEY, MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 1917.

ONE PENNY

THE GREAT STRIKE OF 1917 ARTSA deregistered, but ARU created

IN APRIL, 1888, the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association (ARTSA) published the first edition of its journal, the *NSW Railway and Tramway Review*, in a spirit of success and idealism.

Since March, 1886, when William Schey, a porter at Parramatta Station, had organised the Union's first meeting, ARTSA had emerged as a gathering of 4000 members and 30 branches, covering some 40 per cent of wage grade rail employees, which despite initial opposition from the Railway Commissioners, had achieved official employer recognition and registration under the Trade Union Act.

In that first edition, Robert White, ARTSA's Treasurer, wrote that it was the duty of all employed on the Railways "to make the great department in which they served as efficient and harmonious as possible."

White believed that anything which raised the intellectual and moral status of rail employees and managers would enable them to fully realise ARTSA's motto: "All men are brethren."

From the first efforts made to bring together railworkers into ARTSA, the sense of combinations across the grades — regardless of seniority or skills — was seen as the key to effective co-operation and strength, against both the expected resistance of the Commissioners and the divisions that had developed between workers.

One union for the Railways, one union covering every worker, proved an elusive goal for ARTSA. Engine Drivers preferred to maintain their own organisation (the Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners' Association) and salaried officers preferred the Railway and Tramway Officers' Association.

ARTSA was also troubled by small sectional unions which periodically emerged, unitarily living off a segment of its members, until these breakaway associations drifted into obscurity, their members eventually returning to the fold.

During the late 1880s and early 1890s, Guards, Shunters and Signalmen all formed their own breakaway organisations. The Signalmen's Union, for example, evolved from a signalmen's social club formed in October, 1888. The chairman at its first meeting was Robert White, ARTSA's Treasurer.

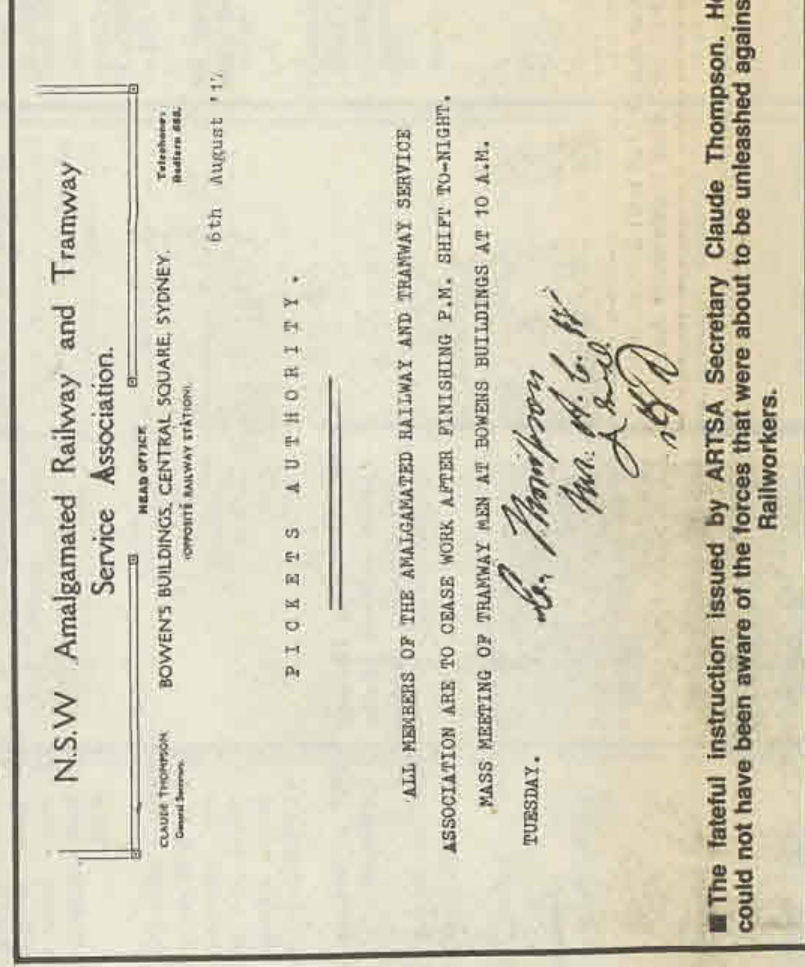
Like so many other unions, ARTSA suffered badly during the 1890s, in the years of economic depression and employer resistance to unionism.

However, ARTSA revived in the early years of the 20th Century, and by the outbreak of War in 1914, had re-emerged as an influential and active organisation.

War brought its own difficulties for Railworkers. Wages fell, and working conditions deteriorated. In December, 1916, ARTSA members at Darling Harbour struck over an overtime dispute.

ARTSA's rank and file were restless, and some were disillusioned with the arbitration system. In 1916, William Teen, a member of the militant Industrial Workers of the World and an employee at the Randwick Tramway Workshops, was elected ARTSA's council.

Teen called for the abolition of the arbitration system, and urged ARTSA to in-



■ The fateful instruction issued by ARTSA Secretary Claude Thompson. He could not have been aware of the forces that were about to be unleashed against Railworkers.

investigate the use of industrial sabotage. The war, creating carnage on the front-line, was feeding its own reaction at home.

