

Tales

of

RAILWAY

MEN'S

Chivalry

*Tales of
Railway Men's
Chivalry*

Published by **S. B. Lahiri**
Printed by **Sailen Ghosh**

Publisher's Preface

The title of the Book indicates the struggles and sacrifices of Railwaymen all over the country. It is basically the personal memoirs of writers who were obviously involved in Trade Union movement of Indian Railwaymen. It lays no claim to be a history. What I have tried to do is to portray the various aspects of their personal experience in the Trade Union Movement. There has been no attempt to alter the opinions and views expressed by the writers (although we differ in some places) as this appears to be a well equipped measure to provide for divergent points of view. A thorough and comprehensive analysis of the issues raised are based on the personal knowledge and evidence that will ensure the authors of history to conclusions which are reflective of interests of people devoted to find a true picture of working conditions and struggles of Indian Railwaymen from the early days of construction of Railroad in India.

Many incidents mentioned in their writings are hitherto unknown to many and they highlight not only the administrative inaptitude even in the post-independent era but also indicate the reasons for discontent among Railwaymen. It will be evident from the Book that the Indian Railwaymen have a long and proud tradition as well as rich experience of meeting the challenge of a greater movement in the country as capitalism co-exists with feudalism. There is a persistent demand of the prevailing situation for a fundamental socio-economic changes. A determined struggle is necessary under the leadership of the working class. There has been a continuous move on the part of vested interests, corrupt bureaucracy and dishonest politicians to create confusion among the toiling millions of the country. Some misguided elements are always trying to weaken the unity and integrity of the country, which can only be maintained through the united efforts of the working class.

It is time now for the workers in all Industries of Public and Private sector to shake off the dictates of the political parties and forge unity above anything else to make a final bid to fulfil the ultimate object of socio-economic changes. They must take a pledge to work for the realisation of the cherished dream.

In addition to the Names of departed ones, mentioned in Chapter IV, I further add names of M.M. Basu, H.D. Bagchi and B.P. Roychowdhury who have left us also.

I cannot but express my sincere thanks to Ram Chakravarty who has borne all the expenses in connection with publication of the Book.

We do hope that this publication will receive from the members of the working class and the Trade Union organisations the welcome it deserves.

August 15, 1993

S. B. Lahiri

Foreword

I had a keen desire to write the history of Trade Union Movement in Railways particularly in the Eastern Region of the country. P.C. Dasgupta once made an attempt in 1949 to write the history of All India Railwaymen's Federation but could not succeed due to various factors. Sibnath Banerjee made an attempt and jotted down the outline but could not complete. Paritosh Banerjee started writing the history of Unions on Eastern Railway but could not progress. I wanted to devote myself to the job after retirement from the Railway service but could not do so as after retirement I had to go to Canada on immigration to live with my children. The idea was still there and it disturbed me whenever I used to come to India on a visit and look to my records in Calcutta house. In the meanwhile the first volume of A.I.R.F. history — Origin and Growth of All India Railwaymen's Federation — was available at the end of 1982. The second volume was published by end of 1985. The said book is more or less a factual statement of events and 'It is up to the Historians to work on the materials provided'. Both R. Subramaniam compiler of the Book and J.P. Chaubey, publisher deserve to be congratulated for their efforts. After seeing the book I abandoned the idea of writing a history. On a reading of the book I however felt that I have many more tales to tell hitherto untold particularly of Railway Trade Union movement in Eastern Region and instead of attempting to write a history I should confine myself in writing my MEMOIRS which in future might serve as material for history. It also occurred to me simultaneously that others who had been my colleagues in the Railway Trade Union movement, either in favour or in opposition to me and grown old, might have their own story to tell. On a suggestion from my old and esteemed friend T.V. Anandam, I preferred not to confine the tales up to the Eastern Region alone but to all India. Accordingly I issued letters of requests to all of my colleagues in 9 Zonal Railways including Umraomal Purohit, J.P. Chaubey, Seshu Bhadrani Rao, T.V. Anandam etc. and left for Canada entrusting the job of following up to S.R. Mohan and Nanigopal Chakravarty Ex-Joint General Secretary and Ex-Assistant General Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. Subsequently this job was voluntarily undertaken by a veteran Railway Trade Unionist, Sailendra Nath Ghosh commonly known as Sailen Ghosh of 2-B, Biswakosh Lane, Calcutta-3 with missionary zeal. The publication of this book would not have been possible but for the untiring efforts of Sailen Ghosh who maintained the stupendous but thankless task of co-ordination with scores of past and present Trade Union leaders of Railwaymen throughout the country during the last three years. Added to this is the active service of Sankar Lal Mukherjee ex Secretary, of Calcutta Branch of the E.I. Railway Employees Union which deserves praise and hearty thanks. I am also thankful to Purnendu Basu, S.K. Das, S.B. Lahiri, P.K. Sengupta (S.E. Rly) and a few others who helped in making the progress.

I am sorry to say that inspite of repeated requests I have not been able to get response from about a dozen of my colleagues & friends of A.I.R.F. Unions and as such there has been no write ups from Trade Unionists of certain Zonal Railways. The book in that sense is not complete to my satisfaction. I agree with the publisher that no useful purpose would be served by waiting for these write-ups thereby delaying the printing further. I regret very much the death of veteran Trade Union leaders like P.K. Dasgupta, S.K. Mukherjee and Paritosh Banerjee who could not complete their memoirs.

The book — Tales of Railwaymen's Chivalry — is not intended for sale. Nor it is intended for indiscriminate distribution. It is certainly intended for the past and present Trade Unionist who want to have knowledge or do research work.

I express my sincere thanks to those who have contributed their write ups and those including Sailen Ghosh and S.B. Lahiri responsible in bringing out the publication in my absence.

I dedicate this book to the loving memory of P.C. Dasgupta, greatest of the home-born railwaymen Trade Unionists in service, truly independent and free from influence of political parties, Government and Railway Administration.

Canada

R.C. Chakravarty

April 14, 1993

COMPLIMENTARY COPY

With Compliments to

Sri Amaldar Singh

General Secretary / A.R.M.S

Dadar

Rechabram

14. 4. 93
(R. C. CHAKRAVARTY)

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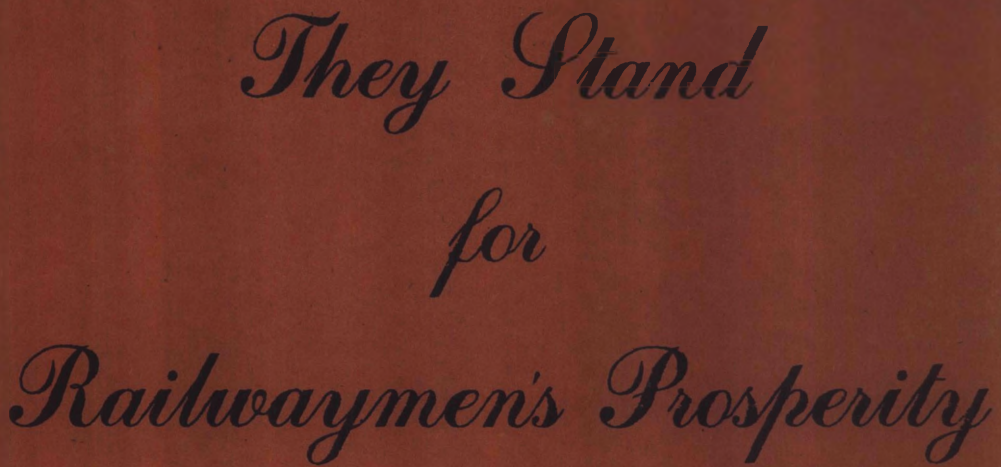
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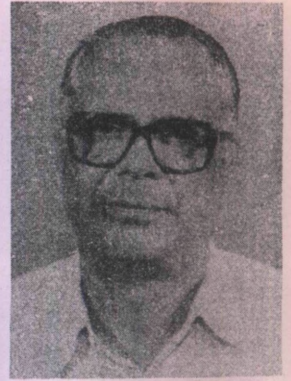
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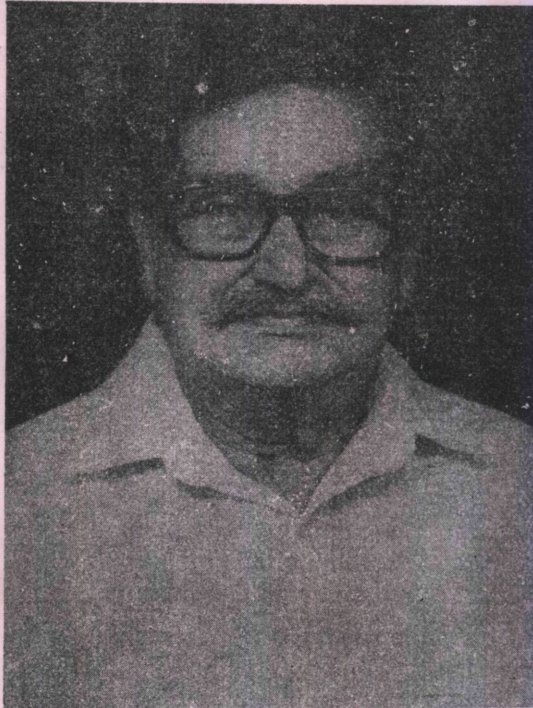
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for
Railwaymen's Prosperity*



K. M. Bhadra



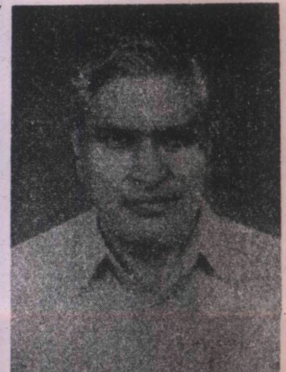
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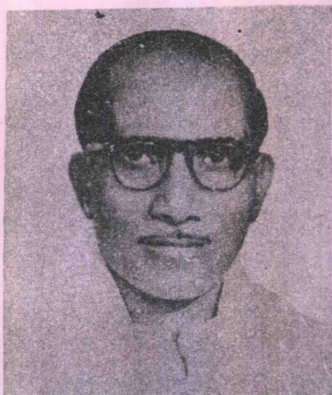
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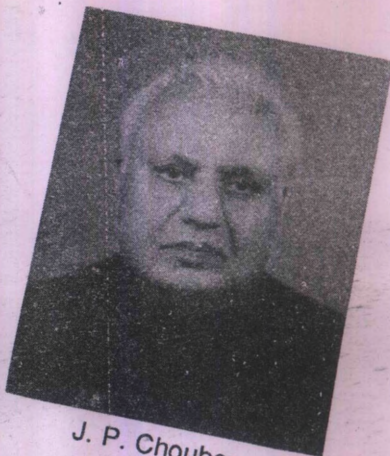
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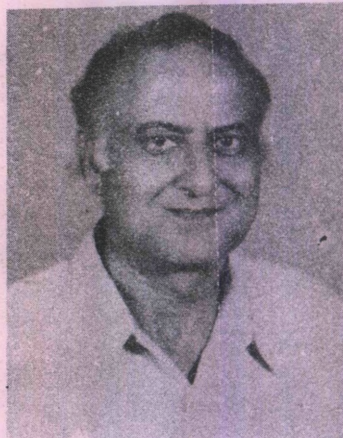
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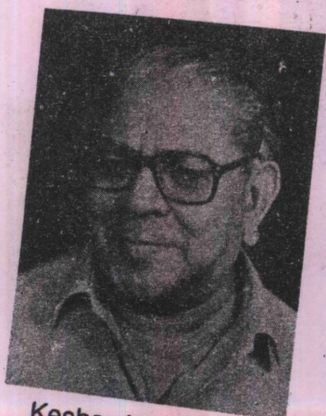
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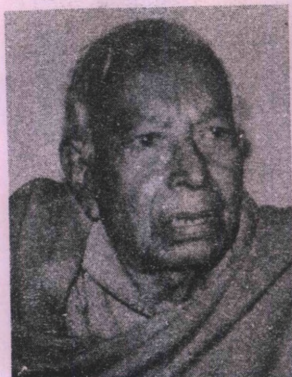
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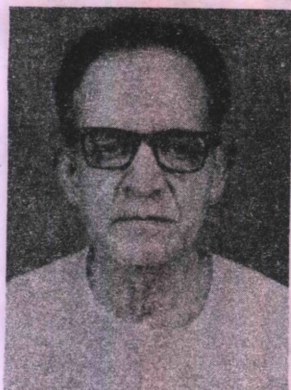


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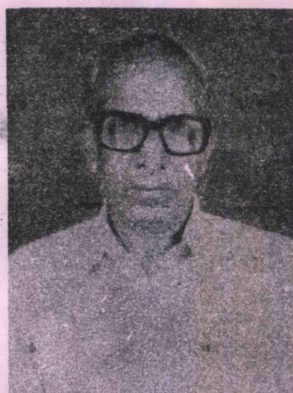
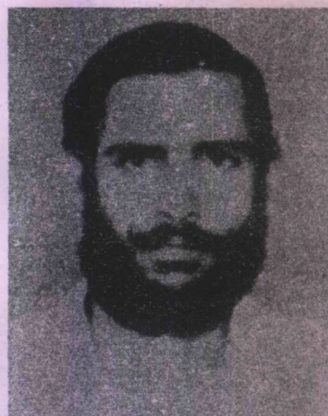
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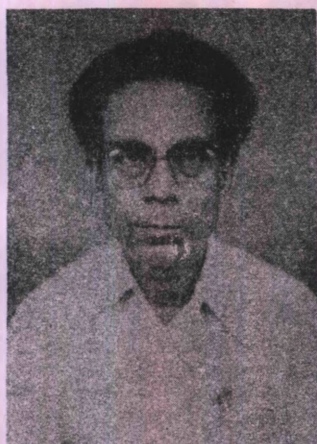


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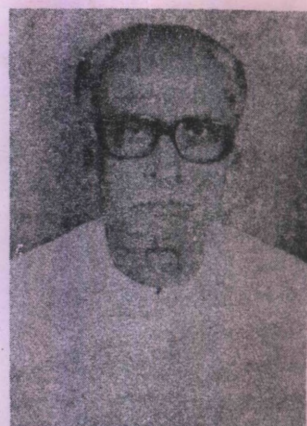
S. Subramoniyam



S. K. Das



Rambalak Singh



Sailen Ghosh

A Struggle to Live with Courage, Dignity and Pride

R. C. Chakravarty

(R. C. Chakravarty commonly known as Ram Chakravarty born in July 1918 in the Village Joari in Natore Sub-division of the District Rajsahi of undivided Bengal, migrated to Varanasi with his father Sarat Chandra Chakravarty in 1924. He received his early education in Varanasi, Sitamau (native state in Malwa) and Salar (in the District of Murshidabad). He passed the B. A. Examination of the University of Calcutta in 1940.

On joining the Railway service in January 1942 he became a member of the E. I. Rly Employees' Association, the first day of his service. Earlier he was a member of the National Congress and Forward Block and had suffered a short imprisonment by striking a hammer on the Hotwell Monument. A great admirer of the preindependent revolutionary leaders he had come in close contact with Sachin Sanyal, Jogesh Chatterjee, Chandra Sekhar Azad, Satya Bakshi, Sibnath Banerjee etc. Amongst the preindependent leaders of the National Congress he was personally known to Sriprakash, Sampurnanand, C. B. Gupta, Govindh Ballabh Pant, Lal Bahadur Sastri, Kamalapati Tripathi, Purushottam Das Tandon, Sarat Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev and many others.

Ever-since his entry in the Trade Union field he had tried to build an independent trade union on the Railways free from the influence of political parties or the Central Trade Union bodies controlled by the political parties and the Government.

He waged a battle life long in service to this end and that was, perhaps the main reason for his final exit from the Trade Union field after nearly 25 years. He had brought to himself some people as his associates who finally pulled the carpet from under his feet with the connivence of some hardened bureaucratic officials. His indomitable courage, determination and ability to face the challenge against all odds had yielded very good results to the Railwaymen. He was a terror to the bureaucrats.

He was the General Secretary of Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Treasurer of All India Railwaymen's Federation. He was connected with the AIRF in all important matters and was a member of many Committees and delegation of Railwaymen.

He visited China & U.S.S.R. on the invitation of Railwaymen's organisations of those Countries. The gallant struggle of Railwaymen on the Eastern Railway in 1960 is a demonstration of his great leadership. Over-whelming majority on the Eastern Railway continued the struggle for 5 days when the strike had not either taken place or fizzled out on the very first day on most of the other Railways. On the Eastern Railway the movement of traffic came to a grinding halt. He was arrested just before the commencement of the strike in the night of 11th July, 1960.

A large number of Railwaymen and officials were his admirers for his sacrifice, sincerity of purpose, determination and ability to look to things in a proper perspective. He struggled to live with conviction, courage, dignity and pride.

After retirement from service in 1978 he lives in Canada with his children. Ram Chakravarty is still now a legendary name amongst the Indian Railway Trade Union Workers.)

I was appointed in the East Indian Railway as a clerk in the office of Chief operating superintendent, Calcutta on the 17th January 1942. I got two appointments earlier, — One in B & A Railway, Sealdah Division as a Guard and the other in E. I. Railway Asansol Division as a Ticket Collector in 1941. As I was suffering from asthma in those days, I declined both the jobs on health grounds.

On the first day of my service after about three hours one tall fair looking gentleman came to my seat and introduced himself as Sudhir Kumar Mukherjee and wanted to know if I would like to be a member of E. I. R. Employees' Association. I had practically no idea of Railway trade unions. I was however, associated with the Indian National Congress and Forward Block. I was a member of the Forward Block and served as a volunteer in Varanasi and Calcutta, and in course of time suffered a short imprisonment by striking a hammer on the Holwell Monument in Dalhouse Sqr, Calcutta. I was an admirer of revolutionaries of Kakori, Meerut and Chittagong etc. The great revolutionary of Kakori conspiracy Sachin Sanyal was well known to me personally as both of us belonged to the same district of Rajshahi and later lived in Varanasi. I had heard the name of Sibnath Banerjee of Meerut conspiracy case who had an union on the Railway. I wanted to know from Sudhir Mukherjee if it was the same union of which Sibnath Banerjee was the leader. The reply was

in the negative. He further told me that Sibnath Banerjee belonged to the Congress Socialist Party and his union was a political one and was confined to the Lillooah Workshop only. He mentioned that the E. I. R. Employees' Association was a non-political, independent and free trade Union and that there was practically no existence of E. I. Railwaymen's union in Head Office. His statement was confirmed by Bibhuti Bhusan Bhattacharya and Benoy Kumar Guha Thakurta who happened to be near me at that time. Benoy Kumar Guha Thakurta told me further that if I wanted to become a member of Sibnath Banerjee's Union because of its militancy, the non militant pro-government organisation E. I. Rly Employees' Association would still be there. He pleaded that I should join the Association and try to bring militancy and national urge, and work for a change in its policy if I wanted it. I signed the pledge form.

Early history of trade union movement on the E. I. Rly.

In those days Jamnadas Mehta Bar-at-Law, a member of the Servants of India Society and a moderate was the President of the E. I. Rly Employees' Association. Prof. A. N. Mallik (son of D. N. Mallik, Rangler of the Calcutta University) was the Working President, A. M. Williams was the General Secretary, P. N. Sengupta was the Joint General Secretary and Sudhir kumar Mukherjee who enrolled me, was

the Treasurer. In addition P. K. Munshi, N. B. Sen and M. D. Dube were Vice-Presidents. In course of the Second World War when Japan joined the war, there was a constant threat of bombing in Calcutta. The Great Revolutionary leader Subhas Chandra Bose having fled India was inspiring Indians by his fiery speeches that were being broadcast from Germany and later from Japan. The British Government was scared and panicky. Several offices owned by British Companies were shifted from Calcutta to safer zones. Even govt. Offices including the Railways were also shifted. Our office along with some others were shifted to Lucknow with effect from April 1942. This shifting brought me in the field of active participation in the Trade Union movement and the E. I. R. Employees' Association. I had ample time in Lucknow to enrol membership and in no time we established a Branch of the Association there. In 1942 ours was the only branch of the Association in the upper divisions of the E. I. Rly Viz. Lucknow, Moradabad and Allahabad. In this task I got help from another office colleague P. K. Dasgupta, an ardent follower of the Communist Party that supported the Allied Forces in the war which they called as "Peoples War".

Lucknow had two big workshops — one in Charbagh (Locomotive) and the other at Alambagh (Carriage & Wagon) and two chargemen S. K. Rana and P. N. Dutta were the leaders of the workers. Lucknow was the Headquarters of E. I. Rlymen's Union. B. K. Mukherjee was the General Secretary with Qazi M. A. Kazmi, Advocate Allahabad as President and P. S. Tandon as Asst. Secy. As a matter of fact the E. I. Rlymen's Union

had influence on the workers of Lilloah, Jamalpur and Lucknow Workshops under the leadership of Sibnath Banerjee, Nirapada Mukherjee — vice-President and Benoy Kumar Mukherjee — General Secretary respectively. The E. I. Rly Employees' Association had a limited membership amongst clerical staff of Commercial, Mechanical, Engineering and Transportation Branches of Head Office, Howrah and Asansol Divisional offices. Most of the Railwaymen on the East Indian Railway were unorganised and many had adverse feeling about trade unions and were reluctant to become members. Sometimes in April 1942 I came in contact with B. K. Mukherjee, P. S. Tandon, S. K. Rana, P. N. Dutta of E. I. Rlymen's Union and was much impressed with their national outlook. B. K. Mukherjee whispered into my ear that the goal of Trade Union movement on the Railways should be to help the Indian National Congress achieve freedom for the country. Benoy Kumar Mukherjee, Thakurta, my colleague in the office, whom I could discover at a much later date to be associated with Yugantar Revolutionary Party, was deadly against the Communist Party which was spreading fast its influence amongst the younger generation. He was a constant watch-dog over me so that I did not join with them. I started my trade union career with an ardent communist P. K. Dasgupta as my partner and Benoy Kumar Thakurta a staunch nationalist as my watchdog over me. I had suffered a mental conflict in those days and I was almost inclined to join the Communist Party of India. My conflict was over when they started vilification of my beloved leader Subhas Chandra Bose.

called him quisling and a Japanese agent, called Indian National Army as fifth column and so on and so forth. Their technique of propaganda was so nice and appeared to be so convincing that many a known lie against Subhas Chandra Bose would appear as true. I developed a terrible dislike for the Communists and their activities. I never believed in Communism or Marxism from my student life and I started disliking the manner of their application. P. K. Dasgupta a dedicated Communist who subsequently sacrificed his Railway career and job for the party, was my best friend in my early Trade Union life and since then I had very many communist friends and colleagues, some of whom were very good trade union workers. In most cases our relations had been fairly good although we differed.

Pre-Independence political situation and Railwaymen

On 9th August 1942 the National Congress under leadership of Gandhiji passed the resolution asking British to quit India. Earlier the Congress was considerably soft towards the British in their war efforts. The impact of Springing tiger (as the British used to call him) Subhas Chandra Bose's speeches from abroad calling the Nation to strike when the iron was hot, was so great and irresistible that Gandhiji in accordance with the National sentiment took the blodest stand of his life on 9th August 1942. Gandhiji and all other top leaders of the Congress excepting a very few like Raja Gopalachari were arrested and kept in confinement in Aga Khan Palace. Leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali and others evaded arrest and went underground. They and the second rank

leaders inspired thousands of Congress workers and common people to destabilise the Government and disrupt the war efforts of the British. Railways and the Post & Telegraph were the main targets. Lucknow University students pulled out all the electrical and telegraph posts in hazratganj area where the Railway offices were located. They were chased by the police who fired several rounds. Some took shelter in the Railway offices and were severely beaten before our eyes. Part of Bengal, entire Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh were affected and there were great damages to Railway lines, electrical and P & T posts and some other properties. The movement was ruthlessly suppressed and the damages were repaired within a short period. punitive taxes were imposed adding misery to the common people.

B. K. Mukherjee was arrested and the office of the E. I. Railwaymen's Union was sealed by the Police. Trade Union leaders like Harihar Nath Shastri, Raj Ram Shastri and others were also arrested.

M. N. Roy had formed a new Radical Democratic Party and its Labour wing was known as Indian Federation of Labour. They supported the war efforts of the British like the Communist Party of India. His theory of Neohumanism had a great influence on the intellectual section of the country and also on our General Secretary A. M. Williams, Joint General Secretary P. N. Sengupta and scores of others on the East Indian Railway, V. B. Karnik, Maniben Kara, G. B. Sultee on B. B. C. I. Railway, G. H. Kale and others on G. I. P. Railway. Jambhadr Mehta joined the Indian Federation of Labour as its President. At his desire both E. I. Railway employees' Association and B. B. & C. I.

Rly Employees' Union of which Jmnadas was President, were subsequently affiliated to the Indian Federation of Labour. The Central Council of E. I. Rly. Employees' Association in its meeting held at Asansol in April 1944 took the decision to affiliate with the Indian Federation of Labour. Due to difference of opinion with M. N. Roy, Jmnadas Mehta subsequently resigned from the presidentship of Indian Federation of Labour. The decision to disaffiliate was taken at the Annual General meeting held at Moghalsarai in November 1944. There was a whispering campaign for disaffiliation by the Communists but nobody was prepared to move the disaffiliation resolution for fear of Police harrassment. Ultimately I moved the resolution which was seconded by P. K. Dasgupta. For moving of this resolution I was in the surveillance of the Police Intelligence and my activities were watched by them till Independence of the Country.

The Central Council meeting of the Association held at Rampurhat sometimes immediately after 'Quit India' resolution of the National congress called upon the Railwaymen to 'Stay to the Post' and support the war efforts of the British Government. The executive Committee of the Association started a relentless campaign for 'stay to the post' and for enrolment to Defence of India Corps (Railway Unit) which was voluntary. Cheap grain shop facilities for Railway employees and their families were set up which was a great allurements for Railway service. The hope to link Railwaymen's struggle with the struggle for freedom of the country was lost for the time being. Thus the greater cause of the country was over looked.

The leaders of the Association could convince the Railway Administration to issue a few Card Passes, — two of which were in favour of 'One representative of the E. I. R. Employees' Association', available over the East Indian Railway for successfully conducting the 'stay to the post' campaign amongst the Railwaymen. As the Association had no Branch beyond Moghalsarai, the Lucknow Branch established by us was the only Branch in Allahabad, Lucknow and Moradabad Divisions in those days. The Central leadership entrusted me with the task of organising Branches of the Association in three upper divisions for which a Card Pass was given to me. The field was vast and there was no rival Railwaymen's union was generally confined to the Workshops, Loco Sheds at Lucknow. The difficulty was railwaymen themselves there was a fear complex amongst some of them and general reluctance to the members of the Union. The Association had a pledge form for membership and on the reverse side of the pledge form the Association had printed Agent (General Manager) letter signifying that the Railway Administration had no objection if Railwaymen becoming members of the Association. My task was to convince the senior subordinate to become a member, most of the would follow them. But if I could not convince a senior subordinate I could not get a single member in that department.

The constitution of the Association permitted non-railwaymen to be members of the President and Working Committee only. Rest of the office bearers were

Central Council could be only Railwaymen in service. Branch Council had no non-railwaymen in office. We firmly believed in Workers' leadership and our slogan was One for all and all for one. In subsequent years I had to face terrible odds and hostility from the political elements due to this conviction and had to pay a heavy price.

Between September 1942 and December 1945 I had visited several times all important stations of Lucknow, Allahabad and Moradabad Divisions of E. I. Rly and could organise Branches of the Association at Benaras, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Tundla, Hathras, Rosa, Bareilly, Moradabad, Nazibabad, Laksar and Dehra Dun in addition to Lucknow. I could enrol active members and workers like S. R. Mitra, Batuk Battacharya, Mandhata Prasad Varma, H. K. Sharma of Benaras, M. A. Ansari, Lalit Mohan, L. N. Johuree of Allahabad, Ved Prakash, B. N. Singh, S. B. Agnihotri, S. P. Gupta and T. N. Sinha of Cawanpore, Dilsukh of Hathras, S. D. Saxena of Rosa, N. K. Srivastava of Barielly, Chitteswar Chatterjee, Kanan Mukherjee, Bireswar Chkaravoroty, Shiv Shankar Agarwal, Gouri Shankar Agarwal, Omprakash Baghi, H. M. Hemdani of Moradabad, L. Prakash, Guard of Dehra Doon, S. L. Bharadwaj of Nazibabad, S. C. Tewari of Laksar, and P. K. Bose of Lucknow and scores of others whose names I do not remember at this stage. All of them subsequently became prominent figures in the Railway Trade Union movement and were established leaders in their respective areas. After cessation of World War II and stay in Lucknow for about four years, our office was shifted back to Calcutta and I came to Calcutta at the end

of December 1945 leaving the entire burden on the shoulder of P. K. Bose, a brilliant organiser.

During this period one Bireswar kanjilal, a Parcel Delivery Clerk, Patna Jn. organised the Branches of the Association in Danapur Division from Jhajha to Moghalsarai.

It may be mentioned that although I was the sole organiser of the Association in upper Divisions of E. I. R. I was not holding any office in the Association of Lucknow Branch because A.M. Williams, the then General Secretary did not trust me. At one stage he suspended me on the allegation that I was an agent of E.I.Rlymen's Union due to my close connection with B.K.Mukherjee. Williams had to face a lot of hostility and criticism from the Executive Committee and the suspension was withdrawn. In those days I was carrying a letter signed by the Joint General Secretary P.N.Sengupta appointing me as an Hony. Organiser of E.I.Rly Employees' Association. I was elected straight as Joint General Secretary of the Association sometimes in 1945 after S.R.Mitra who was holding the office, became a victim of Tuberculosis and resigned.

Amongst many of my bitter experiences and sufferings during my activity in Allahabad Lucknow and Moradabad Divisions I could never forget one incident. Sometimes at the end of 1942 I went to Rosa with the object of organising the Railwaymen. I was checked out of Loco shed by the Loco Foreman. I was not allowed to enter the waiting room. There was no waiting room and I had to wait on the open platform for the train in the Severe winter. When I realised

Lucknow in the morning I had a temperature of 104° and was practically unconscious. One Porter (perhaps of C&W Deptt) out of pity took me to the Railway Dispensary at Charbagh where the Asstt. Surgeon Dr. Chowdhury could recognise me and hospitalised me. After suffering for about two weeks I could recover. I searched for the Porter but I could not get him. I am indebted to him for my life. I did not get any opportunity to repay my debt which I am still carrying with gratitude. This porter a menial staff as the British used to call them, created such an impression on me that I for the rest of my life considered the welfare of Class IV staff as uppermost.

In those days the All India Railwaymen's Federation instead of Annual, used to have Biennial convention in which office bearers were elected. On almost all the Railways there existed two parallel unions affiliated to the Federation and recognised by the Railway administration. On the (1) East Indian Railway there were (i) E.I. Railwaymen's Union and (ii) E.I. Railway Employees' Association. On the (2) Bengal & Assam Railway: (i) B. & A. Railway Employees' Association and (ii) B & A Rail Road Workers' Union; On the (3) Bengal Nagpur Railway - (i) B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union (ii) B.N. Railway Employees' Union; On the (4) North Western Railway (i) N.W. Railway Employees' Union, Karachi (ii) N.W. Railway Registered and Recognised Union, Lahore. and (iii) N.W. Railway Accounts Staff Union; On the (5) Great Indian Peninsular Railway (i) G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union and (ii) G.I.P. Railway Accounts Staff Union; On the (6) Bombay Baroda and Central Indian Railway (i) B.B. & C.I. Railwaymen's Union

and (ii) B.B. & C.I. Railway Employees' Union; On the (7) Oudh and Trihut Railway (Bengal North Western & Rohilkhand Kumaun Railways)—O & T Railwaymen's Union; On the (8) Madras and South Marhatta Railway (i) M & S.M. Railway Employees' Union; On the (9) South Indian Railway (i) S.I. Railway Labour Union, Golden Rock and (ii) S.I. Railway Employees' Association.

In addition to the above there were Unions in the Princely states (Native State) Railways affiliated to AIRF important amongst them were (i) H.E.H. Nizam State Railway Employees' Union (ii) Mysore State Railway Employees' Association (iii) Gaiikwar Baroda State Railwaymen's Union. (iv) Scindhia Gwalior State Railwaymen's Union (v) Jodhpur Railway Labour Union (vi) Jodhpur Railwaymen's Union (vii) Mewar State Railway Employees' Union (viii) Bikaner state Railway Employees' Union (ix) Jaipur State Railwaymen's Union etc.

Two Port Trust Unions viz. Madras Port Trust Railwaymen's Union and Bombay Port Trust Railwaymen's Union, and a good number of Light Railway Workers' Union like, Martin Company Railwaymen's Union, at Howrah, Baktiyarpur, Saharanpur, Arrah etc., S.S. Light Light Railway Employees' Union, Barsi Light Railwaymen's Union, Katwa and Ahmadpur-Katwa Light Railway Workers' Union, Kallighat Railwaymen's Union, Himalayan Railway Mazdoor Union, were also affiliated to the Federation.

After Jayprakash Narayan became President of the Federation in 1946, he initiated merger of the parallel unions and in the process, one union of each

railway was a distinct step forward to the unity of the workers on the Railways. For the first time in my life I attended the Biennial convention of the Federation held at Jamalpur on 14-16 August 1943. The Annual General meeting of our Association was also held simultaneously at Jamalpur. The A.I.R.F. convention was a hectic one- Communist block was opposed to Jamnadas Mehta. There I saw Julmi Ram of GIP Rly, D.S.Vaidya of B.B. & C.I. Rly, Kalyan Sundaram of S.I.Rly, Mallikarjuna Rao of Nizam State Railway and heard their fiery speeches. I also saw V.B. Karnik, G.H. Kale, Abdul Razak, Mirza Ibrahim, M.A. Khan of N.W.R., and Rajani Mukherjee etc. I do not know why, the speech of Kalyan Sundaram impressed me much. In subsequent years I found that Jayaprakash Narayan was an admirer of Kalyan Sundaram. Our Association and E.I.Rlymen's Union, B.A.Railway Employees' Association under able leadership of R.N. Bagchi and B.B. & C.I. Railway Employees' Union were solidly behind Jamnadas Mehta and were opposed to Communist block. In the convention Jamnadas and S.Guruswami were reelected as President and General Secretary.

Jamnadas Mehta resigned from the Presidentship of the Federation when he became High Commissioner for Burma and the resignation was accepted in the General Council meeting of A.I.R.F. held at Moghalsarai on 24th, 25th & 26th November 1944. The said General Council elected S.C.Joshi as President in Mehta's place. But S.C.Joshi became chief Labour Commissioner subsequently and he resigned within six months of his Presidentship. V.V.Giri was then elected President in absentia, which he did not

accept for a long time till guruswami and others prevailed upon him to do so for short period.

With the resignation of Jamnadas Mehta from the All India Railwaymen's Federation a chapter was closed. During this notable period founder President Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad (17.2.1925 - 18.12.1928), N.M.Joshi (1912.1928 - 30.9.1930) and I.B.Sen (1.10.1930-15.3.1931) were at the helm of affairs of A.I.R.F. Jamnadas was President from 16.3.1931 to 24.11.1944 the longest period in the history of A.I.R.F. The founder General Secretary of the Federation was Mukundadas Sarkar from 16.2.1925 to 25.11.1927, then V.V.Giri from 26.11.1927 to 4.7.1937 and thereafter S. Guruswami who took over from V.V.Giri on 5.7.1937 and continued upto 14.8.1957.

In this General Council meeting of A.I.R.F. held at Moghalsarai on 24th, 25th & 26th November, 1944, Jyoti Basu, who was Minister of West Bengal was elected for the first time. We learnt that after he had become Bar-at-law, he joined the Communist Party of India on his return from U.K. and was the President of Bengal-Duars Railroad Workers Union (subsequently B.A. Railroad Workers Union).

Jyoti Basu joined the Bengal-Duars Rail Road Workers Union as the Joint General Secretary of which B.N. Das Gupta was the General Secretary. B.N. Das Gupta was the younger brother of J.N. Gupta founder of both the E.B.Railway and E. I. Railway Employees' Association.

Along with the General Council meeting of AIRF the Annual General Meeting of the E.I.Rly. Employees' Association was also held at Moghalsarai

in which Jamnadas Mehta was relected President of the Association, although he resigned from the A.I.R.F. Prof. A.N.Mallik was also elected Working President in absentia.

The A.I.R.F. General Council meeting at Moghalsarai Formulated some demands of Railwaymen including revision of Pay Scales and Working hours and periodical rest etc. The AIRF General Council again met at Secundrabad in April 1945 and reiterated the demands made at Moghalsarai.

The E.I.Rly had a Printing Press at Fairlie Place, Calcutta with a wing at Howrah. There was a Branch also at Lucknow. Some times in the later half of 1945 and before the end of World War there was a strike in the Press and as a settlement of the strike, N.C. Ghosh, General Manager recognised their newly formed union-Railway Press Workers' Union. N.C. Ghosh was the second Indian General manager, first being L.P.Misra who was General Manager of B & A Railway.

The Second World War came to an end on September 15, 1945. Prof. A.N.Mallik who was on War Service and was on leave from the Association during the period came back in November 1945 and took over the charge as Working President of the Association. I met him in early January 1946 after I came to Calcutta on the shifting back of the office from Lucknow. Prof. Mallik had heard a lot about me and praised me for my organising capacity. He took me by his side and whispered into my ears "keep your powder dry Ram, keep your powder dry". It worked with me.

S.R.Mitra was also transferred from Beneras to Calcutta. A young Grade I

direct recruit Guard - Pratul Chandra Dasgupta - who was previously Professor of Burdwan Raj college was taking interest in union activities. He joined with us and we could form a team to get off to a good start.

With the end of war the Railway Board declared that 2,50,000 Railway Workers would be rendered surplus as there was no work for them. This created a terrible discontentment amongst the Railwaymen. Bengal Assam Railway and East Indian Railway were affected the most. The Association suggested various ways and means to the A.I.R.F. to avert this crisis. AIRF in its Madras General Council Meeting held on 2 - 3 Oct., 1945 with V.V. Giri in the Chair formulated 16 point demands and placed the same before the Railway Board. The AIRF had suggested ways and means for more employment to avert the threatened retrenchment.

