



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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The keynote address will be delivered by the Chairman of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board Mr. F.D. Snell, Dip.E.E., M.I.E. Aust, F.C.I.T. His public and private life have given him exposure to many facets of Victoria's Tramways and some of the problems which the progressional transport operators have in common with the Museum groups.

Frederick Dudley Snell (Dudley) was born in Eaglehawk in 1924 and was educated at Eaglehawk State School and later at the Bendigo School of Mines where he qualified as an electrical engineer. During his time in this area he saw the transfer of the local tramway operations from the private Electric Supply Company of Victoria Ltd. to the State Electricity Commission of Victoria as part of the States scheme to establish an integrated grid.

He joined the State Electricity Commission in Bendigo in 1940 and later completed a cadetship with that organisation before finally leaving the SEC in 1953. This period of his career was interrupted by war service with the R.A.A.F., spent mainly in the New Guinea area and it was shortly after, in 1948 that he married Joan Buckie. They subsequently had two daughters.

In 1953 Dudley joined the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board initially as an electrical engineer and subsequently in the position of Methods Engineer. His appointment as Chief Engineer occurred in 1969 and the following year he became Deputy Chairman of the Board.

His appointment as Chairman occurred in 1976 for a five year term and was subsequently re-appointed for a further term commencing in 1981.

LEARNING FROM THE PROFESSIONALS

by

F.D. Snell

It is often difficult to adapt the subject of an address to the title that is chosen for you by others.

I could be excused for responding to this title by saying that, in Transport, all of our passengers see themselves as the experts and the Transport Administrators as amateurs. This is probably true of most of the Public Utilities and - according to my friends in Industry - also applies to criticisms of Company activities at annual meetings.

We are moving to the position where every action by a public body is reviewed by the instant expert in the media in critical terms. It appears that good news is no longer acceptable because it does not sell papers or media advertising. It is hardly surprising that we professionals go home tired and despondent.

Perhaps the classic example of this is the "Z" class tram.

I need to take a different approach in discussing this subject before an audience comprised of many who know more of the history of trams and their types than I do - but you will all appreciate that we in Melbourne are operating trams that would be revered as museum pieces in most other places in the world.

The trams that we built in 1956 were built to 1935 or earlier technology. The motors in these trams are axle mounted low speed motors of the same general type as those fitted to 1920 vintage vehicles.

We did not learn from the PCC car that we imported in the 1940's - we even spoilt the one that we had by adapting the controls to simulate the old hand controllers that we had used for years - and did not prepare ourselves for the future.

When, in 1974, our pleas for new vehicles were finally accepted we were faced with the sort of technological gap that could be equated with moving from a "T" model Ford to the latest motor vehicle in one step.

I am not suggesting that the "Z" or the "Z3" are perfect - sure we made mistakes - but the criticism that has been levelled by the media is out of all proportion with the real complaints that we receive.

It is all very well to be nostalgic about the "W2" tram but who in their right minds would suggest that we should continue to operate wooden bodied vehicles with limited acceleration and braking capacity - without doors or safety measures for boarding and alighting - in today's traffic situation. This disregards the labour intensive maintenance procedures that are necessary and the virtual impossibility for introducing a modern fare system.

It is interesting to analyse the complaints that we receive. Almost inevitably they relate to the route on which the vehicles are most recently introduced or to visitors to town who do not understand the operating systems.

There are objections to the conductors sitting while passengers may need to stand. One complaint that we investigated indicated that the real basis of the complaint was the fact that a group of public servants had been using tickets - sold to their Authority - over and over again on the old trams but were forced to surrender them on the "Z" trams. Fare evasion on "Z" cars occurs at a level on 25% of the level on "W" class trams.

The "Z3" tram is significantly better on all counts than the "Z1" and "Z2" trams and most complaints are addressed to the "Z1" vehicles but both types are lumped together by the ill informed. There is still talk of Swedish trams when the body on all series is an Australian design and of course the "Z3" series have German components.

You did not come here today to hear about my troubles but I think that it is important that I get my real message across. Melbourne cannot get the high quality street transport system that it should have if we retain our outdated vehicles longer than is absolutely necessary. They are not capable of the high speed comfortable operation that is necessary to compete with other modes.

We have been frustrated for years in being unable to achieve separation from other traffic and priority at traffic signals. These features have been promised in the Government's Transport Policy and we must be able to take advantage of them by operating vehicles that have the performance to match the new operating requirements.

Beyond that there is the opportunity to enter into a true light rail mode by operating on new routes or possible lightly loaded routes now operating in the heavy rail mode. Articulated vehicles will handle the loading on many short routes.

Given new fare structures with automatic ticketing procedures there is the opportunity to increase productivity on the system so that more services will be available.

We cannot do that effectively with the old vehicles. This message is hard to get across while we retain this love of old trams.

I do not mean to criticise your interest in the rolling stock of the past but I believe we need to replace them with modern vehicles if the transport system is to prosper.

The U.I.T.P. Management Committee at its meeting in Stuttgart in 1977 decided that the International Metropolitan Railways Commission did not truly represent the interests of the light railway mode and set up an International Commission for Light Rail, to study the specific requirements of that mode. The working parties - mainly European - are already making progress with their recommendation and the Commission has presented papers at the Congresses in Helsinki and Dublin.

Light rail is more likely to be the answer to many of the transport problems of big cities than the off shoots of aerospace technology that are developed and promoted from time to time.

If you still want the advice of the professional after this digression of mine from the subject that you gave me, I have a few thoughts to pass on -

1. Do not treat your enterprise as a game - be deadly serious about it and treat it as a carefully controlled business. If you don't, it will not achieve your aims.
2. Think about your aims and document them so that you can refer to them because someone is sure to put interesting proposals to you. Make sure that - no matter how attractive the proposal is - it fits in with your organisation's objectives. If it doesn't, reject it or seriously debate whether the original aims were correct.
3. Make sure that any equipment that you operate is in full working condition. Don't take short cuts.
4. Be very specific about your acquisition list. Don't collect junk just because it is old - it probably was always junk - because the cost of storing and restoring junk will affect your capacity to accept the really valuable equipment that will become available over the next few years.
5. Have a collective opinion on transport matters but take care that the opinion is developed after careful consideration of the issues and that it is not just a nostalgic reaction to retain what exists.

Thank you for the invitation to speak. I hope that your Conference is the success that you deserve.