ARTSA's leaders were uncertain how they should respond to an increasingly difficult situation. They rejected the IWW's tactics and urged members not to engage in rash industrial action. However, at Eveleigh Workshops, between July, 1915, and July, 1917, at least eight strikes occurred.

On July 20, 1917, the NSW Railway Commissioners introduced a new management system at the Randwick Tramway Workshops, a card system based on Taylor's (a US management official) time and motion studies. The card was used to monitor the amount of time an employee took to perform a given task.

It has an expensive effect. Workers felt the scheme was intended as a production

speed-up, and its introduction was bitterly resented. On August 2, 1917, 1100 men at the Randwick Workshops walked off the job. On the same day, approximately 3000 employees at the Eveleigh Workshops also downed tools.

The strike quickly spread. ARTSA and other rail unions were caught off guard by its suddenness, and it was not until August 6 that the union issued an official strike notice.

The strike soon involved workers in the transport, fuel and food industries. Water-side workers, coalminers and seamen joined rail and tram workers on strike. More than a dozen unions voted at huge mass meetings to take bans in support.

The strike lasted 82 days, and it has been estimated 14 per cent of the NSW workforce took part. The card issue had be-

come submerged in an unleashing of tension and frustration with the war. For many unionists, the strike became a defence of union rights.

The forces arrayed against the union were powerful and well organised. Management had a strong contingent of volunteer labour to draw from, and many Rail and tram employees had not joined the strike.

The NSW Government used volunteer strike-breakers to maintain a variety of essential services, including rail and tram operations, and even coal-mining.

The union defence committee struggled to keep the men committed to the strike, and the bulletin, *The Striker* reminded the rank and file.

"There is only one power on earth that can beat the workers — that power is THEMSELVES. So long as the workers remain true to the IDEALS OF UNIONISM, and stand shoulder to shoulder, THEY MUST WIN."

However, the government was determined to crush the strike. On August 18, 1917, ARTSA Secretary Claude Thompson, and A. W. Buckley, Labor Parliamentarian and future ARU (NSW Branch) Secretary, were arrested and charged with sedition.

On August 23, the NSW Industrial Commission de-registered ARTSA.

By early September, an estimated 32 per cent of the strikers — the "early-birds" — returned to work. By September 10, the railway part of the strike had ended, ARTSA voting to return to work.

Most of the men who stayed out to the end — the "lilywhites" — found it humiliating and difficult to get their jobs back. They had to accept worse pay and conditions, loss of seniority and regression to junior positions. The card system was retained.

Unionism split on the railways, with scab organisations, loyal to management, moving to replace ARTSA. But the men who had led ARTSA held on, and by 1921, were able to organise a NSW Branch of the new Australian Railways Union.

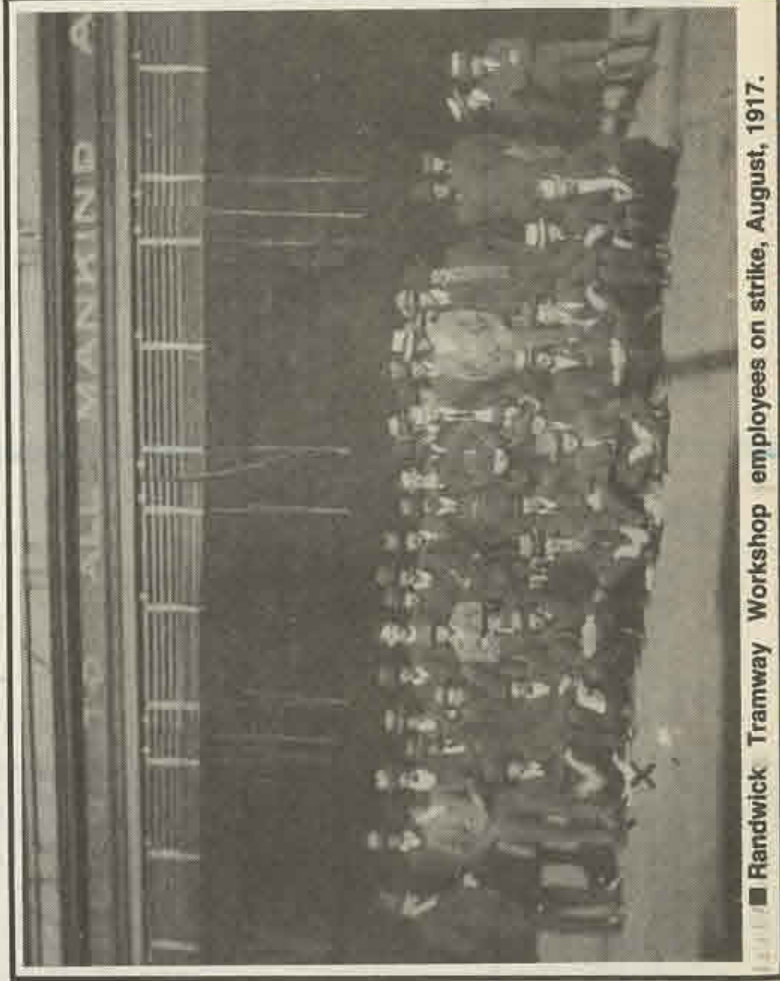
The ARU was a national union, better able to resist employer attacks. It was also committed to right the injustices created by the 1917 strike, and campaigned tirelessly through 1930, for this cause.