The Defence of India Corp was disbanded in December 1945 causing drop of income of Railwaymen serving in Bengal and Assam area. Prices were soaring high and all sections of Railwaymen were economically affected. The British Government saw it wise to continue the Grainshop facilities all they left India in august 1947.

A National upsurge was noticed during the period - early in 1946 the Naval Mutiny and Trial of Indian National Army of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Red Fort sparked off a new wave of movement. No body believed that Netaji died in a Plane crash and everybody was expecting his appearance in India's political scene. All leaders of the Indian National Congress detained in Aga Khan Place after 'Quit India' resolution, were

released. Independence seemed to be imminent. Muslim league and Jinnah were considered as stumbling block to Independence. Gandhiji was engaged in pleasing Jinnah to get his cooperation and consent to Independence. People in general did not like the appeasement policy of Gandhiji. The communal tension was on the increase.

The General Council of the Federation met at New Delhi on 11th to 13th February 1946 and decided to take a strike Ballot on the demands, which was to be completed by 1st March 1946. The said General Council, to the great joy of thousands of Railwaymen, protested against the conditional release of I. N. A. undertrials and demanded for their unconditional release. We on the East Indian Railway took the strike Ballot with great enthusiasm and the ballot was strictly secret. The result reflected the general opinion of the Railwaymen — 97% in favour. There was a controversy in the Central council of the Association as to whether the ballot should be confined to existing members or newly enrolled members should also be allowed to participate. The Working President and other office bearers were against allowing new members to participate. I and my colleagues wanted to take this opportunity for increasing the membership of the organisation. We were in favour of allowing the new members to participate. My motion was passed by overwhelming majority in the Central Council. Yet Prof. Mallik felt that it would be unconstitutional to allow newly enrolled members to participate in the Ballot. However it was eventually decided that the newly enrolled members would participate in the Strike Ballot separately.

We had succeeded in making a remarkable progress in building up a good organisation during the financial year. The membership of the Association exceeded one lakh. I was in charge of Strike ballot at Howrah and Liluah and the response was beyond expectation. Through this ballot I could recruit a large number of active workers like P. K. Mukherjee, Kamal Dutta, B. K. Dey, A. N. Sinha, P. C. Roy, K. C. Roy, Iswari Prasad, Pares Chatterjee etc. The ballot was supervised by the then leaders of the Forward Block at Howrah viz, Haren Ghosh, Kanai Bhattacharya, Arabinda Ghoshal, Suhrit Biswas and others.

There was a growing discontentment against the then General Secretary A. M. Williams whose views on both labour and national outlook was different from that of many of us. In the Annual Conference of the Association held at Moradabad on 26th, 27th & 28th March, 1946, Williams stepped down and N. B. Sen, Vice President was elected General Secretary. Our demand for a change of blood was acceded and P. C. Dasgupta was elected Joint General Secretary in place of P. N. Sengupta. Working President Prof. A. N. Mallik who presided, was reelected. Vice-presidents P. K. Munshi and M. D. Dubey and Treasurer S. K. Mukherjee were also reelected. Jajnadas Mehta who was still President of our Association regretted his inability to continue and we were in search of a President. It was the opinion of the younger section to approach Sarat Ch. Bose for Presidentship of the Association. Sarat Chandra Bose who had earlier supported the cause of the Railwaymen and their strike efforts, was then the leader of the congress Party in the Central

Legislative Assembly, New Delhi. As I was known to Sarat Chandra Bose, I was sent to obtain his consent. I met him in New Delhi. He regretted his inability and suggested that Diwan Chamanlal who was then President of P & T Federation may be requested for leading our organisation. I approached Diwan Chamanlal with a letter of Sarat Chandra Bose and he gave his consent. As desired by the Moradabad Branch of the Association I also approached Aruna Asaf Ali to be our Chief Guest. Associates of Aruna Asaf Ali demanded Rs. 10,000/- as donation for the purpose and the idea was dropped. The Moradabad conference of the Association urged upon AIRF to launch the strike if the demands were not fulfilled.

In the meantime Government announced on 3rd April 1946 appointment of Mr. Justice Rajadhyaksha to adjudicate on the issue of Hours of employment, Periodic Rest and leave.

AIRF General Council met at Bombay on 4th & 5th May 1946 to review the Strike Ballot results. 95% of the members of affiliated unions voted in favour of strike. The general council directed the affiliated unions to serve Strike Notice on the respective Railways by 1st June 1946 indicating that the strike would begin from the midnight of June 27, 1946. V. V. Giri on his assuming the responsibility as Labour Minister, Madras Government, resigned from Presidentship of the Federation. He issued a statement urging upon the Railway Board and Government of India not to stand on grounds of prestige but to see reasons in the demands of the Federation. Earlier Moulana Abul Kalam Azad as President of National Congress had urged upon the Railwaymen

to have patience in the context of the independence of India at an early date. This had created some confusion amongst the Railwaymen. On the second day the General Council under the Presidentship of R. A. Khedgikar, Vice-President reiterated that the situation remained unchanged although the issue of working hours, periodic rest and leave, one of the demands of AIRF had been referred for adjudication. (According to Industrial Disputes Act, a Strike would not be legal if any of the demands is referred for adjudication). In the conference a 16-men Committee of Action was formed to co-ordinate the activities of the affiliated unions related to the proposed strike and negotiations for settlement.

The Committee of Action met in New Delhi between May 26 and 30, 1946 and negotiated for a settlement at the instance of S. C. Joshi ex-President of AIRF who was then Chief Labour Commissioner. The entire exercise was fruitless.

It would not be out of place to mention here that in the General Council meeting held in Bombay on 4th & 5th May 1946 Jamnadas Mehta, though a life member of AIRF by virtue of his being ex-President was not allowed entry by the communists. I took a serious exception to the incident and made a strident criticism of the communists.

The Government announced the appointment of the First Pay Commission on 10th May 1946 with Hon. Mr. Srinivasa Varadachariar, Ex-Judge of the Federal Court of India as Chairman and eight other members including a representative like N. M. Joshi, father of the Trade Union movement in India.

The AIRF General Council again met

at Delhi on June, 18, 1946 to consider the recommendations of the standing Finance Committee for withdrawal of strike Notice.

Main features of the recommendations were the setting up of a High Power Committee to see how far the demand of A.I.R.F. that there should be no retrenchment was justifiable, the time limit for Pay Commission to complete their recommendation by 6 months and that the recommendations were to have effect from 1. 1. 1947; and that 9 crores of Rupees were to be paid as interim relief.

The General Council felt that without a categorical assurance of 'No Retrenchment' strike notice could not be withdrawn. This assurance having been given by the Railway Board, the strike Notice was withdrawn on June 20, 1946.

The preparation of the strike was so thorough that the strike would have been a tremendous success had it not been withdrawn.

The AIRF General Council meeting held at Diwan Hall old Delhi on 18th June 1946 was presided by M. A. Khan, Vice President of AIRF. He was President of North Western Railway Union and was an anti-communist.

Mirza Ibrahim leader of Moghalpura workshop and a communist, led a section of workers, shouted slogans against Khan and against withdrawal of strike Notice, forcibly entered the hall and assaulted Khan. P. K. Mukherjee and a few other delegates protected Khan from being seriously assaulted. The meeting ended in turmoil. The meeting was held next day in New Delhi with adequate protection.

There was a mass meeting of

Railwaymen in the evening of 20th June, 1946 to explain the circumstances under which the strike Notice was withdrawn. The aim of the communists was to discredit and blackmail the leadership and they made the issue of withdrawal an act of betrayal. Guruswami spoke at length in English which was translated in Hindi. The Communists were trying to sabotage the meeting and signs of discontentment were there. All on a sudden Khawaja Sahab, the Vice-president of N. W. R. Union and a close confident of M. A. Khan, took hold of the microphone and delivered a fiery speech. I remember a few words still now — "Sher Job Kudta Hai — Do Kadam Pichhey Hatta hai" So the withdrawal of strike Notice was just a temporary retreat to strike hard with renewed vigour. There was tremendous clap and the Communists retreated. Khawaja Sahab was a very good friend of mine. He subsequently became President of Railwaymen's Federation in Pakistan. He used to come to our union office at 23 & 24 Strand Road, Calcutta-1 when ever he visited India.

After the strike notice was withdrawn the Association under the directive of A. I. R. F. devoted itself to prepare E. I. Railwaymen's case before the Adjudicator. Prof. A. N. Mallik, P. C. Dasgupta, S. R. Mitra and M. D. Dubey were entrusted with the job. It might be mentioned that Prof. A. N. Mallik and Justice Rajadhyaksha were class friends in England and Prof. Mallik hosted a Party in Great Eastern Hotel, Calcutta in his honour. I remember that Justice Rajadhyaksha greatly appreciated the memorandum submitted by the Indian Railway Employees' Association

and referred several matters to the Association for opinion and clarification. The Award was a great achievement for the Association. The Association published a booklet 'This Adjudication' which was very much appreciated.

The next task was to prepare memorandum for the Pay Commission which had started its work. The memorandum submitted by the Association to the pay Commission was printed and published in a book form with the heading 'Our Demand before Pay Commission'.

While the work of the Adjudicator and Pay Commission were in progress the Great Calcutta Killing — Hindu Muslim communal Riot started on 16th August 1946 by the Muslim League after its mass rally in Maidan. The riot was of such a magnitude that it was hardly possible for anyone to describe the horror. In those days I was staying with my uncle in Ahiritola Street, Calcutta and saw streams of dead bodies in the Ganges. Thousand of dead bodies were seen floating, receding with ebb and reappearing with tide. It was just impossible to have a bath in the ganges, not to speak of using the water for any purpose.

The victims belonged mostly to the poorer section of the society and manual labour. This riot was great impact on the leaders of the National Congress and they were so scared that they succumbed to the subsequent threat by Jinnah of a civil war unless the demand of Pakistan was acceded to. The Government allowed a free fighting for three days and no attempt was made to stop the riot. On the 4th day Military took control of the city,

curfew was imposed and gradually law and order was restored. Muslim league Government of Saheed Surawardy was at the helm of affairs. I was an eye witness to this riot.

Role of Communists and the consequences thereof

Although the AIRF and Railway Board had reached a settlement and the strike Notice was withdrawn the Railway Unions under communist influence were not satisfied and were determined for a fight. One such union was the South Indian Railway Labour Union which served on August 1, 1946 a notice of general strike to commence between 15 and 31 August 1946 on the demands that were mostly covered by the terms of reference to the Adjudicator and Central Pay Commission. On August 11, the S. I. Railway Station Master's Association served a notice of General strike on the same demands of the Labour Union. The strike commenced on August 24, 1946 and continued till 22nd September 1946 when it was called off.

In those days there used to be a seat reserved for Railway Labour in Bengal Assembly. The election used to be held through electoral college and vote by the delegates elected at the ratio of one for 200 eligible voters. J. N. Gupta, founder of our Association was a member of Bengal legislative Assembly representing the Railway labour. The election was due in 1946 and J. N. Gupta having decided not to contest, it was agreed that Prof. Humayun Kabir who was then the President of the B. A. Rly. Employees' Association should contest. The B. A. Rail Road Workers' Union decided that Jyoti Basu should join in the fray. A

contest was inevitable. After the delegates' election it was seen that Kabir Sahab would have a comfortable majority. Humayun Kabir was touring different parts of B. A. Railway. He was assaulted by the Communists at Bhairab Bazar station. B. A. Railway Employees' Association men were no match for the Communists in the manoeuvres. False voting to elect delegates tampering of ballot boxes, threatening to voters etc. were adopted and the last resort was preventing about 15 delegates physically from voting. The result was Prof. Kabir was defeated by a narrow margin and Jyoti Basu was elected. Bankim Mukherjee and Somnath Lahiri were at the helm of Bengal Communist Party and they pushed Jyoti Basu up in the position.

Rupees 9 crores given to the Railwaymen as an "Interim Relief" as a settlement of the negotiation for averting the strike was distributed amongst the Railwaymen irrespective of rank to all staff drawing pay upto Rs. 250/- at a flat rate of Rs. 4/- and Annas 8 on the suggestion of AIRF. This enhanced the position of AIRF and its affiliated unions amongst the Railwaymen.

N. B. Sen, General Secretary of our Association suddenly died on 26. 1. 1947. The burden fell upon the shoulders of P. C. Dasgupta, Joint General Secretary. Myself and S. R. Mitra promised him all help.

The recommendations of the Adjudicators Award and Central Pay Commission Report were submitted on May 15 and May 16, 1947. The process of implementation started sometimes thereafter and continued for years much to the disappointment of Railwaymen.

The biennial Convention of the Federation was held at Gorakhpur on June 6 - 7, 1947. In this meeting the recommendations of Pay Commission and Government decisions thereon were analysed and it was felt that the recommendation fell for short of the reasonable and legitimate aspirations and expectations of the workers. A large number of anomalies were also found.

In this Convention the great Socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan was elected President of the Federation. Sibnath Banerjee for sometimes was trying to bring Jayaprakash at the helm of A. I. R. F. and with this end in view got Jayaprakash Narayan elected as President of E. I. Railwaymen's Union earlier. It may not be out of place to mention that in its Annual General Meeting the Union replaced B. K. Mukherjee by A. M. A. R. Fatmi, a Railway employee of Danapur as General Secretary and elected Jayaprakash Narayan as President following a difference of opinion between B. K. Mukherjee and Sibnath Banerjee. We were opposed to Jayaprakash Narayan becoming the President of A. I. R. F. and wanted Prof. Humayun Kabir. The reasons were simple. We apprehended that Jayaprakash Narayan with his status, personality and political conviction was going to make the Federation an appendage to the Socialist Party and none of us would have any position in the Federation. With this notion we, the delegates from E. I. Rly Employees' Association, B. A. Railway Employees' Association and few others from other unions opposed election of Jay Prakash Narayan and tried to elect Humayun Kabir as president but failed. Humayun Kabir was not present in the meeting and

he came to know this he rebuked us and expressed his confidence in Jayaprakash Narayan. I must admit that we were wrong. Not for a single day Jay Prakash Narayan tried to thrust his political views on the Union and the Federation. Nor did he allow his partymen to interfere or influence the Railwaymen's affairs for which his partymen were very much aggrieved. He was really great and such a leader could hardly be found. He could take decisions on merits without political consideration. I am sure his partymen felt subsequently that they were wrong in dragging J. P. to the Federation. Jayaprakash Narayan was so frustrated with his party that he left the political field and joined Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement.

Annual General Meeting of our Association was held at Allahabad just on the eve of Independence and Partition of the country on 7-9 August 1947. Acharya Narendra Dev, the Socialist leader inaugurated the Conference and Jogesh Chatterjee, founder of Revolutionary Socialist Party was the Chief Guest. Bireswar Chakraborty organised the whole show. In this meeting Anand Mohan Sahay, an associate of Netaji Subhas in Burma, Singapore and Japan was elected as President, M. D. Dubey as Working President in place of Prof. A. M. Mallik who was unwilling to continue, P. K. Munshi and another (whose name I do not remember) as vice presidents, P. C. Dasgupta as General Secretary, Satya Ranjan Mitra as Joint General Secretary and Chitteswar Chatterjee as Treasurer.

Partition of India and the effects on Railwaymen

The Indian National Congress, much

against its declared policy accepted the partition of the country, much to the frustration of millions of Indian in general and particularly in Bengal, Punjab, Sindh and North Western Frontier Province. Never before had the country witnessed such a betrayal by the leaders. In their anxiety to share powers and peaceful brotherly co-existence, the Congress under influence of Jawaharlal Nehru accepted Pakistan for the Muslims. Gandhiji who could fast for every little thing did not make any effort to stop partition of the country although many a times he did tell that country had to be partitioned over his dead body. History had proved that Partition of the Country was a great blunder and instead of solving any problem it created problems ; and tranquility and peace are lost. Had Netaji Subhas been there, he could resist the partition. Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee made futile attempts to stop partition. His cry for exchange of population was a cry in the wilderness. Indians are suffering and would continue to suffer for generations for the blunder committed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Gandhiji. I was amongst those who were opposed to partition of the Country and like thousands I lost my home and property.

At the material time Ghulam Faruque was the General Manager of East Indian Railway. The National Flag was to be hoisted on 15th August 1947 in the H. O. building of the East Indian Railway and Faruque bestowed this unique honour on E. I. Rly Employees' Association. The Calcutta Branch Secretary, S. K. Choudhury hoisted the flag.

My father died on 29th August 1947. After partition thousands of Railwaymen

came from Pakistan-East and West and they had to be absorbed. Various anomalies like status, grade, pay, seniority etc. cropped up and awaited solution for years together. It was East Indian and East Punjab Railways which were affected most. The Federation and affiliated unions were flooded with grievances and representations many of which remained unsolved.

Satya Ranjan Mitra, Joint General Secretary of the Association became victim of Tuberculosis sometimes in early 1948. He was admitted to the Jadavpur Tuberculosis Hospital. I and P. C. Dasgupta used to visit him frequently. S. R. Mitra resigned and I was elected Joint General Secretary of the Association in the Central Council meeting held at Danapur sometimes in middle of 1948.

When Jayaprakash Narayan became President of All India Railwaymen's Federation there existed two parallel unions on each Railway affiliated to the All India Railwaymen's Federation. This seemed to be an impediment to growth of healthy Trade Union movement on the Railways. With a view to have one union in one Railway he initiated amalgamation of the parallel unions.

Birth of INTUC and a new Federation of Railwaymen

The All India Trade Union Congress had no rival. The Communists had almost captured it. After the Independence of the Country the Congress party felt the need of a section of working class to be loyal to the Congress. With the blessings of Nehru and Patel, Khandu Bhai Desai and Harihar Nath Shastri formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress. Socialists followed suit by

forming Hind Mazdoor Sabha in 1948. After some times the INTUC formed its Railway Labour wing on the Railways — Indian National Railway Workers' Federation in 1948 and started forming unions affiliated to it on each Railway. On the East Indian Railway E. I. Railwaymen's Congress was formed with Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, ex Chief Minister of West Bengal as President and J. N. Bose an A. S. M. as General Secretary. A. P. Sharma joined the said Railwaymen's Congress sometimes at the end of 1949 or early 1950 as its working President. Thus the unity of Railwaymen remained a dream to be fulfilled.

The Annual convention of A. I. R. F. was held at Lilloah from August 30th to September 1, 1948 with Jayaprakash Narayan President in the Chair. At that time Jyoti Basu who was a Vice President of the Federation, was under arrest. Jayaprakash Narayan prevailed on Dr. B. C. Roy, the then Chief Minister to release Jyoti Basu on parole to attend the convention. Such was the greatness of Jayaprakash Narayan. In this convention K. C. Mitra popularly known as Jatedhari Baba, who conducted the strike of Lilloah workshop for 4 months in 1928, was also present.

A sea of changes in the organisation

After partition B. A. Railway Employees' Association was limited to Sealdah Division only. When the talks of amalgamation between E. I. Railwaymen's Union and E. I. Railway Employees' Association was in progress, the B. A. Railway Employees' Association merged with E. I. Railwaymen's Union. During the talks for amalgamation a formula evolved by Jayaprakash was accepted by

both the unions. The office bearers posts were divided into two groups — one with President, a Vice President, an Asstt. General Secy. and Treasurer and the other with two-Vice-Presidents, General Secretary and an Asstt. General Secretary. The E. I. Railway employees' Association was given the first option. Sibnath Banerjee was piloting the affairs of the E. I. Rly Men's Union and I on behalf of the Association was doing the same. It was generally agreed to between us that the Association would opt for the General Secretary's group so that the amalgamated union will have Jayaprakash Narayan as President and Pratul Chandra Dasgupta as General Secretary. Unfortunately maneuvering started in both the camps. Associations branches in Danapur division particularly Moghalsarai and Danapur wanted Ananda Mohan Sahay as President and was in favour of opting for President's group. A. P. Sharma the then Branch Secretary of the Association at Moghalsarai who was hosting the conference for considering the issue of amalgamation was very much opposed to Jayaprakashji and wanted to opt for President's group to keep him out. Anand Mohan Sahay was equally interested to continue as President. To make things worst A. M. A. R. Fatmi and his supporters joined hands in favour of this move. P. C. Dasgupta who was depending on me was perplexed particularly at Anand Mohan Sahay's opinion that the decision of amalgamation required three fourth majority of the delegates present. The Association was truly non-political, free and independent trade union and believed in leadership of the Railwaymen in service. Many of the Branches in Howrah and Asansol Divisions had their reservations.

A. M. Williams although no longer an office-bearer, was commanding some influence and was against Jayaprakashji's Presidentship on the ground of politicalising the Trade Union movement. Branches of Lucknow, Moradabad and Allahabad divisions were our supporters and were solidly behind us. I made a whirlwind tour of the upper divisions and doubly ensured myself of their support. P. K. Bose, the then Branch Secretary, Lucknow was very much in favour of amalgamation and he prevailed upon the delegates in favour of the amalgamation and opting for general Secretary's group. The Extra-ordinary General Meeting of the Association met at Mughalsai in December 1948 to consider the issue. The group against unity opposed the amalgamation move first but when it was passed by three-fourth majority of the delegates present they changed their move and wanted President's group to be opted. They lost and the amalgamation of the two unions viz E. I. Railwaymen's Union and E. I. Railway Employees' Association took place with Jayaprakash Narayan as President and P. C. Dasgupta as General Secretary. I was given the post of General Secretary. The E. I. Railwaymen's union and B. A. Railway Employees' Association who were amalgamated shared office-bearers' posts two each viz E. I. Railway Employees' Association for four. The amalgamated union was started functioning with the following office bearers : —

President Jaya Prakash Narayan
 Vice-President Mvrlidhar Dubey
 Sibnath Banerjee
 P. K. Munshi

General

Secretary Pratul Chandra Dasgupta

Asstt. General

Secretary Pratul Kumar Chatterjee

Ramchandra Chakravarty

Treasurer Kiron Chowdhury

But even after amalgamation, the E. I. Railwaymen's Union group and B. A. Railway Employees' Association group in the amalgamated union maintained their separate identity and representation in the AIRF on the ground that so long as the amalgamation was not accepted by the register of Trade Unions and Registration number was given, the amalgamating unions legally retain their separate entity. A.M.A.R. Fatmi started discrediting P. C. Dasgupta on this score and claimed separate entity. P.C. Dasgupta met V. V. Giri who was then Labour Minister and the Union was Registered next day although it remained unsettled for nearly an year. A.M.A.R. Fatmi was thus frustrated. After this he left for East Pakistan and never returned.

The recognised unions on East Indian Railway were enjoying some facilities and privileges unknown to unions on to other Railways. There were 5 card passes available between any to any station on E. I. Railway ; one First class for the President two second class and two inter-class in the name of 'One Representative', unlimited pass for the Central Council meetings and Annual General meetings — pass being not lower than Inter class, special casual leave to all. Also Special Organisational leave to Central and Branch office-bearers and special passes available within the jurisdiction of the Branch and Divisional Head quarters; special casual leave and passes to hold Branch council meeting and meetings with the Railway

officers both at the Head quarter level and Divisional level. Central office bearers could hold and attend meetings at General Managers level and Divisional Superintendent's level. Bimonthly meetings with the General Manager and monthly meetings with the Deputy General Manager (Personnel) and meetings with the Heads of Departments used to be arranged as and when necessary. The Permanent Negotiating Machinery that was formed to settle the grievances of the Railwaymen as agreed to between Jayaprakash Narayan and the Railway Board subsequently — benefited all the Railways excepting East Indian Railway where it was practically a curtailment. When J. P. could know of the position he did convince the Railway Board to agree to maintain the existing facilities. But the Railway Board did not act up to the agreement in later days and the facilities obtained during British regime were gradually withdrawn by the Congress Government.

It may not be out of place to mention that on a complaint to the General Manager, the Divisional Superintendent, Howrah had to furnish details of my absence from duty on special leave on various counts for a period of 3 months and it was seen that I worked for the Railway for 29 days only during the period and rest were special casual leave.

I was promoted as Staff Warden later redesignated as Asstt. Welfare Inspector) from Grainshop manager in December 1948 and continued in the Welfare Organisation till my retirement on 2-2-1978. My work as Welfare Inspector and as a Union office-bearer were excellent. I had throughout my service complete job satisfaction and although I

was forced out of the Trade Union, I never felt isolated from the Railwaymen and maintained contact with them till my retirement.

I was also elected Director of E. I. Rly Employees' Co-operative Credit Society sometimes in 1948 before amalgamation and continued in that capacity till 1962 when the Administration introduced amendment to the Co-operative Rules to debar the Railwaymen under suspension to hold office in the Managing Committee and I was removed from the Board of Directors. I felt it beneficial to the Trade Union to have hold on the Co-operative Credit Society and during my tenure on the Board of Directors of the Society, I arranged for permanent jobs in the co-operative society for those who served the union for some time.

The amalgamated union started functioning. The amalgamation in the Branches also took place on 50 : 50 basis as in the centre and election was to be held subsequently to replace the adhoc body. The E. I. Railwaymen's Union had developed a few very good Branches between 1946 and specially after Jayaprakash Narayan became President of the Union and Calcutta Branch was one of them. Under the able leadership of Panchkari Banerjee and Sankar Lal Mukherjee, Calcutta Branch was parallel to the Central Office of the Association in Secretarial work and representations of Railwaymen's grievances which were the monopoly of the Association till then. Although Jayaprakash Narayan was very much neutral, others belonging the Socialist Party and Railwaymen's Union group started eliminating the Railway Employees' Association Group in Branch elections wherever possible. This had

happened first in Calcutta and Liluah branches where Railwaymen's union really had supremacy over the Association. The rivalry between the two groups spread over to other parts, one eliminating the other wherever possible.

The General Council meeting of AIRF under the Presidentship of Jayaprakash Narayan held at Nagpur in November 1948 reviewed the position of Railwaymen's demands made at Liluah Convention and resolved to observe a 'Protest Day' on January 1, 1949 against the Government's attitude followed by a Strike ballot. Both the Protest day and Ballot were successful. Soon after this Gopalswami Ayyanger, the then Railway Minister and Jayaprakash Narayan met in Bombay in January 1949 and agreed to set up a Joint Advisory Committee to go into the anomalies arising out of implementation of the Pay Commission. The Committee was set up under Chairmanship of Justice Jeejeebhoy, S. Guruswami, Harihar Nath Shastri, K. A. Khedgikar and P. K. Chatterjee representing Railway labour. The committee functioned till end of 1950 and considered more than a thousand items.

The Grainshop Enquiry Commission with Mohanlal Saxena as Chairman and K. Santhaman and Khandu Bhat as members was set up on 28th February 1948 and submitted its report in July 1948. It curtailed drastically the facilities and recommended only 5 items to be given to Railwaymen through Grainshops viz. Cereals, Dal, Cooking Oil, Soap and Match Boxes. It also recommended the withdrawal of Grainshop facilities in favour of time lump sum cash benefit. Railwaymen were much aggrieved and felt that through the strike ballot of 1949

the facilities would be restored.

Running Staff Pay and Allowance Committee which was set up on 1st July 1948 to go into details of their pay and allowances as recommended by Central Pay Commission, Rest, leave and working hours as recommended by Adjudicators Award and also their mode of recruitment and training facilities, submitted their report at the end of the said year.

The E. I. Railway Employees' Association appeared before both the Committees with their memoranda in 1948. As a matter of fact the Committees continued till 1952 so long Jayaprakash Narayan was at the helm of affairs of the Federation - just to convince him that the Government was anxious to do as much good as possible for the Railwaymen.

Railway Workers' Classification Tribunal was set up on 2nd April 1948 with T. Water house as Chairman and R. A. Khedgikar Vice President of A. I. R. F. and K. Ramchandran as members. The members of the Tribunal travelled over on all railways and visited Workshops, Running & Carriage and Wagon sheds to classify the workers as 'Skilled' or Semi-skilled' and prescribed necessary Trade Tests for them. R. A. Khedgikar non-technical man, wanted a technical hand as his advisor and I recommended R. E. P. Sinha the then chargeman of Loco shed Gaya and Branch Secretary of the Association Gaya, which P. C. Dasgupta readily accepted. R. E. P. Sinha did a very good job and Khedgikar praised him highly. R. E. P. Sinha subsequently joined the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and became its Working President.

Expulsion of the Communist from A. I. R. F.

The historic General Council meeting of the All Indian Railwaymen's Federation that expelled the Communist led Union from A. I. R. F. for acting against its mandate, met at Danapur under Presidentship of Jayaprakash Narayan on February 16 and 17, 1949. Jayaprakash Narayan explained the developments since the strike Ballot was taken and pleaded for restraint in view of public hostility. The General Council saw reasons and decided to stay action on the results of strike ballot to get the benefit of further negotiations. the communist led unions on GIP, BB & CI, S. I., E. I. (GIP Railwaymen union, BB & CI Ry Employees union, S. I. Railway labour union and E. I. Rail Road workers union) who had decided to go on strike from March 9, 1949 and served strike notice, refused to stay action and insisted on the strike and were against further negotiation. the Communist block in the Federation had been vilifying Jayaprakash Narayan for sometimes past. They had also been shouting 'Ye Ajadi Jhoota Hai, Shabb Mut, Bhulo Mut' and some other slogans not connected with Railwaymen's problems. I remember a particular occasion when I attended a meeting at Gomoh where the said slogan was chanted and a song was sung — a line of which I still remember — "Kekarey Lutey Nam Batayi — Nehru Lutey, Patel Lutey Lutey Panthwa Ho — Kekarey Lutey Nam Batai" "Whom to name — anybody including Nehru, patel and Panthwa are looting the country". I was immediately and warned Bharu, the then Branch Secretary who was forced to stop the scandal in the meeting. I was already a bitter feeling against the communists and on the decision of the

General Council these unions were expelled from the Federation. Jyoti Basu and Satyen Ganguly of E. I. Rail Road workers' Union were also expelled. The General Council of A. I. R. F. thereafter called upon the Railwaymen 'to actively dissociate' themselves from the proposed unauthorised strike.

The strike launched by the Communist Unions was a total failure. Hundreds of Railwaymen and trade Union workers were arrested, suspended and removed from service.

These expelled Unions continued their efforts for reaffiliation with A.I.R.F. till 1951 after which they directed their members to join the A.I.R.F. affiliated unions. There were quite a few good workers in those unions and they established their leadership in the affiliated unions in due course. They, however, continued to act as a group under the direction of the Communist Party in the Union and also in A.I.R.F.

The process of integration of Princely states' to Indian Union was going on under the able leadership of Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel necessitating the merger of Railways owned by such states with Indian Government Railways. The Indian State Railways took over a mileage of nearly 5,500 miles with about 60,000 employees. The demand of the AIRF was early integration of all Princely States Railways with the Indian Government Railways and equal treatment to the absorbed employees.

Sometimes in the middle of 1949 the two Asstt. Generl Secretaries were entrusted with two important tasks — Peter Alvaries to edit and publish a monthly journal 'Railwaymen' and P. C.

Dasgupta to write a History of A.I.R.F. and publish it before the Silver Jubilee Session of the Federation in 1950. P. C. Dasgupta did write many pages and went to Madras to meet Guruswami twice but unfortunately the history could not be completed. Although a made-to-order history of the All India Railwaymen's Federation written by R. Subramaniam under guidance of J. P. Choubey, may face criticism on several scores, the attempt is praiseworthy and my old colleague J. P. Choubey deserves to be congratulated for the attempt.

The A.I.R.F. was affiliated to International Transport Workers' Federation, London some times at the end of 1949 on payment of a token affiliation Fee. Although many of the A.I.R.F. Unions were affiliated to Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the E. I. Rly. employees' Union remained independent. The attempt to get A.I.R.F. affiliated to H.M.S. was objected to by Jayaprakash Narayan himself.

Internal Struggle in the ~~East Indian~~ Railway Employees' Union

P. Dayal, branch Secretary of the amalgamated E. I. Rly Employees' Union at Dhanbad gave a notice of a General Meeting of the Branch to be held on February 25, 1950. N. R. Roy, President of the Branch, belonging to E. I. Railwaymen's Union group, was sure defeat in the election filed a case in Munsif Court, Dhanbad, charging irregularities and obtained an injunction on the holding of the Annual Meeting. Never in the history of Railway Trade Union movement, to my knowledge, a Trade Union matter was sought to be resolved through court.

law. This set a very had example and on subsequent days there had been many court cases and injunctions due to internal quarrels in unions. The court case at Dhanbad was not pursued and a compromise was made allowing N. R. Roy to remain as President of the Branch for the time being.

In this connection I would mention another case that was filed in the court by Panchkari Banerjee of Calcutta Branch on the last day before Puja vacation. He obtained an injunction on holding of the Annual General Meeting of E. I. Railway Employees' Union at Dhanbad on the ground that although his branch was entitled to a larger number of delegates, General Secretary arbitrarily reduced the number. We were very much perplexed and did not know what to do. All arrangements were complete and postponement of the meeting would have resulted in a heavy financial loss. On enquiry we could know that a vacation Judge of the High Court would hold court in his house for one day during the Puja holidays and that day was prior to two days of the holding of the meeting. Barrister Dipak Dutta Chowdhury (son of Sarala Devi Chowdhurani) appeared on behalf of the Union. We had decided earlier that we would concede all the demands of Panchkari Banerjee so that the Judge would not have any ground to continue the injunction. Panchkari Banerjee and his supporters lost the opportunity to stall the Annual Conference. The judge of course vacated the injunction and the Annual General meeting was held.

Following a demonstration Balai Chatterjee, a militant Branch Secretary, Asansol was removed from Service on

disciplinary measures. This was the first case of victimisation of Trade Union Official to my knowledge.

The Government introduced two Anti-labour bills — the Labour Relation Bill and Trade Union Bill sometimes in early 1950. There were terrible agitation against these bills and we on East Indian Railway held meetings and rallies to condemn the bills. The Govt, however, abandoned the move.

During this period The Railway Board accepted that the employees of the Princely State (Native states) Railways would be entitled to Central Pay Commission scales of pay and allowances with effect from April 1, 1950. This was virtually a triumph of Railwaymen. In April 1950 Pandit Nehru accepted on the floor of the Parliament, in principle, the recommendations of Fair Wages Committee.

The Silver Jubilee convention of the All India Railwaymen's Federation was held on June 7, 1950 at Nagpur under Presidentship of Jayaprakash Narayan. Jayaprakash Narayan wanted to be relieved of the burden of Presidentship but was persuaded to continue. There was a sharp exchange of views between Jayaprakash Narayan and Priya Gupta who was then the General Secretary of Assam Railway Union and Jayaprakash Narayan wanted to resign. Priya Gupta apologised to J. P. and the matter ended.

There was an influx of refugees from East Pakistan in early 1951 and our union was very much involved in the relief work. Most of the refugees were coming to the border town, Bongaon and our Branch at Bongaon had to organise camps and kitchen for relief. The services of the Branch secretary Sasadhar Banerjee were praiseworthy.

The General Council of AIRF met at Bombay on March 9 & 10, 1951 with President Jayaprakash Narayan in the Chair and directed the affiliated unions to take a Strike ballot to be completed by third week of June on two basic demands common to all railwaymen viz. (i) Grant of Dearness Allowance in accordance with CPC recommendations and (ii) setting up of a Standing Machinery for settlement of disputes failing which arbitration by an independent Chairman acceptable to both AIRF and Railway Board. Sometimes in May 1951 S. Guruswami arranged for the General Council Meeting to be held on June 21, 1951 to consider the results of the Strike Ballot.

Indian National Railway Workers' Federation had by then become a rival to All India Railwaymen's Federation and was causing hindrances to fulfilment of demands. The INRWF was receiving official encouragement from the Railway Board and the Railway Minister. The INRWF opposed the Strike Ballot and created a confusion amongst the Railwaymen. A. P. Sharma after his expulsion from the E. I. Railway Employees' Union by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1949 for disobeying the mandate of the Federation, had joined the E. I. Railwaymen's Congress as its Working President (afterwards he became President) and was propagating against the strike move. The Railwaymen's Congress had a very insignificant influence on workers but was a favoured child of the Administration. If the government or the Railway Administration was to grant even a very small concession, the INRWF and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress would know it first and we could know through their propaganda before receiving official communication.

A. P. Sharma's organising tactics were unique. He had picked up cases of commercial and transportation staff who had illegal earnings and get their transfer orders issued just to make them surrender to him and join his Railwaymen's Congress. Most of them surrendered and those who did not, had to suffer for the transfer, to make room for men of Sharma's choice. He took full advantage of the differences between the two groups of the East Indian railway Employees' Union (Viz Association and Men's Union) and welcomed the men who lost the elections or forced out otherwise. He would take up such individual cases of important or influential persons lost by the Employees' Union and got them transferred to him. Many of the ultra members, in apprehension of victimisation for their actions, joined the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress. We had to move through All Indian Railwaymen's Federation for matters relating to Railway Board at took time. But A. P. Sharma took up the matter personally and promptly got the Railway Board for immediate resolution. The composition of the East Indian Railwaymen's Congress at the end of 1951 as reviewed by us was overwhelmingly (95%) with the members from E. I. Rly Employees' Union. A. P. Sharma was himself a renegade.

To quote a few examples one Gaya Branch as a whole walked over to the Railwaymen's Congress. R. P. S. P. Sharma a powerful organiser and Paul Chatterjee an asset, were lost. Many from the Gaya Branch after a sporadic strike in 1950 organised by Khalil Ahmad, a militant leader, went to the Congress. In Bihar, the members were P. P. Roy, K. K. Dutta, Khalil Ahmad, Paritosh Banerjee etc. Bhojpur, Bihar

and a few other Branches went to Congress lock, stock and barrel.

