



# Phoenix

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## Bus Drivers Fume Over Contract Delays

Santa Cruz City Bus Lines (SCMTD) has again postponed honoring its end-of-the-year contract agreements, causing hard feelings among a lot of drivers. According to their contract, the district was to offer 116 full-time routes to the approximately 140 drivers on December 15. Instead, only 89 full-time routes were posted on the 15th.

Management asked drivers to accept a postponement until January 3rd for the additional routes, and drivers voted to accept the postponement. But on January 3rd, management again postponed the promised routes until January 31.

This hits the 27 drivers who had anticipated full-time routes hard. Many of them had made plans and bought items on credit, expecting the pay increases guaranteed by their contract. (One driver even bought a car on credit.) But as it is, only 89 of the city's 140 drivers work the regular routes forty hours a week. The other 51 clock an average of 25 hours a week, work unpredictable shifts, and never know their day off until the week in which it falls.

And the public can expect at least one more month of overcrowding, late busses, and scheduled busses which never arrive.

Management explains the delays by citing defects in the 26 new busses which they received, after much anticipation. Marketing and Personnel Relations Officer of SCMTD K.C. Boyle said that the 26 new busses which arrived last month were plagued with faulty electrical systems. Gruman Flexible, the company which manufactured the busses, has sent its factory representatives here to work on them.

SCMTD management states that they plan to add new routes and change others to make the schedules more realistic, in hopes of eliminating the "5 o'clock crunch" and other delays. However, none of these changes can be implemented until the new busses arrive.

"Management doesn't have a sense of timing," says driver Maurice Jemison. "They listen to their constituents, the taxpayers, who say 'we want service,' and they extended the lines beyond acceptable limits even before they had the new busses."

Driver Gail Remick charges that management should either have had a back-up plan, or should accept responsibility in some way for accidents and mistakes. "They can't just shrug and say it's not their fault." But Remick feels that the management is generally reasonable, and has many problems to contend with which have cropped up recently. The company is small and the routes are five

years old, says Remick; population and traffic have doubled in that time. And of course, ridership has jumped 54 per cent in the past three months due to both the gas crisis and the scuttling of school bus services for most children.