1917 was a defeat for Australian unionism, but it bred a grim determination. Perhaps this spirit is best summed up by Ben Chifley, ex-train driver who lost his job in the strike said:

"All that harsh and oppressive treatment did, as far as I was concerned, was to transform me, with the assistance of my colleagues, from an ordinary engine-driver into the Prime Minister of this country."

NOTE: Material for this article was obtained from G. E. Patmore, "A History of Industrial Relations in the NSW Railways, 1855-1929"; Dan Coward, "Crime and Punishment" (from "Strikes" edited by J. Fremonger etc, Angus and Robertson 1973); "How Labour Governs" V. G. Childie, MUP 1964; "The Striker", Unions Defence Committee Bulletin, August 13, 1917; and "The Railway and Tramway Review", No 1, April, 1888.

■ This supplement was prepared by members of the ARU History Project for the ARU's Centenary celebrations.



■ Randwick Tramway Workshop employees on strike, August, 1917.

CUTTINGS FROM THE UNION'S HISTORY

■ On this page we publish a series of cuttings from Railroad and other sources which highlight aspects of the lives of Railworkers and their families not often emphasized.

The pensioner

I WAS shoved against him by the surging crowd, which swerved and pushed and eddied on its multitude of errands and purposes in Pitt Street, last Saturday morning. He knew me at once and, using our shoulders, we pressed our way out to the edge of the pavement.

"We can't talk here, Ted," I said. "Come and have a drink."

He hesitated, then nodded, and we forced our way across the crowd, through a laneway and into a quieter street, where we entered a pub.

I noticed his dispirited look, the shabby sports coat, the frayed trousers, the dirty shoes, and the tie drawn thin, from long usage, and string-like about his neck, and I paid for the drinks.

We took our beer back to the wall, away from the congestion at the bar counter.

"How's things now you're on the pension?" I asked.

"Not much good, Joe. Prices are up every week, and the wife and I are having a struggle. I've tried to get a job, but I'm 62 and nobody wants us at that age."

Before me, the scrambling mob at the bar faded, and my mind went over the years to the days when Ted and I worked together in the back country on the railway lines of this State.

I was west of Condo, in the middle of a scorching summer. We were on the black soil plains east of the sand country, with a big gang fixing the line to take the speed-up traffic. For years the black plain stretch had been a menace. In wet weather, the rails bogged in black ooze. In dry, hot weather, the ground cracked open and swallowed the ash ballast. Engine drivers were in continued fear of derailment.

We lessened the sleeper-spacing to give more bearing. We pulled in extra sleepers. We raised the line high on ballast. We greased the fishplates to make the rails slip in the shifting temperatures.

In stifling heat, dust, swarms of vicious biting flies and insects, we toiled, day after day. And we did the job. Today, express time-tables operate on the black plain, mainly due to Ted, who was in charge of the job.

"You're very quiet, Joe," said Ted.

I came back to the present and got more beer and refused to let Ted pay, and we talked.

"Do you remember the big floods out in the South-West?" asked Ted after a while.

I'll never forget them. We had been out all day on the far end of the length and were coming home through the cutting and down the hill on the trolleys, when ahead we saw the water like a cataract roaring over the line.

Someone had to get over to warn the traffic ahead. We and watched, with our hearts in our mouths, while Ted pushed the loaded machine into three feet of flood and steadied himself by holding on. He wouldn't let anyone go with him. Time and again, he had to clear the line of debris, and only his on the machine saved him from being swept off. He got over and stopped the oncoming traffic.

We talked over our drinks of this and other things. And Ted had a lot to talk about. He had given 30 years of devoted service to the Railway Department.

"And now you've finished with it all, Ted," I said. "and they've given you 40 bob a week pension to keep you and your wife. What a damned shame!"

Come home and meet the wife," said Ted. "She'll be glad to see you again."

Ted took me to a narrow, slum street not far from the "Cross". We entered a long, dismal passage of many doors and noisome with the smell of gasping cooking from many apartments of crowded humanity. The place vibrated with the hum of talk and argument. A drunk sang in one room; from another raged a loud-mouthed dispute. In a room at the end I met Ted's wife.

She flushed and said, "Ted, you'd no right to bring Joe here."

I understood. Before, when I visited them, they lived in a bungalow in the suburbs — a place she had been proud of, surrounded by lawns and flowerbeds.

"We had to shift here," she apologised. "We couldn't pay the rent on the pension."

When I left, Ted wouldn't take the money I wanted to give and, in the electric train, on my way home, I thought of him and of all the other railway pensioners. Last week the unions had been to the Government about them, but were told, "Nothing can be done. There's no money."

I was thinking of this, as I left the station, and nearly walked under a big, luxurious latest-type car.

I knew the car. It belongs to our local member, the man who represents the worker and the railway pensioner in the Government, which controls the railways and the railway pensions of this State.