Panchkari Banerjee our Branch Secretary, Calcutta who also become Asst. General Secretary of the Union had a case for himself. His claim was that he was recruited against Graduate Quota and, therefore, should have been given the intermediate grade. Union fought his case and lost. A. P. Sharma fought and won. His condition was that Panckari Banerjee with his Calcutta Branch would join the Railwaymen's Congress, which, however, did not happen. He subsequently became an officer and retired as Deputy Chief Controller of Stores. Another glaring example was that of J. P. Choubey, present General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. In early 1950s while working as Explanation clerk under Loco Foreman, Lucknow. Choubey was suspended by N. N. Tandon the then Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Superintendent Power), Lucknow. Choubey was a member of E. I. Railway Employees Union and wanted his case to be fought by the Union. Union fought and failed. A. P. Sharma got his suspension order cancelled and he joined the Railwaymen's Congress. He was with the said Congress till such time there was a split in the N.F.I.R. and A.I.R.F. was revived. In those days A. P. Sharma as an old friend used to keep close touch with me. He used to say that more we agitate the better for him and his Railwaymen's Congress because the panicky Railway Administration and the Railway Board would have no other alternative but to depend on them for help. Congress was the Ruling Party and it was surrounded by the bureaucrat like Gopalswamy Ayyanger in the

Government and corrupt persons in its various organisations. The Railwaymen no doubt had their legitimate grievances, and were expecting immediate results on many matters because of the stature of Jaya Prakash Narayan. Jayaprakashji was getting frustrated and wanted to be relieved of the burden of AIRF Presidentship and also of Presidentship of E. I. Railway Employee's Union. In those days I was a frequent visitor to Jayaprakashji's house at Patna on work of the Union and I could foresee the situation. He was also not happy with his party men. At the same time he could not leave the Federation abruptly rendering Railwaymen helpless. The rivalry between the AIRF and INRWF and their affiliated unions at Railway level used to distress him. He believed more in unity of working class than in political gain. He was no match for husecraunt like Gopalswamy Ayyanger. He had no political ambition. After separation he joined in the Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhade. His sense of responsibility induced him to initiate the unity move between the two Federations of Railwaymen.

The Postponement of the proposed strike in 1951 — a demonstration of loyalty to the country.

A look back to the issue of strike Ballot of 1951 is not out of context here. Third ballot was taken (First in 1945, and in 1949 and third in 1951) and the result was overwhelmingly in favour of strike. The general Council decided to launch the strike from August 27, 1951. The Government was panicky and Railway Minister Gopalswamy Ayyanger was shaky. The Government passed an ordinance "Essential Services (Prevention

of Strikes) ordinance 1951" Gopalswamy Ayyanger in his radio broadcast warned the Railway employees against the consequences of participation in the strike declared illegal by the said Ordinance. This made the Railwaymen more angry and determined for the strike. We on the Eastern Railway made a full-proof preparation for a successful strike.

With my experience of Railway Trade Union movement and preparation of strike both in 1951 and 1960 I can say with confidence that the strike in 1951 would have been much more successful on the E. I. Railway due to preparation and self confidence amongst Railwaymen — self confidence generated by the stature of Jayaprakash Narayan at the helm of affairs. Preparation was easier due to provocations of the Railway Minister.

Nehru came to the rescue of Railway Minister. His passionate approach to Jayaprakash Narayan and apprehension of a Pakistani aggression made the AIRF General Council to reconsider and postpone the strike by two months.

J. P. hits out

Jayaprakash Narayan then issued a press statement on Sept 4, 1951 appealing to the public to support Railwaymen's cause for their patriotic action and released his letter of July 25, 1951 to the Prime Minister which is a precious document for Railwaymen's struggle. The statement reads as follows :—

"..... I should like, however, to place the case of railwaymen before the public at large. The strike has not been abandoned, but only postponed. In the two months of breathing space that are available, efforts should be made to settle the matter. It would facilitate settlement,

if there were better public understanding of the railwaymen's case.

"First, the strike was postponed, but not abandoned because there was no settlement over the demands of the Federation. The postponement was made in view of the threat to national security.

"Comment has been made in certain quarters from the very start and there should have been no talk of strike in view of the threat. But, when the strike decision was taken at Kharagpur on July 6, there was no apprehension of any serious trouble between the two countries. The relations were strained, no doubt, but they have always been so.

"It was some time after Kharagpur that Pakistan stuck out its clenched fist at us. Accordingly, the working committee of AIRF meeting at Calcutta on August 11, pledged its whole-hearted support in defending the country against any aggression.

"Later, in the course of a letter explaining the issues involved in the dispute, I wrote to the Prime Minister that as far as AIRF was concerned it had indicated in no uncertain terms that it would give its fullest co-operation to Government in the task of national defence.

"Some time later, I wrote to Ayyanger also to the same effect. Their replies were placed before the Action Committee at Bombay on Aug. 9. The Prime Minister wrote that his information was one of the reasons why Pakistan was making threats against India was from an expectation of a general strike on the Railways.

"In his letter of August 8, 1951 that the situation vis-a-vis Pakistan was

very serious. He appreciated my letter to Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, in which I had said that if the situation was grave, the railwaymen would stop the strike.

"In a telegram Ayyangar said : 'I have hesitation in saying that in view of the grave emergencies of national security and of food situation the action proposed by the All India Railwaymen's Federation is fraught with grave danger and I earnestly hope that they will abandon the contemplated strike. This will be widely appreciated and will contribute towards strengthening confidence and a sense of national security. The Prime Minister joins me in this message.'

"If after these appeals and the warning of grave danger, railwaymen and the Federation had persisted in the strike, they would have covered themselves with eternal shame, besides irremediably injuring their cause. The so-called militants and leftists have said that the national danger was a bogey raised to side track workers' struggle. But the workers' struggle would not only be sidetracked, but ditched for ever if they were so blind as not to see the red signal struck before their very nose.

"Let me now turn to the workers' case. In my letter to the Prime Minister, I had raised several fundamental issues in connection with railway labour and administration. Ayyangar, responding cordially to the postponement of the strike, has agreed to discuss five of these fundamental policy issues, viz.

1. A permanent machinery for negotiations and settlement of disputes arising from the Shop level upwards.
2. The scope for adjudication in respect of disputes in the nationalised State-

administered Undertakings when negotiations fail.

3. Should one Union or Federation alone be recognised as the body with whom Government would negotiate in a nationalis State-administered undertakings. If so, how should this Union or Federation be selected ?

4. The place of labour in the management of nationalised, state administered Undertakings.

5. Should the management of Indian Railways be entrusted to an autonomous Corporation ?

"The dearness allowance question — the most vexed of all — is expected to be taken up after these matters are satisfactorily settled. Ayyangar has also agreed to keep the Prevention of Strikes Bill in abeyance for the time being.

"In explanation of these issues, let me quote from my letter of July 25, to the Prime Minister.

"I wrote to you in my last letter that the basic cause of this almost permanent state of labour tension was the absence of a regular standing machinery for the settlement of disputes.

"In the present dispute between the Federation and the Government, arbitration on the outstanding issues has been one of the two demands. This has so far been denied, though arbitration has been the sheet-anchor of Congress labour policy. It has been argued that in the field of private industry, arbitration may be a desirable principle, but in case of nationalised industries, it would mean a denial of the sovereignty of Parliament according to whose will the Government of India should function.

"This is a dangerous view-point and the thin end of the edge of totalitarianism. When a whole industry is nationalised, leaving no competition, both the workers and consumers are at the mercy of the State, which may impose upon them whatever burdens it may choose.

'At least half the labour trouble in the Railways is due to the Congress and a part of the Railway Ministry and Administration fostering rival unionism. AIRF is a non-political labour body and its doors are open to all bonafide unions of railwaymen. But, just because the Congress cannot control it and bend it to its purpose, it has brought into being a rival Federation and several rival unions.

'When these bodies receive covert official encouragement (I have no doubt, with Ayyangar's approval), the situation is explosive, and relation embittered all round. One favourite game of INTUC leaders and Congress Ministers is socialist baiting and one of their favourite lines of attack is that the Socialists are exploiting the workers for their political ends.

'But it was left for INTUC leaders to indulge in the most shamefaced and brazen political exploitation of not only railwaymen but the entire Indian working class. I am referring to the resolution of the INTUC General Council passed recently at Barielly asking all the members of INTUC Unions to vote for the Congress in the next elections. Even in their dreams it never occurred to the Socialists to place such a resolution before AIRF or Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

'It has been a universally recognised principle that the workers on a nationalised industry should have a say or a hand in the Management. Various

forms of Workers participation in Management have been experimented within other countries. It is time that we too started this experiment. Workers' effective part in management is one of those vital measures that are necessary to check the growth of economic dictatorship in a nationalised economy. Such a kind of workers' participation in management would also lead to the stabilisation of industrial relations, because it would inculcate a sense of responsibility in the workers.....'

"No other demand of AIRF has raised up so much dust as that of dearness allowance. The public have been told that though railwaymen are better than others, they are never satisfied and always keep on clamouring for more. The fault is not of the railwaymen, but of the economic situation over which they have no control. If prices keep on rising, it is most natural for the workers to demand higher D. A. to compensate them for the rise in prices.

"It should not be forgotten that the first demand of the workers in such a situation as always been for reduction in prices. The workers have also gone a step further. They have always given their fullest co-operation to Government in their effort to reduce prices; they readily agreed to Ayyangar's appeal in 1949 to a Compulsory Savings Scheme.

"It is only when the Government fails not only to reduce prices, but also to shield them from rising out of all proportion that they clamour for justice. Any impartial observer would agree that the railwaymen have shown exemplary patience and that their case is unanswerable.

"The present policy of the Government, however, with regard to this matter is utterly devoid of any guiding principle. The Central Pay Commission had recommended a basic Pay structure and scales of D. A. determined according to certain well defined principles. By their declaration of May 16, 1947 the Government of India accepted those recommendations and stated in regard to D. A., 'that a review will be made every six months and as recommended by the Commission, any variation of 20 points in the cost of living index upwards or downwards will necessitate a change in the allowance.' (Quotation from the Ministry of Finance Communique, January 1949).

"Employees of the Central Government, among them, railwaymen, are only demanding that the Government should honour its pledge. Since May 1947, there has not been a single six-monthly revision of D. A. as recommended by the C. P. C. and accepted by government"

After the Annual General Meeting at Rosa in 1950 a special General Meeting of the E. I. Railway Employees' Union was held at Jamalpur on March 30-31, 1951 to amend the Constitution and Rules of the Union under Presidentship of Jayaprakash Narayan. The amendments related to creation of the posts of Working President and Joint General Secretary. It was mutually agreed that the office of Working President would go to the group of Men's Union and that of Joint General Secretary to the Association (that is how the two groups of the Union were named then). It was also mutually agreed between the two groups that Sibnath Banerjee would be the Working President

and I myself as Joint General Secretary. P. K. Bose and Lucknow Branch wanted D. P. Joshi its President, to be the Working President. A whispering campaign continued. Branches of Lucknow Allahabad and Moradabad Divisions rallied round in favour of D. P. Joshi. D. P. Joshi belonged to P. S. P. and so was Sibnath Banerjee. Moreover D. P. Joshi was in charge of Jamalpur earlier and he rescued the Workshop organisation from the clutches of the communists. Jamalpur also supported D. P. Joshi. Thus D. P. Joshi was elected as Working President. Jayaprakashji knew his calibre and was very happy to see that his burden would be lessened. Thus a dynamic personality was introduced in the leadership of E. I. R. workers who led many struggles for subsequent years.

In the Annual General Meeting of the Union held at Rosa sometimes in 1950, Jayaprakash Narayan was re-elected as President. Sibnath Banerjee, Kiron Chowdhury and M. D. Dubey as Vice Presidents, P. C. Dasgupta as General Secretary, myself and Panchakari Banerjee as Assistant General Secretaries and P. N. Sengupta as Treasurer. After the creation of two more posts of Working President and Joint General Secretary D. P. Joshi and myself were elected and in the resultant vacancy of Assistant General Secretary, P. K. Bose Branch Secretary Lucknow was elected.

In the said special General Meeting at Jamalpur a terrible scuffle followed and tension increased between the two groups. As a matter of fact in all the meetings — Annual General, Central Council or Working Committee quarrels, mutual recriminations, allegations and counter-allegations were regular features. J. P.

who used to preside in most of the meetings was distressed but could not take sides. Even in the Praja Socialist Party camp of the Union there was a division — Sibnath Banerjee, Amalsh Majumder of Liluah, Chhoteylal of Jamalpur, Paritosh Banerjee and the group led by Calcutta Branch and Panchkari Banerjee on one side and D. P. Josi, Sri Krishna Sinha of Jamalpur, S. N. Pandey of Moghalsarai, Dulichand Shastri and Triyugi Narain Bajpai of Lucknow etc. were on the other. Myself and my group were of course supporters of D. P. Joshi.

Role of bureaucrats

Jayaprakash Narayan as President of the E. I. Railway Employees' Union, gave reasonable time to the Union. We had utilised his services for solving many problems. During his Presidentship he attended quite a few meetings between the Union and the General Manager — East Indian Railway, Kailash Behari Mathur, a reactionary bureaucrat was then General Manager. He curtailed a number of facilities enjoyed by the Union and held the view that a Railwayman is always a Railwayman and could not expect any immunity for his Trade Union activity done even beyond his duty hours. He was intolerant of any criticism of the Railway officers in general and their corrupt practices in particular. I am tempted to reproduce below the minutes of a meeting in this connection.

Minutes of the Meeting held between Kailash Behari Mathur, General Manager, E. I. R. and Sri Jayaprakash Narayan, President, E. I. Rly. Employees' Union on 29. 10. 1951.

Application of disciplinary action rules to employees for acts done by them

outside the hours of Railway duty and in their capacity as Trade Union officials.

Jayaprakash Narayan stated that in his opinion the Administration should have no right to haul up its employees under the Disciplinary Action Rules for their activities as Trade Union officials performed outside the hours of duty. For such activities they may be liable to legal but not departmental action.

The General Manager regretted that he could not agree with his view and he added that the Government employees at all times, whether or not he was on duty, was liable to disciplinary action even for matters, which were, strictly speaking not connected his employment.

Jayaprakash Narayan stated that the Union could not yield to this view, which strikes at the root of free trade unionism. It is the declared policy of the Government of the day to encourage the management of trade unions by workers themselves. If this policy is to be implemented, trade union officials have to be allowed immunity from the operation of departmental disciplinary action for acts performed beyond their duty hours.

Allegations of bribery and corruption was particularly mentioned by the General Manager, who also stated that it would be an impossible proposition if all staff were allowed to make allegations of bribery or corruption against their superiors in open meetings. The administration could not permit such activities being indulged in with impunity nor was the administration prepared to accept that only remedy lay in going to court.

Jayaprakash Narayan stated that in such cases the best course would be to

report them to the Union authorities for taking up with the individual concerned or in the alternative seek legal protection. In any case no other course of action would be open to the administration if the trade union official concerned happened to be a non-railwayman. It would be neither wise nor fair to treat the trade union officials in a different manner simply because he happened to be a railway employee. To do so would be encouraging inevitably the trade unions being placed wholly in the hands of outsiders, which, as already stated, is against the declared policy of the Government of the day.

As there was difference of opinion between the Administration and the Union, Jayaprakash Narayan intended to discuss the general question of policy involved in these matters with the Hon'ble Minister at the forth-coming meeting on the 9th November, '51.

It was also agreed that until then the enquiry in the case of Sri R. J. Tewari might be deferred.

Rights and privileges of the Union

The Union referred to their letter No. R/1 dated 28th August, 1951 and stated that certain rights and facilities enjoyed by them were of late being refused, simultaneously extending them to the other recognised union, namely, E.I. Railwaymen's Congress and wanted to know reasons for such differential treatment.

The General Manager stated that the denial of certain established rights and privileges for some time was due to the strike as well as political situation existing at the time .

Jayaprakash Narayan stated that it was unfair to mix up political issues with the Strike issue. As a matter of principle the strike situation did not justify withdrawal or curtailment of established rights and privileges of the Union in view of the fact that contemplated strike was never actually declared illegal by proper authorities.

Grant of special casual leave and leave against dues for organisational purposes of the Union

The General Manager assured that such leave would be granted as usual.

Holding of Union meetings in railway premises

The General Manager stated that instructions had been issued to Divisional Superintendents withdrawing the restrictions which were imposed some time ago on holding of such meetings and that under the existing instructions the Divisional Superintendents etc. were free to give permission when asked for. The Union stated that it had been the practice for them to hold meeting at certain places without obtaining specific permission and they desired that this privilege should continue. The General Manager explained the reasons for prior permission to be obtained. He requested the Union to furnish a list of places at which by practice meeting had been held without the Administration's insisting on the Union obtaining permission. He said that after scrutiny he would inform the Union if the Administration had any objection of such meetings at a certain place. Prior permission should, however, be taken in all other cases. In response to the latter it was agreed that the Union should give at least 3 days' clear time to

the Divisional Superintendents or other appropriate authorities to issue a permit for holding the proposed meeting and they would be instructed to give the reply within 3 days of the receipt of such a request. The Union officials might contact the Divisional Superintendents etc., by 'phone' if there was any delay in the issue of a reply.

The Union further stated that no place where meeting had been allowed to be held should now be declared unsuitable for the purpose. As an example they mentioned that it had been an age old practice for the union to hold meetings in the enclosed ground near the Tonga Stand at Allahabad station and the Administration should not raise objection on the ground that it caused disturbance to the Telegraph staff. The General Manager stated that he would personally visit the place and see for himself if the place is unsuitable. The Union desired one of their representative to accompany the General Manager to which he agreed.

Arising out of this the General Manager agreed that there was no objection to the Union officials using Railway telephones on Union business if necessary, except those installed in telephone exchange offices to which entry was prohibited.

Intimidation of the active workers of the Union

Apart from other types of intimidation that the Union workers were subjected to during the period of contemplated strike, it was pointed out by the union that in a number of cases active union workers had been transferred on the ground of "Administrative interest" without prior consultation with the Union, although

such consultation had agreed to previously by the General Manager. Matters were never elucidated further and the Union had reasons to believe that in some cases at least, there was no administrative interest involved. The Union desired that in such cases they should be taken into full confidence and an enquiry should be held where the Union felt necessary.

The General Manager explained that it was not possible to hold enquiry in every case and to give particular administrative reasons which necessitated a transfer, as in certain cases the reasons could not be divulged. This did not necessarily mean that the Administration had no confidence in the Union officials as such, and he assured that the Union's point of view will be accommodated wherever possible.

Exhibition of Union's progress etc. in the Railway periodicals

The Union wanted to know if there would be any difficulty in the present now to which the General Manager assured that there would be no difficulty.

Indifference to Union representations and refusal to meet Union representatives

The Union complained about their representations not being properly attended to and distinctions were made between the representations of the Railwaymen's Congress and those of the Union. It was also pointed out that in a number of cases the Administration refused to meet Union representatives to hold regular monthly meetings.

The General Manager stated that it is not the intention of the Administration to make any discrimination between the organisations and Divisional Superintendents.

etc. had been asked to deal Union representations with utmost consideration. He further explained that since it would not be feasible for the Divisional Superintendents to hold more frequent meetings with Union officials, he had instructed them to hold meeting once in two months.

The Union maintained that it was an agreed practice to hold such meetings monthly and they were not prepared to forego the right.

After some discussion, on request from the General Manager, the Union agreed to give the proposal a trial for the time being .

It was also agreed that :-

(i) the subjects put up for discussion by various branches of the Union within a Division should form a combined agenda to be dealt with at one meeting and if necessary such meeting should continue for more than one day until the agenda was fully gone through :

(ii) these periodic meetings would be held on fixed days in a month which would facilitate the preparation and submission of agenda in advance as it was desirable that the Union should forward the agenda at least 10 days ahead for study of the subjects by the administrator ;

(iii) question of policy along and matter of general interest should be put up at the formal periodic meetings with the Divisional Superintendents and individual cases would not be put up at such meetings unless it involved a matter of policy ;

(iv) such individual cases not involving a matter of policy or accepted principle

should be discussed with the Divisional Superintendents separately and not in the bi-monthly meetings :

(v) apart from these formal periodic meetings with the Divisional superintendents the existing orders did not prevent the Union officials from having contacts and discussions with the Divisional Personnel Officers or other Branch Officers when desired and the Divisional Superintendents would be informed that these would continue to be allowed as in the past ;

(vi) as regards meeting with the Dy. General Manager (Personnel) it was agreed that the practice followed hitherto, viz, Meetings being held as and when asked for by the Union would continue.

The Union complained that the Divisional Superintendents Moradabad and Asansol had held no meetings with the branches for 5 or 6 months. The General Manager stated that this complaint would be brought to the notice of the Divisional Superintendents.

Case of Tatanagore Mistries

Referring to the General Manager's D. O. letters No. AE 3633/250 of 1st October, '51 and 20th October, '51 to Jayaprakash Narayan, President of the Union, it was emphasised that the stand of the Union was absolutely clear in so far as their case had been for the protection of the 'status' of about 27 Tatanagore Mistries who did not opt for Tatas when the E. I. Railway workshops at Tatanagore was handed over to Messrs Tatas in 1945. The Union further suggested that the ends of justice would be met if 27 supernumerary posts of mistries could be created with a view to protect their status and thus solve this

long drawn dispute. While the Union accepted "errors and omissions must always be corrected whenever they are brought to notice" they maintained that this right was not unilateral. Since in the opinion of the Union the agreement reached by B. K. Mukherjee, the then General Secretary of E. I. Railwaymen's Union was wrong and not in the best interests of the workers, they had been pressing for the review of the whole case.

The general Manager in reply stated that what he meant by setting the dispute out of court was to put Kassem and Pandey back to duty without taking any disciplinary action to which they had made themselves liable by taking the case to a court of law without the permission of the Administration.

The Union pointed out that the court case was instituted by the Union and not by Kassem and Pandey and as such there was no cause for any disciplinary action being taken against them.

It was eventually agreed that the case would be discussed again and meanwhile the General Manager would review the matter in the light of the discussion now held.

Stoppage of work by Allahabad sweepers

Jayaprakash Narayan stated that by refusing to declare as dies-non the period of stoppage of work by Allahabad sweepers, the administration had taken recourse to an act of victimisation in view, particularly, of the commitment of the Divisional Superintendent made at the time of their resumption of work that "there would be no victimisation of any worker".

The General Manager felt that the matter was one for the Railway Board to

decide and suggested that Jayaprakash Narayan might discuss this case during his forthcoming visit to Delhi. Upon a further request, the General Manager agreed to consider about forwarding his suitable recommendations in regard to this case to the Railway Board."

Permanent Negotiating Machinery

As a result of negotiations after postponement of Strike decision in 1951 for two months, the Railway Ministry by its letter dated December 24, 1951 set up the Permanent Negotiating Machinery which was considered a landmark in the annuals of Trade Union right. The terms of Negotiating Machinery were already in existence for last few years on the East Indian Railway in a better form excepting the item of Arbitration consequent upon failure of negotiation. But it was really an improvement on trade union rights and channel of settlement of disputes to all other Railways excepting the East Indian Railway where it was curtailment of the existing facilities and subsequently Jayaprakash Narayan had to seek an assurance that the existing facilities would not be curtailed. The Permanent Negotiating Machinery started functioning with effect from January 1, 1952. The Machinery envisaged three tier negotiations (i) Meetings at the district / divisional / workshop level with the Branches of the recognised unions once in two months (The existing system on E. I. R. was monthly meetings) (ii) Meetings at the Headquarters level with the General Manager or his Senior Deputy General Manager in charge of staff one in a quarter (as against the existing monthly meetings with Dy. General Manager (Personnel) and Bimonthly meetings with the General Manager)

(iii) Quarterly meetings between Railway Board and AIRF to discuss a mutually agreed agenda (In the periodical meetings between AIRF and the Railway Board during the British period the agenda was not required to be mutually agreed) (iv) subjects within the powers of respective levels would be discussed at those levels and failing to arrive at a settlement at a particular level the issue might be referred to next level (v) Matters relating to promotion, transfer, discipline etc. of individual employees involving breach of accepted policy would be discussed at the discretion of the officers concerned (vi) On the failure to arrive at a negotiated settlement the issue might be referred to a Tribunal with consent of both parties (vii) Once an issue was mutually settled or by decision of the tribunal, the issue could not be raised for two years. The full text of the Permanent Negotiating Machinery as circulated by the Railway board on 24.12.1951 is as follows :-

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(Railway Board)**

No. E 51FEI- 22

New Delhi dated the 24th Dec' 51

To

**The General Managers and C. A. O. s.
Indian Railways.**

**Subject :- Setting up of a
Permanent Negotiating Machinery for
dealing with disputes between Railway
Labour and Railway Administrations.**

As you are aware, the Railway Board has had under consideration the question of setting up a Permanent Negotiating Machinery for dealing with disputes between Railway labour and Railway

Administrations. After discussions with labour, it has now been decided that a Permanent Machinery as described below should be set up for maintaining contact with labour and resolving disputes and differences which may arise between them and the Administration. These arrangements will come into force with effect from 1st January, 1952. Your attention is, in this connection, invited to the Press Communiqués issued by the Railway Board on the 10th November 1951, and the 1st December, 1951 from which you will observe that both the All India Railwaymen's Federation and the Indian National Railway Workers' Federation have agreed to the setting up of the machinery as proposed by the Board.

2. The machinery is envisaged in 3 tiers; one at the Railway level, the recognised unions having access to district/ divisional officers and subsequently to officers at the headquarters including the General Manager ; in the next tier, matters not settled at Railway level will be taken up by the respective Federations with the Railway Board; and at the third tier in cases in which agreement is not reached between the Federation and the Railway Board and the matters are of sufficient importance, reference will be made to an Ad hoc Railway Tribunal composed of representatives of the Railway Administration and labour presided over by a neutral Chairman.

3. The following detailed procedure is laid down for the working of the machinery referred to above :-

(i) At the district or divisional level, the District or Divisional Officers should meet the branches of the recognised unions

which may be established in the districts or divisions, at least once in two months and oftener if necessary. Each workshop will be considered as a district. The particular branches which should meet the District or Divisional Officers as prescribed above should be agreed upon between the General Manager and the Union. The detailed procedure of arranging these meetings should be agreed upon with the Union, but this should include a provision that the branch should supply in sufficient time before the meeting the subjects which it proposes to raise at the meeting with memoranda setting out its point of view. This would enable the District or Divisional Officer to examine the questions and be prepared to take part in a useful discussion.

(ii) At the Railway Headquarters, the General Manager or the Assistant Deputy General Manager in charge of staff will meet the unions at least once a quarter and oftener if necessary.

(iii) All disciplinary matters and subjects like promotion, transfer, etc. of individual members of the staff which do not involve any general principle will be excluded from the scope of the discussions at all these levels, except at the discretion of the officer concerned. Where, however, Unions have been given certain privileges in these matters, these will not ordinarily be curtailed. If, in an intergrated unit, there is disparity between the existing privileges in this matter and agreement cannot be reached with the Union on a uniform application of some procedure, the matter should be referred to the Railway Board for further instructions. Pending the receipt of these instructions, the general rules set out above should be followed.

(iv) At the district and railway levels, subjects will comprise these which are within the powers of the officers concerned.

(v) Questions concerning pay-scales, allowances, etc., will only be discussed between the Federations and the Railway Board and not at lower levels.

(vi) At the Centre, negotiations will be between the Railway Board and the two Federations and for this purpose, there will be quarterly meetings between the Railway Board and the Federations.

(vii) When a matter which is raised for discussion at the district level not settled by agreement it may be raised at the Railway level, for further negotiation. Similarly, a matter not settled at the Railway may be brought up by the Federations to the Railway Board for discussion.

(viii) All subjects brought up for discussion at the various levels should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible.

(ix) If after discussions between the Railway Board and the Federations, agreement is not reached between the two sides on any matters of importance, such matters may be referred to an ad hoc Railway Tribunal which will be set up for dealing with them at the Centre. This Tribunal will consist of an equal number of representatives of Railway labour and the Railway Administration with a neutral Chairman. The Tribunal will be enabled to make such investigations as they deem necessary before they give their decision. The detailed procedure which the Tribunal should adopt for conducting its proceeding and submitting its decision has not yet been drawn up; this will

appropriately be dealt with when the Tribunal is set up for the first time.

(x) It would be open to Government to accept, reject or modify the decision of the Tribunal and where the matters in dispute affect the workers under Ministries other than the Railway Ministry, these Ministries will be consulted as to :-

(a) whether they have any objection to the disputes being referred to the Railway Tribunal; or.

(b) whether they would like the dispute to be referred to an Ad hoc Commission on which they will also be represented.

(xi) On matters which have been settled by agreement or in which Government ultimately accept the decision of the Tribunal it will not be open to the Federation to raise the same issues again for a period of two years. In those cases in which government have rejected or modified the decision of the Tribunal, the issue may be raised at the end of one year.

4. The Board will be glad if you will take the necessary steps to establish this machinery to enable it to start functioning from 1. 1. 1952. They may also be advised when the machinery starts to function and be supplied with copies of any detailed instructions which you may issue.

5. Certain amendments to the disciplinary rules have also been agreed upon. A separate communication will be sent to you in regard to these.

DA/NIL

Sd/-
R. Srinivasan,
Deputy Director
Establishment Railway Board.

No. E61FEI-22 New Delhi dated
the 24th December 1951

Copy forwarded to :-

(i) The General Secretary, A.I.R.F/
I.N.R.W.F. with 22 spare copies.

(ii) The Secretaries, Home, Defence,
Labour, W. H. S. Communications,

Commerce & Industry and Transport
Ministries; for information.

Sd/-
R. Srinivasan,
Deputy Director Establishment
Railway Board.

The India Railway Enquiry Committee with Hriday Nath Kunzru as Chairman recommended inter alia that the regrouping of Railways be deferred at least for 5 Years. After partition of India and with the integration of Princely State Railways, the Ministry felt that Regrouping of Railways was necessary. Instead of a proper Regrouping of railways in the interest of the country on a scientific and workable basis they pushed through the scheme on political considerations. A study of the regrouping stage by stage, would show how a Pioneer Railway, East Indian Railway was only butchered whereas all other class I Railways were allowed to remain intact. The shrewd antilabour bureaucrat Railway Minister Gopalswamy Ayyangar was the architect of the regrouping and he regrouped the Indian Railway originally in 6 zonal Railways viz (1) Northern (2) Western (3) Central (4) Southern (5) Eastern and (6) North Eastern with jurisdiction he himself changed several times at least for the Eastern and his successors increased the number to 9 adding (7) South Eastern Railway (8) North East Frontier Railway and (9) South

Central Railway. Memorandum circulated by the Government of India in this regard in June 1950 is as follows :

Regrouping of Railways

"The existing railway administrations have grown up haphazardly, owing to historical reasons. The Company system had originally been formed more or less on accidental considerations. Often, the main consideration was financial. There has been a persistent demand for nationalisation and regrouping of the existing systems. So long as all the major railways had not come under State Management, this was not possible. The Railways of Indian States cutting across the other Railway Administrations, like that of the Nizam's State Railway, was another serious obstacle to nationalisation, as also the existence of various small Railway administrations owned and controlled by the Rulers of Indian States.

2. The partition of India in August 1947 involved the breaking up of the old North Western Railway and the Bengal Assam Railway and India has been left with rumps of these systems in the Eastern Punjab Railway and the Assam Railway which cannot, in any case, continue as economic and self-sufficient units. The final integration of the Indian States from 1st April 1950, has removed the major obstacle towards regrouping. The time is, therefore, fully ripe for re-organising the Indian Railways on a rational basis.

3. The Railway Board have been considering this question for the past many months and have reached tentative conclusions. They realise, however, that the question is of such great importance that no final decision should be taken

without giving the country and all interests concerned in railway transport, ample opportunities for consideration and comment. The tentative scheme is, therefore, being released to the State Governments, the various Chambers of Commerce, the Railway Labour Organisations and the public, with the request that their considered views may be sent to the Railway Board before 31st August, 1950.

4. The main principles underlying the tentative scheme are four-fold:

(1) Every Railway Administration should serve, as far as possible as a compact region.

(2) It should be large enough to provide a Headquarters organisation of the highest calibre, capable of following and assimilating up-to-date improvements in railway techniques and equipment, with adequate Workshop facilities, and statistical, training and research institutions.

(3) The regrouping should cause the minimum dislocation in the existing arrangements and should be so phased as to prevent any kind of dislocation of even temporary diminution of the quality of efficiency of Railway service.

(4) While the existing proposals do not indicate the nature of the internal administration of each group, viz, whether it should be on a Divisional or District system, it is not proposed to adopt any dogmatic attitude in the matter and the vital necessity of causing minimum dislocation will also govern the decision of this important issue.

(5) The total route mileage of the Indian Railway is of the order of 33,000. It is

proposed to divide this into six Zones of administration with regard to the factors mentioned above. The Zones proposed will be as follows :

Zone 1 - Northern Railway

It will consist of the E. P. Railway, the Western portion of the E. I. Railway: between Lucknow-Kanpur and Delhi-Saranpur, Metre Gauge portion of the BB & CI Railway between Agra and Kanpur, and the O. T. Railway, west of Chapra.

Zone 2 - Western Railway

It will consist of the Metre Gauge portion of the BB & CI Railway except Kanpur-Agra section and the States Railways of Saurashtra, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Rajasthan and Cutch. In this Zone, consideration has been given to the development needs of Kandla Port and the business and economic connections of Saurashtra, etc. with Rajasthan.

Zone 3 - Central Railway

It will consist of the Broad Gauge section of the BB & CI Railway, major portion of G. T. P. Railway, Scindia and Dholpur State Railways. In this Zone, not only the alternative from the major port of Bombay to Northern India, but also the lines of communication between Bombay and the industrial areas around it, have been placed under one administration.

Zone 4 - Southern Railway

It will consist of S.I. Railway both Broad Gauge and Metre Gauge, major portion (Broad Gauge) and entire portion (Metre Gauge) of M & S.M. Railway and the entire Mysore Railway. Both geographically and from Railway operating point of view, grouping together of all the Southern Railways is the ideal arrangement.

Zone 5 - Eastern Railway

It will consist of N. S. Railway, portion of the G. I. P. and M & S. M Railway and B. N. Railway excluding the coalfield area of Bengal and Bihar and Howrah-Kharagpur Section

Zone 6 -North Eastern Railway

It will consist of the E. I. Railway east of Lucknow -Kanpur, the coal field area of Bihar and Bengal, at present with B. N. Railway, Howrah -Kharagpur- Section, O. T. Railway, east of Chapra and the Assam Railway including the Assam Rail link and the Darjeeling - Himalayan Railway"

In April 1951 the Southern Railway was formed and in November 1951 the Central and Western Railways were formed leaving only three more zones to be formed in pursuance of the regrouping scheme. The Railway Board circulated another memorandum for opinion of all concerned which reads as follows :

"The views of important administrative and other interests on the Railway Board tentative scheme of regrouping, raised the desirability of making some changes in some of the Zones. The incorporation of these certain changes in the formation of Central and Western Railways such as the inclusion of the Nizam's State Railway instead of the Eastern Railway and the inclusion of the Broad Gauge section of the former BB and CI Railway and the exclusion of the Jodhpur and Bikaner Railways from the Western Railway, led to consequent modifications in the regrouping of the remaining Railways. In order to indicate clearly the details of the pattern of regrouping to be completed, the Railway Board has finalized, for the consideration of the Central Adminis-

Council for Railways, their scheme for all the last three Zones. The new Railways will be known as Northern Railway, the North Eastern Railway and the Eastern Railway.

2. The Northern Railway will have its Headquarters at Delhi and will comprise of the following lines :-

(1) The entire Eastern Punjab Railway.

(2) The old Oudh & Rohilkhand Railway portion of the East Indian Railway, represented by the present Moradabad and Lucknow Divns.

(3) The Jodhpur and Bikaner Metre Gauge Railways, and

(4) The Delhi - Rewari - Fazilka Section of the former Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway, which has been temporarily retained in the Western Railway.

3. The North Eastern Railway will have its Headquarters at Calcutta and will be formed by the amalgamation of the following lines :

(1) The entire Oudh - Trihut Railway.

(2) The entire Assam Railway.

(3) The Fategarh Traffic - District of the former Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway, which has been temporarily retained in the Western Railway.

(4) The following Broad Gauge Sections of the East Indian Railway:

(a) The Sealdah Division of the East Indian Railway.

(b) Khana - Jamalpur Loop (excluding Jamalpur), and

(c) Bandel -Barharwa, Bandel - Naihati and Naihati - Azimganj.

4. The Eastern Railway will have its Headquarters at Calcutta and will be made

up of the following lines :

(1) The entire Bengal - Nagpur Railway.

(2) The remaining portions of the East Indian Railway.

For reasons of operational convenience, the Allahabad - Phaphamau - Unao (excluding Unao) and Moghalsarai-Benaras (including Benaras) Section of the present Lucknow Division will be retained in the Eastern Railway.

5. The route mileages of the three Railways as thus regrouped will be as follows :

Zones proposed	B.G.	M.G.	N.G.	Total
1. Northern Railway	3,132	1,999	128	5,259
2. North Eastern Railway	774	4,692	91	5,557
3. Eastern Railway	4,680	—	929	5,609
4. Southern Railway	1,755	4,142	102	5,999
5. Central Railway	4,091	744	564	5,399
6. Western Railway	1,266	3,365	792	5,423

6. As regards the internal organisation of the three Railways, the policy evolved in connection with the formation of the three Zones already completed has been steadily followed. That policy has been to adopt to the prevailing organisational features of the constituent units, so as to facilitate a smooth transition, to cause the least disturbances to operation, and to reduce the movement of staff to the minimum. The proposed internal organisation of each of the new Railways has, therefore assimilated into a working pattern the existing set up of the different constituents.

7. On the Northern Railway, while Delhi, Ferozepore, Moradabad and Lucknow Divisions will continue to function as at present, the Bikaner and Jodhpur Railways will be formed, respectively, into two Divisions. The Delhi - Fazilka Section will be merged into the Bikaner Division.

8. On the North Eastern Railway, the metre gauge lines to start with will be divided into three Regions, one Region located at Pandu, being responsible for the Assam Railway portion, and the two remaining Regions located at Gorakhpur, being responsible for the remaining metre gauge portions. The existing Sealdah Division will continue to work as a Division after taking over the Broad Gauge portions from the East Indian Railway, as referred to earlier. Eventually, the entire Railway is proposed to be organised into three regions.

9. On the Eastern Railway, the Allahabad and Dinapore Divns. (apart from minor additions necessitated by the absorption of the Allahabad- Phaphamau-Unao and Moghalsarai - Benaras Sections respectively) will continue to function as at present. The present Howrah Division will similarly take over the Chakradharpore District and a portion of the Kharagpur district of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. The remaining portion of the Bengal- Nagpur Railway, viz the Bilaspur, Nainpur and Waltair Districts, along with a part of the Kharagpur District will be constituted into a Region.

The Headquarters of this region is proposed to be located in a central place like Bilaspur or Raipur. But as the required accommodation at either of these places is not immediately available, the Regional

Traffic Superintendent only will be stationed at one of these places, for the present, the two other Regional officers working from Kharagpur.