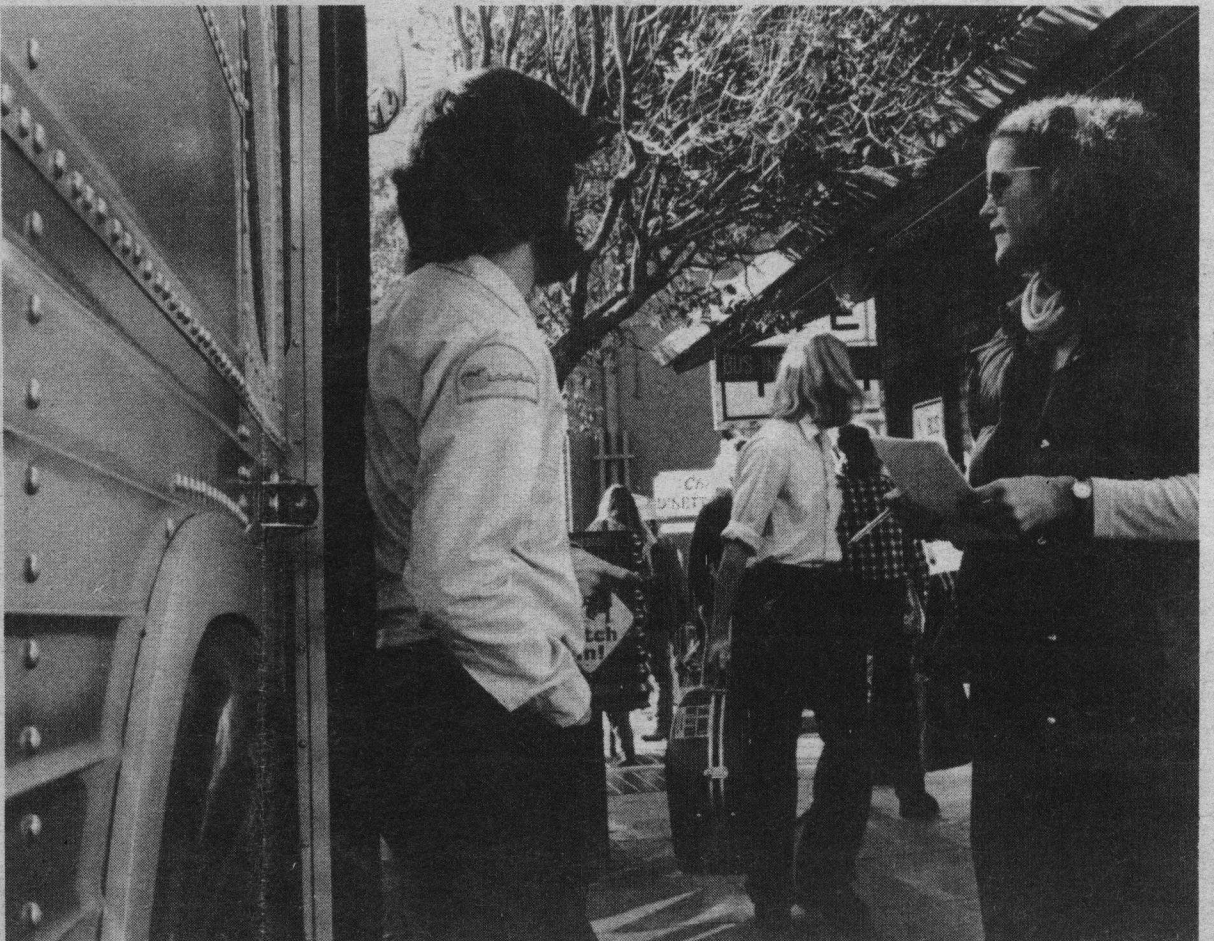
Remick, who joined the company one and a half years ago, was driver #78; since then the number of drivers has nearly doubled. At present, only two secretaries are on the payroll to deal with 140 drivers, and only four dispatchers are expected to coordinate some 60 drivers "at any given time."

As most bus riders will confirm, the sudden boom in ridership has created problems which the current resources and routes cannot handle. Many routes, according to driver "T-Bone," are "impossible" to make on time. By 5 pm each weekday, most of the routes are running fifteen to thirty minutes behind schedule. T-Bone claims that the Mission 2B route—and others—almost always has to drop one "run" about that time, in order to catch up—which means that riders, who include old people, children, weary employees just off work, and parents who need to get home are left standing along Mission Street awaiting a scheduled bus which arrives a half hour late under darkening skies.

Even so, bus drivers are forced to drive fast on many routes and barrel through changing lights in an attempt to meet their schedule. Moreover, drivers have a hard time fitting in breaks, even for such basic needs as a trip to the bathroom. Riders are all too often passed up at bus stops by drivers who are under too much stress and who have a tendency to pass by anyone who does not flag them down.

The bus lines have recently seen an influx of young drivers who rarely see the job as an end in itself. Remick and other young drivers describe it as "growing pains." She says that many drivers hesitate to join the union because a Monterey local's members make less than Santa

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Santa Cruz bus drivers on break at the Transit Center. S.C. Transit management has not yet delivered promised schedule changes; as a result, drivers encounter increasingly irate passengers.



# Busses

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Cruz drivers (Santa Cruz drivers currently get \$4.00 to \$6.95 an hour).

One driver who supports the drive for a union is Dan Dickmeyer. Dickmeyer, who works with the negotiating committee, told the *Phoenix* that "it's our experience that in the middle of negotiations people get frustrated and start talking union, so in January or February we want to bring the issue to the District Association [of the S.C. City Transit District employees] once and for all." He continued that a questionnaire was being sent out this week to 10-12 local unions, "to find out which union could best represent us."