J. G. POOLE, State Councillor.

■ This article was written in 1948 by Joe Poole, an Officer and Branch Councillor of the ARU for many years. We think it captures the hardships faced by retiring Railworkers.



6d a day in sunny Australia

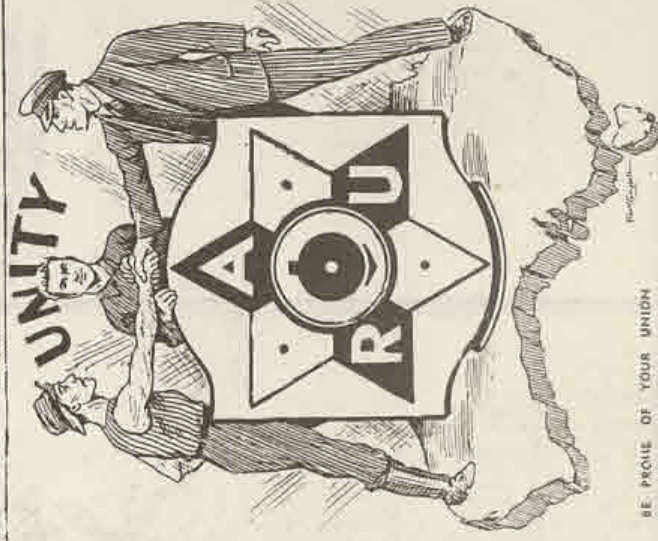
EMILY Watters (above) migrated from Scotland to NSW in 1880. In 1885, she married Percy Watters, Fetter from Nyngan, and from that year until 1911, when Percy died at Werris Creek, the family followed Railway jobs through the North-West.

In 1911, Emily was appointed by the Railways Department as Gatekeeper in charge of the Maitland level crossing, and in 1913, promoted to the position of Station Assistant at Brawlin, on the Coolamundra-Tumut branch line — a position she held until her retirement in 1934.

During those years, she single-handedly raised three sons and two daughters. In this photograph she appears upright, resourceful, with a strong hand. There is determination in her face, yet she seems ready to smile.

She was luckier than the wives of rail employees who acted as gatekeepers during the 19th Century. As the Railway and Tramway Review commented bitterly in 1888:

"Sixpence a day in sunny Australia for a woman to be at call day and night, never able to go away without providing an approved substitute! And then, if a man, justly incensed at the paltry pittance, refuses to make his wife a wage-slave, out in all weather for such an amount, he has a No 1 chance of having to break up his little home and seek fresh fields and pasture new as a recompense for his temerity."

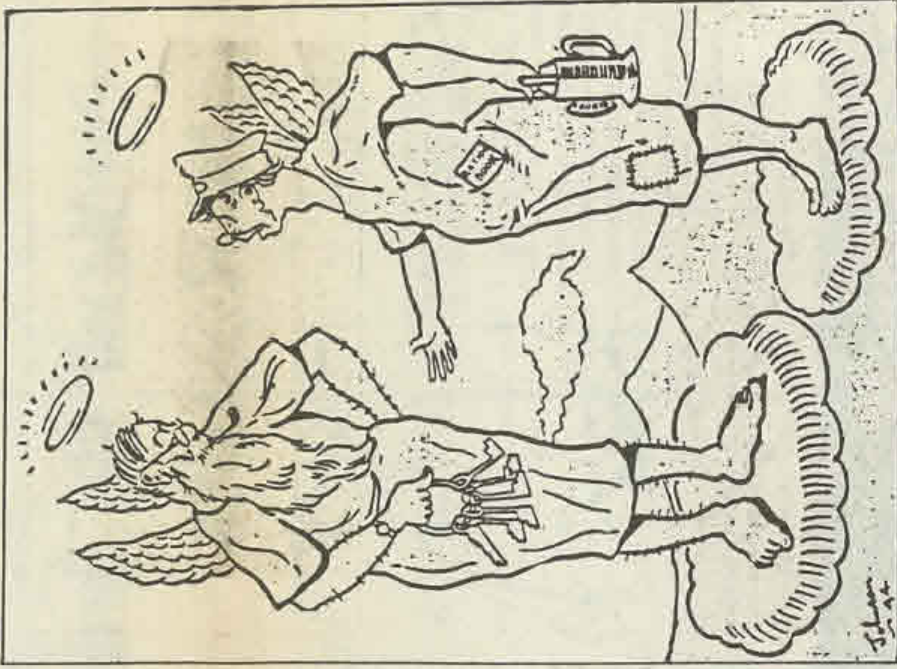


8E FINANCIAL—WEAR AN A.R.U. BADGE

□ During the late 1950s, the Union pushed for stronger solidarity. Rifts were occurring in the ranks over the serious problems of dieselisation and mechanisation. The Executive was riding through as extremely difficult and dangerous period, deciding whether to exert industrial pressure. Dr Lloyd Ross said during this period: "We cannot retreat. We must continue our strength, but we must carry our membership along with us — basic unity must prevail."



■ This illustration appeared in Railroad in March, 1943, urging women who had come into the industry during the war to play an active role in the ARU. The enthusiastic call was typical of Railroad in the war years: "We can go forward together in building standards, building a more successful war effort, forward together to victory, peace, a stronger Labor movement — and a new order that will be of our own making."