10. The principal features of the scheme are indicated below :

(1) The formation of each of the new Zones proceeds on the principle of amalgamating small independent lines and well - defined portions of the existing Railways in contiguous areas into self - sufficient systems, serving a compact region having economic unity and natural affinities of trade and flow of traffic.

(2) Six out of seven Railways affected by the regrouping are merged into the three Zones in toto. Thus, the Bikaner, Jodhpur and Eastern Punjab Railways are merged as they are at present in the Northern Zone. This entire mileage of the Assam and Oudh-Trihut Railways is similarly included in the North Eastern Zone. The Bengal-Nagpur is observed as it stands at present in the Eastern Zone. Whereas, in the original scheme, both the East Indian and Oudh-Trihut Railways were to be divided. In the present proposal, only the East Indian Railway is affected by certain adjustments, viz. the transfer to the Northern Railway of the old Oudh & Rohilkhand Railway portion, amalgamated with the East Indian Railway in 1923, and that to the North Eastern Railway of the Sealdah Division, which was added after the partition of

the Bengal-Assam Railway in 1947.

- (3) All the Bengal, Bihar and Central India Coal Fields, the ore despatching and receiving areas, the iron and steel industry, and other complementary manufacturing industries will be served by a single Railway Administration instead of by two different Administrations as at present.
- (4) Similarly, the bulk of the traffic, such as Tea, Jute and Timber from Assam, North Bihar and North Bengal towards Calcutta and coal, iron and steel manufactures and imported goods from Calcutta side will be dealt with throughout by a single Railway Administration as at present.
- (5) Although Gorakhpur will not be the Headquarters of the North Eastern Railway, the two Regions as well as certain sections of the Headquarters office proposed to be located there, will almost wholly absorb the ministerial staff now working at Gorakhpur.

(11) In view of the modifications made in the tentative plan of the Railway Board for the Northern, North Eastern and Eastern Railways, the outline of the final scheme is being circulated to the State Governments, Chambers of Commerce, Railway Labour Organisations and other public bodies, with the request to communicate, before January 31, 1952, their views, which will then be given careful consideration before the final scheme is placed for the approval of the Central Advisory Council for Railways."

- (1) The Headquarters of the North

Eastern Railway should be located at Gorakhpur.

- (2) The Allahabad of the East Indian Railway should be included in the Northern Railway.
- (3) The question whether the Sealdah Division, which is a Broad gauge section of the existing East Indian Railway should be included in the Eastern Railway or attached to the North Eastern Railway, to be decided after Railway Minister's discussion of the issue with the Chief Minister of West Bengal Government and the Defence authorities of the Government of India.
- (4) The Headquarters of the Northern Railway should be at Delhi, as proposed by the Railway Board.

This was also the last sitting of the Central Advisory Council for Railways."

A tremendous agitation was built up locally by the Calcutta Head Quarter Branch of the Union against shifting of any Railway Headquarter from Calcutta. A powerful committee was formed with eminent members of the public like Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee as President, Dr. Nalinakshya Sanynal as Secretary, and Jyoti Basu, Soumendra Nath Thakur, Subodh Banerjee etc. and Railwaymen's representatives like Panchkari Banerjee, Sankar Lal Mukherjee, Bishnupada Ray Chowdhury, Kiron Chowdhury (E.I.R.) Nil Krishna Sarkar and Bhaben Choudhary (N. R.) as members. The Committee held a seminar in the university Institute in which the aforesaid and other eminent political leaders took part. Dr. B.C. Roy the then Chief Minister was convinced about the Justness of the demands. When

the All India Congress Committee Meeting was being held in South Calcutta, a rally of about 20,000 Railwaymen of Eastern and South Eastern Railways marched from Shahid Minar to the venue of A. I. C. C. to present a memorandum and protest. Police stopped the procession at the junction of Rash Behari Avenue and Russa Road. The Railwaymen dispersed when an assurance came from Nehru that he would meet the representatives of the Railwaymen in Delhi. The movement continued for months together. On the call of the committee there was a total strike and the Rail movement in West Bengal was completely stopped on May 7, 1952.

At the level of the East Indian Railway, the central council meeting of the union held at Dehra Dun on 20-23 April 1952 gave a call of "No Truncation of East Indian Railway" and formed the following Committee of Action : -

- (1) Sri Jayaprakash Narayan - President.
- (2) " D. P. Joshi - Working President.
- (3) " Sibnath Banerjee - Vice President.
- (4) " M. D. Dubey - Vice President.
- (5) " P. C. Das Gupta-General Secretary.
- (6) " R. C. Chakravarty-Jt. General Secretary
- (7) " P. K. Bose-Asst. General Secretary.
- (8) " R. N. Roy-Asstt. General Secretary.
- (9) " P. N. Sen Gupta- Treasurer.
- (10) " S. D. Saxena (Moradabad Division)
- (11) " D. S. Misra (Lucknow Division)
- (12) " Lalji Malaviya (Allahabad Division)
- (13) " S. L. Bhardwaj (Dinapore Division)
- (14) " P. Dayal (Dhanbad Division)
- (15) " N. Banerjee (Asansol Division)
- (16) " P. K. Mukherjee (Howrah Division)

- (17) " S. P. Tewari (Lucknow Workshops).
- (18) " R. A. Singh (Jamalpur workshops)
- (19) " K. Bhattacharjee (Lillooah Workshops)
- (20) " Ganesh Das (Signal Shop, Howrah)

A fierce movement was built up through out the East Indian Railway and demonstrations, processions and gatherings were held in every important station of the Railway. It was felt that the division of E. I. R. could be averted.

Nehru kept his promise and met a delegation of the union on 11th April 1952. A memorandum justifying 'No truncation of East Indian Railway' in the context of regrouping of Railways in the Northern, North Eastern and Eastern Zones was handed over to the Prime Minister who assured to look into the matter and get the memorandum examined by the Railway Minister. Another memorandum was also given to all the members of the Parliament subsequently. Unfortunately, the regrouping was made more by political and provincial considerations than by the scientific Basis of efficient operation. In their anxiety to serve and oblige the top personalities like Govind Ballabh Pant and the faithful civilian Gopalswami Ayyenger, the Railway Board made several changes even at the last moment. Govind Balladh and his associates in Uttar Pradesh felt that the interest of Uttar Pradesh men would be better served and employment potentiality would increase by truncation of E. I. R. and attaching the portion of the Railway beyond-Moghalsarai with Northern Railway along with the Head quarter of the N. E. Railway at Gorakhpur. He let

loose sentiments and it worked. Within a short period the movement failed and a national object was lost.

The memorandum of the Union given to the members of the Parliament read as follows : -

MEMORANDUM OF E.I. RAILWAY EMPLOYEES UNION

Justifying "No Truncation of East Indian Railway" in the Context of Regrouping of Railways in the Northern, North Eastern and Eastern Zones

"After a very careful consideration this meeting is of opinion that retention of East Indian Railway as a single operating unit is justified in the greater economic, operational and national interests of the country and in the context of the area served, route mileage, equipment, volume of traffic, number of employees and financial aspects, East Indian Railway system as a single operating unit is most effective." - (Extract from the resolution adopted at the Central Council meeting of the East Indian Railway Employees' Union held at Dehra Dun on the 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd April, 1952).

2,10,000 East Indian Railwaymen are determined to resist this irrational regrouping, in the name of which attempts are being made to divide East Indian Railway into three parts - a phenomenon unparalleled in the history of zonalisation of Indian Railways and thereby breaking up a system of Railway which has been held to be the premier Railway in India and which is to be retained as a single operating unit in the larger interests of the country.

As a result of this attempt has been made in this

memorandum to show that this "No truncation of East Indian Railway" demand is justified from the standpoint of a correct, rational and scientific approach to the problem of regrouping.

2. Since the integration of O. R. R. Section with East Indian Railway in 1925, the improvement in operational efficiency has proved conclusively the prime importance of the East Indian Railway having direct operational control over traffic moving above Moghal Sarai via both the routes as expressed in the views of Railway Experts and High Power committees.

3. Those who are fully conversant with the operation of the voluminous traffic over the East Indian Railway (15,000 wagons in each direction) and the day-to-day control exercised from the Headquarters to ease off the movements which are so very vital not only for coal trades but for movements of merchandise traffic and empty wagons cannot but view the dismemberment of the East Indian Railway at Moghal Sarai as a very great blunder. Several Railwaymen like Sir Robert H. G. Clement Hindley, Sir Philip Acworth and many others deposed before the Acworth Committee in 1921 and explained the difficulties experienced by them in moving the traffic above Moghal Sarai.

4. The Late Sir Robert H. G. Clement Hindley in his evidence before the Committee referring to the Railway Board's refusal to agree to the doubling of Allahabad to Tundia said -

"The reason that the Railway Board gave for refusing the sanction to that was that any surplus traffic which we had could be diverted to Oudh and

Rohilkhand Railway at Moghal Sarai." (vide page 172 Vol. III Minutes of Evidence - Acworth Committee, 1921).

5. Sir Clement Hindley in his evidence deposed -

"It might be advantageous if the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway were attached to the East Indian Railway for administration purpose and he thought that it would be quit feasible to work it from Calcutta." (vide page 42, Vol. III Minutes of Evidence - Acworth Committee, 1921).

6. The Acworth Committee while suggesting state management of Railways recommended as follows -

" In the case of the East Indian Railway there is another reason in favour of direct state management. For hundreds of miles in the north-west from Ambala roughly to Allahabad, the main line of the East Indian is parallel with the main line of the Oudh and Rohilkhand State Railway. Both lines are at present overcrowded and inadequately equipped to deal with the traffic offering. If they are combined together and worked as a single system they would be at least less inadequate as though traffic could be diverted from one to the other according to the greater or less demands on either for the accommodation of local traffic. " - (vide page 67 paragraph 224 Vol. I - Report of Acworth Committee 1921). was accepted by the Government of India and implemented in 1925.)

7. The Kunzru Committee (Railway Enquiry Committee) expressed a very definite opinion on this subject as follows-

"The first essential, therefore, is that the East Indian Railway must remain a thoroughly efficient unit and that its

limits should be such as would enable it to discharge its responsibilities fully. The magnitude of this movement is already such as to require the working of the Grand Chord line continuously up to its maximum capacity and this traffic, we believe, will increase. We therefore regard it as essential that the East Indian Railway must continue to control not only Moghal Sarai which is the focal point for the reception of coal from the coalfields and the distribution to upper India but also the working of lines for some considerable distance to the West and north-West of Moghal Sarai. This will give the Railway such holding capacity as will obviate any temporary congestion at junctions with the other Railways or at main terminals such as Allahabad, Kanpur and Lucknow causing congestion at Moghal Sarai and so reacting on the working of the Grand Chord. " (vide page 196 paragraph 216-Kunzru Committee Report, 1947).

8. It is in this context that East Indian Railway has marched from ~~progress to~~ progress since 1925. It must be understood that large-scale transport operation on any Railway system requires adequate field of operation. East Indian Railway has to be responsible for movement of the biggest traffic in goods and coal and unless this system is allowed to have adequate area of operation no amount of camouflage and make - shift arrangement will enable to discharge its responsibility. Loading of over 4,000 wagons daily in coal and goods need an area which will permit of the requisite number empties to pour into the system and allow of corresponding balancing of loaded train movement. If this aspect of transport movement is only realised the ~~present~~ proposals would never be made to cripple a system and handicap it by disrupting

the balance of movement which is so essential for successful operation. Grouping of Railways without taking into consideration this basic requirement, to say the least, is absurd and it is pity that the sound and accepted principles laid down by the Ministry of Railways themselves in paragraph 22 of their memorandum on the formation of the Southern zones have not been applied in the case of the present proposals of grouping of Northern, North Eastern and Eastern Railways.

9. "A little detail regarding what happened in the past and is happening day-to-day on East Indian Railway in the matter of transport operation will make the position clearer still.

10. "During the quarter of century the East Indian Railway had carefully studied the facilities required via both the routes for the anticipated traffic moving from the coal-fields and below or above Moghal Sarai. The section Kanpur to Tundla on the Allahabad Division was doubled leaving Allahabad -Kanpur section as a single line which carries all the Up and Down Passenger trains, all up-wards trains and about 25 per cent of the down goods trains. On the Lucknow Division some additional facilities had been provided for the movement of traffic between Moghal Sarai and Lucknow and on the Moradabad Division, the section Luknow to Bareilly had been doubled and increased facilities provided on the Moradabad-Ghaziabad section. These facilities on Allahabad, Lucknow and Moradabad Divisions together enabled the East Indian Railway administration with rigid day-to-day scrutiny not only to maintain a steady flow of coal and general merchandise traffic from sections whenever required

but these have also been helpful in regulating day-to day flow of empties over Allhabad, Moradabad and Lucknow Divisions through Moghal Sarai into coal-fields. These improved facilities more than anything else enabled the East Indian Railway administration to maintain a very high standard of efficiency which has been duly recognized by the trade, commerce and the public. The anticipations of the Experts were thus fully realized on the amalgamation of Oudh and Rohikhand Railway with East Indian Railway.

11. East Indian Railway has been the premier Railway in India. From 1947 to 1952 there has been a steady improvement in operational efficiency, economy, volume of traffic, standard of service rendered to the travelling public. From the empty wagon figures of 900 in 1947, it has come up to 1,500 each way ; from goods loading figure of 2,000 in 1947 it has come up to 5,000. It is the only Railway where there is free loading, where there is no priority system. First come first served has been the motto. Tremendous improvement in coal transport has been a hallmark in East Indian railway's history. From the empty wagon figure of 1,900 it has come up to 29,571. Appended below are a few relevant figures to show the composite efficiency of the East Indian Railway.

12. Passenger miles (millions) summary traffic handled and earnings during 1950-51 compared with 1949-50-

Year	Broad Gauge	Narrow Gauge	Total
1949-50	8,313.78	5.70	8,319.48
1950-51	8,545.27	8.98	8,554.25

(Difference increase plus 234.77 and percentage variation increase plus 2.82).

13. Net earnings.- The capital outlay on the East Indian Railway System and the net return on capital for the last five years are shown in the following statement. (Figures in Lakhs).

Year	Capital outlay at the end of the year	Net earnings	Percentage of net earnings on capital outlay
1946-47 ...	1,59,24.25	-3,42.64	-2.25
1947-48 ...	1,77,95.29	(a)	(a)
1948-49 ...	1,90,41.40	-11.94	-0.6
1949-50 ...	1,93,93.71	+ 5,89.79	+ 3.04
1950-51 ...	1,96,32.40	(a)	(a)

(a) Not available.

Operating Ratio: An increase of .33 per cent in the gross earnings offset by increase of 2.81 per cent in the working expenses including, appropriation to Depreciation Reserve Fund resulted in the operating ratio being enhanced to 82.13 from 80.14 per cent in 1949-50. Due to the regrouping in the present shape this ratio will go up further to 87.5.

14. There has been record improvement in regard to ton-miles and wagon miles, goods train loads, goods train speeds. The engine miles per day per engine on line and the engine miles per day per engine in use for the 1950-51 are 63 and 89 respectively.

15 Goods Stock. -Coal and goods loading - Appended below is a statement showing coal and goods loading during the last 6 years including 1950-51.

Year	Coal	Goods	Total
1945-46 ...	690,452	603,611	1,294,063
1946-47 ...	674,252	482,486	1,516,738
1947-48 ...	628,633	485,661	1,114,294
1948-49 ...	669,419	608,475	1,277,894
1949-50 ...	782,158	678,410	1,460,568
1950-51 ...	753,098	697,827	1,450,925

It will be observed from the figures quoted above that though there was a decline in the coal loading figures during the year 1950-51 in comparison with the figures of the previous year, there was a considerable increase in the goods loading figures during 1950-51 as compared with that of 1949-50. The total coal and goods loading figures during the year 1950-51 even surpassed considerably the total loading during 1945-46 which is reckoned as one of the best years of performances but is slightly less than the figures of 1949-50. The percentage of increase in coal and goods loading during 1950-51 over 1945-46 is 12.1. This is significant.

16. There has been a steady improvement in wagon turn-round.

	1948-49	1949-50	1950-51
March	10.0	9.5	9.1

17. Fuel Economy : Locomotive coal consumption—The rate of coal consumption during the year 1950-51 under "Passenger and proportion of mixed" was 214.4 lb. per thousand gross ton-miles as against 228.1 lb. per thousand gross ton-miles during the year 1949-50. The results for 1950-51 show a decrease of 13.7 lb. per thousand gross ton-miles.

18. "Goods and proportion of mixed" was 147.9 lb per 1,000 gross ton-miles against 152.3 lb. per 100 gross ton-miles during the year 1949-50. The results show a decrease of 4.4 lb. per 1,000 gross ton-miles or approximately 3 per cent over the corresponding figures of 1949-50. (Figures pertaining to other Railways have been given in Appendix 'A'.)

19. After the partition East Indian Railway was the worst affected Railway. 80 per cent of the Loco Running Staff had opted for Pakistan. A stage was reached as if train running would come to standstill. But that severe shock has been absorbed: we have turned the corner: halted the crisis and have steadily moved towards progress.

With the annexation of Sealdah Division with East Indian Railway after partition in 1947 a new chapter in operational efficiency was opened up. The conflicts between the East Indian Railway and Bengal Assam Railway for dealing with Calcutta Dock traffic vanished, as soon as the whole movement came under one uniform co-ordinated control. It was realized that this area with a very high density of traffic could be better served by one Railway system since conflicts were eliminated, interchange points between the two Railways involving heavy expenditure and detentions to stock could be abolished and the system started working smoothly.

Although the bulk of the traffic from coal-fields to Calcutta Docks area passes via the Willingdon Bridge and the Calcutta Chord Railway, on account of operational reasons adjustments have to be made for diversions of this traffic via Bandel and the Jubilee Bridge to Naihati. This freedom of movement of Calcutta Dock traffic was gained with the annexation of Sealdah Division by East Indian Railway. Apart from these traffic to the Assam Railway over and across the new Assam Rail Link has been much accelerated.

20. Traffic to the Assam Railway over and across the New Assam Rail

Link. -- Movements to and from Assam Railway stations including those over and across the New Assam Link on various accounts via Sakrigali-Manihari Ghat, Bhagalpur and Mokameh Ghat continued to be regulated as per quotas allocated by the Assam Rail Link movements Committee. During the year under review, altogether 17,181 wagons, made up of 8,730 wagons of coal and 8,451 wagons of general merchandise, were loaded and despatched. Some of these wagons were cleared as follows--

- (a) 2,679 wagons of coal by 49 block rakes, and
- (b) 3,690 wagons of general merchandise by 76 special trains.

The balance wagons were cleared piecemeal.

This brought the total number of wagons loaded and despatched over the Assam Rail Link between 31st December 1949 to 31st March 1951 to 22,073 wagons, consisting of 11,099 wagons of general merchandise and 10,974 wagons of coal. Of these, 5,160 wagons of general merchandise were cleared by 100 special trains and 3,782 coal wagons were cleared by 69 block rakes.

21. This efficiency in operation and sound management in East Indian Railway which in the opinion of the Hon'ble Railway Minister from "the paramount considerations in the administration of Railway" did not evolve in a day. It has been the result of the working of an integrated system for the last 27 years in which the officers and workers of this Railway have worked steadily with a well laid out plan and scheme. They have settled themselves to the intricacies, and

complexities of this Railway. Through a process of adjustments in a wide operational sphere, constant watch and co-operation, intimate acquaintance with workers and their tools and finally mutual understanding and harmony, this Railway has come to this glorious chapter of its history. Has there been any necessity to truncate this Railway and cripple it operationally? Does not this Railway satisfy the considerations which go to determine the optimum size of a Railway system in the context of (a) area served (b) route mileage (c) equipment (d) volume of traffic (e) number of employees (f) financial aspect?

22. In the memorandum on the formation of the Southern zone, the Railway Ministry very rightly said that to determine the optimum size of a Railway system six aspects require consideration,

- (1) Area served
- (2) Route mileage
- (3) Equipment
- (4) Volume of traffic
- (5) Number of employees
- (6) Financial aspect.

23. In the above context, retaining East Indian Railway as it is and accepting the logic of a seventh zone, the picture is as below—

Area	Number of employees	Route mileage	Equipment	Volume of traffic	Finance
(1) Southern	...	5,999	...	3,000	...
(2) Western	1,50,000	5,660	...	3,000	...
(3) Central	2,10,000	5,428	...	5,000	...
(4) Northern (E. P. Jodhpur and Bikaner).	...	3,963	...	...	...
(5) North Eastern	...	5,305	...	...	...
(6) Eastern (only EIR)	2,10,000	4,380	...	8,695	10.91
(7) South Eastern (BNR)	1,07,605	3,388	...	4,290	5.33

24. In proposing the zones, the Railway Board apparently divided the total route mileage of Indian Railways into six almost equal divisions ranging from 5,364 to 56,000. In the matter of area served, volume of traffic and number of employees each zone varies very widely. The financial aspect has only been considered from the angle of present day earning. No details have prepared of the cost of the regrouping and how this might react on the economy of the zones concerned. In paragraph 116 of the Memorandum on the formation of the Northern, North Eastern and Eastern zones the Ministry said "the results of detailed investigation which will be undertaken prior to and during the process of regrouping have to be awaited before the total economies from the unification may be estimated". This is an unfortunate position in a business organization. We believe, that the normal course of reorganization of any major undertaking,

is to go into details of economies expected. No estimate appears to have been prepared even of the office and residential staff, accommodation and also of the alterations in workshop facilities which might easily cost 10 to 15 crores of rupees and the expenditure of this nature would be unthinkable without full justification being established beyond all doubts. But, here, because the Railways have got financial autonomy, the Ministry is able to launch into schemes without preparing detailed estimates and full financial justification. On this ground alone on further implementation of regrouping should have been taken without waiting for results of the regrouping of the three already done in April and November, 1951.

25. Operational setback that will emanate from the truncation of East Indian Railway.— If in the circumstances the East Indian Railway is cut at Moghal Sarai, the most important work of this regulation of traffic above Moghal Sarai will devolve on another railway with Headquarters at Delhi. By no stretch of imagination it can be argued that the Operating Head of Northern Railway will be in a position to visualize the flow of traffic from the coal-fields upwards and will survey the different directional movements of loaded traffic and regulate and flow of empties with the much of precision and give a true appreciation of the position to the Operating Head of the Eastern Railway before Mid-day everyday as so to enable the latter to fix his daily loading programme---coal and merchandise. Telephonic advices will be of no avail and a great deal of uncertainty will prevail on this very important issue. If such an experiment is made, it is not

only doomed to failure but it will very greatly destroy the operational advantages built after years of experience.

26. Moghal Sarai yard has the capacity to handle the maximum of 30 goods trains daily in each direction with approximately 1,500 wagons passing each way. The Grand Chord (Sitarampur - Gaya-Moghal Sarai) works to the maximum capacity of 19 through goods trains each way and the main line below Moghal Sarai (Patna) six daily. The Allahabad route takes about 12 and the Lucknow route 13 trains daily from Moghal Sarai. The line capacity via the Allahabad route is limited by the single line section between Allahabad and Kanpur, and the single line section between Tundla and Ghaziabad. Enough facilities, however, exist for maintaining free flow of traffic via Chheoki, Lucknow and Agra area, but limited facilities are available for Ghaziabad traffic via the Allahabad route.

27. Facilities on the Lucknow route permit of working train loads of 72 wagons as against 60 via the Allahabad route. Both the routes are inter-dependent and it is not infrequent to adjust Lucknow, Kanpur and Ghaziabad loads for operational reasons.

28. It was to ensure free flow of traffic from East Indian Railway to Allahabad via Moghal Sarai via Allahabad and Lucknow routes that Oudh and Rohilkhand Divisions was amalgamated with East Indian Railway in 1925. In their recent reorganization the Railway Ministry seems to have forgotten this altogether, and the proposal for separating the Oudh and Rohilkhand section from the East Indian Railway is

far advanced by the Railway Ministry, is the fact that prior to 1925 the Oudh and Rohilkhand section was a separate unit altogether. But it appears that they have no patience to analyse the reasons for its inclusion in the East Indian Railway system although in 1948 the Kunzru Committee with two experienced General Managers in the Committee explained the reasons very clearly for retaining East Indian Railway system at least up to Lucknow. The Ministry has not given reasons for not accepting such a weighty recommendation following the opinions expressed by the Wedgewood Committee and other well known Railway Experts referred to above. The flow of traffic from below Moghal Sarai via both these routes has to be frequently adjusted for operational reasons and such adjustment is only possible if the controlling authority vests in one.

29. Absence of such complete control on the movement of up traffic from the originating points for sections above Moghal Sarai both via Allahabad and Lucknow routes will lead to congestion on the Grand Chord, which is the main artery for the flow of coal traffic, with adverse effects on the coal-fields where over 6,000 wagons, loaded and empty, are handled daily. Any congestion in coal-fields will adversely affect the wagon position of the East Indian Railway and on all other Broad Gauge systems. Such adverse effects on the wagon position may arise out of absence of timely information from Northern Railway about flow of traffic to particular directions for which allotment may have been made by the Eastern Railway. This cannot be avoided if control is divided between the two Railways. That is why Railway

Experts have suggested in the past retention of control of such movement by East Indian Railway.

30. Further, with the doubling of the section Lucknow to Bareilly on the Moradabad Division the bottleneck at Lucknow has considerably eased and there is no likelihood of hold-up at Lucknow. In order to provide a free flow of traffic from Moghal Sarai, Lucknow and Moradabad Divisions have to be re-linked with the Eastern Railway.

31. Further, quite apart from the movement of through traffic over the Lucknow Division from Moghal Sarai and about 650 empty wagons daily to Moghal Sarai there is a considerable volume of traffic for Kashi, Banaras and via Banaras to Oudh Trihut Railway originating from stations below Moghal Sarai. On account of inadequate facilities of traffic moving via Banaras to Oudh Trihut Railway, day to day there is such traffic to Oudh Trihut Railway as one of the chief concerns of the Eastern Railway as in absence of such facilities there is bound to be serious hold-up of loaded wagons on the Railway and their turn-round. Frequent transshipment at Mokameh Gh during the monsoon necessitates the use of wagons from Mokameh Gh to Allahabad for Oudh Trihut Railway. This freedom of the Eastern Railway not to send goods to North Bihar via a circuitous route to save detention of loaded

32. Prior to the amalgamation of the East Indian Railway and Rohilkhand Railway, it was complained that East Indian Railway does not receive goods trains

Sarai which resulted in building up of Bechupur yard at a distance of about 3 miles from Moghal Sarai. This yard was abandoned on amalgamation of Oudh and Rohikhand Railway with the East Indian Railway. In day to day working such difficulties would again arise if Northern Railway is extended up to Moghal Sarai. Such conflicts are noticed daily at several junction points between two State Railways. On an average 13 goods and 12 passenger trains each way move daily between Moghal Sarai and Banaras presenting complexities of operating problems. Occasional hold-ups would be quite enough to destroy the existing economy in operation, and ultimately re-opening of the expensive Bechupur yard may have to be considered, which will not be necessary if Lucknow and Moradabad Divisions remain with the Eastern Railway the justification for which has been fully explained in this memorandum. Even with the Bechupur yard and Liaison Organization at Moghal Sarai confusion will be inevitable.

33. Neither will the Liaison Officer of District or even Administrative rank at Moghal Sarai be in a position to regulate the movement of traffic below and above Moghal Sarai with that much of accuracy with which the Chief Operating Superintendent, East Indian Railway, does at present. Conflicts between officials of two railways as well as the Liaison Officer at Moghal Sarai will be inevitable, and constant references will be made to the two Headquarters for settling disputes. The present efficiency in operation will thus vanish completely. Such an organization was set up by the East Indian Railway to regulate the flow of traffic only a few years ago and it did not

prove a success. The same fate will meet the proposed organization at Moghal Sarai which is to be the terminating, point of two different railways. There is no room for costly experiments for dealing with the heaviest volume of traffic passing daily through this point viz., Moghal Sarai, in both directions.

34. Even today when Moghal Sarai has been the terminal point between Eastern zone and Northern zone, notwithstanding the setting up of watchdog organization at Moghal Sarai, the same old procedure of maintaining interchange points at Ghaziabad and Khana-Alampura has perforce of circumstances have to continue, because the Railway Board knows that the present system cannot work, though the public has been bluffed to believe that Eastern Railway germinates at Moghal Sarai. Apparently regrouping of Railway staff has brought in economy by reduction of the posts of General Managers, but the cost of such costly and useless watchdog organization has only added to the burden of national exchequer without substantial improvement in operating efficiency.

35. What this truncation means to the 2,10,000 railwaymen of Eastern Railway. This regrouping of Railway staff the shape of truncation of Eastern Railway will mean potential retrenchment and virtual transfers.

It will mean reversion, stagnation and stagnation in basic grades in the Southern zone and recent transfers in Western and Central zones by the clerks of South Indian Railway with transfer order and ex-Superintendent of Mysore Railway are being transferred to Ajmer on the pain of retirement.

Still the assurance was there. The Prime Minister of India had assured in January 1949 that Dearness Allowance will be reviewed every six months in the context of price index. That assurance has remained a dead letter. Once the tempo dies down the stiffness of opposition decreases, transfers will be there, retrenchment shall be there but that by slices and under the garb of efficiency or administrative exigencies.

41. One Extra Zone the only solution. The retention of East Indian Railway as a single operating unit gives rise to the natural corollary of the creation of one extra zone for an effective solution. Eastern Railway will have a total route mileage of 5667, total ton mileage carried being 9,374 and the total number of employees 2,55,895 approximately. Further there will be a lot of additional railways constructed on the Bengal Nagpur Railway for the development of iron ore, manganese, and coal traffic. 2,000 miles of surveys had been contemplated in 1946, some of which have been completed and some constructions are likely to start in the near future. Besides, a combined East Indian and Bengal Nagpur Railways will be too unwieldy for efficient administration under the existing conditions.

42. The Hon'ble Minister has also referred to "large untapped mineral resources awaiting development, for helping which schemes of railway expansion will soon have to be undertaken. As far as we understand, survey of 2,000 miles in the area had been completed and construction of 250 miles has been approved by the Central Board of Transport, Construction of the Central India coalfields may also be reviewed in the near future. Expansion of the Eastern

zone in such circumstances will be considerable and it is from this point of view also desirable to leave the East Indian and Bengal Nagpur Railways as separate units.

43. The best line of approach for the solution, if a reference to an expert committee is not considered necessary, would be to have 7 instead of 6 zones. Considering all aspects of the situation there is very little force in the suggestion that each regrouped railway should be approximately 5,000 miles long. Under the Transport Act of 1947 the East Indian Railways with total mileage of 5,667 were regrouped into six regions with the mileage of each as indicated below. Among others, the trend of the operational characteristics of East Indian Railway received the greatest attention in consideration and not the mileage for each regrouped railway. The boundaries of the Southern Railway were not extended to North India. The net ton mile figures for each region has also been indicated in the table below—

Railway	Route	Route miles	Net ton miles
(1) London & North Eastern		4,746	6,019
Midland		4,021	4,152
(2) Western		2,278	9,374
(3) Southern		3,050	4,412
(4) Eastern		922	2,222
Eastern		3,621	4,412
(5) North			
(6) Scottish			

* Vide British Transport Commission Report and Accounts, 1948-49.

44. The myth of coal loading by one Railway.—It is a

argued that unified railway jurisdiction over coal and industrial areas will be a great advantage in railway working. While there is some superficial benefit in this, the matter is not so very simple. No unified control of loading areas will be of any use in successful railway working unless an adequate field of operation is permitted for ensuring steady flow of both loaded and empty stock.

45. At present the daily coal loading target is fixed periodically by the Minister of Mines and Power taking into consideration the needs of various industries, State Governments, Railways and their interests. The periodical target fixed never exceeds the maximum capacity of the East Indian and Bengal Nagpur Railways receive their periodical quotas of coal loading, which is in the neighbourhood of 3,000 wagons daily--roughly 2,000 for East Indian and 1,000 for Bengal Nagpur Railway.

46. There is a very old convention and very definite instructions from the Railway Board too that for day-to-day allotment of wagons for coal loading the Operating Heads of these two Railways must examine the empty position and make such readjustment as necessary in order to maintain the daily coal loading to target. It is this co-ordination which has enabled these two railways to supply the required number of wagons to all interests according to the programme fixed by the Coal Commissioner. The record coal loading during the last financial year over and above the daily target fixed bears a true testimony to the wonderful co-ordination between these two railways. Prima facie, therefore, there is no question of amalgamating the East Indian and Bengal Nagpur Railways for the benefit

of coal trade or for any other advantage. On the contrary there is a terrible confusion if the existing field of operation is arbitrarily cut

47. It has already been explained the essential necessity for the East Indian Railway to retain control on movement of traffic above Moghal Sarai over Allahabad, Moradabad and Lucknow Divisions to maintain efficiency in operation of coal and merchandise traffic to the tune of approximately 1,000 coal and 500 goods wagons daily, and 1,000 empties on the reverse direction plus about 5,000 loaded wagons. Nearly half of the total volume of coal traffic on East Indian Railway is meant for what is known for the whole of the Country, i.e., the Howrah-Calcutta area. The problems for the management of this vast amount of traffic, coal and goods are more than what the Administration can look after with efficiency.

48. On the Bengal Nagpur Railway an average of 1,000 coal wagons pass daily approximately 1/4th of the total ultimately passes over the Howrah-Bengal Railway and for the balance 75% the Administration has to shoulder the entire responsibility for its operation to maintain flow of empty wagons to foreign line junction points to the Bengal Nagpur Railway coalfields. Large portions of coal wagons from the Bengal Nagpur Railway flow in opposite directions altogether and the problems also differ widely from those faced by the East Indian Railway.

49. The Wedgewood Committee has raised a voice of caution on the subject. "If it should be decided to amalgamate the proper policy for the

course of time to take over the whole of the railway administrations, we are of opinion that it would still be desirable for them to maintain separate state-managed administrations of reasonable dimensions. If the administrations are unduly extensive, headquarters supervision becomes too remote, and the machine as a whole becomes unwieldy. The 'esprit de corps' of such overgrown concerns is weakened and they lose the individuality that comes from direct personal initiative at the top. We think there is also much to be said for preserving a measure of rivalry between different administrations, particularly at one centre. This tends to stimulate efficiency of service and progressive ideas of management."

50. About the formation of a seventh Zone with Headquarters in Calcutta the Hon'ble Minister says —

"Nor can there be any change in the direction of establishing a seventh zone with another Headquarters in Calcutta as, amongst other things, this will undo the unified railway jurisdiction over the coal and industrial areas which will be one of the outstanding achievements of the new scheme; and will be fundamentally opposed to the essentials of the all-India regrouping plan."

The operational difficulties in centralising loading of coal and other mineral traffic without the approved methods of operation of such traffic over wide areas have been explained. On this ground alone the proposed amalgamation of Bengal Nagpur Railway with portions of East Indian Railway cannot stand. It has been difficult to follow how the formation a seventh zone will be

fundamentally opposed to the regrouping plan. The Wedgewood Committee proposed 8 zones and made a very definite recommendation to leave East Indian Railway and Bengal Nagpur Railway separate.

51. The advantage arising out of the unified control on loading only of coal and other mineral traffic will be more than vitiated by the unwieldy character of the Administration where the Headquarters Supervision will be too remote, the esprit de corps weakened and the individuality and personal initiative from the top will be lost, against which the Wedgewood Committee laid so much emphasis. As this Zone will be vital for supplies of essential materials to all industries throughout the Indian Union, any inefficiency in working of the Zone will immediately react on production of the nation. Nothing must, therefore, be done which will jeopardise efficient transport which is so very vital to the community. With the prospective expansion of the Bengal Nagpur Railway system in the near future and opening of new coal mines, the necessity for two zones in lieu of Eastern Railway is indisputable.

52. The creation of an additional zone will not need any additional expenditure as two Headquarters are already in existence. The staff movements will be easily eliminated, human factor in Railway working will not be disturbed and the regrouping scheme will be then on a correct basis.

53. Problems of Eastern Punjab Railway.— "No truncation of East Indian Railway" raises the subsequent issue of

the problems of Eastern Punjab Railway rather than the Northern zone.

"As modified in the present scheme, the Jodhpur and Bikaner State Railways from part of the Northern instead of the Western Railway. The principal modification so far as the Northern zone is concerned is the inclusion of the Jodhpur and Bikaner Railway and the exclusion instead of certain portions of the Oudh Trihut and East Indian Railway. After the formation of the Western Railway, the most satisfactory arrangement is for the two Railways to be fused with their contiguous railway on the north. Their inclusion in the Western Railway would have increased its mileage by nearly 1,700 route miles and this would have led to considerable differences in the size of the different zones. Secondly, from the traffic point of view the Bikaner has greater affinities of the areas served by the Eastern Punjab Railway. Thirdly, after the partition the setting up of the Eastern Punjab Railway was, right from the outset considered only a temporary arrangement. It was too small a Railway and had no workshop facilities. The amalgamation of this line with other Railways was contemplated almost immediately after partition. Railways nearest the geographical frontier have special problems of their own and in order to deal with them satisfactorily, it is desirable to bring all of them under the authority of a single administration. From this point of view, it is more appropriate to combine the Jodhpur and Bikaner Railways with the Eastern Punjab than with any other system." —Memorandum on the formation of the Northern, North Eastern and Eastern zones — by Railway Board.

Kunzru Committee considered the possibility of bringing at least one Mechanical Workshop within the limits of Eastern Punjab Railway by extending it in a direction other than towards the East Indian Railway. They considered the following transfers—

(1) Great Indian Peninsula Railway to Eastern Punjab Railway—

Jhansi (inclusive) to Oldha and Great Indian Peninsula Railway branches in Agra area

(2) Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway to Eastern Punjab Railway—

Kotah (exclusive) to Malwa Bayana to Agra East Bank

(3) East Indian Railway to Eastern Punjab Railway —

Tundla (inclusive) to Meerut Tundla to Agra, Khatwa Meerut City Branch

(4) Great Indian Peninsula Railway to East Indian Railway

Jhansi (exclusive) to Ait-Kunch Branch

54. The main purpose of this was to transfer to Eastern Punjab the Great Indian Peninsula Workshop at Jhansi. Kunzru was opposed to the amalgamation of the Eastern Railway with either the East Indian Railway or the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. "The East Indian Railway is as large a system as can be efficiently controlled from its Headquarters and we should not be adding further responsibility to it." —Kunzru Committee Report, 198.

