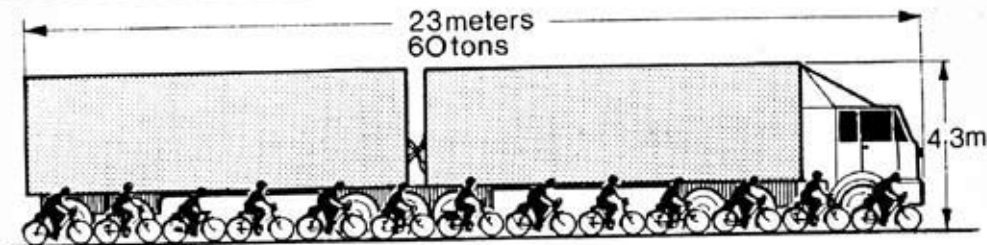


The World Awheel



Here come the road monsters

Just when you thought it was safe to venture out onto the roads state transport ministers have approved the latest generation of super truck - 'soon to a road near you'.

The monsters are known in the trucking trade as B-Doubles and make the northern Australian road trains look like an ordinary semi. The B-Doubles weigh 60 tonnes, carry almost twice as much as a normal semi trailer and are pulled along by a massive 400 horsepower prime mover.

The two trailer units are as long as 13 bicycles placed end to end and are even more dangerous to riders than the already massive trucks and trailers that regularly use our suburban and city streets. Motorists may have problems overtaking road trains but think what it would be like being overtaken by one of these speeding juggernauts.

As a general rule the larger the truck the more dangerous is its slipstream to cyclists. A big truck does not have to hit a rider; the wind gust is often powerful enough to send the rider careering out of control off the road or under its gigantic wheels.

No research has ever been done into the aerodynamic effects of such large vehicles on two wheelers. Both cyclists and motorcyclists have a legitimate complaint that their safety needs have been blatantly ignored. The so-called Expert Committee which conducted the review of road vehicle limits in 1985 failed to recommend the necessary research.

Unfortunately there are so few roads in Australian cities with adequate curbside width to allow the bigger trucks that a decision to approve them would be a blatant disregard of cyclists basic rights to use the road. At present the transport bureaucrats plan to restrict them to outer suburban roads and country areas allowing them into the suburban and inner city roads when public opinion has been softened up.

The hidden long term strategy behind the introduction of these monsters is an attack on the rail system's last bastion - bulk interstate freight. The truck indus-

try says that its new vehicles will be safer because there will be fewer needed to carry the existing load. However the economic rationalists supporting the move say that the most important thing in their favour is that they will improve productivity in the industry.

In other words it will enable the major freight companies to undercut the railways in their few remaining profitable areas and consequently we can expect more B-Doubles not less. Using the trucking industry's wonky logic that must make them less safe?

Perhaps the transport ministers should sell of the railways to TNT and Brambles as soon as possible. That way they can then drop this charade of greater productivity and let the private sector get into real operational efficiency with heavy rail. That way the taxpayer can be relieved of the burden of subsidising the damage caused to road system by bigger and bigger trucks.

There is an old saying that if the government can't control something then it will make money from it. Governments will benefit in the short term from increased road taxes on larger trucks so it's better for them to make a buck quickly that way because they can't make money the way they currently run their railways.

Alan Parker



Melbourne to Sydney Penny Farthing Ride

In November 1888 George Burston and H R Stokes set out from Melbourne on their penny farthing bicycles heading for Sydney on the first leg of what was to be one of the first world bike rides. On the way up through Albury, Cootamundra,

Cowra and Bathurst they encountered bush fires, drought and vast herds of cattle.

Now a century later a group of vintage cycle enthusiasts from Melbourne are planning a re-enactment ride along the route taken by the intrepid pair. The Burston and Stokes Centenary Ride is being organised by Bicycle Victoria in conjunction with the Vintage cycle Club of Victoria and will leave Melbourne on October 29 arriving in Sydney on November 12.

Several vintage cycle collectors are loaning a number of their precious machines to willing and experienced high wheel riders to ensure a large travelling group. Coles Catering will accompany the riders and supporters and provide meals along the way working out of a restored vintage truck.

Entries close on Monday September 19 so hurry, especially if you want to ride one of the vintage bikes on loan.

Contact the organiser Charlie Farrer at Bicycle Victoria (03) 650 2550. Entry forms can be obtained from Bicycle Victoria PO Box 1961R Melbourne VIC 3001. If you live in Melbourne you can obtain entry forms from the Bicycle Victoria office, Shop 15 (behind the fountain wall), City Square.

Perth to Sydney record attempt

Graham Woodrup, well known Victorian marathon cyclist, will attempt the gruelling Perth to Sydney Intercapital record in August this year. 'Woody' hopes to break the present record of 11 days 29 minutes for the 4354 km journey. The present record holder is Kevin Hunt who set the record in 1974.

Woodrup will leave Perth on the 20th and hopes to average 45 km per day on the long haul across the Nullarbor. His attempt via Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra will be supported by an enthusiastic team of 12 volunteers including bike mechanic, first aid officer, cooks, drivers and time keepers as well as two publicity people to deal with the media.

Capitano Honey is to be the major sponsor and local seafood exporter