■ Ex-Traffic Man: "Glad to see you, Peter! It's my first holiday in years."

During the war, many members worked long hours without taking leave. In spite of attempts to sabotage Union efforts to negotiate openly with the Commissioners, the ARU finally obtained three weeks' holidays for Guards and Shunters.



■ This cartoon illustrates one example of the many long-standing difficult conditions in the RRR at the time. During 1939, it was the practice of some sub-managers to compel waitresses to pay extra money not collected from customers. This malpractice led to an atmosphere of terror and victimisation.

1880-90

1886 — ARTSA is formed by William Schey, a porter from Parramatta Station.
 1887 — The sick and Accident Fund is started, creating for the first time, security for the injured and sick also financial support for families of deceased Railway and Tramway workers.

1888 — April 19 — The first edition of the *Railway and Tramway Review* is published.

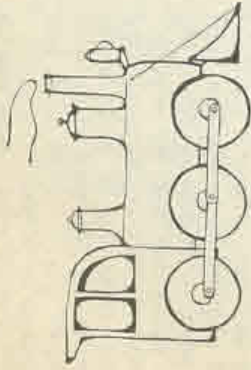
1888 — June — The condition that fetters wives shall keep the gates without remuneration is abolished.

1888 — June — wages are dropped from 7/- a day to 6/- a day because of due to retrenchments designed by Commissioner Eddy. ARTSA calls for the immediate re-introduction of 7/- a day.

1888 — August — wages stay at £50 to £60 a year for some employees, increments were not being paid.

1888 — August 16 — a deputation to Commissioner Eddy succeeds in gaining a quarter of a day's pay for Gangers for walking their lengths on Sundays, the extension of good conduct holidays for Signalmen, and Sundays for Porters.

1890 — April — the fight for an eight-hour day begins.



1890 — December — anti-smoking ukase, stating that: "At no time when in uniform are rail employees to smoke." This caused much furor and was never enforced.

1891 — March — the Railway Institute opens in a political move amid much fanfare to regain railway and tramway employees votes.

1900-10

1901 — Federal Government establishes a 7/- a day basic wage.

1903 — Full payment for Sunday duties awarded.

1904 — ARTSA continues to act as an Sick and Accident Fund; has an annual income of £567/3/5.

1907 — "Harvester Judgment" — Justice Higgins establishes the basic wage a "fair and reasonable" minimum wage. (£2/2s).

1901 — Compulsory arbitration established.

1903 — *Railway and Tramway Review* advertises "Guard's lever keyless watch for time keeping, only 25/-."

1916 — Basic wage increased to 14/9 a day.

1915 — Living wage for NSW railway and tramways 8/9 a day.

1917 — ARTSA members struck for eight months, eventually involving 65,000 workers State-wide.

1920

1924 — Quarterly adjustments to the basic wage established; basic wage was £4/2/- a week.

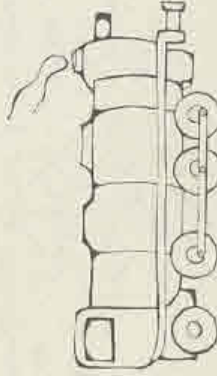
1924 — six-day sick leave awarded to workers.

1925-1928 — £300,000 a year was gained by ARU activity in all states.

1927 — ACTU established. President W. W. Duggan (1927-1932), Secretary C. Crofts (1927-1943).

1927 — a 44 hour week awarded to members of the metal trades.

1924-1927 — 10,000 new members join the ARU.



1930

1930 — Basic wage adjusted to £3/13/- per week.

1931 — Basic wage cut by 10% — general strike call unsuccessful.

1932 — Premier Jack Lang introduces compulsory unionism for the railways.

1934 — 44 hours awarded to workers.

1936 — Total number of transport employees statewide 35,400. Railway 28,000, Tramway 7300.

1936 — Consolidated Railway Industry award made by Judge Drake-Brokeman.

1940

1941 — Basic wage £3/9/-

1942 — *Railroad advertisement*: Tailor made suits £2/12/6. "Lorna" 3-piece lounge suite £14/19/6.

1941 — ARU wins High Court appeal for incapacity compensation case.

1942 — "Best ever award" for Guards — they are awarded the right to appeal for holiday increments in the event of the death of a member.

1942 — General Signalmen's reclassification.

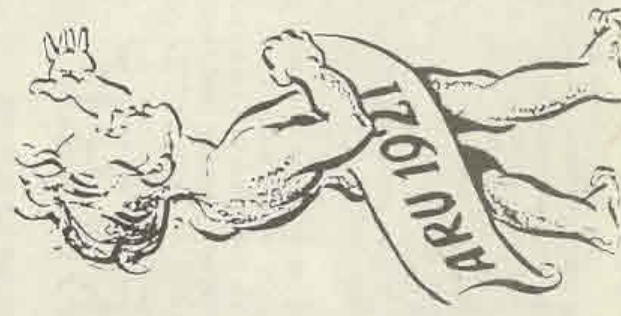
1944 — Miss Eillen Powell convinces the Commissioner to grant three weeks' leave to all female members of the RRR.