As such the inclusion of Lucknow, Moradabad and Allahabad Divisions into the Northern zone has been against expert opinion and truncation of East Indian Railway shall cripple East Indian Railway and not add to the efficiency of Northern zone.

55. The Workshop facilities to the Northern zone can be extended, if required, by the Lucknow Workshops. Even today these workshops are catering the needs of Eastern Punjab Railway and other contiguous Railways. It is not incumbent that the Lucknow Workshops should be within the geographical limits of Northern Railway. Chittaranjan Workshop is catering the needs of all Indian Railway, though it falls within the geographical limits of Eastern zone. Even now, works for Indian Railways are being done from private firms, such as, Braithwaite, Jessop, Martin Burn, Tata and Hindusthan Corporation of Bangalore. As such we do not visualize any hitch to develop in catering the need of Northern zone by the Lucknow workshop, more so, when both are under the overall control of Railway Board.

56. "These lines (Moradabad, Lucknow, Allahabad) serve areas which have for centuries been closely linked with Delhi as the Centre of their culture and economic activity. The social and economic affiliations of this part of the country are essentially towards Delhi and not to the East of Calcutta. Delhi is therefore, naturally the most appropriate choice for the location of the Headquarters of the new Railway. — Memorandum on the formation of the Northern, North Eastern and Eastern zones.

57. This statement is ~~absolutely~~ incorrect. Before 1925, East Indian Railway stretched from Howrah to Kalka via Delhi and Ambala. Since 1925 in course of these 27 years O. R. R. section has been completely fused with East Indian Railway, and there has been complete union. If a plebiscite is made, we are sure, overwhelming majority of the East Indian Railway staff in Moradabad, Lucknow and Allahabad divisions would like to remain with East Indian Railway. This forcible cutting out of Moradabad, Lucknow and Allahabad divisions from East Indian Railway and inclusion in the northern zone has been against the express wish and desire of 2,10,000 Railwaymen of East Indian Railway.

58. In the above lines we have tried to show that our demand for 'no transition of East Indian Railway' is based on a rational and scientific approach to the issue. It is not a demand based on 'sentiment' nor on 'nostalgia'.

59. In our meeting with the Prime Minister Sri Jawaharlal Nehru on the 11th April 1952 we had made this point absolutely clear. We had stressed that Railways constitute the greatest national undertaking of the country. It is without question a most efficient organization built on the solid foundation of years of practical experience. We had urged to let no hasty action, without consideration of the practical working aspects of transport, break the integrity of the most vital and important part of Railway Administration (such as East Indian Railway) and bring chaos which is none today. We had stressed that the basis of regrouping should be unity and not disintegration as is being attempted in the present proposals. We

had humbly suggested that there is yet time to retrieve and save the country from the sure disaster which we are being led to. The magnitude and immensity of Railway organisation-- an organisation in which over 850 crores of capital are sunk --- which yields a gross receipt of 288 crores --- a net revenue of 56 crores and net gain of 22 crores to the Country's exchequer, can hardly be stressed. It was in this context, in the context of the opinion of Railway experts and magnates of trade and commerce who are unanimous in expressing their considered opinion that no definite gain will emerge of the above proposals, that we had requested the regrouping in the above zones to be suspended".

The General Council meeting of AIRF held Amingaon, Assam on March 30-31, 1952 with Jayaprakash Narayan as President opposed the manner in which the regrouping of Railways was sought to be done on provincial consideration without a scientific approach. The General council also endorsed the decision of postponing the strike on patriotic grounds.

Disturbing trends in the Union

P.K. Mukherjee T. T. E. and organising Secretary of the Union was removed from service without assigning any reason by Kailash Behari Mathur, G. M. under application of Rule 149 (2).

In the central Council meeting of the union held at Cawnpore in August 1952 under Presidentship of D. P. Joshi, Working President, Paritosh Banerjee was expelled from the primary membership of the E. I. Railway Employees Union for gross indiscipline and hobnobbing with the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress.

Kamal Kumar Dutta and Patit Paban Roy, Branch Secretary and Assistant Secretary of Howrah Branch of the union were also similarly expelled.

Paritosh Banerjee a member of the AIRF Working committee solicited intervention of the Federation and complained against removal of his name from the AIRF Working Committee by the Union on the ground of his election against quota of Eastern Railwaymen's Union. The Working Committee Meeting of AIRF was held at Poona on 2nd and 3rd November, 1952 under Presidentship of Jayaprakash Narayan, felt that the expulsion of Paritosh Banerjee from the union was an internal matter and ruled that Shri Paritosh Banerjee continues to be a member of the AIRF Working committee until the expiry of his term. Paritosh Banerjee, Kamal Kumar Dutta, Patit Paban Roy, Khalil Mohammad (who resorted to a sporadic strike of Carriage Shed Howrah earlier and facing disciplinary action), Ramdulal Banerjee and their followers joined the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress sometimes at the end of 1952. The expulsion order on them was withdrawn on my initiative in the Annual General Meeting of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union held at Sealdah on 12-14 Sept. 1952.

Move for one union in each zone

After Jayaprakash became Working President of AIRF he initiated amalgamation of parallel unions affiliated to AIRF. The regrouping of Railways means the formation of parallel unions in AIRF. The Working Committee in its meeting at Sealdah on November 2, 1952 called for the formation of one union in each zone to be affiliated to AIRF.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation had the following affiliated Unions with membership shown against each (as circulated by the General Secretary S. Guraswami)

Name of the Union

Name of the Union	Member-ship as on 31st March 1951	Member-ship as on 31st March 1952
1. Dehri-Rohtas Light Railway Employees' Union Employees'	210	684
2. Barsi Light Railwaymen's Union	1,632	1,631
3. B.N. Railway Employees' Union	3,595	4,065
4. Kailghat Falta Railway Workers' Union	229	210
5. Assam Railway Labour Association	18,685	21,364
6. B.B. & C.I Western Railway Employees' Union	14,355	22,670
7. B.K.&A.K. Railway Workers' Union	151	145
8. South Indian Railway Workers' Union (Southern)	10,664	12,405
9. M & S.M. Railway Employees' Union (Southern)	29,016	23,977
10. O.T. Railway Employees' Union	9,284	10,151
11. Staff Association, Railway Clearing Accounts Office	1,147	1,147
12. East India Railway Employees Union	68,536	72,259
13. Madras Port Trust Railwaymen's Union	252	250
14. Jaipur State Railwaymen's Union	1,082	*

The All India Railwaymen's Federation had the following affiliated Unions with membership shown against each (as circulated by the General Secretary S. Guraswami)

Name of the Union

Name of the Union	Member-ship as on 31st March 1951	Member-ship as on 31st March 1952
15. Jodhpur Railway United Labour Union	5,104	3,983
16. Nizam State Railway Employees Union	12,296	10,400
17. B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union	22,350	20,079
18. G.I.P. Railway Mazdoor Panchayat (Central)	32,549	40,329
19. Eastern Punjab Railwaymen's Union (Northern)	10,644	9,782
20. Scindia State Railwaymen's union	667	
21. Samyukta Rajasthan Railway Karmachari Sangh	827	
22. Bombay Port Trust Railwaymen's Union		200
23. Mysore State Railway Employees' Association, Mysore	9,088	
24. Bikaner State Railway Employees' Union	8,208	
25. Assam Railway Mazdur Union, Kurseong		
26. Light Railwaymen's Union Howrah		

*audited membership returns not furnished to the Federation.

After due negotiation the parallel unions on the newly formed Eastern Zone viz. E. I. Railway Employees' Union (Regd. No. 2051) B.N. Railway (Indian) Labour union (Regd. No.5) and B. N. Railway Employees' Union (Regd.No.1) with the blessings of Jayaprakash Narayan were amalgamated on March 22, 1953 in their meeting held at Waltair and was named as EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S UNION.

The Eastern Railwaymen's Union was registered on 10th April 1953 by the Registrar of Trade union, West Bengal under the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926 with registration No. 2770. The agreed list of office-bearers was as follows :—

President : Sri S.N.Singh,
Section controller,
Waltair

Working President: Sri M.D.Dubey,Train
Examiner, Gommoh

Vice President : Sri P. Dayal,Clerk
Coal Area Supdt.
Dhanbad

Vice President : Sri Kiron Chowdhury,
Welfare Inspector,
Sealdah

Vice President : Sri N.N. Sanyal,
General Clerk,
S. C's Office,
Kharagpur

Vice President : Sri N. Gauripati Rao,
Clerk, S.P's Office,
Waltair

Vice President : Sri K.M. Bhadra,
Relg. A. S. M.
Kharagpur

General Secretary : Sri P.C. Dasgupta,
Section Controller,
Howrah

Asst. Genl. Secy. : Sri N.K. Moitra,
Cabin ASM Kharagpur

Asst. Genl. Secy. : Sri R.C. Chakra-
varty, Asst. Welfare
Inspector, Howrah

Asst. Genl. Secy. : Sri N. Sircar (Retired
employee) 34,
Pratapaditya Place,
Calcutta

Asst. Genl. Secy. : Sri R.N. Roy, Clerk,
D.S. Office, Dinapore

Organising Secy. : Sri K.K. Murthy,
Clerk AEE's Office,
Bilaspur

Organising Secy. : Sri P.K. Mukherjee-
Ex. T.T.E., Howrah

Treasure : Sri J. Gurunadham,
Sr. Clerk, Genl.
Stores, Kharagpur

In the preamble of the Terms of Amalgamation, it was stipulated that the amalgamated union would be an independent and free union based on principles of Trade Unionism, which shall be free from the influence of the Government, the employer and the political parties.

Prior to the formation of E. I. Rly. Employees' union with the merger of E.I.R. Employees' Association, E.I.R. Men's Union & B. A. Railway Employees Association the membership, according to the returns submitted to the Registrar of Trade Unions, West Bengal for the year ending 31st March 1953 was as follows :

B. N. Railway Indian Labour union	...	12,286
B. N. Railway Employees' Union	...	10,286
E. I. Railway Employees' Union	...	41,121

These members were enrolled in 61 Branches and 14 Station Committees on the Railway. For the sake of efficient running of the Branches on the Ex B. N. Zone particularly in regard to representation of grievances both individual and collective, a Regional office was set up and maintained at Kharagpur under the charge of one of the Asstt. General Secretaries N. K. Moitra.

Consequent upon the partition of the East Indian Railway, the E. I. R. Employees' Union was also partitioned with D. P. Joshi as President and P. K. Bose as General Secretary - with three upper divisions viz, Lucknow, Allahabad and Moradabad as jurisdiction. Karnail Singh who was the General Manager of the newly formed Northern Railway refused to recognise the Northern portion of E. I. R. Employees' Union but continued the recognition of E. P. Railwaymen's union which also formed a part of Northern Zone. Scuffle, agitation and demonstration followed. Ultimately E. I. R. Employees' Union (northern portion) and E. P. Railwaymen's Union were amalgamated into Northern Railwaymen's Union and recognised by the Northern Railway Authorities.

ONE UNION IN ONE INDUSTRY

One Federation for Indian Railwaymen

It may not be out of place to mention that the Eastern Railwaymen's Union was composed of B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union established in 1920, B. A. Railway Employees' Association in 1919, E.I.Railwaymen's Union in 1920, B.N.Railway Employees' Union in 1925

and E. I. Railway Employees' Association in 1932.

I have already stated that Jayaprakash Naryan who joined the Bhambhani movement of Vinoba Bhave was gradually getting detached. He had a conviction that unity between the two Federations viz: AIRF and NFIR should be achieved in the interest of Railwaymen. His conscience was not permitting him to leave the A. I. R. F. abruptly. He started a dialogue with Harihar Nath Shastri offering to step down from the Presidentship of AIRF and invited Harihar Nath Shastri to lead the United Federation as its President. Amalgamation was agreed to between the two Federations. The instrument of amalgamation that was passed by the respective Working Committees subject to ratification by the respective Working Committees subject to ratification by the General Council was as follows : -

'INSTRUMENT OF AMALGAMATION'

"With a view to establish among the Railwaymen of this country, a strong and effective Trade Union organisation free from the influence of any political party or factions and based on the principle of democratic Trade Unionism, the Working Committees of All India Railwaymen's Federation and Indian National Railway Workers' Federation hereby agree to the following instrument of unification :

1. The name of the amalgamated organisation shall be **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN RAILWAYMEN** with Headquarters at New Delhi.
2. A Working Committee consisting of the following shall be constituted to function for the next one year.

responsible for the affairs of the new Federation.

- (a) President Harihar Nath Shastri
- (b) General Secretary S. Guruswami
- (c) 1 Vice-President, 1 Assistant Secretary and Treasurer from INRWF side.
- (d) 2 Vice-Presidents, 1 Assistant Secretary from the AIRF side.
- (e) Jayaprakash Narayan and Khandubhai Desai
- (f) 24 other members out of which each Union on the Government Railways will have two seats.
- (g) The number of 'outsiders' in the Committee shall be confined to 3 from each side, in addition to Jayaprakash Narayan and Khandubhai Desai.

3. The number of Unions affiliated to the amalgamated Federation shall be restricted to one for each of the six Railways, from each side.

4. In the course of six months, this number will be reduced to one on each Railway.

5. The affiliated Unions other than those on the State Railways will have only the status of associate membership.

6. During the transition period, there will be, inter alia, collaboration between the individual unions on each Railway, in respect of the following :

- (a) There will be joint delegations, wherever possible, to meet the General Managers, Divisional or District Officers at the periodical meetings.

- (b) There will be other joint meetings, on specific issues or when the office bearers of the Federation visit any Railway.

7.(a) Where the existing Unions are affiliated to either the INTUC or HMS, such affiliation shall not stand in the way of amalgamation.

- (b) Amalgamation shall mean automatic disaffiliation from the Central Trade Union Organisation Concerned.

- (c) The amalgamated Union shall be free to decide the issue of affiliation.

8. The Constitution of the AIRF, subject to the modification necessary to implement the above Agreement, shall govern the working of the amalgamated organisation, for the present. In the meantime, a Sub-Committee consisting of the President, the General Secretary and the following members will be appointed to draft a revised Constitution, to be adopted in due course:

- 1. P. C. Das Gupta
- 3. Peter Alvares
- 5. Amar Dass

The Working Committee of the AIRF, of which was one member, shall be responsible for the affairs of the AIRF.

As already decided, a Convention at Mysore in 1952. The above instrument of amalgamation was discussed in the meeting of the AIRF, and was adopted unanimously.

The Working Committee of the AIRF for Unity was held at Mysore in Nov. 1952, presided by Jayaprakash Narayan which was his last appearance in Railwaymen's meeting as President of the AIRF.

A.I.R.F. There was a difference of opinion between the Eastern and Northern Railwaymen's Union and Jayaprakash Narayan. Unions wanted the issue to be cautiously proceeded with step by step and considered by respective Central Councils of the Unions and the AIRF General Council and Convention. We had held the view that the unity move should be worked from bottom up and not top down. Moreover with a view to give an opportunity to the potential force of railwaymen, the conditions of amalgamation were to be considered by Central Councils of the unions and the General Council of the Federation.

Our views were misunderstood by Jayaprakashji who thought that we were trying to scuttle the unity move. He knew A.P.Sharma well. A.P.Sharma had been keen on neutralising the AIRF group in no time after amalgamation. Subsequently our apprehension came true. The Annual convention of A.I.R.F. held at Mysore in January, 1953 ratified the instrument of amalgamation and the amalgamated body, National Federation of Indian Railwaymen came into being. I remember a small incident. In the process of negotiations INRWF group (particularly A.P. Sharma) was insisting on the word 'National' being inserted before 'Railwaymen' or 'Railway Workers' which AIRF group was resisting on the ground that the word "National" before the word 'Workers' was redundant as every body was national in the context of Independent India. Peter Alvares, the then Asstt. General Secretary of A.I.R.F. came out with a solution which was agreed to. The solution was that the word 'National' should be before the word 'Federation' and not 'Workers'. Thus the

name of the amalgamated body was accepted as national Federation of Indian Railwaymen.

The first Working Committee of N.F.I.R. was held on July 30, 1953 in New Delhi with Harihar Nath Shastri as President. The start was good. We were hopeful. The N.F.I.R. directed the parallel unions in each Railway affiliated to ex AIRF and ex INRWF to effect their amalgamation. The Working Committee again in its meeting held on November 15, 1953 under Presidentship of Harihar Nath Shastri directed for a speedy merger of the parallel unions of 4 Railways viz. Eastern, Northern, North Eastern and Southern failing which the unity would be achieved through process of election. Unfortunately. Harihar Nath Shastri died by a plane crash on December 11, 1953 and S.R.Vasavada Vice-President became the President under terms of amalgamation. S.R.Vasavada was a shrewd, die-hard and dominating person. His opinion of Railwaymen and his dictatorial method of ruthless suppression of any expression against his views had already caused serious doubts in the minds of many of us about the end result of the unity move. He was, perhaps, temperamentally not suitable for leading the Railwaymen in India. He failed to realise the ideals of Jaya Prakash Narayan for a brave new world of Railwaymen. I was told that both Khandu and S.R. Vasavada assisted G. Mahajan in organising Mazdoor Mahasangh of Ahmedabad Textile Mills. After seeing Vasavada it seemed to be a surprise to me.

In the meanwhile Justice Sankar Das One man Tribunal was set up on July 22, 1952 and started functioning. Both the

AIRF and INRWF were pleading for the Railwaymen's case before it. The tribunal continued upto 1956 and submitted its award. Another catastrophe took place in early 1954. The Watch & Ward Department of the Railway was converted to Railway Protection Force, a para-military type of organisation by a special enactment with the consent of Vasavada. This deprived them of their rights to become members of Trade Unions. In the Eastern Railway alone the union lost more than 5 thousand membership and the men felt helpless.

The Central Railway and Western Railway merged their AIRF and INRWF Unions promptly. We on the Eastern were on the process of negotiations and framing of agreed Constitution and Rules for the Union. I was deputed for the purpose and was meeting with my counterpart, A.P.Sharma at Dehri-on-sone where R.E.P. Sinha Working President of Railwaymen's Congress was the Loco Foreman. He was a common friend. This exercise continued for 6 months if not more and we were getting wiser day by day.

A Negotiating Committee was formed by the Working committee at Khurda Road on 28th and 29th August 1953 consisting of N.N. Sanyal, P Dayal and myself to decide the terms of amalgamation and other relevant matters. With great difficulty the following terms of amalgamation were agreed to between the representatives of the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and Eastern Railwaymen's Union.

**"TERMS OF AMALGAMATION OF
EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S
CONGRESS AND EASTERN**

**RAILWAYMEN'S UNION AGREED
TO AND ENDORSED JOINTLY BY
THE NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
CONSISTING OF AUTHORISED
REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH
THE UNIONS.**

1. The amalgamation between unions, viz., Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress shall have to be a legal amalgamation and according to the provisions of the Trade Unions Act and Trade Unions Regulations of Govt. of West Bengal where both the Unions are registered.
2. With a view to establish among the Eastern Railwaymen a sound and effective Trade Union Organisation, free from the influence of any political parties or factions and based on free and democratic trade unionism, the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress hereby agree to amalgamate.
3. The Constitution, Rules and Byelaws as framed by the joint Negotiating Committee shall be the Constitution and Byelaws of the amalgamated Union and shall have to be adopted at the General Body meetings of the unions separately and jointly.
4. Branches of the respective unions will not incur any expenditure on their head after Sept. '53 more than the cash assets excluding the Central quota.
5. The details of assets and liabilities of the respective organisations as on 31.3.53 and as obtaining on 30.9.53 have to be jointly endorsed by the Unions and placed before the joint General Body.
6. The amalgamated Union shall not accept any liability and only assets

respective Organisations will be transferred to the amalgamated Union.

7. The audited accounts of the respective Unions upto September 1953 shall have to be jointly endorsed and placed before the respective General Body meetings for their adoption. All accounts of the respective Unions including its Branches from October '53 till the month in which the amalgamation will take place will have to be made available by the Treasurers of the respective Unions to the General Secretary and Treasurer of the amalgamated Union latest by the last date of the month following the month in which amalgamation resolution is adopted by the joint body of both Unions after which no accounts will be taken into consideration by the amalgamated Union.

8. A list of Branches with their office-bearers as on date (12.9.53) shall have to be jointly endorsed. No new Branches are to be opened except with the approval and according to the Constitution of the amalgamated Union.

It is decided that B.K. Mukherjee will prepare a list of the Branches of the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress in the manner indicated in the above agreement and same to be jointly endorsed along with the list of Branches of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. by B.K. Mukherjee and R.C.Chakravarty members of the Negotiating Committee within 17.9.53.

9. The General Body and Central Council of the amalgamated Union shall be constituted on the membership as audited and submitted to the Registrar of Trade Unions for 1952-53 by the respective Unions on the ratio of one for 200 and one for 500 membership, as elected by the respective branches. The total number of

delegates and the total number of Central Council members of the amalgamated Union derived on the above ratio will be divided between the two organisations on 50:50 basis.

10. The General Bodies of the two unions will meet separately at on.....

(i) to amalgamate into one Union as per agreed terms

(ii) to adopt the new Constitution, Rules & Byelaws

(iii) and to elect their quota of the office-bearers of the amalgamated Union.

resolutions on (i) and on (ii) being passed by 3/4th majority and on (iii) by bare majority. The same to be ratified by the joint General Body meetings of the Unions to be held at the same place on the following day.

11. Amalgamation at the Centre :

The quota of Central office-bearership for each of the two Unions, and the Working Committee will be on the basis of 50:50.

12. Amalgamation in the Branches :

(i) Wherever possible the office-bearership of the Branches should be allotted to each of the two Unions in manner which is agreed by mutual consent.

(ii) Wherever such mutual agreement is not possible the distribution of the office-bearership amongst the two Unions in the Branches will be divided proportionately according to the strength of the respective membership of each Branches as may be found on scrutiny of the membership register and accounts by a Scrutiny Committee consisting of one representative of each side.

(iii) in case of the above procedure not being agreed to by any of the Branches, the amalgamation to be effected by way of open election by the members of both the Unions as found on scrutiny.

(iv) for the purpose of amalgamation in the branch level, the Station Committees of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union shall be considered as Branches and amalgamation will be by mutual agreement between such Branches and Station Committees of the respective Organisations, failing which the offices shall be distributed on 50:50 basis,

(v) Areas where there are station Committees with no Branches of the other Union, should be merged with the nearest branches.

13. The members of the two organisations viz., Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress shall be treated as members of the amalgamated Union.

14. The first Annual General meeting of the amalgamated Union on the basis of membership for the year 1953-54 shall be held within the twelfth month from the date of amalgamation and that of its Branches by the 11th month at the latest from the date of amalgamation.

15. Unless anything is specifically laid down in the terms of amalgamation, the amalgamated union shall be governed by the Constitution, Rules & Byelaws of the amalgamated Union in all matters.

16. The Central office of the amalgamated Union shall be at the place where the Headquarter of the Eastern Railway is located. Till such time a suitable accommodation becomes available the Central Office will be in the office of the

Eastern Railwaymen's Union at 23 & 24, Strand Road, Calcutta, Sri A.P.Sharma and Sri R.C. Chakravarty are authorised to fix a suitable accommodation for the office.

17. The amalgamation will take effect and the amalgamated Union will start functioning as such from the date of registration of the amalgamated Union by the Registrar Trade Unions, Govt. of West Bengal.

18. These terms are to be strictly followed and in case of violation of any of the terms by anybody, member or members shall have the right to seek redress in a manner provided in Constitution.

19. All these terms excepting those where specific period of time has been mentioned will be in force until the first Annual General meeting of the amalgamated Union is held, whereafter the Union will be governed by its Constitution, Rules & Byelaws alone and according to the resolutions of the Annual General meeting, Central council and Working Committee, as passed from time to time.

20. Statement of Branch Accounts and membership for the year 1953-54 with all accompanying records and vouchers as required under the Constitution & Rules of the Union shall have to be submitted to the Treasurer and a copy of this statement of Branch accounts and membership to the General Secretary of the amalgamated Union in the Central office by 31st May 1954 at the latest, after which no accounts and membership will be accepted for the purpose of incorporation in the Annual Accounts (viz. Annual Return) of the Union to be submitted to the Registrar of Trade Unions and such defaulting Branches, if any, will automatically lose representation

in the Annual General Meeting and they will be treated as not existing with effect from 1st June '54.

A notice reiterating the above term shall be issued to all the office-bearers of the Branches concerned by the Treasurer or the General Secretary under registered cover by 30th April 1954.

21. The posts of the Central Office-bearers will form into the following two groups for distribution between the two organisations on a 50:50 basis:

President	General Secretary
Vice-Presidents -3	Vice Presidents -4
Asstt. Genl. Secretaries -2	Asstt. Genl. Secretaries -2
Organising Secretaries -4	Organising Secretaries -2
Treasurer	

22. Statements showing the membership of each Branch of the respective organisations on the basis of audited membership for 1952-53, to be jointly endorsed prior to amalgamation.

23. The names of Central Council Members and Delegates of both the organisations obtained as per item 8 of the terms of amalgamation to be jointly endorsed prior to amalgamation.

24. The Regional office of the Central Office at Kharagpur will be maintained.

25. The office-bearers or Committee and Council Members either at the Centre or in the Branches leaving one organisation and joining another shall not be admitted by the unions concerned from 12.9.53 the date of starting the negotiation talks.

26. There shall be no nominations of

Central Council Members for the first year.

27. It was agreed that the name of the proposed amalgamated Union shall be "Eastern Railway Sramik Sangh".

There were points of disagreement also. On the four terms of amalgamation there were difference of opinion in the Negotiating Committee of the two unions viz Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the matter was referred to Arbitration according to the terms of instrument of amalgamation. Khandu Bhai Desai gave his decision which was endorsed by the Working Committee of N.F.I.R. in its meeting held in New Delhi on 16th May 1954.

The said points of difference and decisions of N.F.I.R. Working Committee are reproduced below:-

TEXT OF THE 4 TERMS OF AMALGAMATION OF THE EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S CONGRESS AND EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S UNION IN WHICH THERE HAD BEEN DIFFERENCE OF OPINION IN THE NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH THE UNIONS.

1. An agreed decision could not be arrived at in respect of exercising that option for the group of office-bearers
2. No agreement could also be reached on the following items (a) & (b) raised by the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and item (c) raised by the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress (appended below):-

(a) Such persons, who are of what is

any time in the past office-bearers either in the Centre or in the Branches or ordinary members of either organisation, and failed to fulfil their legitimate obligations viz., submission of accounts and union money and handing over the Union papers, records and other properties and/or against whom disciplinary actions (such as suspension, expulsion, removal etc.) were taken in the Central council or Annual General Meeting of either organisation, may be allowed to become members of the amalgamated union but shall not be allowed to hold any elective post in the amalgamated union either at the centre or in any of the Branches for the first year unless otherwise decided on the merit of each case by the respective General Bodies of the two unions to which they belong or belonged. A list of such persons jointly endorsed by the representatives of the two Unions shall form part of these terms.

- (b) In regard to policy matters for a period of one year the General Secretary and the President will jointly represent the Union with the administration and there shall not be any commitments by either the President or the General Secretary alone and independently on behalf of the Union.
- (c) The Eastern Railwaymen's Congress shall be treated as automatically disaffiliated from INTUC from the date of ratification of the amalgamation in the Annual General meeting. The amalgamated

union shall however be free to decide the issue of affiliation either with INTUC or HMS immediately after the amalgamation. Such decision can be taken by the Central Council by a simple majority of votes of the members present in the said Central Council meeting.

Sd. A. P. Sharma. Sd. N.N. Sanyal
 Sd. R.E. P Sinha Sd. P. Dayal
 Sd. B.K. Mukherjee Sd. R. C. Chakravarty

DECISION OF THE N.F.I.R. WORKING COMMITTEE

This Working Committee records with satisfaction that the understanding has been reached between the representatives of Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and Eastern Railwaymen's Union before Khandubhai K. Desai on the following terms : -

The representatives of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress met at Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi on 10 May 1954 in presence of Khandubhai Desai and on his advice the difference referred to the N.F.I.R. Federation of Indian Railwaymen was resolved and agreement was reached under : -

- (1) The General Secretary's office-bearers to go to the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and the President's group of office-bearers to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union will give their set of office-bearers.
- (2) Disciplinary action taken by the organisation from the date of amalgamation talks, i.e. April 1953, will

today should be withdrawn and such persons should not be debarred from holding any responsibility on the ground that such action had been taken.

(3) The policy matter is essentially a matter for the new Union and failing which for the Federation.

(4) The issue of affiliation with I. N. T.U. C. or H. M. S. had been decided in the "INSTRUMENT OF AMALGAMATION" agreed to in April 1953 by two Federations.

Regarding the membership that might have been enrolled by the two unions during the period 1st April 1954 to 16th May 1954, it is agreed that fresh receipts of the amalgamated union would be issued to members after scrutiny and membership not exceeding 3,000 for each union should be accepted as members of the amalgamated union. From 16th May 1954 till the date of amalgamation there shall be no further enrolment by any of the existing two unions.

It was also agreed that the General Bodies of the two unions will meet jointly as early as possible but not later than 15th June 1954 to ratify the Terms of Amalgamation."

Betrayal of Eastern Railwaymen's Congress

Ultimately the General Bodies of both the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress met at Dehri-on Sone on 14th and 15th June 1954 to separately and then jointly endorse the terms of amalgamation.

The General Body of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union met separately under Presidentship of Dr. Lanka Sundaram and endorsed and ratified all the agreed terms of amalgamation together with the

decision of Khandu Bhai Desai and N. F. I. R. Working Committee Meeting at New Delhi on 16th & 17th May 1954 on the four terms of difference. This was communicated in writing to the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress at Dehri-on-Sone requesting similar action so that the joint session of the two unions could be held early. The Eastern Railwaymen's Congress instead of ratifying the terms, wanted important changes to be made in the agreed forms of amalgamation. This could not be agreed to by the Eastern Railwaymen's union. The position was communicated to Khandu Bhai Desai on telephone on the morning of 15.6.1954 and he was requested to advise the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress to adopt the resolution of amalgamation on the basis of agreed terms and N. F. I. R. Working Committee's decision on points of disagreement. Although Desai assured of such an action by the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress, nothing came out till the evening of 15th when delegates dispersed and thus the amalgamation remained unachieved. This was reported to the General Secretary N. F. I. R. who in turn requested for A. P. Sharma's remarks which did not come.

After a prolonged silence since Dehri-on-Sone meeting on 15th June 1954, the issue was raised again by S. R. Vasavada, President N. F. I. R. during his visit to Calcutta on 22nd March 1955 when the fights between the two groups on the Western Railway had already taken the worst turn and the Western Railway Employees' Union was on the point of revival. As desired by Vasavada, viz Kiron Chowdhury, Sunil Bhatnagar, myself, available representatives of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union in Calcutta,

met him at Howrah Station where all the Office-bearers of the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress were already present. He pleaded for treating the past chapter as closed and advised us to start efforts for amalgamation afresh. He tendered the following advice in regard to amalgamation : -

(1) The President, A. P. Sharma, on behalf of the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress, is to send the formula about the merger to the General Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union before the 27th March, 1955. A copy of this formula will be sent to the Federation Office, New Delhi.

(2) If the formula of the merger be acceptable to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union, the union will notify its agreement to the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and send a copy of the same to the Federation Office, New Delhi, not later than the 2nd April 1955. If, however, the formula is not acceptable to the Union, the Union will send its suggestion to the Congress for amending their formula to the Congress, and send the copy of the same to the Federation Office not later than the 2nd April 1955.

(3) If the suggestions received from the Unions are acceptable to the congress, the assent will be notified to the Union and the Federation not later than the 5th April, 1955. If the suggestions are not acceptable, non-acceptance of the same will be communicated to the Union and the Federation, not later than the 15th April, 1955.

(4) If by the 5th April, 1955, there has been no agreement regarding the merger of the two unions, each of the two Unions

will appoint its arbitrators and the points of differences will be submitted before the arbitrators whose unanimous decision shall be final and binding to both Unions. When the disagreement is notified, the Unions will have to appoint the arbitrators and notify the names to each other and to the Federation, not later than the 10th April, 1955. The arbitrators appointed by the Unions will have to meet, study and hear the case and give their decision before the 15th April, 1955. The arbitrators will communicate their decision to both the Unions and to the Federation.

(5) If the arbitrators disagree, they themselves will appoint the Umpire who will have to give his decision as early as possible but not later than the 30th April, 1955. As soon as the arbitrators have appointed the umpire, the appointment will be notified to both the Unions and to the Federation. The Umpire will communicate his decision directly to both the parties and to the Federation.

The umpire's decision will be final and binding on both the parties.

(6) Whether the merger takes place by agreements or by award of the arbitrator or by the decision of the Umpire, the date of merging the Union shall be specified in the document that talks about the merger.

(7) The arbitration proceedings will take place in Calcutta.

(8) The time limit to get the decision from the Umpire may be extended by mutual consent of the arbitrators, after consulting the respective parties. In case the decision will be delayed for more than two fortnightly extensions.

The parties present accepted the president's advice subject to the concurrence of the respective committees.

Who is responsible for the failure ?

In pursuance to Vasavada's advice, the General Secretary of the Railwaymen's Congress sent fresh terms of amalgamation on 26. 3. 55 which deviated considerably from the original signed agreement as well as the last minute revised offer made by the Congress on the spot at Dehri-on-Sone. The issue was discussed in the Central Council Meeting of the Union held at Kharagpur on 29th and 30th March 1955 and it offered a set of generous and reasonable terms. The terms offered by the Railwaymen's Congress and the Central Council Resolution of the Eastern Railwaymen's union are reproduced below : -

"TERMS OF AMALGAMATION OFFERED BY THE EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S CONGRESS.

In pursuance of the terms of Instrument of amalgamation agreed by both the Federations, viz., I. N. R.W. F. and A. I. R. F. , and in accordance with the decisions of the Working Committee set up by the said Instrument of Amalgamation (Appendix I) and also in pursuance of the Resolution of the said Working Committee passed at its meeting held on 13/3/53 (Appendix II), the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress, hereby agree to amalgamate themselves and form one Union on the Eastern Railway, which shall be the Union affiliated to the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen.

The following shall be the terms of amalgamation :

(1) Any person who does not subscribe to the policy decision (vide Appendix I) will not be permitted to be enrolled as ordinary or honorary member of the amalgamated Union. As for the existing ordinary or honorary members, the amalgamating unions will have right to be satisfied whether any person whose name is included in the list of office bearers of the amalgamated Union subscribe to the Policy decision of the Federation (vide appendix I).

(2) The amalgamating Unions jointly request the Working Committee of the Federation to set up a Committee to which disputes pertaining to matters referred in No. (1) shall be referred to and the decision of that Committee shall be final and binding to both parties.

(3) As soon as the decision for amalgamation is reached whether by agreement or by award of the arbitrator or by the award of the Union, the amalgamating Unions will appoint a Committee consisting of two representatives of each Union and a nominee of the Working Committee of the Federation as Chairman. The function of this Committee will be as follows : -

- (a) To complete the process of amalgamation within the stipulated time limit as per agreement or award.
- (b) to function as Election Committee with the power to frame election rules, to conduct the election and declare the results and to function as Scrutiny Committee.

for the purpose of election. The decision of the Committee in matters referred to shall always be given in writing.

(4) The Working Committee of the Federation will set up a Committee from amongst its members consisting of one Chairman and two members who will hear appeals on the decisions of the Committee mentioned in clause (2) and the decision of this Committee will be final and binding to the Union.

(5) The name of the Amalgamated Union shall be Eastern Railway Shramik Sangh.

(6) As regards the membership of the amalgamated Union only the fully paid members enrolled on the prescribed receipts of the amalgamated Union issued by the Control Office after duly signing the Pledge Form shall be considered as valid membership for the purpose of the Amalgamated Union.

(7) The Amalgamated Union shall not accept any liability and only assets of the respective Organisations will be transferred to the Amalgamated Union.

(8) The Committee set up in accordance with Clause (3) will frame the Constitution of the Amalgamated Union within a period of two months after the decision of amalgamation is reached. With a view to avoiding delays and difficulties in securing affiliation, the constitution, before it is passed by Union, shall be submitted for approval to the Committee mentioned in Clause (4).

(9) (a) The amalgamation shall be effected at the Central and Branch level

on 50 : 50 basis.

(b) The posts of the Amalgamated Union at Head Office will be divided into the following two groups :

(1)	(2)
President ... 1	General Secretary ... 1
Vice Presidents... 3	Vice Presidents ... 4
Asstt. Genl. ... 2	Asst. Genl. Secretaries ... 2
Org. Secy. ...	Org. Secretaries ... 4
Treasurer ... 1	

(c) The Eastern Railwaymen's Union will nominate personnel for group No. 1 while the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress will nominate the personnel for group No. 2.

(d) The Central Office of the Amalgamated Union shall be at 20, New Subhas Road, Calcutta till a suitable accommodation is available.

(e) The total number of Executive Committee of the amalgamated union will be 22 members excluding the Office bearers and they will be nominated by both the Unions on 50 : 50 basis.

(f) The funds and property of the amalgamated Union will remain in the name of the General Secretary and the President, a joint Bank account will be opened in the name of the President and the General Secretary. The President and the General Secretary will arrange and maintain accounts of the funds of the amalgamated Union and before any expenditure is incurred, the President and the General Secretary shall obtain the sanction of the Executive Committee. The President, the General Secretary and the members of the Executive Committee

shall hand over the accounts of the funds of the Amalgamated Union as soon as the new Executive Committee and the Office bearers are elected under the constitution as passed by the representatives elected by those who have enrolled themselves as members of the amalgamated Union and have paid their dues.

(g) The Executive Committee and the office bearers of the amalgamated Union shall conduct the affairs of the Union till such period, it is required to enrol membership of amalgamated Union, pass the Constitution and to hold and complete election under the New Constitution. This period shall not exceed 18 months. As soon as the Constitution is passed and the new Office bearers are elected, the amalgamated Union will take steps to get it registered under the Trade Union Act. The Committee appointed under clause (3) will be responsible for implementing the provisions mentioned in this clause.

(h) The Branches where amalgamation has taken place after Dehri-on-Sone meeting, shall be the Branches of the amalgamated Union.