"The drivers can decide what they want to do. Personally, I feel that there are a lot of advantages to joining a union," Dickmeyer continued. "We [the Association] have done a lot on our own, but we can't handle the workload on a \$5 a month donation. He pointed out that the union hires full-time negotiators, who have contact with professional negotiators and labor law firms. Dickmeyer added, "The top 60 to 90 top-paid transit districts in the country are union, most of them the Amalgamated Truckers Union. As for Monterey, I feel they just got a bum deal, that it depends on the strength of the group what you get."

Dickmeyer explained that a movement was underfoot to see

that the City Transit District Board of Directors were elected rather than appointed. "I'm all for that; we need a driver or ex-driver on the board." He questions whether the board members have a full commitment, charging that "they just go along with whatever management advises. We need some full-time people handling this."

Many drivers feel that the

S.C. Municipal Transit District Association has, until recently, been hamstrung by a lack of good leadership. According to Remick, it was "president-dictated and run singlehandedly" until last fall's election of current president Tanya Gray.

Gray and Remick, along with fellow drivers Jerry Latsko and David Lyall, make up the negotiating committee of the Associ-

ation. Although most drivers appear to be sympathetic to management and its problems, the four negotiating committee members fear that management views them as "radicals." They see themselves as workers who are "taking an active role in trying to help solve problems and express [their] needs" to a management which tends to move slowly to meet new challenges and changes. In the words of one driver, "to management it's all on paper."

The drivers have to deal with

the public in a way that management does not, and riders are often upset nowadays by the inefficiency of the bus system. "I've had riders swear at me and throw things at me," says Remick.

Many drivers are unwilling to inconvenience the public with a strike. But how to negotiate with a management which continually "postpones" promises which are part of a contract? The association can only explore the legal avenues open to them. ■

Donna George

## More notes from page 9

### Three days in jail

Dear *Phoenix*,

On Wednesday, January 2, I was arrested at the Lockheed/Santa Cruz facility while attempting to talk with employees about the implications of the work going on there.

I entered a plea of "no contest" to a charge of trespass and I was sentenced to three days in jail. What follows is the text of a statement I made to the court prior to sentencing.

"On Christmas Eve I went to midnight Mass at a church in San Francisco, where I was visiting my family. We call Christ the Prince of Peace. The commemoration of his birth has always been a symbol of peace for us. But at the offertory, when the members of the congregation asked for prayers for special intentions, I was struck that no one expressed a concern about peace in

the world or about the arms race, which is surely the greatest threat to world peace that humankind has ever faced.

"I think part of the reason is that people are mesmerized by the power of the institutions which propel the arms race and they feel powerless to respond. Meanwhile, the superpowers continue to slide toward nuclear war.

"I left the Christmas service feeling a need to respond, a need which felt particularly appropriate because I have made an effort to inform myself about the arms race, because I have for some time been involved in educational and organizing work on the arms race, and because of some personal convictions.

"One conviction is the central value which I place on the pursuit of truth. Another is that we as individuals have both a right and a res-

ponsibility to act in the interest of the community, especially in relation to such a critical issue as the arms race. A third conviction is that the organized power of a people is stronger than any government or economic interest. The results of the protest of American people against the Vietnam War and, more recently, against nuclear power are good examples of that power.

"Finally, I am convinced that we get what we do, not what we want. If we continue to build more and more weapons, adding overkill upon overkill in senseless redundancy, we can expect that those weapons will be used. History has shown that the preparation for war inevitably leads to war.

"Harold Brown, Henry Kissinger, Stansfield Turner and others have acknowledged that the US continues to maintain a generally 5-7 year lead over the USSR in new weapons technology... SALT has done little more than legitimize the arms race

... the US has rejected several Soviet proposals to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons.

"I went up to Lockheed to ask the people there two questions: When and how will we stop? It seemed particularly timely to ask these questions at the beginning of the new year and the new decade... I tried to act in such a way that I might stimulate dialogue on this issue. I asked that we all put our best creative thoughts and energies toward resolving this problem.

"Although I don't know what the ultimate consequence of my small act will be, I am convinced that we will not have peace until we all, including everyone here today, begins to struggle for peace with some measure of the intensity with which, at present, we are so glibly, so automatically, so ominously preparing for war."

Sincerely,  
Philip McManus  
Santa Cruz