1944 — ARU files a claim for a 10 per cent industry allowance. High prices and low wages were causing many hardships for workers.

1947 — 40-hour week introduced.

1949 — Double time on Sundays awarded.

1948 — Sussex Inlet Holiday Camp Opens — first union-sponsored holiday camp in Australia.



GAINS

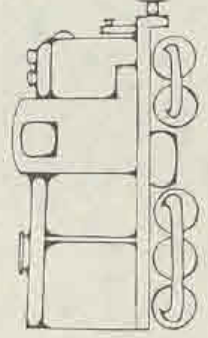
Morning Tea Appreciated
 REP. F. LOCANE, of Rankin's Springs, writes:
 "On behalf of the Fattlers of Rankin's Springs, I wish to congratulate you on your success in securing morning tea, which is appreciated by everyone out here."

FEBRUARY 18, 1941

AFTERNOON TEA RESTORED

President Jim Holt represented the A.R.U. on the deputation which obtained the restoration of the afternoon tea break in the transport department.

OCTOBER 3, 1952.



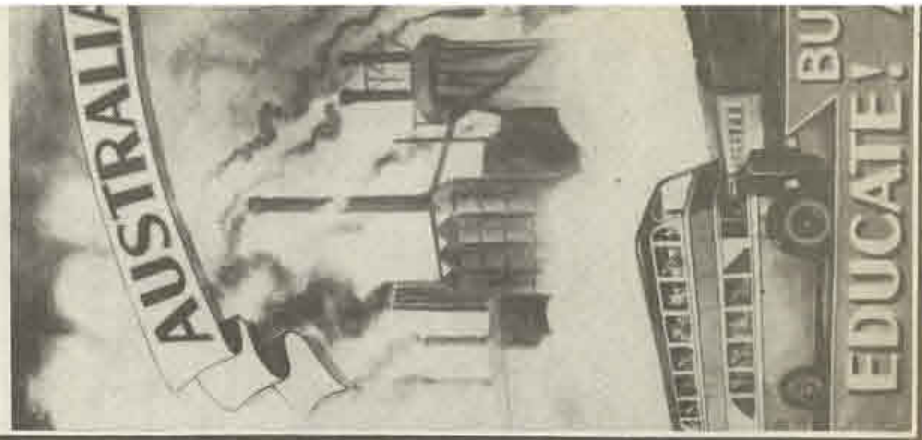
1880-1890

1900-1910

1920

1930

1940



GAINS

publish a list of gains. But side and not always do we list gains. But side sign for big gains, there goes a winning or individual members. We do not always ys try. And generally we try and try

early £100,000 in compensation for our ases before the Appeals Board. Our our members. We campaign not because but so that big gains can be won.

APRIL 30, 1965

THE GAINS OF THE A.R.U.

would fill a book — and a big book at that

We list below the benefits which the N.U.R. has brought to railwaymen:

JULY 27, 1964.

We all like them!

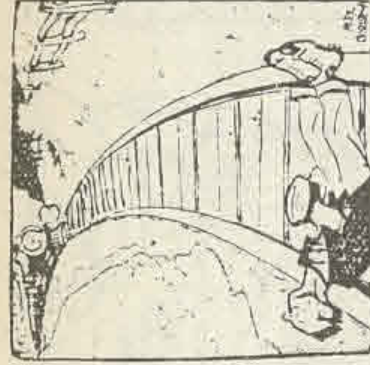
Gets Results

I am to be a kicker, I always long peace, the wheel that does the making is the one that gets the se, nice to be contented and an easy to please, it the dog that's always scratching e dog that has the fleas, e art of softly pedalling is an art sometimes stales, it the guy that swings the hammer e guy that drives the nails, time not put any notions that are aful in your head, it the baby that keeps yelling is the / that gets fed.

n Cliff, Stationmaster, Boorowa

EMBER — DECEMBER, 1970

NOVEMBER 10, 1931



THE ONLY SURE WAY TO DODGE YOUR UNION DUES.



1950

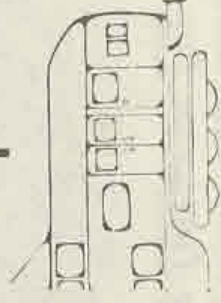
1952 — Sick pay for wages staff.

1953 — margins increased for Per/Way; long-service leave extended.

1954 — Improved brake vans, with doors to limit passenger access.

1955 — Reclassification of women Gatekeepers and Platform Attendants.

1956 — "Two of the things that have been of great benefit to staff are annual holidays and sick leave. In the old days, you had to work on public holidays to get a decent annual holiday, and many a time when you were ill you kept going when you should have been in bed." (Ted Williams, retired Porter, 27/1/1956, he started work in 1910).



1957 — Gains in Workshops included overalls for heat treatment at Chullora; 10-day roster for fuelmen at Eveleigh Running shed; new amenities block and supply for hot water.

1957 — June — Water tank for Fettlers at Holmwood, re-employment obtained for members at Yass Junction, decision on annual leave of employees in extra gangs.

1958 — High Court upholds long-service leave provisions for dismissed railway employees; 152 members receive compensation assistance in three months.