(i) For the purpose of amalgamation in the Branch level, the Station Committee of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress shall be considered as Branches. Areas where there are station Committee with no branches of either Union should be merged with the nearest branches.

(j) Amalgamation in the Branch level should be completed within three months of the date of amalgamation of Centre; either by mutual agreement within one month, failing which on 50:50 basis

as in the Centre (within three months). After the lapse of three months from the date of amalgamation only amalgamated branches should be recognised as the Branches of the amalgamated Union.

Appendix I

(Decision of the Working Committee of the N. F. I. R. held at 17, Queensway, New Delhi on 30th and 31st July 1953 under the Presidentship of Harihara Nath Shastri)

3(g) In view of the declared policy of the Federation to follow peaceful and democratic methods alone for the fulfilment of its objectives, the Working Committee urges upon all affiliated unions to take effective steps to ensure that the organisation, at all levels, is free from the influence of those elements who do not follow the aforesaid policy of the Federation.

Resolved further that the President and the General Secretary be authorised to deal with complaints as and when they arise in connection with the alleged violation of the above resolution and to appoint any committee for the purpose of investigation of complaints submitted in this connection.

Appendix II

(Resolution of Working Committee of NFIR held at New Delhi on 13.3.1955)

This meeting of the Working Committee of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen reiterates its faith in the unity of railwaymen in the country and solemnly resolves to stick to the terms of agreement incorporated in the "Instrument of Amalgamation" dated 15th April, 1953 which has brought about the merger of two Federations.

The Committee notes with gratification the merger of Unions of Northern and Central Railways and congratulates the workers of these Railways for setting an emulating example before the workers of the other railways.

This Committee is, however, perturbed to note that a section of the Western Railway have started a campaign which may harm the solidarity of the unions which have been already merged. This Committee appoints a Sub-Committee consisting of S.M.Shukla (Central Railway), Rajab Ali (Southern Railway) and Udham Singh (Northern Railway) with S.M.Shukla as convenor, to investigate the causes of discord and submit its report before the next meeting of the Working Committee.

The unions which have not merged till now are requested to merge within two months time failing which this Committee will issue a final directive for merger and the union or unions failing to carry out the directive shall be dis-affiliated from the Federation.

The Committee also notes with regret that some workers who were responsible for bringing about the merger of the two Federations have been resorting to a course of action which may create a split in the unity of workers. While expressing its disapproval at any action that may bring about disruption, the Committee in the interest of the unity of workers, appeals to all the workers employed on the Indian Railways to ignore all narrow-minded and disruptive activities and to strive earnestly to bring about real unity.

The Committee hopes that the entire body of railwaymen in the country will support the Committee in its efforts to

accomplish complete merger of unions at all levels."

"RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S UNION HELD AT KHARAGPUR ON THE 29TH & 30TH MARCH '55 ON THE SUBJECT OF AMALGAMATION BETWEEN THE EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S UNION AND EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S CONGRESS.

This meeting welcomes the decision of the General Council of the N. F. I. R. taken in its meeting held on 22.2.55 at Delhi to refer question of amalgamation at union level to the convention of the N. F. I. R. to be held by not later than 22.4.1955 for a clear and final decision on the subject.

This meeting finds that in a meeting of the Working Committee of the N. F. I. R. held at New Delhi on the 13th March '55 the resolution that was passed on the question of amalgamation was contrary to the resolution of the General Council. This meeting is of the opinion that for the affiliated unions such difference in stand and programme of action between the General Council and the Working Committee of the N. F. I. R. is apt to be confusing and misleading and therefore desires the President and the General Secretary of the N.F.I.R. to jointly issue a circular clarifying the position as early as possible.

Until, however, such clarification is made available, the General Council being a superior body to the Working Committee by all constitutional standard, the Union has no option but to follow the directive

of the General Council in preference to that of the Working Committee when such directives are contradictory to or conflicting with each other.

This meeting further note that subsequent to both the General Council and Working Committee meeting referred to above, the President of the N. F. I. R. during his visit to Calcutta on 22.3.55 made a personal effort to expedite the amalgamation between this Union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and for this purpose met representatives of both the organisations. This Council would welcome as a laudable object any move for amalgamation from any quarter by consent and agreement which may do away with the necessity of amalgamation being effected by a directive from any higher quarter. It is in this spirit that the Central Council has pursued the fresh proposals of amalgamation by common consent forwarded by the General secretary Eastern Railwaymen's Congress under his letter No. 1/Amalgamation/55 dated 26.3.55 inviting expression of opinion thereon on behalf of this Union.

In the opinion of the Central Council, the proposals of the Congress are scrappy in nature, do not cover many points essentially relevant for the purpose and include some which are irrelevant to the issue. In order to help the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress to form its comprehensive opinion on all relevant and essential points to be considered for the purpose of amalgamation the Central Council authorises the General Secretary to send the following proposals as draft terms of amalgamation along with a copy of this resolution to the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress inviting their opinion on the same.

TERMS

1. The amalgamation between Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress shall be strictly in accordance to the provisions of the Trade Union Act and Trade Unions Regulations of Government of West Bengal where both the Unions are registered.

2. The amalgamated Union shall start with a Registered Constitution & Rules and its Constitution & Rules shall be the one agreed upon and signed by the members of the Joint Negotiating Committee in its meeting held at Sone East Bank on the 9th, 10th & 11th December, 1953.

3. The name of the amalgamated Union shall be the Eastern Railway Mazdoor Union.

4. The number of office bearers of the amalgamated Union shall be limited to 12 and that of the Working committee to 21 excluding the office-bearers and shall be on the basis of election as contemplated in the N. F. I. R. Working committee's decision taken on 16th & 17th Nov. '53 under item 3(a) and 3(e)

or

4(a) The number of office bearers of the amalgamated Union shall be limited to 12 and that of the Working Committee to 21 excluding the office-bearers.

(b) The posts of president and general Secretary being shared by the two amalgamating unions, other posts shall be distributed on proportionate strength of membership of the respective unions.

(c) The basis of determination of the membership strength of the respective Unions shall be either of the following as

may be accepted by the sister organisation viz. Eastern Railwaymen's Congress : -

(i) The audited Annual Return for 1953-54 submitted to the Registrar of Trade Unions.

(ii) The membership for whom affiliation fees have been paid to the Federation within 31st March 1954 as per decision under item 3(c) of the N. F. I. R. Working Committee meeting held on 16th & 17th November '53.

(iii) The membership for the year 1954-55 as may be found on joint scrutiny by a Scrutiny Committee composed of Treasurers of the two amalgamating Unions and the Treasurer of the Federation, who held the offices on 31st March '55.

(d) The post of General Secretary shall go to the union which has the larger membership cum assets determined by a Committee consisting of Treasurers of the amalgamating unions and the Federation as contemplated in 4(c) (iii) above and the post of President to the union which has comparatively lesser membership cum assets .

(e) The posts of office bearers and Working Committee members allotted to the two organisations in the aforesaid manner, shall be filled up by the respective General Bodies by way of election and there shall not be any change till such time the office-bearers are replaced by a fresh election.

(f) Since as per instruments of amalgamation of the two Federations the amalgamated Union shall automatically lose its affiliation which the amalgamating organisations had either with the I. N. T. U. C. or H. M. S. prior to amalgamation

and with a view to establish among the Eastern Railwaymen a sound and effective trade Union organisation, free from the influence of any political party or factions and based on democratic trade unionism, the office-bearers of the amalgamated Union must not have any connection whatsoever with I. N. T. U. C. or H. M. S. or with any other All India Trade Union organisation excepting N. F. I. R.

5. The composition of the Central Council and General Body of the amalgamated Union shall be on the basis of one for 500 and one for 200 members, to be elected by the respective unions as per their constitutions and there shall not be any change in the personnel till fresh elections.

6. All decisions regarding disciplinary actions against members of the amalgamated Union shall be by 75% majority.

7. The amalgamated Union shall start functioning as such from the date of Registration of the amalgamation by the Registrar Trade Unions, Govt. of Bengal.

8. The members of the two organisations viz, the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress shall be treated as members of the amalgamated Union.

9(a) The details of assets and liabilities of the respective organisations as on 31.3.55 shall have to be jointly verified by both the unions and presented to the respective General Body meeting.

(b) The amalgamated Union shall not accept liability and only the respective organisations will be liable to the amalgamated Union.

10. The Central office of the amalgamated Union shall be at Calcutta and at 23 & 24, Strand Road to start with.

11. All these terms shall be in force until the first Annual General Meeting of the amalgamated Union is held or six months after 31st March 1956 whichever is earlier, whereafter the Union shall be governed by its Constitution Rules & Byelaws alone.

12. The amalgamation in the parallel Branches shall be in the following manner : -

(i) Where ever possible the office-bearers and Branch Council members of the amalgamated Branch shall be decided by mutual agreement within one month after amalgamation at the central level.

(ii) In case of failure to cause amalgamation by mutual agreement, the amalgamation to be effected by way of election by the members of both the unions in the Branches as per audited return submitted to the Registrar Trade Union, for the year 1953-54.

(iii) for the purpose of amalgamation, only such Branches (not station committees) will be taken into consideration which have been opened and recognised by the Administration on or before 31.3.55 or as per item 3(b) of decisions of the N. F. I. R. Working Committee meeting held on 16th & 17th November '53 whichever is preferred by the sister organisation viz. Eastern Railwaymen's Congress.

13. The General Bodies of the two unions will meet separately : -

(i) to amalgamate into one union as per agreed terms

(ii) to adopt the Constitution, Rules & Byelaws

(iii) to elect their quota of office-bearers of the amalgamated Union.

(iv) to elect seven persons authorising to give notice of amalgamation to the Registrar Trade Unions, West Bengal on behalf of respective organisations.

resolutions on (i) and (ii) being passed by 3/4th majority and (iii) by bare majority, whereafter the authorised persons shall file the application for necessary Registration of the amalgamation to the registrar Trade Unions.

14. The office-bearers, both at the centre and the Branches as well as members of the Central Council and delegates to the Annual General Meeting of the amalgamated union according to principles enunciated in item (4) above, will be replaced in the following manner.

The elections of office-bearers, Branch Council Members, Central Council Members and Delegates to the Annual General Meeting of the amalgamated Union will be held in the Branches within 4 months of the closure of the financial year 1955-56 on the basis of the membership scrutinised by a Committee composed of 3 persons, viz. the Treasurers of the amalgamating unions and the Federation who held the office on 31.3.55. Thereafter the election of office-bearers and Working Committee members of the Centre shall be held at the earliest date not more than 6 months from 31st March 1956.

There was no response to this resolution either from the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress or from the N. F. I. R. although the resolution was duly forwarded to them for their consideration.

In the meantime the trouble at the N. F. I. R. level between S. R. Vasavada and S. Guruswami had already started leading to an end to the chapter of "one Railway - one union."

After the amalgamation of E. I. Railway Employees' Union with B. N. Rly. Indian Labour Union and B. N. Rly. Employees' union, the amalgamated Union viz. Eastern Railwaymen's union started functioning in a very cordial atmosphere. In those days I was looking after the organisational side of the Union and was moving from Branch to Branch on the ex - B. N. Railway. The B. N. R. Employees' Union of which Nil Krishna Sarkar was the General Secretary, was infiltrated by communists. After amalgamation I felt the need of propagating more than even before the necessity of independent Trade Union which meant that every issue confronting the Railwaymen had to be decided in a democratic manner by the workers in service themselves without any external influence from any quarter including political parties keeping the interest of Railwaymen alone in view. This brought results and within a short period I found a band of dedicated workers not attached to any political ideology round me. I remember S. Guruswami used to say that he was the last independent trade unionist free from influence of any political party and I used to correct him by saying 'last non-railwayman independent trade unionist' and claimed myself as 'last Railwayman independent trade-unionist.' Ironically, my claim was right - Paritosh Banerjee, Bishnupada Roychowdhury, Bimal Dey and Sujit Roy, all my successors claimed themselves as followers of Socialist Party and depended on it for

their support. They had affiliated the Eastern Railwaymen's Union with Hind Majdoor Sabha as trade Union wing of the Socialists, whereas I and my predecessors resisted such a move. I pleaded for Railwaymen in service holding office in the Trade Union and gradual elimination of non-railwaymen so that vested interests could not grow. My successors eliminated Railwaymen in service from the Trade Union. A group of retired Railway-men seen to be now the most privileged class with vested interests in the Railway Trade Union field.

In August 1953, the Administration while according official recognition to the amalgamated union sought to curtail a number of facilities enjoyed by the unions. This was brought to the notice of Harihar Nath Shastri, the then President of N. F. I. R. who promised to take up the matter with the Railway Minister. But his untimely and unfortunate death prevented him from doing so.

The Central Council meeting of the Union was held at Moghalsara with pomp and grandeur by end of 1953. S. N. Singh President of the Union presided. Both S. N. Singh President and Jugal Kishore Sinha a guest were taken out on an elephant followed by thousands of Railwaymen in a procession.

Another Central Council Meeting of the union with S. N. Singh as President was held at Burdwan on 14-16 February 1954 and considered the progress of negotiation with the Railwaymen's Congress for amalgamation.

Removal of S. N. Singh from the Union was a necessity

For sometime past the activities of S. N. Singh, President of the Union were

against the interest of the union particularly his unauthorised, unilateral and secret negotiations with A. P. Sharma of Eastern Railwaymen's Congress. Although requested several times he did not desist from the same. A requisition was received for considering action against him by the Central council. The Annual General Meeting of the Union was being held at Howrah on 5th, 6th & 7th May 1954 and on the eve of it, a Central Council Meeting was held to consider the issue. The Central Council adopted the following resolution with 105 members out of 114 voting in favour one against Sheshi bhusana Rao - Branch Secretary Waltair and his men walked out. Sheshibhusana Rao is now the General Secretary of N. F. I. R.

"RESOLUTION

In exercise of the power conferred on this council in term of Rule 59(ii) of the Constitution of the Union, this meeting of the Central Council of the Eastern Railway men's Union held at Howrah on this day of 5th May 1954 commencing from 1 P.M. do hereby decides to remove S.N.Singh, President of the Union in view of his recent harmful activities against the interest of the Union from the post of Presidentship of the Union with immediate effect and debars him from holding any elective post in the Union for a period of three years.

This meeting further decides that M. D. Dube, Working President will preside over the ensuing General Body Meeting of the Union to commence from 3 P. M. on date.

Recent harmful activities of S. N. Singh are listed below :

(1) flouting of and acting against the

unanimous resolution of the Central Council meeting of the Union held at Burdwan on 14th, 15th & 16th February, 1954 on the subject of amalgamation between this union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress.

(2) Trying to prevent unconstitutionally the holding of the Working Committee Meeting of the Union at Howrah on 10th & 11th April '54.

(3) Provoking sectional feelings within the Union to disrupt the organisation.

(4) Entering into an unauthorised agreement with Sri A. P. Sharma of Eastern Railwaymen's Congress at Kharagpur on 23.4.54, purely for the purpose of self-aggrandisement arrogating to himself the rights, privileges and authority of such constitutional Bodies of the Union as the Working committee, Central Council and Annual General Meetings;

(5) Refusing to contradict the persistent rumours of his leaving the organisation to join the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress :

(6) Threatening to join the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress to suit his convenience."

Curtailment of facilities to the Union and also of the privileges and rights of railwaymen

The first Annual General Meeting of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union held at Howrah on May 5/54 presided over by M. D. Dubey, President as S. N. Singh President of the Union had already been reported as an annual General Meeting of a dynamic personality like J. K. Singh elected as Organising Secretary

the official candidate backed by us. J. M. Biswas in those days subscribed to the views of Communist Party of India and later defeated Atulya Ghosh West Bengal Congress President in the General election of the Parliament held in 1968 on a CPI nomination. He was a selfless and self-sacrificing trade union leader who lost his job on account of his trade union activities.

In his Report to the said annual General Meeting P. C. Dasgupta, General Secretary dealt with two very important aspects of Trade Union movement viz, Trade Union rights and condition of service which I am tempted to reproduce below : -

"Curtailement of Trade Union Rights and Facilities.

"The year under review has been one of the onslaughts on Trade Union rights.

The practice of issuing cheque passes to the Central office-bearers for attending Branch meetings have been stopped without showing any satisfactory reason.

The three Unions now amalgamated into the Eastern Railwaymen's Union used to get two card passes each over the Eastern Railway for organisational purposes. The number of these card passes were brought down from six to two immediately after amalgamation, later on, as a result of representation, the Railway Board have agreed to issue four card passes instead of six that the Union was enjoying. It appears to be the intention of the administration that even when the proposed amalgamation of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Congress is translated into a fact and there will be only one recognised Union for the entire railway, the reduced number of Card passes will remain in

force and the amalgamated Union will get only four card passes.

"In gross violation of the terms of recognition and the fundamental right of a worker to join a Trade Union of his choice, the Administration has not yet accorded its recognition to the Press Worker Branch of this Union. The River Side shed Branch of Howrah, has been denied the right of representation to the Dy. General Manager (Personnel) and other Heads of Departments, though the establishment of the entire membership of the Branch is maintained by the administration and is under the Administrative control of the Head Quarters Office.

"The Railway Board vide its No.E53NMI-2(L) dated 3.10.53 have decided that the Railway employees under suspension may not form part of the Union's delegation to the Permanent Negotiating Machinery meetings even if such employees happen to be office-bearers of the Union.

"Attempts have been made to refuse permission for the use of Railway premises, Land etc. for holding union meetings and bringing out processions of railway workers to vindicate their grievances.

"New hindrances in the functioning of the Union by transferring indiscriminately its office-bearers and active workers are being put as a result of agreement between the Union and Administration.

"These new handicaps on the way of proper and efficient management and organisation of the union can have one end in view, namely, to weaken the union. The administration



Sitting from left - T. N. Bajpai, B. K. Mukherjee, V. V. Giri, R. C. Chakravarty.



S. Guruswami, R. A. Ragahvan,
Peter Alvares, Pratul Chatterjee.



PRIYA GUPTA

"As a result of prolonged efforts the Federation moved the Railway Board to agree to certain changes in the Disciplinary Action Rules with a view to ensure reasonable security of service. As a result it was provided that in case of dismissal or removal from service, an employee would have the option of preferring appeal against the original order of penalty either to the General Manager or to the Railway Rates Tribunal which is a judicial authority. This scope of approach to a really independent and judicial authority has since been restricted considerably by denying it to all ex-company staff which includes a large majority of employees of the ex. B.N.R. portion.

"More serious than all this and objectionable on principle is the tendency that the administration has shown of late to circumvent altogether the normal disciplinary procedure by removing staff from service without assigning any reason either under special power of the General Manager or on one month's notice according to service agreement. Nothing could be more unfair and a greater threat to security of service. Nothing could be a worse negation of the rule of law, the condition precedent of democratic pattern of authority as envisaged in the Constitution of our Republic. It is a matter of deep regret that all constitutional attempts on our part for preventing extra-procedural extreme punishments have failed to produce any result.

"By a change in the procedure of promotion to Selection posts it has been decided that the panel of candidates selected for such promotion should henceforth be kept secret and even the selected candidates themselves will not be informed of their position. We fail to

understand why such secrecy is considered necessary except for providing scope for subsequent wangling and manipulations of a type which are not above board. Further, in case of promotions by selection within a fixed group of staff, the practice hitherto was that once a candidate was selected his position in the panel was to be determined on the basis of substantive seniority. Henceforth it will be the absolute discretion of the Selection Boards to determine such position irrespective of substantive seniority. This again has given a scope for unbridled favouritism. Further the insistence of the Administration on the requirement of passing certain qualifying examinations for the promotion of certain categories of staff to grades below 200-300 or 150-225 has in fact rendered infructuous to a large extent the orders of the Board that all promotions below the above grades should be according to seniority.

"In regard to the conditions for occupation of quarters the Class 'K' staff who constitute more than 50% of the total personnel on the Eastern Railway have been put to a serious disadvantage with financial implications. For all times in the past they had not to pay any rent for the quarters allotted to them. Now, however, they are being made to pay such rent as full. Further certain 'K' type quarters with very little modification have been reclassified as 'B' type. The quantum of improvement by such modification is hardly 5% but increases the rent to approximately to the tune of 100%.

"The merger of 50% of the Dearness Allowance into pay district as per the any immediate direct effect on the staff except that certain allowances are

quantum of which is dependent on pay, e.g. House-rent allowance, compensatory allowance, etc., were liable to be increased a little. In actual effect however in some cases such allowance instead of being increased have undergone a decrease. For example, in 'C' areas (Asansol, Khargpur, etc.) prior to merger of the Dearness Allowance into pay, employees drawing pay upto Rs. 100/- were entitled to a House-rent Allowance of Rs. 7/- per month. After the merger employees drawing pay above Rs. 75/- and below Rs. 82/- are getting this Allowance at a decreased rate varying from Rs. 6/- to Rs. 1/- and those drawing a pay of Rs. 82/- and above are getting nothing whatsoever. Strangely enough, while for this purpose the Dearness Pay is being treated as regular pay, for the purpose of privilege and duty passes it is not taken into account.

"Citing further examples of similar unfair and unjustified orders would, I am afraid, be tiring and perhaps useless as well. Because, studied as a whole, there is a method behind this madness. Methodically, slowly but steadily, by bits and pieces, doing things at times which should not be done, refraining from doing something which should be done — the Administration is fixedly pursuing definite objective viz, the reduction of benefit to the staff both in cash and kind and transgression on security of service. Most of these orders emanate from the Railway Board and whenever the Union propose to take the up with the Administration the Union is told that the matter is one in which the General Manager has nothing to do and which can be solved only at the level of the Railway Board by our Federation. We have repeatedly drawing

the attention of the Federation to undo the evils. On some of them there have been discussions between the Federation and the Railway Board but I regret to report that it has not been possible to get even a single undesirable order cancelled or amended".

In the said Annual General Meeting in 1954 M. D. Dubey was elected as General Secretary, P. C. Dasgupta and Nil Krisna Sarkar as Vice-Presidents, Thakur Jugul Kishore Sinha M. P. as Working President and Dr. Lanka Sunderam M. P. as President, Anadinath Bhattacharya as Treasurer, Sunil Bhattacharya, S. Subramaniam and myself as Assistant General Secretaries and J. M. Biswas as Organising Secretary.

Unity move in Federation failed again

S. R. Vasavada's style of functioning was autocratic. Right from the beginning he had a dislike for the AIRF Section in the N.F. I. R. He was partisan and wanted elbowing out the AIRF group from N.F.I.R. To aggravate the situation without consulting the General Secretary of N.F.I.R., he unilaterally withdrew a large number of cases from the One Man Tribunal. As a matter of fact he bypassed Guruswami, the General Secretary of N.F.I.R. in all matters. Guruswami gave notice for a General Council Meeting to be held on February 22-23, 1955 in New Delhi. S. R. Vasavada objected to the holding of this meeting. He and his INRWF group boycotted. Guruswami as General Secretary then convened the Annual Convention of N.F.I.R. to be held at Madras on May 27, 1955. This convention elected office-bearers of N.F.I.R. with V. V. Giri M. P. as President

(Giri was then no longer in the Central Cabinet). V. V. Giri, however, declined to accept the post of the President.

S. R. Vasavada called the convention of N.F.I.R. at Bezwada on November 20-21, 1955 and elected a new set of Office-bearers excluding the A.I.R.F. group. In the said meeting one N. K. Banerjee of National Railway Mazdoor Union was brutally murdered. Thus two groups started functioning in the name of N.F.I.R. viz : N.F.I.R. (Madras) and N.F.I.R. (Bezwada). While the N.F.I.R. (Madras) was not having benefits and facilities of recognition, N.F.I.R. (Bezwada) was enjoying such facilities.

Jayaprakash Narayan and V. V. Giri made efforts for a reconciliation and resolving the stalemate and discussed the issue with Prime Minister Nehru and Railway Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. A meeting was held in Railway Minister's house. In presence of Lal Bahadur Shastri, Khandu Bhai Desai, Jayaprakash and V. V. Giri fresh terms of agreement were drawn up on March 13, 1956 and signed by S. R. Vasavada and S. Guruswami. The said terms of agreement are as follows :—

Terms of Agreement, dated
March 13, 1956.

1. "It is agreed that the two Federations that came into existence at Madras and Bezwada should merge together in the interests of achieving complete unity amongst railway workers.

2. The following procedure is agreed to, to bring about the merger of the two Federations :

A Joint Committee consisting of one

representative each of the affiliated Unions with an independent Chairman, preferably a retired High Court Judge or Sessions Judge, or if no such person is available, the Regional Labour Commissioner, will scrutinise the membership lists of the two Unions and will hold elections on the basis of the combined list of membership.

3. The first step towards a merger of the two Federations shall be the merger of the Unions affiliated to the Federations. To bring about this merger of the Unions, Joint Committees consisting of one representative of each of the affiliated Unions shall be formed to scrutinise the lists of membership for the year 1955-56 as per the returns of that year which should be prepared by 31st May, 1956, and to prepare a combined list. In case of any dispute, the service of a retired High Court Judge or Sessions Judge will be obtained and his award will be accepted as final by both sides.

4. After the preparation of the combined list of membership, the Regional Labour Commissioner will conduct the elections of the merged unions as per the Constitution passed at Bezwada. The elections should be over by 31st August, 1956. In the case of co-optation of unrepresented categories, if there is no agreement between Guruswami and Vasavada, the decision of the Chief Labour Commissioner should be final. The Joint Convention of the delegates as elected by the merged Unions will be convened in October. At this Convention, Committees of the amalgamated Federations will be passed and election of Office-bearers held.

5. The amalgamated Federations hereby agree to subscribe to the principles laid down in columns 3, 4 and 7 of the

Constitution adopted at Bezwada and those principles will be included in the new Constitution of the amalgamated Federation.

6. To work out this Agreement a Committee will be formed consisting of 7 representatives of each Federation, with Vasavada as Chairman and Guruswami as Secretary.

Sd/- S. R. Vasavada Sd/- S. Guruswami

This agreement also did not work due to adamant attitude of Vasavada and his group.

The position of affiliated unions of N.F.I.R. (Madras) was that, out of 7 zonal Railways (South Eastern Railway formed in April 1955) only in 3 viz Central, Eastern and North Eastern enjoyed recognition and 4 were unrecognised. The position of affiliated unions of N.F.I.R. (Bezwada) was that, excepting in Central Railway in all other 6 Railways, they enjoyed recognition. After the issue of unity was ratified in the Annual Convention of AIRF held at Mysore, on January 1953 Western Railway Employees Union was the first union to amalgamate with its counterpart of INRWF. It was done with haste and without necessary safeguard. The General Secretary's group was given to the INRWF union retaining the Presidents group for Maniben Kara to be the President. The Central Railway union followed suit and then Northern Railway. Western Railway Employee's Union was the first union to break away within a period of little over one year and started propagating its bitter experience of unity with Congress Union of INRWF. Central Railway with P. R. Singh General Secretary who retained the General

Secretary's group in the amalgamation overthrew the INRWF group in the next election in a democratic manner and pulled on with the unity upto NFIR (Bezwada) meeting, where one of their delegates Banerjee was brutally murdered. On the Northern Railway AIRF group was squeezed out in the so-called election by INRWF group who had the General Secretary. On the Southern Railway, the Southern Railway Employee's union (AIRF) and Southern Railway Employee's Association (INRWF) merged into Southern Railway Employee's Sangh on July 15, 1957 and pledged loyalty to N.F.I.R. (Bezwada). Uptil June 1957 T., V. Anandam and his Union however was with Guruswami and N.F.I.R. (Madras). On the Eastern and the North Eastern Railways there was no amalgamation at all and on the South Eastern Railway, a breakaway group under the leadership of S. N. Singh and Shashi Bhusan Rao merged with Railwaymen's Congress. In this context All India Railwaymen's Federation was revived in the Annual Convention of NFIR (Madras) held at Poona on 12th, 13th & 14th August 1957.

Consequent upon the creation of the 7th Zonal Railway out of bifurcation of Eastern Railway, into Eastern and South Eastern Railways with effect from, April, 1955 the Union was bifurcated into Eastern Railwaymen's Union and South Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the Annual General meeting of the Union held at Sealdah on 12th, 13th & 14th Sept. 1955 which elected two sets of office-bearers for the two unions. In this meeting the expulsion order on Paritosh Banerjee imposed on him by the Central Council meeting of E. I. Railway Employee's Union held at Kanpur in 1952 for his joining the

E. I. Railwaymen's Congress was withdrawn at my initiative and he was elected an Organising Secretary. Earlier Paritosh Banerjee had severed his connections with the E. I. Railwaymen's Congress and offered unqualified apology to the Union.

Open session of the said Annual General Meeting was addressed by V. V. Giri on the 12th September 1955. S. Sarangapani, General Manager Eastern Railway also spoke. N. C. Kapoor, General Manager South Eastern Railway sent a message wishing success to the Conference. In the said Annual General Meeting Thakur Jugal Kishore Sinha was elected President, M. D. Dubey Working President, P. C. Dasgupta General Secretary, myself, Bimal Dey, Nirapada Banerjee, and Satyen Chkravarty Assistant General Secretaries, Sachin Chowdhury Treasurer. Kiron Chowdhury, S. K. Chaturbedi, P. K. Adhikary, P. Dayal and Biswanath Roy Vice Presidents and Nanigopal Chakravarty & Paritosh Banerjee Organising Secretaries of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. A similar number of office-bearers were elected by the delegates of South Eastern Railwaymen's Union with S. Guruswami as President S. Subrahmaniam as General Secretary.

Unfortunately N. C. Kapoor, the General Manager of the newly formed South Eastern Railway refused to recognise the South Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the trouble started. A demand for Festival advance was gaining ground and a powerful movement started. Demonstrations were held in the General Manager's office at Fairlie Place and Garden Reach. While S. Sarangapani, the then General Manger of Eastern Railway

tackled the situation in a tactful manner, N. C. Kapoor the General Manager of the South Eastern Railway Called Police force just to aggravate the situation. A joint meeting of Eastern and South Eastern Railwaymen was held at Calcutta Maidan on 17th October 1955 where a call was given to ministerial staff working in the Head. Quarter's Buildings of the two Railways to go on strike for a day on 18th October 1955 in support of the demand. The strike was a grand success and the demand for Puja advance was conceded.

Visit to China

Earlier in the same year 1955, on an invitation to the All India Railwaymen's Federation by All China Railway Workers Union, a delegation of 3 consisting of myself, Jagdish Ajmera of Western Railway Employee's Union and Triyugi Narain Bajpai of Northern Railwaymen's Union visited China for three weeks with effect from April 24, 1955. A large number of delegates from many Countries and various organisations of India visited China during the said period on invitation of their counterparts in China. Stalwarts in the said delegation was Jyoti Basu (now Chief Minister West Bengal) representing AITUC, Basawan Singh representing HMS, B. K. Mukherjee Ex-General Secretary, E. I. Railwaymen's Union representing P & T Federation. We saw Mao Tse Tung, Chou-en-lai, Marshal Chow-te and other leaders of China in the May Day Celebration. The then Prime Minister Chou En Lai gave a cocktail party to the delegation. In this tour there was a division and difference of opinion amongst the Indian delegation over the attitude of

Chinese hosts. Acceptance of China's suzerainty over Tibet by Jawaharlal Nehru was not liked by many of us. In Shanghai when we were shown a map, we found a large area of India shown as territory of China in complete disregard of the recognised boundary of MC Mehan line. Basawan Singh and many of us including B. K. Mukherjee protested. Basawan Singh and other HMS delegates put an end to their tour and left for India early. They issued a statement from HongKong which perturbed the Chinese hosts and they wanted a rejoinder to be issued by all of us who stayed back. Jyoti Basu and his followers issued a rejoinder which, however, many others including B. K. Mukherjee, Triyugi Narain Bajpai and myself did not sign.

Problems of the Union

In the Negotiating Machinery meeting between the Divisional Superintendent Keith Bathgate held on 1. 2. 1955, Bimal Dey, Branch Secretary Howrah made certain remarks to which Bathgate took serious exception and walked out declaring the meeting as closed. Myself and P. C. Dasgupta tried to settle the matter but Bathgate would not agree for anything short of an apology from the Union which we could not agree to. There was a stalemate. We gave three days time to the Divisional Superintendent for resuming the P. N. M. meeting and started demonstration outside the Divisional Superintendent's bungalow at Liloah. The P. N. M. meeting was resumed on the third day without an apology.

Following a demonstration against

the Asansol Divisional Superintendent, G. D. Khandelwal's attitude towards an employee's wife on 19th April, 1956, the Branch Secretary of the union H. D. Bagchi, and Asstt. Secretary R. K. Basu were dismissed from service with effect from September 28, 1956. Quite a few others were also suspended and punished. Simultaneously with the departmental proceedings, criminal cases were also filed by the police against them at the instance of the said Divisional superintendent. The criminal case did not stand and the dismissal orders were set aside. Vindicative as he was, G. D. Khandelwal had initiated a fresh attack. Another departmental enquiry was held and they were removed from service again. During my Trade Union life I have seen high-handedness of a large number of officers but I have never seen such vindictive person like G. D. Kandelwal. I have great regrets that I could not fight this victimisation and also that the Union could not muster strong to deal with him with vengeance he rightly deserved.

P. C. Dasgupta was elected General Secretary of the bifurcated Union in the Annual General Meeting held at Sealdah in September 1955 in place of Murlidhar Dubey who was elected General Secretary of the undivided union in the meeting held on 5th, 6th & 7th 1954 at Howrah. As he was not able to devote time to the union after he became the Chief Controller Howrah, P. C. Das Gupta expressed his desire to step down in the ensuing Annual General Meeting at Asansol to be held on 5th, 6th & 7th October, 1956. I was next to P. C. Dasgupta and the independents in the union not attached to any political party or group, wanted me to be the General Secretary. I filed

a nomination. The pro-communist block in the union tried to persuade P. C. Dasgupta to continue but having failed to do so started opposing me. They were alarmed and panicky and allergic to me. They wanted to block my success in the election of the General Secretary and in case it was not possible, I should be left with no able assistants. The Eastern Railway Administration was very much upset. They apprehended that the cordial relation that existed between the Administration and the union with P. C. Dasgupta and Murlidhar Dubey at the helm of affairs would not be there with my taking over as the General Secretary. The administration did never like my outspoken ways. My aggressiveness of purpose frightened them.

Eastern Railway Authorities conspired against me.

I could know a fact at much later date in 1969 from Murlidhar Dubey. Dubeyji was Working President of the Union before the Annual General Meeting held at Howrah on 5th, 6th & 7th May 1954. P. C. Dasgupta wanted to step down. In between P. C. Dasgupta, Dubeyji and myself it was decided that I should file the nomination for General Secretary's post and accordingly I did so. After a few days Dubeyji also filed nomination for the post of General Secretary and explained to me that he had to file the nomination as an influential section of ex-B. N. R. did not approve of my candidature. I withdrew my nomination without even trying to know who were the persons opposed to my candidature. Such was my loyalty for Dubeyji and P.

C. Dasgupta. Now what Dubeyji told me subsequently in 1969 when I was Welfare Superintendent at Danapur, was shocking to me. Dubeyji and P. C. Dasgupta were called by Dy. General Manager (Personnel) and also by General Manager E. Rly and they made it clear that with my taking over as the General Secretary, not only the cordial relations would cease to be there but would also antagonize the attitude of the Administration. P. C. Dasgupta tried to convince the General Manager but failed. Ultimately M. D. Dubey had taken over as the General Secretary.

Frustration and ineffectiveness of the union workers

For about an year after the Annual General Meeting held at Sealdah in September 1955 the union was facing chaos, confusion, frustration and ineffectiveness due to (i) Administration's calculated hostility emanating from misunderstanding, indifference and incorrect assessment of the prevailing frustration of the employees (ii) Offensive attitude of sister organisations and unfriendly elements and (iii) Growing feeling of insecurity in the minds of active workers in almost all the important Branches arising out of harassment and victimisation of their colleagues and absence of proper and timely directions from the Central Office to the Branches.

This was the background in which we met in the Annual General Meeting at Asansol on 5th, 6th & 7th October 1956. In spite of my request neither P. C. Dasgupta nor Murlidhar Dubey who was Vice-President attended. All sorts of whispering campaign were let loose by

the Communist block against me just to create division amongst the independent delegates not attached to any political party. Even men like M. M. P. Sinha, Nirapada Banerjee, N. M. Chowbey, P. Dayal etc. were confused. I was attacked from all sides and instead of frustration and dejection I was getting determined to fight. The election was held by secret ballot under the supervision and control of the President Thakur Jugal Kishore Sinha. Both Thakur Jugal Sinha and Kiron Chowdury were elected unanimously as President and Working President. In all other posts there were contests. Although I was elected General Secretary by a comfortable majority, independents of my group lost most of the posts to the Communists and their sympathisers B. N. Roy, leader of the Communist block in the Union Kedarnath, ABC, Barakakana were elected as Vice-Presidents, Sachin Chowdhury as Treasurer, Ram Balak Singh (present MLA Bihar) Organising Secretary, Nanigopal Chakravarty, S. K. Upadhyay and Nirapada Banerjee as Asstt. General Secretaries. I was expecting some assistance from Bimal De and Paritosh Banerjee who were elected as Asstt. General Secretary and Organising Secretary respectively but they were more busy elsewhere — Bimal De for his study in M. A. and Law and Paritosh Banerjee for Hind Mazdoor Sabha and Praja Socialist Party. I was practically alone encircled by elements who were hostile to me. Compelled by circumstances I was drawing nearer to the Socialist group who were long out of the Union in the process of the conflict.

A series of Trade Union victimisation followed. Priya Gupta then General

Secretary of NE/NF Railway Mazdoor Union and an Electrical Foreman at Faridkot was removed from service under the President's powers with effect from 8th August 1956. Haridas Bagchi and Ranjit Kumar Basu, Branch Secretary and Asstt. Secretary of Asansol Branch had already been victims of Divisional Superintendent Asansol, Khandelwal's wrath. Bireswar Chakravorty, Branch Secretary of Northern Railwaymen's Union at Allahabad was removed from service through Departmental D. A Enquiry for allegedly instigating an illegal strike in Allahabad Loco Shed on 10. 5. 1956. Ram, Balak Singh, Organising Secretary of the Union who was under suspension from 1949 since 1949 was removed from service under President's power. Series of sporadic strikes took place at Patherdihi, Gomoh, Dhanbad, Moghalsarai, Burdwan, Rampurhat, Ranaghat, Jamalpur, Saidah etc. causing break-in-service of the concerned Railwaymen.