1950 — ARU develops information in foreign languages for new migrant members.

1960

1960 — Two-hour Government transport stoppage, September 31; 4-hour stoppage December 11; result — four weeks' annual leave for all.

1962 — Pass privilege for widows of deceased employees.

1963 — 10 per cent margins increase for metal grades.

1964 — Basic wage increase: 1956 — 10/-; 1957 — 10/-; 1958 — 5/-; 1959 — 15/-; 1961 — 12/-; 1964 — 10/- (men) 7/- (women); four weeks' for all Government transport workers.

1965 — marings 1½ per cent increase awarded by Full Bench of the Arbitration commission.

1966 — Camping out allowance increase for Per/Way and Signals. Passes — first-class pass for everybody.

1968 — Equal pay for women cleaners.

1969 — Passes — first-class pass for interstate travel after 20 years' service.

1961 — £4000 compensation to rail widow.

1970

1970 — Penalty payments for Enginemen and Guards working three engines; sickness and mortality scheme established to assist members and their families on a co-operative, non-profit basis.

1971 — Interim wage increase of \$3.50 per week for non-trademen, pension made available for widows of former contributors to Government superannuation account.

1972 — New Broken Hill allowance of \$2, in addition to inducement allowance.

1973 — Annual leave loading granted 20 per cent to shift workers, 17½ non-shift workers; work value wage increase granted by Arbitration Commissioner H. G. Neil.

1974 — Organised English classes for migrants.

1975 — Extra week's leave for shift workers; workers injury compensation increased from \$43 to \$64; paid maternity leave.

1976 — Free home and duty rail travel; Husband and family on women employee's pass.

1977 — Five weeks' annual leave loading for shift workers.

1978 — Inclusion of de factor on passes.

1979 — Camping out allowance increased from \$3.80 to \$4.60 a day.

1980

1980 — All award wage increase 4.5 per cent.

1980 — Disability allowance for Per/Way and Signals

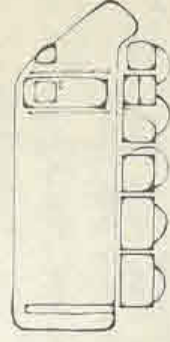
1981 — \$20 a week industry allowance increase.

1981 — SRA agrees to provision of duff-coats for Fettlers.

1983 — 38-Hour week, 19-day month for workers.

1983-85 — Major upgrading of Sussex Inlet holiday camp at a cost of \$700,000

1985 — Public Authorities Superannuation Bill, new superannuation scheme incorporating optional early settlement.



1950

1960

1970

1980

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J. G. POOLE, State Councillor.

■ This article was written in 1948 by Joe Poole, an Officer and Branch Councillor of the ARU for many years. We think it captures the hardships faced by retiring Railworkers.



6d a day in sunny Australia

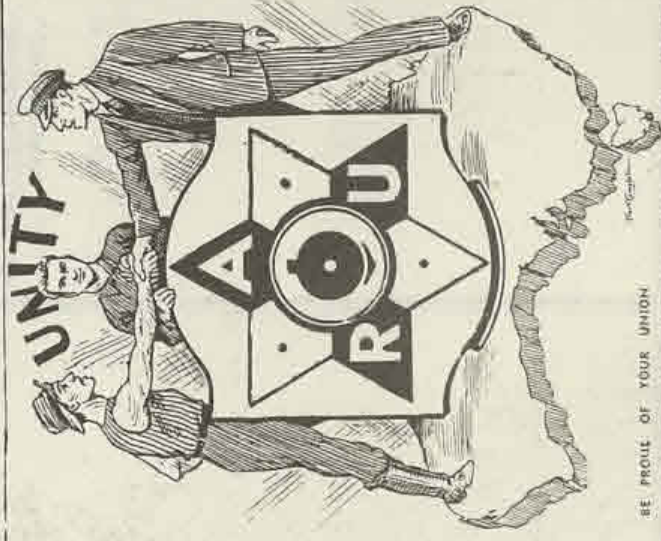
EMILY Watters (above) migrated from Scotland to NSW in 1880. In 1885, she married Percy Watters, Fetter from Nyngan, and from that year until 1911, when Percy died at Werris Creek, the family followed Railway jobs through the North-West.

In 1911, Emily was appointed by the Railways Department as Gatekeeper in charge of the Maitland level crossing, and in 1913, promoted to the position of Station Assistant at Brawlin, on the Cootamundra-Tumut branch line — a position she held until her retirement in 1934.

During those years, she single-handedly raised three sons and two daughters. In this photograph she appears upright, resourceful, with a strong hand. There is determination in her face, yet she seems ready to smile.

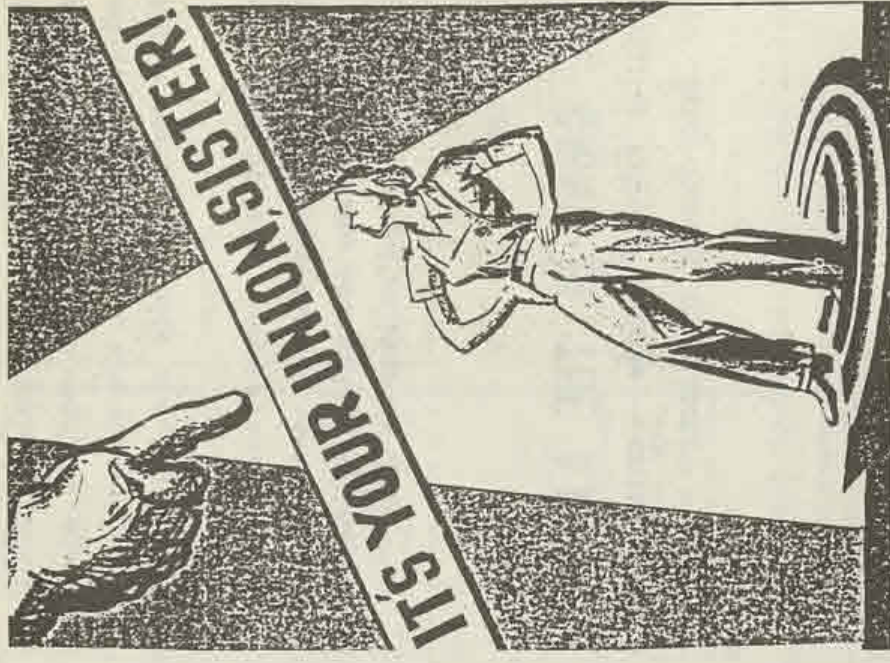
She was luckier than the wives of rail employees who acted as gatekeepers during the 19th Century. As the Railway and Tramway Review commented bitterly in 1888:

"Sixpence a day in sunny Australia for a woman to be at call day and night, never able to go away without providing an approved substitute! And then, if a man, justly incensed at the paltry pittance, refuses to make his wife a wage-slave, out in all weather for such an amount, he has a No 1 chance of having to break up his little home and seek fresh fields and pasture new as a recompense for his temerity."

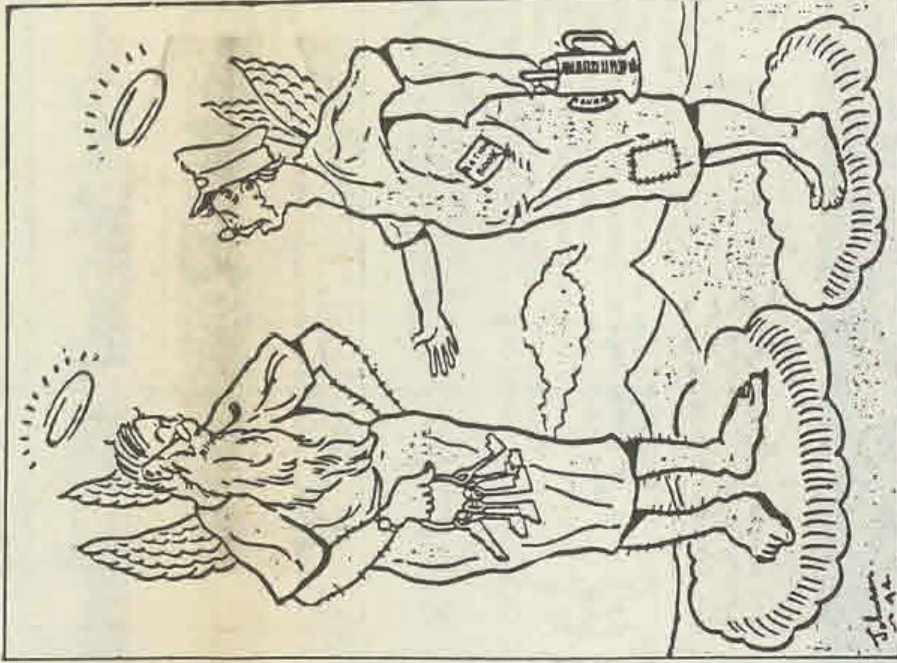


BE FINANCIAL—WEAR AN A.R.U. BADGE

□ During the late 1950s, the Union pushed for stronger solidarity. Riots were occurring in the ranks over the serious problems of dieselisation and mechanisation. The Executive was riding through as extremely difficult and dangerous period, deciding whether to exert industrial pressure. Dr Lloyd Ross said during this period: "We cannot retreat. We must continue our strength, but we must carry our membership along with us — basic unity must prevail."



■ This illustration appeared in Railroad in March, 1943, urging women who had come into the industry during the war to play an active role in the ARU. The enthusiastic call was typical of Railroad in the war years: "We can go forward together in building standards, building a more successful war effort, forward together to victory, peace, a stronger Labor movement — and a new order that will be of our own making."



■ Ex-Traffic Man: "Glad to see you, Peter! It's my first holiday in years."

During the war, many members worked long hours without taking leave. In spite of attempts to sabotage Union efforts to negotiate openly with the Commissioners, the ARU finally obtained three weeks' holidays for Guards and Shunters.



■ This cartoon illustrates one example of the many long-standing difficult conditions in the RRR at the time. During 1939, it was the practice of some sub-managers to compel waitresses to pay extra money not collected from customers. This malpractice led to an atmosphere of terror and victimisation.