Lal Bahadur Shastri resigns and Jagjivan Ram takes over as Railway Minister.

Following an accident at Allahabad Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned and Jagjivan Ram took over as Railway Minister. He called a meeting of the President and General Secretaries of all unions affiliated to N.F.I.R. on 10th August 1957 at New Delhi. He announced a scheme of higher grade for the major categories of non-official employees. He in his opening address referred to the differences in the leadership of organisations.

labour and attempts made by his predecessor Lal Bahadur Shastri to bring about a rapprochement between the two sides. Jagjivan Ram further said "ever since I assumed the responsibility of this Ministry, it has been my desire to meet the representatives of the Federation and of the various unions with a view to coming in personal contact with them. "The pending demand of some of the unions for recognition which could not be entertained for some reason or another, has now been accepted. (Western Railway Employees' union, Northern Railwaymen's Union and South Eastern Railwaymen's Union were recently recognised) He made it clear that this recognition to unions did not necessarily imply any deviation from the policy of continuing only one Federation for all the Unions on all the Railways." He in conclusion appealed for cooperation.

Thereafter different speakers expressed their view points. I had drawn the attention of the Railway Minister to the harassment and victimisation of the Trade Union workers and denial of normal Trade Union rights. I also stressed on immunity to the Railwaymen Trade unionists from operation of Discipline and Appeal Rules for their Trade Union activities. Jagjivan Ram in his concluding speech referred to my points of Trade Union rights etc. and assured us to examine the matter in greater details. Full text of my speech and Railway Minister's reply are given below :—

R. C. Chakravarty

General Secretary, Eastern Railwaymen's Union spoke as follows :—

"Beloved Minister and respected Members of the Railway Board :

Permit me to congratulate you for the step taken by you towards establishing the much desired cordial relation between the Labour and the Management which had practically ceased to exist in Railways.

My Union is pledged to offer its unqualified cooperation for the successful implementation of the Five Year Plan not merely to please any individual, but because, the Union is convinced of its far reaching implications and possibilities helping the development of the country's economy. At the same time Sir, I would like to point out that while the conscious section of the workers do appreciate this view point, the overwhelming majority who are not conscious about the implications of the Five Year Plan could only be enthused to work for it ungrudgingly provided they could get a share of the wealth produced through their effort and toil.

While reiterating the submissions made by my other friends present here in regard to Wage Commission functioning of the Tribunal and case of Class IV workers including Workshop Artisans who have been excluded from the scope of the announcement, I would most humbly and respectfully like to draw your attention to certain very vital and important aspects necessary for the development of a cordial relation between organised Labour and the Management.

"On the Eastern, South Eastern and North Eastern Railways a reign of terror is imposed for some time past. Let us stop Trade Union activities on my part such as convening of meetings on Railway premises, distribution of leaflets, conducting peaceful demonstrations and legitimate

of the Administration and its officers have been rendered difficult under threat of penal action. A large number of workers have been victimised and harassed. Apart from the fact that no tangible good comes out of the Permanent Negotiating Machinery meetings, holding of such meetings has been rendered almost impossible on account of unnecessary impediments created by the local Administration. The central Office Bearers and even the General Secretary are now being prevented from attending the PNM meetings at the Divisional level. The freedom of the Union to choose its representatives for attending the PNM meetings is being denied and removed or discharged railwaymen who are office bearers of the Union are also prevented from functioning as such or attending the PNM meetings. Against the spirit and provisions of the Trade Union Act itself suspended Railwaymen who are officials of the Union are not allowed to take part in the PNM meetings and even in the Union's council or committee meetings. Minutes of the meetings are not recorded properly and unnecessary delay is caused in finalising the minutes. While the doors of negotiation at the Railway Board's level are closed to the Union since the Federation to which it is affiliated is not yet recognised, the modest request to forward the view points of the Union to the Railway Board for their consideration is not acceded to by the Union to the Railway Board for their consideration is not acceded to by the General Manager. While issues are allowed to accumulate, no efforts are made for their speedy settlement by holding PNM meetings regularly and at shorter intervals. The office bearers attending the PNM meetings

are generally treated as subordinates and incur annoyance and displeasure of the officers in case they criticise any policy of the Administration or assert trade union rights. These meetings are conducted with an attitude of benignancy rather than treating the Union on equal terms for the purpose of discussion.

Break in service has been caused to a large number of workers and wage cut have been resorted to. I do not suggest that in all the cases the workers were faultless, but I would like to submit that in many cases the punishments inflicted have been unduly harsh and unjustifiable altogether no attempts have been made to go into the reasons of such sporadic actions and arrest the disease to minimise the scope of its recurrence. The staff are being generally treated in such a manner as to create a fear complex in their mind which is neither good for the Administration nor for the country, since a set of demoralised and frustrated workers can be of no use. In several cases in such sporadic actions the Union have been made responsible and their officials punished and victimised though the Union officials helped the Administration for early restoration of normal work.

The attitude of the Administration has been prejudiced against the Union and demands have been made on the Unions to deal with such Union workers pointed out by the Administration irrespective of whether or not such workers were associated with a sporadic action. Vindictive attitude of the Administration has been thoroughly exposed in that, while charges against some Union officials were pending investigations before the Court of Enquiry, Departmental enquiries were held on

similar charges and without giving reasonable facilities as guaranteed under the Constitution, they have been removed from service. While the Union do not support sporadic actions and its members associating with such action, the Union wants to be convinced about charges brought against them by the Administration and with this end in view had requested the Administration to hold joint enquiries consisting of representatives of the Union and the Administration sitting in a committee to go into the whole case of sporadic action in order to find out the reasons and fix up the responsibility which, however, the Administration has not agreed to. I earnestly request the Railway Minister to consider whether such enquiries are possible.

"Presumably, on account of their biased notion and prejudice against the Union as a whole, the Administration has curtailed a good many rights and facilities of the Union which were hitherto been allowed.

"Permission for holding meetings are unnecessarily delayed on some pretext or the other. Even for holding meetings in the Railway Colonies the Administration is now insisting on prior permission being obtained; unnecessary conditions are imposed for holding meetings in Railway premises thus rendering the holding of meetings difficult. To quote an example the Divisional Superintendent, Asansol, has not granted any permission since September last for holding any meeting in the Railway premises and the attitude of the Divisional Superintendent is well exhibited from the trend of several correspondence that have passed between him and the Union.

"These curtailments as well as the entire attitude of the Administration has rendered it difficult for the Railwaymen who are Trade Unionists to work in the Trade Unions properly and effectively. The introduction of the New Railway Servants Conduct Rules and application of disciplinary rules on the Trade Union officials for their Trade Union activities have curtailed the scope of bona-fide Trade Unionism on the Railway. The Railway Administration have on very many occasions expressed their desire that the Railway Trade Union should be free from the influence of the political parties and should be managed by Railway workers themselves. In pursuance of this desire, I would request the Railway Minister to kindly consider how far it is fair to deal with the Railwaymen who are also Trade Unionists under Departmental rules for their Trade Union actions and activities. It is a big problem and Railwaymen do not know where they stand. If the laws regulating Trade Union activities in the country and the Constitution guarantee something there is no reason why the departmental rules take away those rights and facilities. The Railwaymen Trade Unionists as such are very anxious to know where they stand particularly in relation to the Trade Union Act and citizenship rights guaranteed under the Constitution and the departmental rules. In all fairness the Railwaymen should be told very clearly as to how far they can proceed and where to halt. I urge upon the Railway Minister to kindly consider that no bona-fide and healthy Trade Union can grow and the Railwaymen who are Trade Unionists cannot discharge their responsibilities to their constituents effectively unless they

are given immunity from the operation of departmental rules of the Railway for their Trade Union actions. I also urge upon the Railway Minister that with a view to establish cordial relationship between the organised labour and the management it is essential to reinstate these Trade Union Workers who have been victimised for Trade Union activities and withdraw all proceedings pending against Trade Union workers for disciplinary actions.

My Union believes in unity of the workers but the manner in which the whole issue of achieving unity between parallel Unions and Federations has been dealt with, leads to frustration in the minds of the workers. No unity can be effective and real which has not got the sanction of the workers. The present agreement of unity cannot materialise unless the Government actively cooperates and takes up the responsibility upon itself and causes the amalgamation through a democratic method either by a referendum or by implementing the present agreement.

"I hope that the difficulties that are experienced will gradually be removed through a cordial relation established by such contacts as the Minister has kindly made possible on this occasion."

RAILWAY MINISTER'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

In his concluding remarks, the Railway Minister said:

"The views expressed by you at this conference are very profitable to me, and that was the primary objective of convening this conference. I have no hesitation in confessing that with my very limited experience of the working of the

railways. I have been in charge of this heavy responsibility only for a short time, it has not been possible for me to go into all the details, and, therefore, I cannot attempt to deal fully with points raised by you. But I would certainly like to take notice of the important and salient points that you have made. It is indeed gratifying to know that there is such a large measure of unanimity on one of the fundamentals of Railway Trade Unionism, and that is, there should be one Federation for all the Railways, and one Union possibly on each zonal railway. I have always stood for unity among the workers and it will be out of place if I mention here what I did in the P.&T Department. When I took charge of that Ministry, there were nearly 27 Unions and not much love was lost between them. I had stated once in the Parliament that as an employer, perhaps it would be advantageous to have a multiplicity of unions so that the employer can play one union against the other whenever it suited him. But I did not like that. I always believe in the unity of the working class, and there, in the P&T., succeeded to a great measure and I was able to reduce the number from 27 to 19 and to bring about one Federation for them. I am quoting this so that the railway workers should also think on those lines of having one Federation.

You (The Labour Representatives) stated that democratic procedure should be adopted for effecting that unity. Well I am one who always believes in democratic principles, and even if the Unions passed into the hands of some individual or section which will not be regarded as very desirable, and if he or the section happens to get into position by democratic methods, I am one who

will not oppose that. There are some concomitant defects in the functioning of democracy also. It is not always that only competent and efficient men are thrown up in democracy. Sometimes undesirable persons also get into positions of vantage. In democracy that happens. It is not always the best that is advocated by the majority in democracy. It also so happens that the things advocated by the minority are much better than the things advocated by the majority. But the will of the majority prevails.

As I have said in my remarks, although I would like to have one union on each railway, it was with a view to satisfying the demands of some of the representatives of organised labour on some railways, that I went out of my way and granted recognition to them. But it should not be construed that it is my intention to create a multiplicity of unions on the railways, or to create division among them. You may interpret it that way, and it will not be unnatural to put that interpretation on the action that I have taken on three Railways recently. Well, uncharitable persons may put forward the remark that because I wanted to create division on those railways, I have granted recognition, and that will not be very unnatural. But assure you that it was not my intention. I believed that one union on a railway will contribute to greater cohesion among the workers and also give more and more strength to them. So I need not elaborate these points. It is gratifying indeed that all of you are unanimous on that point i.e., there should be one Federation. How best to effect it? Well again if you wish me to respect the principles of democracy and free trade unionism, you would not like me

to interfere or intervene, unless you yourselves desire me to do that in order to bring about unity among yourselves. I say this as one who believes in free trade unionism. And I would not like, myself in my capacity as Railway Minister, the employer of the railwaymen to interfere or throw my weight on this side or that side for effecting the establishment of one Federation.

As I have said, if you will require my services, I am always at your disposal, and am prepared to help you in whatever way I can in arriving at an amicable settlement of whatever differences you have between two groups or factions, or whatever you may say, so that one representative Federation could be established. One Federation will be of advantage not only to the workers but also to the administration. That is what I have to say as far as the 'Federation' is concerned.

About having one union on each zonal railway, I do not see any difficulty, if you yourselves mutually arrive at a settlement and agree to the amalgamation of the different unions on a particular railway. I do not think there will be any insurmountable difficulty. Given the goodwill on both sides in evolving some formula by which you can amalgamate the Unions, it would not be so difficult. Somebody said 'How is it possible?' If the leaders agree and if the leaders do represent the workers-if they do not represent them they have no business to be here-it is not impossible. I discuss with you in your representative capacity and I feel whatever commitment you make with me, you do in your representative capacity and on the strength of the vote of the workers. If you are not able to carry

the workers with you, then as an honest man it is your business not to be there. When we ask the leadership to combine, it means the vast number of workers whom they represent, to combine. If the leaders have no representative capacity, then there is no meaning in the leaders combining. I say that if the leaders of different unions on the different railways put their heads together in a spirit of cooperation on the issue of having one union, it will not be difficult of achievement. As have already said it is only a few weeks since I have been in charge of the Railways, and I have not been able to study fully the workers organisations on the Railways. The mechanism of human relations is a very delicate mechanism. It will require some time for me to study the mechanism of the organisation of workers on the railways. I know something of the mechanism generally; still in this particular case, some time is required. I feel I have not been able to devote as much time as I would have liked, because of the present circumstances as you know, the Elections, selection of candidates, and all these have taken most of my time. So I propose to go into greater detail into this question. Anywhere necessary I shall consult some of you, and if I have any proposals to make, I shall put them before you for your consideration, so that you can follow them up with a view to effecting unity among yourselves.

Mr. Chakravarty has raised some fundamental questions about Trade Union rights, disciplinary action, service rule and things like that. It is very difficult to draw a line in the case of an active worker as to which of his activities should be regarded as Trade Union activities, strictly

speaking and for which activities he should be immune from the General Conduct Rules or Disciplinary Rules. That applies to any worker of any industry whether a governmental undertaking, or private. But in governmental undertakings another restriction is also placed and that is, that as soon as a person enters into Government service, certain restrictions are placed on his citizenship rights, which he willingly accepts. So we have to take these things into consideration, when we think of free Trade Union rights for an employee who is not in a private industry but in the service of the government, I was going to suggest that I would like to examine this position in greater detail. I will welcome a detailed note on this from you explaining the grievances you feel so that there may not be any inconsistency in the position of a worker in the industry as a person or a citizen in the employ of the Government and as a Trade Union worker. It requires some time for us to consider this matter. Let somebody take these factors into consideration and then send me a note. I will welcome such a note.

Then about class IV employees. I was conscious of the fact that nothing has been said in this announcement, or whatever you may call it, regarding class IV employees. The difficulty is this that class IV heterogeneous mass and we have class IV employees in the Government of India doing all types of work right from Chaprasi in the Secretariat to the Garman on the Railways. Many people have no knowledge of the working of the railway or of the Posts and Telegraphs Departments and the functions of class IV employees in these depts. The Public generally consider that class IV means the

Chaprasa. Moreover by the Central Pay Commission Recommendations, the lot of the class IV employees have been improved much more than that of the class III employees. It does not mean that I do not propose to do anything for the class IV employees, but these questions require some detailed examination. Of the categories of class IV employees, who are not doing the same type of functions as the chaprasa in the Secretariat, we have to make distinction among the class IV employees as well. These things take months before we arrive at a decision.

"Someone said regarding the appointment of a committee in the matter of the redress of minor grievances of staff. I do not propose to do that. I want to look into this directly and do something which will help expediting the disposal of small grievances. In the P & T Department I did something. I called for returns of the pending cases and the duration for which they were pending. I propose to do likewise here also. Regarding its nature I am not quite clear. I do not propose to set up a Committee. It will take six or nine months to submit its report. I want something concrete and quickly as I can.

"Someone said about the Welfare Organisation. I do not know about the functioning of the Welfare Organisation. I shall look into that and see that it should serve the purpose for which it is intended."

Sometimes in middle of 1957 Jagjivan Ram, Railway Minister introduced the Pension Scheme on the Railways. At the beginning the scheme was not popular due to many shortcomings. But in due course improvements to the original scheme, one of the best for social security, was considered to be gradually attributed. It is now a boon to Railwaymen.

There was inordinate delay in making

settlement of the retired employees. Both the AIRF and the Union made several representations for early settlement viz. within 15 days to one month of retirement. The Railway Minister wanted this to be given a top priority and the Railway Board as an experiment, wanted Eastern Railway to explore the feasibility of settlement of all dues within 10 days of employee's retirement. The General Manager after discussion with the Union wanted this to be experimented from Howrah Division where I was a Welfare Inspector. I consulted my colleagues of the Welfare organisation and due to their uniting efforts, the experiment was successful. When I retired from Railway Service on 01.02.1978, the settlement used to be on the day of retirement and the pension was made available on the next pay day in, just after a month of retirement.

An All India Technical staff Conference was held at Jamalpur under auspices of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. There was a very big mass meeting on this occasion which was presided over by me and addressed by Priya Gupta and Jagjivan Ram. Priya Gupta spoke at length detailing the burning grievances of the Railwaymen. He condemned the role played by railway officers for their insensitivity to actual problems of railwaymen. Jagjivan Ram replied to most of the points and maintained his robustness of a seasoned political leader. I had found him to be fairly sympathetic and reasonable in his dealings with Railwaymen.

A Class IV staff promotion committee was appointed on May 4, 1957. Manojen Kara was one of the members. Our Union gave satisfactory evidence before it when the committee visited Calcutta.

As stated earlier the convention of N. F. I. R. (Madras) was held at Poona on 12th, 13th and 14th August 1957. In this convention it was resolved to revive the old All India Railwaymen's Federation and drop the name of N.F.I.R. (Madras). The convention was presided over by Maniben Kara. A new constitution was also adopted for the Federation; the most important provision was election of office-bearers by simple voting instead of cumulative voting in which a delegate could cast all his votes for the posts (where there were more than one) to one candidate only. This used to give the minority necessary protection and representation in the Federation. In this convention S. Guruswami was elected President and Peter Alvares, General Secretary. Nath Pai the brilliant parliamentarian and Chairman of the Central Government Employees' Confederation was elected Vice-President and myself as Treasurer.

The N. F. I. R. (Madras) (AIRF) was then not recognised. A section in the Federation was feeling that replacement of Guruswami by a person who had the right approach to the government would be helpful for the cause. There was no difference of opinion in the AIRF about devotion of Guruswami - but there was difference of opinion about his functioning which he although did from his house in Mylapore Madras. We used to joke that AIRF was in Guruswami's bag. Other office-bearers were just show boys and had no function. Everybody felt that AIRF should have an office in New Delhi but could not do anything beyond that. It was no doubt a shame that the AIRF could not pay Guruswami regularly and adequately and a section of AIRF would not endorse

the idea of an office and shifting it to Delhi on that ground. Guruswami's desire to hold Southern Railway Employees' Union and T.V. Anandam in the N. F. I. R. (Madras)/ A.I.R.F., also went against him. We had discussion amongst us before Poona convention of AIRF about replacing Guruswami as General Secretary. Basawan Singh, President AIRF and N.E. Railway Mazdoor Union, Priya Gupta and K. L. Gupta were in favour. As a matter of fact both Priya Gupta and myself met and discussed with Guruswami at Madras before Poona meeting. Guruswami of course did not relish the idea. D.D. Vasth of Northern Railwaymen's Union had the same feeling. R.N. Banerjee of S. E. Railwaymen's Union and S. Subrahmaniam also agreed that it was better if Guruswami could be replaced by some one. They of course differed about the personnel. A.P. Verma of Central Railway (then Treasurer of AIRF) and V.R. Malgi were enthusiastic about the proposal. The breakaway group of the Southern Railway Employees' Union led by P. Govind Menon, Western Railway Employees' Union and majority of the S.E. Railwaymen's Union were in favour of Guruswami continuing as General Secretary. There were two candidates before us, Nath Pai M.P. President of Central Government Employees' Confederation and Peter Alvares ex-Assistant General Secretary of AIRF who were idle at the moment. As proposed by myself, R.N. Banerjee, and G. Chatterjee of N.F. Railway and A. Treasurer who had taken the lead in the matter took us to Nath Pai and wanted to convince him for accepting the post of General Secretary. Unfortunately Nath Pai was hesitant to accept the proposal on the ground of many a call upon him.

was no doubt a busy man and we felt it of no use to press him further. Nath Pai also approved the candidature of Peter Alvares for the post of General Secretary. Priya Gupta, K.L.Gupta, D.D. Vasisth etc. were already in favour of Peter Alvares. Although the persons named above were equally responsible and A.P. Verma took the lead in the matter, Maniben Kara and Western Railway Employees' Union let loose a propaganda as if I alone was responsible for removing Guruswami from the post of General Secretary of AIRF. A.P.Verma who was mainly responsible for Peter Alvares coming to power, was not liked by Peter Alvares. A.P. Verma in later days told me that Peter did not like me as well and I was his next target. Priya Gupta also could not pull on well with Peter Alvares in later days. Peter was first elevated to the post of President and then replaced by George Fernandez in election. Nath Pai later regretted for not accepting the offer of General Secretaryship of AIRF at Poon Convention. Although Peter Alvares belonged to Praja Socialist Party, he had his own coterie and was against many of his Party men. Socialist like N.G.Gorey was not happy with him.

I must acknowledge that I received support from Peter Alvares and our relation was cordial till the Moghalsari Conference of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union held in October 1962, when Bishnupada Roychowdhury, Subhas Mitra, Manoj Basu, Bimal Dey etc. lost the election and D.P.Joshi, a Socialist (PSP) was elected as Working President. I had also a bitter experience of Peter Alvares' vindictiveness.

The main demand of the Poona convention was recognition of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and authority of negotiation. It was also

decided that a strike ballot should be taken to achieve the necessary goal.

S.Guruswami met the Railway Minister Jagjivan Ram on 24th August 1957. Peter Alvares, Nath Pai and Basawan Singh met Jagjivan Ram in early September 1957 and pleaded the case of recognition. Jagjivan Ram suggested a joint meeting of NFIR and AIRF by 20th November 1957. In view of this the AIRF Working Committee in its meeting held in New Delhi on 12th, 13th & 14th October 1957 decided to defer the issue of Strike notice till 25th November for withdrawal of labour from the mid-night of 14th December 1957.

A Fresh move for unity failed

A joint meeting of AIRF and NFIR officials was held in Railway Minister's chamber on November 19 & 20, 1957. AIRF side was represented by President S.Curuswami General Secretary Peter Alvares, Treasurer R.C. Chakravarty (myself), Maniben Kara, Sucheta Kripalani (She was then President of the Northern Railwaymen's Union) and Basawan Singh. N.F.I.R. was represented by S.R. Vasavada, A.P. Sharma and others. A ~~taped~~ record of the meeting was kept by the Minister. Jagjivan Ram wanted that efforts should be made once again to implement the unity agreement and unity should be achieved.

The Terms and Time ~~Table~~ to work out the Agreement for Unity were as under :

1. The membership to form the Electoral Roll will be as on 31st March, 1957.
2. The delimitation of Branches on each Union will be completed by 31st December. For this purpose,

- the two General Secretaries of each affiliated Union on each Railway will jointly make out the jurisdiction of the Branches of their Railways, If there is any dispute, it will be referred for final decision to the Regional Labour Commissioner for arbitration.
3. The membership lists (according to the branches so delimited) shall be submitted on the 20th March 1958 to the Regional Labour Commissioner of the respective area. Two lists are to be prepared for submission. One of these two copies is to be handed over to the other affiliated Union simultaneously.
 4. The following are the Regional Labour Commissioners for the respective Unions :
 - (a) Northern Railway ... Delhi
 - (b) N.E.Railway ... Lucknow or Gorakhpur
 - (c) Eastern Railway)
 - (d) South Eastern Railway) Calcutta
 - (e) Southern Railway ... Madras
 - (f) Central Railway)
 - (g) Western Railway) Bombay
 5. Membership Pledge : There is a disagreement about this. AIRF representatives could not agree to a Pledge. At the most they agreed to a statement of Pledge to the Constitution of the Union. This matter will be referred to arbitration.
 6. From the 1st April to 15th April, objections could be lodged regarding the membership of the other Union. From 16th April to the 30th April, the Regional Labour Commissioner will give his Award on any objections raised.
 7. By 31st May, the elections at the Branch level will be completed.
 8. By 30th June the elections, for one Union for each Railway will be completed.
 9. By 30th July, the elections, to the Federation will be completed.
 10. The assets and liabilities of each Federation (NFIR) and (AIRF) will be disposed of by the process of either by disbursing or by meeting the liabilities. The merging Unions may make any arrangement they choose.
 11. The representatives of NFIR did not accept the qualification of AIRF Unions taking part in the merger on the Northern and Southern Railways. The case of these two Unions has not been referred to arbitration. Some decision will be taken later.

The procedure for amalgamating the Unions and the Federation was of elections from the Branch level up to the Federation level. There is no provision for a formal merger of the type usually done whereby half the Office-bearers are from one side and the other half from the other.

Members of the Joint Committee from AIRF side were S.Guruswami, Peter Alvares, R.C. Chakravarty, Manilal Kari, D.D.Vasisth, P.R. Singh, R.N. and G.L. Chatterjee. The joint committee

met on January 25, 1958 and decided that (i) on the implementation of unity agreement on Southern, Central and Northern Railways both sides should submit their statement before the Arbitrator for an award which would be binding and (ii) on the signing a fresh pledge form, the two Federations would submit statements before the Arbitrator whose decision would be final.

The meeting of the joint Committee under the Unity agreement was convened twice, but was postponed at Vasavada's instance. In terms of unity agreement and the decision of the meeting dated July 13, 1956 the membership lists were prepared by the NFIR (Madras) Unions and N.F.I.R. (Bazwada) Unions, were requested to scrutinise the same and allow access to their lists so that both the lists could be submitted before the Regional Labour Commissioner as envisaged in the Terms of Agreement. There was no response from N.F.I.R. (Bezwada) and after the repeated postponements a meeting was ultimately held in Bombay on June 11, 1958, NFIR (Bezwada) informed that they had in their Working Committee meeting held at Lonavala on a day earlier i.e. June 10, 1958 resolved that no effective and ideological unity can be achieved with AIRF and as such decided not to pursue their efforts for unity of the two Federations once for all. The exercise that continued for more than four years came to an end leaving a bitter memory.

Appointment of an Arbitrator
and his award.

AIRF gets back recognition

While the process of unity as initiated by the Railway Minister Jagjivan Ram was on move, the Ministry of Railways

by a notification dated 30th April 1958 appointed Justice J. N. Majumder of 63/1/2 Landsdowne Road, Calcutta-25 as an arbitrator in connection with the disputes that might arise between the two groups of Railway Labour now in the process of implementing an unity agreement. Justice Majumder's appointment was upto 31st July 1958 which was extended upto 30th September 1958. It was difficult for the General secretary of AIRF Peter Alvares to come to Calcutta frequently for evidence before the arbitrator and hence he authorised me to conduct the case on behalf of the AIRF. I did my best and to the satisfaction of the Arbitrator. The N. F. I. R. (Bezwada) by their absence and attitude taken, annoyed the Arbitrator. The decision of the Arbitrator was holding the N. F. I. R. (Bezwada) responsible for not implementing the terms of unity. Full text of the Arbitrator is as follows :-

AWARD OF THE ARBITRATOR IN
THE MATTER OF AN ARBITRATION
BETWEEN TWO GROUPS OF RAILWAY
LABOUR NOW IN THE PROCESS OF
IMPLEMENTING AN UNITY
AGREEMENT

1. " By a notification No. E-58-Po-8/3/RBI dated the 30th April, 1958 of the Government of India, Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, I was appointed as arbitrator in connection with the disputes that might arise between the two groups of labour now in the process of implementing an unity agreement. The period of my appointment was upto 31st July, 1958 or the implementation of the agreement, whichever is earlier. The time was extended by the Government upto the 31st August, at the first instance and then again upto the 30th Sept., 1958.

2. The two groups of labour was represented by the All India Railwaymen's

Federation (AIRF) and the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR). In the process of the implementation of the unity agreement between them disputes having arisen a reference was made to me for immediate arbitration in respect of two matters. They are (i) as to what future course of action should be adopted between the rival unions on the Northern, Southern and Central Railways and (ii) on the question of the Pledge Forms.

3. After the reference was made the representatives of both the AIRF and NFIR were being duly notified by me about the dates of meeting from the 21st May, 1958. It is not necessary to recount here the details as to what happened in the meetings held which are recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of the respective dates, but it is sufficient to mention that representatives of the AIRF appeared and filed their statements in support of their points of view regarding the disputes raised but till the 11th August, 1958 no one appeared on behalf of the NFIR. Prior to that date no communication from them were received by me except that a letter was written by Shri P. Subbaramiah, General Secretary, NFIR, forwarding me a copy of the resolution of the Working Committee of the NFIR, adopted at a meeting held at Lonavala between the 4th to 6th June, 1958. In the letter it was stated "On consideration of the resolution of the Working Committee of the NFIR and views expressed by the members of the Joint Committee it was decided to postpone further action. After this as there was no work left for the Joint committee to purpose, the committee adjourned its meeting sine die. Under the above circumstances I have to humbly

submit before you as per the direction of the Working Committee, no further action is called for in the matter of unity. no statement which was decided earlier to be filed before you, is being filed as no arbitration is at present necessary". The resolution of the working Committee runs as follows :

"Having been convinced that in Unity alone lies the good of the railwaymen and the country, the working committee of NFIR has, time and again, endeavoured to bring about unity in the ranks of the Railwaymen. This committee, however, is constrained to note that since the last meeting of the Joint Committee formed to achieve unity among railwaymen, the AIRF and some of its constituents, while negotiating for unity with the AIRF and some of its constituents, while negotiating for unity with the NFIR on the one hand, have been directly or indirectly aligning themselves on the other, with undemocratic forces indulging in undesirable activities, thereby undermining the very basic principles of the unity agreement without whose acceptance and application, this committee believes that no effective and ideological unity can be achieved.

Having reviewed the developments at the events that have taken place since the last meeting of the Joint Committee this working committee has come to the painful conclusion that no useful purpose will be served by carrying on negotiations any further until there is conviction that the parties would genuinely abide by the principles which govern a healthy Trade Union Movement which is conducted not only in the interests of the Railwaymen but the entire country.

The committee, therefore, while directing the members of the NFIR on the Joint Committee to postpone any further decision with regard to the unity talks with the AIRF, authorises the President to strive to create such circumstances as would bring about lasting unity among the Railwaymen.

This committee also requests the President to thank the Union Railway Minister who had greatly helped in bringing about the unity agreement and appraise him with the circumstances under which Unity talks are postponed for the present."

4. Copies of the letter and resolution of the NFIR Working Committee are forwarded by me to the AIRF. They did not agree with the views expressed by NFIR in their said letter and submitted a statement raising inter-alia the question that this disagreement between the parties was also a dispute within the scope of the arbitrator's jurisdiction and wanted me to proceed with the arbitration and give award about this disputes as well with the disputes already referred. I forwarded the copies of the statements of the AIRF to NFIR and gave them notice for consideration of the question if there is at present necessity for an arbitration in respect of the disputes, fixing the 11th August 1958 as the date of hearing. On that date the representative of the NFIR as well as the AIRF attended the meeting when the question raised above mentioned was intended to be taken up as a preliminary issue in order to enable me to come to a decision as to whether having regard to the stand taken by the NFIR I should be justified in proceeding with the hearing. The representatives of

the NFIR were not prepared to offer their views on the matter having regard to the directions contained in the resolution of their working committee as mentioned above and wanted time to ascertain their views on the subject. I granted time till the 27th August, 1958. On that date Sri Subbaramiah appeared and filed a statement.

5. In his statement, Sri Subbaramiah challenged the jurisdiction of the Arbitrator on the grounds :

(i) that between the AIRF and NFIR there was no written agreement in respect of the unity, (ii) the unity agreement of the 13th March, 1956 between NFIR (Bengal) and NFIR (Madras) and it was only enforceable as long as NFIR (Madras) was alive and the NFIR (Madras) being dead it is not enforceable by AIRF, (iii) that according to the 13th March, 1956 agreement the unity of both the parties should have been completed by the end of October, 1956 and time having elapsed the agreement expired also, and (iv) that the disagreement between the NFIR and AIRF on the question raised by the NFIR that there was no necessity for an arbitration is not a dispute and even if it is, there is no proper reference in respect of that before Arbitrator. The AIRF in their turn filed a rejoinder to the statement and their case was that there was written agreement between the parties recorded in correspondence, and the resolutions of the meeting of the AIRF and the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held before the Railway Minister in Delhi, that the reference to the Arbitrator being a joint reference by the parties one party was not entitled to withdraw without proving the allegations.

made in the Lonavala resolutions, Shri Subbaramiah gave evidence to prove the absence of a written agreement but did not offer any evidence to prove the existence of the ideological differences between the two groups of labour as mentioned in the Lonavala resolution, which was the foundation of his objection that no arbitration was necessary. He was cross examined on behalf of the AIRF. He stated that no further witness will be examined by the NFIR and wanted the issue regarding jurisdiction of the arbitrator to be decided first. At the conclusion of the evidence of Sri Subbaramiah application was made by the AIRF calling upon the NFIR to produce certain documents which are in their power and possession. They applied also for necessary steps being taken for examining the Railway Minister and several others in whose presence the agreement is alleged to have taken place and also to call for the documents from the Railway Board, namely the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held before the Railway Minister at New Delhi on 19th and 20th November, 1957 and a Press Communique issued by the government and the record of the proceedings in a tape recorder. I directed Sri Subbaramiah to produce such of those documents called for by the AIRF as were in their possession and power and in case of their inability to produce such documents on the grounds that they are not in their possession or power to file an affidavit to that effect in the next sitting which was fixed for the 12th Sept. 1958. One of the documents, namely a copy of the Unity Agreement of 13.3.56 Sri Subbaramiah sent to me by post. The Railway Board sent to me the documents

but stating that they are uncorrected. So I did not make them exhibits in the case, or supply copies thereof to the AIRF notwithstanding their requests. Shri Subbaramiah did not appear on the 12th Sept. on the grounds of his sickness about which he informed me telegraphically. In the circumstances, I adjourned the meeting till the 23rd Sept. 1958, on which date Shri Subbaramiah attended but did not produce any other documents related to the matter in dispute and the NFIR decided not to produce them. Shri Subbaramiah further stated that having regard to the Lonavala resolution he is not proceeding with the arbitration proceeding but so long he did it simply for the reason that the non appearance on behalf of the NFIR might be misconstrued as an act of discourtesy to the Arbitrator and he appeared only for putting in a statement pointing that the Arbitrator had no jurisdiction. He also stated certain reasons for his withdrawal which is recorded in the minutes of the proceedings and which is not necessary for me to recapitulate. He stated that he was not proceeding with the arbitration and desired to withdraw from the arbitration including withdrawal of the statements. Shri Chakravarty who appeared on behalf of the AIRF stated that Shri Subbaramiah was wrong in the interpretation of the objection regarding the validity of NFIR's appearance. He, however, offered to withdraw the portion of the statement if it has been construed like that in order to enable the NFIR to take part in the arbitration proceedings. Shri Subbaramiah had nothing further to say excepting that his statement might be kept on record. Shri Guruswami controverted the reports given by Shri Subbaramiah for his

withdrawal and which I am not referred to because they are also recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of that date. Shri Subbaramiah then took my leave and left the meeting. The position being in the circumstances, that there was no appearance on behalf of the NFIR I proceeded to take evidence of Shri Guruswami in the absence of any representatives of the NFIR. Shri Guruswami gave his oral testimony and produced copies of documents which are marked as Exhibit A-I, to A-28.

6. After the conclusion of the evidence Shri R. C. Chakravarty while arguing, stated on behalf of the AIRF that he did not want me to give any award on the two items of disputes referred on the grounds that (i) the NFIR are absent, and (ii) that he is not sure if the award given in the circumstances of the case, could be legally for achieving the implementation of the unity agreement. He wanted, therefore, to decide only two objections raised by Shri Subbaramiah regarding the jurisdiction and necessity of arbitration as preliminary issues. As an Arbitrator my decision regarding either of the question is not final though I should be entitled to go into the merits of the objections to satisfy myself whether I should proceed with the hearing and give any award. Having regard to the views expressed by the parties that they did not want adjudication on the merits of the disputes referred the point of my going into the merits of the objections raised by Shri Subbaramiah disappears. But, as both the parties want my decision on those points and having already not the materials on the record on which a decision could be pronounced I am expressing my opinion on the question.

7. It appears from the evidence oral and documentary that prior to 1953 there existed two federations, All India Railwaymen's Federation (A I R F) and Indian National Railway Workers Federation (I N R W F). Shri Guruswami was the 'General Secretary of the AIRF and Vasavada was connected with the INRWF. It is in the interest of the Railway workmen that there should be one Federation. To give effect to that object these two Federations INRWF and AIRF were amalgamated under the name of NFIR of which Shri Vasavada became the President and Shri Guruswami was the General Secretary. Shri Vasavada and Shri Guruswami worked for some time together, but there were some differences between them and a convention of NFIR was called by Shri Guruswami at Madras some time in May, 1955 where new office bearers of the NFIR were elected and Shri Guruswami became the General Secretary, but Shri Vasavada had no vote. Some time in November, 1955, a convention of the NFIR was convened by Shri K. H. Kulkarni as Office Secretary of the NFIR, and new office bearers were elected and Shri Guruswami as General Secretary was replaced by Shri P. Subbaramiah, the present General Secretary of the NFIR. When these two Federations came into being both of them claimed to be the original NFIR. In regard, however, to the names of the place where two conventions were respectively held the Federation with Shri Guruswami as General Secretary was known as NFIR (Madras) and the Federation of which Shri Vasavada was the President was known as NFIR (Bezavada).

8. Attempts were made for bringing

about the merger of these two Federations resulting in an agreement between Shri Vasavada and Shri Guruswami and on the 13th March, 1956, the terms agreed upon were reduced into writing and the document is called the Unity Agreement, which was hereinfore mentioned;

The document is described as -

"Terms of Agreement reached between Shri S. R. Vasavada and Shri Guruswami in presence of Shri Jai Prakash Narayan, Shri Lal Bahadur Sastri, Railway Minister and Shri Khandubhai Desai Labour Minister on the 13th March, 1956 at New Delhi, at the Railway Minister's Bungalow.

In the first paragraph of the document it is stated-

It is agreed that the two Federations that came into existence at Madras and Bezwada should merge together in the interest of achieving complete unity amongst railway workers".

One of the clauses of the said unity agreement, which is the arbitration clause is as follows:-

"The first steps towards a merger of the two Federations shall be the merger of the unions affiliated to the Federation. To bring about the merger of the unions, joint Committee consisting of one representative of each of the affiliated unions shall be formed to scrutinise the list of membership for the year 1955-56 as per return of that year which should be prepared by the 21st May, 1956, and to prepare a combined list. In case of any dispute the service of a retired High Court or Sessions Judge will be obtained and his award will be accepted as final by both sides."

9. The Joint Committee as contemplated by the terms of the agreement was constituted. But merger of the unions was not brought about. In August, 1957, Shri Guruswami as General Secretary convened a convention of the NFIR (Madras) at Poona in which a resolution was passed that the name of NFIR should be changed into AIRF. Again an attempt was made for the merger of the two Federations namely the AIRF and NFIR and for that purpose meetings were held on the 19th and 20th Nov. 1957, at Delhi in the presence of the Railway Minister and it was agreed that the terms in the Unity Agreement of 13th March, 1956 should be adhered to with certain changes in the dates and the names of the representatives of the AIRF and NFIR. This agreement was recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held in Delhi in the presence of the Railway Minister in respect of which a press Communique was issued by the Govt. and both the AIRF and NFIR in their meeting and or convention ratified this agreement by passing resolutions, correspondence passed showing the acceptance of the agreement for bringing about a merger on the lines of the procedure agreed upon in the agreement of 13.3.56. It is in pursuance of this agreement that the Joint Committee was constituted which held its meeting on the 25th January, 1958 when it was decided that three representatives on behalf of the AIRF and three representatives on behalf of the NFIR should be empowered to file a statement before the Arbitrator. The relevant portion of the decision of the Joint Committee of 25.1.58 is as follows:-

"The question of implementation of the unity agreement on the Southern

Central and Northern Railways came up for discussion and it was decided that Shri Guruswami and P. Subbaramish, P. R. Singh and S.M. Sukla and D.V. Vasistha and P.P. Kulshreshtha should submit their statement regarding Southern, Central and Northern Railways respectively before the Arbitrator and get an award regarding future course of action. The award of the Arbitrator will be binding on the parties concerned.

The question of signing the pledge form was taken up for discussion. It was decided that the representatives of the two Federations will submit their statements before the Arbitrator and take his decision. The decision of the Arbitrator will be final. "It was agreed between the AIRF and NFIR that Shri Peter Alvares would be the Secretary of the Joint Committee in place of Shri S. Guruswami who was the Secretary of the Joint Committee.

10. After giving my best consideration to the evidence on record both oral and documentary, I am of the opinion that there was a valid agreement in writing between the AIRF and NFIR and the objection raised by Shri P. Subbaramiah is not tenable. I am further of opinion that there was an agreement of NFIR and AIRF for merger into one Federation on the lines of the procedure laid down in the agreement of 13.3.56 with the alterations in the dates mentioned therein and that agreement of 13.3.56 was also enforceable by either of the parties NFIR and AIRF with such modifications and the objection of Shri Subbaramiah on the ground that the agreement ceased to be operative as the NFIR (Madras) was dead also fails. The contention of the NFIR that

having regard to the resolution of the Working Committee they are not prepared to proceed with the unity talks and therefore, no arbitration is necessary amounts indirectly to revocation of submission for arbitration. Under Section 5 of the Arbitration Act the authority of an appointed Arbitrator shall not be revocable except with the leave of the Court unless a contrary intention is expressed in the arbitration agreement. No leave has been taken from any Court nor there is any contrary intention expressed in the arbitration agreement and as such the NFIR cannot legally take the stand which it has taken.

Dated the 30th Sept. 1958

Sd/- J.N. Majumder
Arbitrator
Railway Labour Disputes"

63/1/2 Landsdowne Road,
Calcutta-25

Recognition of AIRF

The All India Railwaymen's Federation was officially recognised thereafter. The first meeting, between the Railway Board and the representative of the Federation was held on 4th August 1958 and second meeting on 9th and 10th December 1958. As many as 23 pending issues were discussed and decided. Earlier in October 1958 Jagjivan Ram met Peter Alvares and informed the Government's decision to recognise the A.I.R.F.

Appointment of Second Pay Commission

The Second Pay Commission was set up under Chairmanship of Justice Jagannadha Das, Judge of the Supreme Court on 21st August 1951 with a very

wide terms of reference. An exhaustive memorandum of over 800 pages was prepared by Eastern Railwaymen's Union and submitted to the Commission. The memorandum covered all the aspects concerning the Railwaymen. The credit of this memorandum goes to Bireswar Chakravarty victimised Branch Secretary of the Union at Allahabad and Nanigopal Chakravarty Astd. General Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. But for their untiring efforts and sacrifice compilation of such a document would not have been possible. There was praise for the memorandum from all quarters including the Secretary of the Commission. The Eastern Railwaymen's Union also prepared a memorandum for All India Railwaymen's Federation and sent it to Peter Alvares for necessary action.

S. Guruswami, Peter Alvares, R.C. Chakravarty, Chhotubhai Desai and Bireswar Chakravarty were elected to give evidence before the Pay Commission. With the trust reposed in me by Peter Alvares, I coordinated the evidence from each Railway union which continued for more than two weeks in November 1958. The report was submitted on August 24, 1959 and published sometimes thereafter.

Out of the North Eastern Zone another zone was formed in January 1958 known as North East Frontier Zone with headquarters at Pandu. The Union was also bifurcated with K.L. Gupta as General Secretary of the N.E. Railway Mazdoor Union and Priya Gupta as General Secretary of N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union. Thus there were eight zones instead of six. Subsequently another zone was also created mainly with ex-Nizam state Railway known as South Central Railway.

On the Eastern Railway I was facing hostility from the Railway Administration and from my colleagues belonging to communist camp. It was their decision not to cooperate with me rather create obstructions in my functioning as they feel that I had joined the Socialist camp. It was my irony of fate that although I was an independent and free trade unionist, not attached to any political party or group, I was branded as a communist by the Socialist and a Socialist by the Communists whenever it suited them.

The Administration's attitude which was very stiff at the start became reasonable after an incident. Following an accident that took place at Sealdah North Station on 21st February 1957 in which six Railway employees (carriage staff) and a number of passengers sustained injuries (one of the Railway employee succumbed to the injury within four hours) train services at Sealdah were disrupted for about six hours. In consideration of the immense suffering of the travelling public who were stranded I decided to make efforts for restoration of the train service. I along with the Branch officials pleaded with both the striking Railwaymen, C. & W staff and members of the public for allowing train services to be restored. I was man-handled by both. It may be mentioned that after becoming General Secretary, I laid stress on public-railwaymen relationship and was holding Conferences at various levels for the purpose. I apologised to the public on behalf of railwaymen for causing inconveniences and assured the Railwaymen to stand by them and fight for their cause. The Railway Administration permitted me to use public announcements

system for the purpose. My appeal and assurance worked and the train services were restored. 104 staff suffered break-in-service for resorting to illegal stoppage of work and 5 were removed from service after departmental proceedings. Before I initiated settlement the Divisional officers had tried for long five hours to bring the situation under control but failed. Kripal Singh who became the General Manager after a month or so, was the Chief Operating Superintendent of the Eastern Railway. He was aware of the actual position and communicated his thanks to me through the Chief Personnel officer. I met Kripal Singh as General Manager and got the removed persons reinstated in service and the break-in-service of staff was condoned. Our relation was very cordial which continued even when he was the Chairman, Railway Board.

The Annual General Meeting of the Union was held at Dehri-on-sona in June 1958. Both the Communist and independent block were ready for a showdown. Amaresh Sen a non-railwaymen attached to Socialist Party was Organising Secretary, Western Railway Employees' Union at Ajmer came to Calcutta permanently in 1957. He wanted to help and work for Eastern Railwaymen's Union and was welcomed by me. The constitution of Eastern Railwaymen's Union then had a provision for non-railwaymen in the office of President and Working President only. As such Amaresh Sen had to contest for the Working President's Office at Dehri-on-Sone which he won. Thakur Jugal Kishore Sinha President was allowed to go uncontested. In all other posts there were contests. M.M.P. Shina contested me for the post of General Secretary and lost.

Bireswar Chakravarty, Manoj Basu, Bishuupada Roy Chowdhury, Subhas Mitra and Bimal De contested as Asstt. General Secretaries and Zonal Secretary AIRF and won. B.N. Roy, Kedar Nath (ABC-Barkakana), Nanigopal Chakravarty, S.K. Upadhyaya, Nirapada Banerjee, Ram Balak Singh - Vice Presidents, Asstt. General Secretaries and Organising Secretary and Sachin Chowdhury Treasurer were defeated in the election. This election gave me self-confidence. It was clear to me that if one remained with workers in their need they would always be with him. Sachin Chowdhury a pro-communist was the Treasurer. The accounts and membership were under his control and there was no scope of inflating the membership and thereby inflating delegates by either group as we were keeping keen watch on each other.

The set of office-bearers elected were as follows:-

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| President | - Thakur Yugal Kishore Singh MP |
| Working President | - Amaresh Sen. |
| Vice-Presidents | - 1. Kiron Chowdury
- 2. Dulal Chandra Chatterjee
- 3. A.M. Williams
- 4. Jibesh Prasad
- 5. Debraj Adhikary |
| General Secretary | - Ram Chandra Chakravarty, Asstt. General |
| Secretaries | 1. Bireswar Chakravarty
2. Manoj Mohan Basu
3. Subhas Chandra Mitra
4. Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury |
| Organising Secretary | 1. Paritosh Banerjee
2. R.K. Upadhyaya |

Treasurer Anadi Nath Bhattacharya
 Zonal
 Secretary
 AIRF Bimal Chandra Dey.

After the Dehri-on-Sone election I started working with a relaxed mind and free from unnecessary tension. B.N.Roy at a much later date admitted their mistake for the Communist Party's hostile attitude towards me. Although I differed with the Communist Party and its policy, I had no prejudice against any individual worker. When the E.I. Rail Road Workers' Union was expelled from the Federation in 1949 at Danapur and the affiliation could not be restored in the following years, I welcomed every worker in the E.I. Railway Employees' Union and Eastern Railwaymen's Union. Without naming any individual I must say that I was much impressed with the sincerity, zeal and integrity of a good number of Communists on ex E..I. and ex-B.N. Railway Sections.

Visit to U.S.S.R.

The Working Committee of AIRF met in Delhi on December 9 and 10, 1958. It gave a call to all Railwaymen and their affiliated unions to AIRF to observe January 6, 1959 as Anti Retrenchment Day all over Indian Railways. Peter Alvares was permitted to function from the camp office of the Federation at Bombay for the time being with the decision to shift the central office to Delhi as early as possible. The decision of International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) of London to start a National Centre in India was welcomed. The Working Committee accepted the invitation from U.S.S.R. Railwaymen's organisation to send a delegation and decided that President S. Guruswami would be the leader and delegation would

consist of one from each affiliated union. The AIRF delegation consisting of S. Guruswami, President, myself from Eastern, B.J. Rayalu from South Eastern, Tarapada Chakraborty from North Eastern, R.J. Shukla from Central and another from Southern Railway visited USSR for two weeks from 17th June 1959.

The Annual convention of the Federation was held in Delhi from 17th to 19th August 1959 wherein S. Guruswami, Peter Alvares and myself were re-elected as President General Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

BIRTH OF THIRD UNION

On the Eastern Railway for sometime past there was a growing discontent in the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress against the leadership of A.P. Sharma. Charges and counter charges were made. This conflict resulted in split of the Railwaymen's Congress into two. The breakaway group formed an union of their own named as Eastern Railway Employees' Congress' sometimes in 1959. They published a biography of J.N. Ram, Railway Minister and presented it to him in a function. The Union got recognition of the Administration thereafter. Jagdish Upadhyaya, an assistant to A.P. Sharma was the first General Secretary and Trivedi M.P. was the first President of the said Employees' Congress. In course of time J.N. Bose who headed the East Indian Railwaymen's Congress in 1948 and had to leave the organisation due to conflict with A.P. Sharma sometimes in 1951, became the General Secretary of the Employees' Congress and Ramdulari Sinha M.P. the President. Jagdish Upadhyaya, chief organiser of the new union was Assistant General Secretary.

A small incident was responsible in creation of this third union on the Eastern Railway. In the National congress there were groupings and in those days, A.P. Sharma belonged to the group of Morarji Desai. Eastern Railwaymen's Congress was to hold its conference at Patna. Jagadish Upadhyaya and many others wanted the Railway Minister Jagjivan Ram to inaugurate the conference. A.P. Sharma got the conference inaugurated by Morarji Desai, Finance Minister who in his speech accused the Railwaymen of corruption and negligence to duty. A large section of delegates thereafter walked out of the conference and formed the union, Eastern Railway Employees' Congress.

The object of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union was to have a Trade Union free from the influence of the Government, and political parties. Members holding any political view should not be allowed to pursue and thrust their political decisions on the trade unions. I may reproduce the quotation of Karl Marx used by Professor Humayun Kabir ex-President B & A Railway Employees' Association in the Foreword of the short history of the Association published on 22nd August 1945 :-

"Karl Marx in a discussion with Socialist working men in Hanover in 1869, told Hamann the treasurer of the metal Workers' union that "The trade unions must never be associated with or dependent upon a political group. Otherwise they would never be able to fulfil their task and they would receive a mortal blow. The trade unions are the schools of socialism. In trade unions the workers become Socialists because they see every day before their own eyes the

struggle against capital. Political parties, whatever they may be, can arouse the enthusiasm of the working masses only temporarily, for a time only, whilst the unions hold their loyalty much more securely and it is only these unions which can be a real working class party and erect a bullwork against the power of capital".

The history of Bengal & Assam Railway Employees' Association and East Indian Railway Employees' Association (of which Eastern Railwaymen's Union was the successor) served as a brilliant illustration of the truth of these remarks of Karl Marx.

The Union was affiliated to All India Railwaymen's Federation only and not to any of the Central Trade Union Organisations viz. All India Trade Union Congress, Indian National Trade Union Congress, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Hind Mazdoor Panchayet and United Trade Union Congress. Repeated attempts to get the Union affiliated to Hind Mazdoor Sabha could not succeed so long I was in the control of the Union. After my removal with the help of the Socialists attached to Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the Union was affiliated to HMS, the labour wing of a political party.

The Union during my tenure of General Secretary continued to establish contacts with the organisation of workers of the Railways and made efforts to remove the prevailing misunderstanding about the Railwaymen, their service conditions, duties and responsibilities etc. On account of hostile attitude of a section of untruly travelling public, assaults on railwaymen on duty were a frequent affair particularly in Calcutta area. The eminent representatives of the travelling public as

their organisations disapproved such actions and co-operated with the Union and the Administration for necessary protection to the Railwaymen on duty. Kripal Singh, the then General Manager of Eastern Railway took effective steps to protect the Railwaymen on duty from being man-handled.

Fight for security in service

Under Rule 148 of the State Railway Establishment Code the General Manager enjoyed the powers to terminate the services of an employee in terms of service agreement without assigning any reason whatsoever. Para 2 of Rule 1708 of the said Code also gave powers to the General Manager to remove an employee on disciplinary action without assigning any reason. Against these two provisions and provision of President's Special power for dispensing with the services of an employee without assigning any reason, the Union had been fighting all through. Against removal of 4 employees by application of Rule 148 and apprehension of similar actions against many more, there was a tremendous agitation on the Eastern Railway and under banner of the union 'service security week' was observed from 9th to 15th November 1959.

The Union was experiencing difficulties in the working of the Permanent Negotiating Machinery. The following extract of the General Secretary's Annual report dated 28th, 29th and 30th November 1959 is an indication of the state of affairs.

Permanent Negotiating Machinery

"All the problems and difficulties relating to this machinery have not been solved yet. The meetings at various levels are not held regularly, decisions are generally not given at the meeting, even

where the decisions are given, they are not implemented promptly and effectively, thus allowing the issues to accumulate. The Railway Board's revised Circular No.E(L) 56NMI-6 dt. 21.7.58 instead of removing the difficulties, created more complications so far as our Union was concerned. This Union had the privilege of having monthly meetings with the General Manager and Divisional Superintendents in addition to meetings with the Heads of Departments, Chief Personnel officer and Branch officers prior to the introduction of the machinery, i.e. 24.12.51 which were restricted to once in two months at the Divisional level and once in three months at General Manager's level. Even with this curtailment prior to the issue of Board's letter dated 21.7.58 restrictions were not so much in regard to discussion of individual cases or number of items of agenda. Minutes of the meetings used to be properly drafted. All meetings and contacts with the Administration with prior appointments and agenda, used to be treated as formal and minutes of such meetings were drawn and signed jointly.

"While the Union had been trying to restore its facilities, by the issue of Railway Board's Circular of 21.7.58 contacts and meetings with the officers of the Administration other than P.N.M. were intended to be treated as informal. There was no assurance of recording the minutes of such meetings. Even the minutes of the P.N.M. meetings were sought to be brief recording of decisions of the Administration only without incorporating Union's view point in the event of difference. A number of matters which according to the administration, should come within the purview of Welfare

Committees were sought to be excluded from the scope of P.N.M. meetings at all levels. Discussion of individual cases of a special nature (and the nature being decided at the discretion of the administration) was sought to be allowed. Number of items of agenda was intended to be restricted. Meetings with the Heads of Departments were sought to be denied. A joint meeting of the P.N.M. with parallel unions was proposed with a view to restrict the bargaining capacity.

Against this background the Union had to pursue its legitimate rights and secured the following agreements :-

- (i) The P.N.M meetings should be held regularly at all levels and to ensure regularity the date of the next meeting should be fixed at the close of the meeting.
- (ii) There should be monthly meetings between the Union and the Chief Personnel officer at the Head Quarter's level and Divisional Personnel Officers in the divisions and workshops in addition to frequent normal contacts.
- (iii) Individual cases not involving any breach of accepted policy will be discussed in the monthly meetings with the Chief Personnel Officer and Divisional Personnel Officer or separately (other than in P.N.M. meetings) with the General Manager and Heads of Departments or Divisional Superintendents and Branch Officers.
- (iv) The minutes of meetings should be drafted briefly to clearly indicate the nature of decisions taken and in the event of a difference of

views between the Administration and the Union, such views would also be recorded briefly but clearly.

- (v) Drafting of minutes may be undertaken by the Administration but if there is any difference in regard to language and also on points which are not covered in the draft minutes, this should be finalised between the Union and the officers concerned and the agreed draft should be put to the General Manager or D.S./D.C.M.E. as the case may be, for his approval. In case of disagreement, the points of difference will be put up to the General Manager or D.S./D.C.M.E. and in the event of his not agreeing to Unions' views, the item will remain open for further discussion.
- (vi) Attendance of Heads of Departments and Accounts Officers at the concerned level was ensured.
- (vii) The intention of the Railway Board's revised circular on P.N.M. dt. 21.7.58 was agreed to be making the machinery work more satisfactorily and any change in the existing practice obtaining between this Union and the Eastern Railway Administration should be done in agreement with the Union.
- (viii) It was agreed that the important decisions arrived at the P.N.M. meetings would be circulated to all concerned."

About the punishments and disciplinary action procedure, the Union could secure certain protection for Railwaymen. The relevant extract of the

said Annual Report of November 1958 reproduced below gives details :-

"Punishments and Disciplinary Action Procedures."

"Though the Estimates Committee has recommended that the main object of inflicting a punishment should be corrective instead of vindictive, a considerable section of the Railway officers do not keep that in mind. If the punishments inflicted for same offence in the different divisions and by different officers are compared it will be seen that while only a censure or stoppage of passes and P. T. Os has been ordered by one punishing authority, for the same offence another punishing authority has ordered for removal or dismissal from service. The existing procedures for departmental enquiries also are defective to a certain extent. Many of the enquiring officers do not follow the spirit of rules and their tendency is some how or other to give findings holding the staff concerned guilty. Also there is a tendency to inflict a lower penalty than one specified in the charge-sheet and thus avoid holding of a departmental enquiry depriving the staff of a reasonable opportunity to establish his innocence. To add to the misery, the result of the reply to the charge-sheet, show cause and/or joint enquiry held, are not intimated to the employee concerned thus keeping him in a suspense.

"During the year under review, the Union has been able to achieve some important and vital concessions for the railwaymen. Under the decisions arrived at in the P. N. M. meeting the proceedings of departmental enquiry will open with recording the original chargesheet and its reply thereto and no extraneous factors

that are not related to the charges should be brought in. Evidence to establish these charges should be called first along with the examination of the relevant records, that is to say, the witness from the side of the administration will be examined first. The accused person will be given 10 days time for nominating his defence. If the defence counsel belongs to the same division or workshop but if he is a person from elsewhere a further 5 days time should be allowed. Similarly, for changing a defence helper, 7 days and additional 3 days time will be given. Copies of oral evidence recorded at the enquiry will be made available to the accused daily at the close of each day's proceedings. 10 days time will be given to the employee to submit his defence note after the last sitting of the enquiry committee. An employee will be permitted to leave Head Quarter for purpose of preparation of reply to the chargesheet, selecting a defence counsel, preparation of defence arguments and preparation of replies to show cause notice, etc. Details of these concessions are in administration's Serial Circular No. 3669.

"It has been agreed that staff must always be advised of the results of their reply to a chargesheet or show cause as well as of a disciplinary enquiry by the competent authority within a reasonable period.

The punishment of stoppage of increment has the implication of debarring a staff from promotion until the specific period of punishment is over. It has also been agreed by the Administration that the punishing authority should take due care to see whether the employee is due promotion to a higher grade before inflicting the punishment of stoppage of increment.

Security of service vis-a-vis application of Rule 148.

Under Rule 148 of the state Railway Establishment code the General Manager enjoys the power to terminate the services of an employee in terms of service agreement without assigning any reason whatsoever. Para 2 of Rule 1708 of the said Code also gives power to the General Manager to remove an employee on disciplinary action without assigning any reason. Against these two provisions the Union has been fighting all through. Previously for dispensing with the service of an employee without assigning any reason, President's special power was utilised. On account of agitation made by this Union and also other constituent Unions of the Federation in the year 1956-57 it appears that such a course has been abandoned and instead, General Manager's powers are applied. In spite of provisions of Code Rules, if statistics is taken for the last 15 years, it will be seen that its application had been very few and rare. Recently on the Eastern Railway services of 4 employees have been terminated in application of Rule 148, and it is understood that some more cases are awaiting similar actions. The Eastern railwaymen and this Union have taken serious view of such application of special power and are agitating against it. Under the banner of this Union 'Service Security Week' has been observed from 9th to 15th Nov. '56 to fight out this menace. The Union shall continue to agitate till such time these obnoxious rules are deleted altogether."

Peter Alavares, General secretary of all India Railwaymen's Federation in his Annual report stated the following:

"The invocation of Section 148 R. I. and of the law that an employee holds office at the pleasure of the President, has given the administration power to remove or dismiss from service any Railway employee and further to be immuned against any appeal from him. Two recent cases of the second character were decided in the High Court of Bombay the first of Shri Framji, of the Western Railway and second of Shri Sanker Lingam of the Central Railway. In both these cases the administration won their appeal on the ground that the appellants hold office during the pleasure of the President and that no appeal lay against any General Manager or Railway authority who acted on behalf of the President of the Indian Union."

"The Union is not aware if there is any delegation of the President's powers to the General Managers of the Railways. Even if it is so, the General Managers should be more careful in exercising such powers. The Union would earnestly request the General Manager of Eastern Railway to refrain from abusing his powers by application of either Rule 148 or Para 2 of Rule 1708, since it is not only unjust but unfair too to remove an ordinary Railway employee on grounds or charges which cannot be substantiated."

Break-in-Service

The Union raised a fundamental point that the Break in service had no legal sanction except under Disciplinary Code Rules and constituted a punishment and as such could not be inflicted without giving any opportunity to show cause in defence, which was essential in violation of the provisions of the sacred Constitution of Indian Union. At the instance of the

Union, the Eastern Railway referred two points to the Railway Board viz, if the issue of a charge sheet was necessary before causing a break-in-service and if the staff concerned should be intimated about the fact of break in service. Having received no reply from the Railway Board, in order to solve these points and particularly the necessity for issue of a show cause notice, two cases were instituted in the Calcutta High Court and the Administration instead of contesting the cases and thus helping all concerned to obtain a ruling in the matter, condoned the breaks and informed the High Court that necessary relief as prayed for had been provided with the result that the cases could not be pursued further. On representation of the union and my discussion with the General Manager, Break in service of the staff of (i) Ferry Department Sakrigalighat (ii) IOW Liluah (iii) Loco, Ranaghat (vi) Carriage Sealdah (v) Loco, Narkeldanga, (vi) Train Lighting, Sealdah (vii) Commercial and Traffic Howrah Station (viii) Engineering, Burdwan and (ix) Workshp, Kanchrapara were condoned.

New Terms of Recognition

After amalgamation of the three unions viz. E. I. Railway Employee's union, B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union and B. N. Railway Employees' Union fresh terms of recognition were offered by the administration which being considered as more reactionary and a retrograde step than those of the British regime, were not accepted by the amalgamated union viz. Eastern Railwaymen's union. Since then the Union had been trying to revise the terms and as a result of my discussions with the General Manager revised terms of recognition were settled on 10th August 1959. The said terms together with the

agreement reached between the Union and the administration on 4th August 1959 on certain points arising out of the said terms of recognition as well as the old terms of recognition dated 24th September 1935 and 28th August 1953 are reproduced below:-

EASTERN RAILWAY

No. PC 137/2

Dated, 10th August 1959

From

The General Manager,
Eastern Railway,
CALCUTTA.

To ;

The General Secretary,
Eastern Railwaymen's Union,
23 &24 Strand Road,
CALCUTTA,

Dear Sir,

Re : Terms and conditions
of recognition.

Re : Item 3 (iv) of the
minutes of the P.N.
M. meeting dated
9.1.59.

With reference to the discussion held in this office on 30.7.59 between you as representing the Union, and this administration, I am pleased to accord recognition to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union on revised terms and conditions as set forth in the attached memorandum.

DA -As Refd. to

Yours faithfully,
Sd/- Kripal Singh,
General Manager.

Terms and conditions of recognition granted to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union by the Eastern Railway Administration on 10.8.1959 including instructions regarding representation/s to the Administration.

(These are in supersession of the terms and conditions granted in Agent, East Indian Railway's letter No.AC 43/1 dated 24.9.35 and General Manager, Eastern Railway's letter No. PC 137/1 dated 28.8.53 to the precursors of the present Eastern Railwaymen's Union). Copies of which are also reproduced below : -

1. That the Union continues to be a registered Trade Union.
2. That the Union will be governed in all matters by the Provisions of the Trade Union Act.
3. That the Union shall be bound by such regulations as the Railway Board will from time to time make for the conduct of employees of State Railways and those contained in App. XIII of State Railway Establishment Code, Vol.I.
4. (i) Individual cases involving a breach of accepted policy only will be discussed in the P. N. M. meetings.

(ii) Individual cases which do not involve a breach of any accepted policy will not be discussed in the P. N. M. meeting but may be discussed separately.

5.(a) (i) The President, Working President, Vice-Presidents and General Secretary of the central body of the Union shall have access either by personal interview or through written representation to the General Manager.

(ii) The office-bearers of the Central body of the Union shall have similar

access to CPO, Dy. CPO, Heads of Departments, DSs DCMEs, Branch / District Officers or Asstt. Officers in charge etc.

(b) (i) The President, Working President, Vice-presidents and Secretary of a Branch and such of the office bearers who may be authorised by the Secretary of the Branch on particular occasions shall have access either by personal interview or written representation to the DSs and Dy. CMEs.

(ii) Office-bearers of a Branch of the Union shall have similar access to Branch Officers, District Officers or Asst. Officers in charge etc, in their respective areas.

(c) Office-bearers of the Calcutta branch of the Union shall have access to all the appropriate Heads of departments, Dy. CPO, Branch / District Officers and Asst. Officers etc. attached to Headquarters.

6. Permission to the Union may be given for holding meetings in railway premises or land under the following conditions :-

(a) Prior permission of the Railway will be necessary before railway premises/ land can be used.

(b) The request for permission should reach the Administration at least three days before the meeting is sought to be held.

(c) No political subject will be discussed in the meeting.

(d) The Administration will not insist on a copy of the agenda being given to the Railway.

(e) The responsibility for obtaining permission from the Civil Authorities or from the Managing Committee of Institutes, wherever necessary, will be

with the Trade Union concerned. But it is essential to obtain permission from the Railway authorities in addition to obtaining the permission of the Institute Managing committee and Civil Authorities.

(f) The time and place of the meeting will be intimated by the Union when applying for permission.

(g) Orders granting or refusing permission will be issued promptly to the Union, even by using the 'control phone' and normally permission should be given. If the Union do not get a reply to their letter promptly, they should contact the officer concerned over the telephone, if necessary and obtain a decision.

7. Special leave for members to attend union meetings will be given provided the employee can be spared without inconvenience to the administration, subject to the limits laid down by the Railway Board.

8. Special passes to office-bearers and representatives of the Union will be issued according to the rules in force from time to time to attend Union meetings.

9. These arrangements are subject to revision by mutual agreement in the light of experience.

Copy of the Chief Personnel officer, Eastern Railway's letter no. PC 137/2 dated 12th August 1959, to the General Secretary, Eastern Railwaymen's Union.

Re : Points arising out of terms of recognition granted to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union on 10.8.59.

I enclose herewith a copy of the minutes of the meeting held in this office on 4.8.59 in connection with the above.

The agreement has the approval of the General Manager.

"Minutes of the Meeting held on 4.8.59."

A few points arising out of the terms of recognition which have been finalised after discussion between the General Manager, Eastern Railway, and the General Secretary Eastern Railwaymen's Union on 30. 7. 59 were discussed on date. The following agreement has been reached -

1. The constitution and rules of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union, as they stand to-day, are accepted by the Eastern Railway Administration. A signed copy of the constitution and rules is annexed. Any future changes in the said rules and constitution will be operative only on mutual agreement between the Union and the Administration in terms of Appendix XIII of the Indian Railway Establishment Code, Vo. I.

2. The word "access" as used in the terms of recognition does not refer to P. N. M. meeting between the General Manager and the Central Office-bearers of the Union, and similar meetings between the Divisional Superintendents and Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineers with the concerned branches where all office-bearers of the respective bodies will have access.

3. If on account of the General Secretary being unavoidably away from Headquarters or on account of his own sickness he finds it necessary to nominate some other office-bearer of the body to carry on his functions during the period of his absence, such a person will also have access to the General Manager.

An advice of such nomination should invariably be sent to the Administration.

4. Facilities that the Union had been enjoying as a result of any recorded agreement with the Administration will continue to be enjoyed by them till such time as they are altered by mutual agreement.

5. Communications addressed to the General Manager should be signed by the President, Working President, general Secretary or other office-bearers authorised by them in this behalf, and communications addressed to the Union should be signed by the General Manager, Chief Personnel Officer and other Heads of departments or other officers competent to sign on their behalf.

6. Normally, only the President, Working President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Calcutta Branch will have access to Chief Personnel Officer and other Heads of Departments. On particular occasions the Secretary of the Branch may authorise any other office-bearer of the Branch to interview the aforesaid officers. This procedure is subject to revision in case the Union experience any difficulties.

(Sd.) R. C. Chakravarty
General Secretary

(Sd.) S. P. Chatterjee
Chief Personnel
Officer

Eastern Railwaymen's
Union

Eastern, Railway,
Calcutta.

Copy of the letter No. AC 43/1 dated 24. 9. 1935 from Mr. A. V. Venables the Agent, East Indian Railway to the General Secretary, E. I. Railway Employees' Association detailing terms of recognition.

With reference to your President's letter No. R/1 dated 27th August 1935, I hereby accord recognition to your

Association subject to the following terms;

(1) That you continue to be a registered Trade Union.

(2) That your association will be governed in all matters by the provisions of the Trade Union Act.

(3) That your Association shall be bound by such regulations as the Railway Board will from time to time make for conduct of employees of State Railways".

Copy of terms of recognition offered under letter No. PC137/1 dated 28. 8. 1953 from Sri K. B. Mathur, General Manager, Eastern Railway to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union.

Terms and conditions of recognition of unions by the Eastern Railway Administration and instructions regarding representations to the Administration.

1) That the Union continue to be a registered Trade Union.

2) That the Union will be governed in all matters by the provisions of Trade Union Act.

3) That the Union shall be bound by such regulations as the Railway Board will from time to time make for the conduct of employees of State Railway and also those contained in Appendix XIII of State Railway Establishment Code, Vol. I.

4) The President of a recognised Union shall have access either by personal interview or through written representation to the General Manager, Dy General Manager, Heads of Departments, D. Ss, DCMEs, Dist Officers or Asst. Officers in charge etc. A Vice-President or General Secretary shall have access to the same officers as above with the exception of the General Manager.

Branch Secretaries may have access to Divl. Supdts. DCMs. Dist Officers or Asst. Officers in charge etc. in their respective areas. The Calcutta Branch Secretary may have access to the appropriate Head of Department and Dy. GM(P) in respect of Headquarters and Dy. GM(P) in respect of Headquarters' Office staff falling within the jurisdiction of the Calcutta Branch.

5) Meeting in Railway Institutes may only be allowed with the sanction of the majority of the Managing Committee of the Institute, President of the Institute and after an undertaking has been given that the meeting will not be of a political nature. Meetings on Railway land may only be held with the sanction of the D. G. M. (G), Divl. Supdts., D. G. M. Es. or Chairman, D. B. O. of the area concerned, and then only subject to the same stipulation that it is of a non-political nature.

6) Leave for members to attend Union meetings can only be given, subject to the employees being spared without inconvenience to the Administration and subject to the limits laid down in Appendix XIII quoted above.

7) Special passes to office-bearers and representatives of recognised railway unions will be issued according to the rules in force from time to time to attend union meetings.

8) Communications addressed to the General Manager should be signed by the President or the General Secretary himself.

(a) Individual cases of dismissal, removal from service or reduction may not normally be discussed or represented.

(b) cases of selection, promotion

or supersession may not be discussed or represented.

(c) Only cases which have been finalised through the prescribed course of representation and appeal may be discussed or represented.

(d) Lists of cases proposed to be discussed must be sent to the officer concerned, clear fourteen days before the meeting with a memorandum of the points for discussion.

9) These arrangements are subject to revision in the light of experience and subject to Railway Board's orders issued from time to time."

Throughout my life I had fought for (i) Trade Union rights small and big, (ii) immunity to Railwaymen union officials from the operation of departmental disciplinary actions for their Trade Union activities, (iii) against removal from service under President's power or General Manager's special powers, and (vi) victimisation of Trade Union workers. I had given them preference to demands of the Railwaymen, however great they may be. I had stood by harassed and victimised union workers and fought for their cause to the best of my ability. I felt very strongly that if the Railwaymen in service were to run their union by themselves only without the assistance of non-railwaymen or ex-Railwaymen they must get immunity from the operation of departmental rules for their trade union activities and I was able to convince the administration about justness of my demand. The chief personnel officer Eastern Railway under his letter No. AE4039/1965/2(IV) dated 21.10.1959 to all concerned stated as follows : -

"Re: Trade Union activities of Railwaymen"

" Recently the question of granting immunity to trade union officials who are railwaymen to a reasonable extent from the operation of departmental rules for their trade union activities so that they are not harassed or punished unjustly in due performance of their trade union work was raised. It has been decided by the General Manager that while it is difficult to define the rights and facilities of trade union officials, it is not the intention of the Administration to harass or take to task a trade union official who conducts trade union activities in a sober and responsible manner and within the agreed conditions laid down by higher authorities agreed to in the terms of recognition etc. of the Trade Union. The aim is that Railway Trade Union should be run on sound and healthy lines primarily by Railway employees, and that in doing so, these employees should feel a sense of security.

"The General Manager also considers that union officials who are Railway employees should set an example to workers both in the matter of their railway work and in discipline. They should therefore ensure that their railway work does not suffer on account of their trade union activities and they are not absent from their duties without prior permission. In cases where they have to be absent from their railway work temporarily on any day in connection with their trade union activities, they should obtain permission from senior supervising Class III staff under whom they are placed, who should normally grant such permission. Trade Union officials are not

however, expected to make up their work for the days they are on leave in connection with meetings and other trade union activities or for the period of time they are permitted to be absent during their duty hours on any day for bonafide trade union activities.

"It has been decided further by the General Manager that when the Administration proposes to take action against an official of a recognised Trade Union other than for lapses in his allotted railway duties, the President or the General Secretary of the Union concerned would be advised beforehand. A recognised Trade Union may also bring cases of what it considers to be harassment and unjust punishment of its workers to the General Manager's notice for review or intervention.

This is in supersession of all earlier instructions on the subject."

Permission to use Railway premises/land for the purpose of holding union meeting was a bothering issue for a long time. Chief Personnel Officer, Eastern Railway's letter No.AE 4039/1965/36(i) dated 28. 5. 1959 to all concerned which reads as follows, eased the matter :

"Sub: Permission to use Railway premises/land for the purpose of holding Union meeting.

Ref: This office circular No. AE 4039/1965/3(b) dated 6.2.59. In supersession of the above, it has since been decided by the General Manager that permission to recognised trade unions may be given for holding meetings in railway premises or land under the following conditions :

(a) Prior permission of the Railway would be necessary before railway premises/land can be used.

(b) The request for permission must reach the Administration at least 3 days before the meeting was sought to be held.

(c) No political subject would be discussed in the meeting. The General manager would, however, not insist on a copy of the Agenda being given to the Railway.

(d) The responsibility for obtaining permission from the Civil authorities or from the Managing Committee of Institutes, wherever necessary, would be with the Trade Union concerned. But it is essential to obtain permission from the Railway authorities in addition to obtaining the permission of the Institute Managing Committee and Civil Authorities. The time and place of the meeting will be intimated by the Union when applying for permission.

The General Manager desires that orders granting or refusing permission must be issued promptly to the Union, even by using control phone and that normally permission should be given. If the Union do not get a reply to their letter promptly, they should contact the officer concerned over the telephone and obtain permission."

Transfer of Union officials was causing another headache. Such transfers were frequently resorted to for getting rid of an union official whom a particular officer did not like. An agreement was reached between the General Manager and the Union. Instructions were issued to all concerned vide Chief Personnel Offices letter no. AE. 4223/V.R dated 3.3.1959 which reads as follows : -

Transfer of Union Officials

"In supersession of all previous orders on

the subject, the existing orders for the transfer of Union officials are reproduced for guidance

1. It has been agreed upon between the recognised Unions and this Administration that when for departmental reasons it is necessary for staff who happen to be union officials to be transferred, such transfers must be carried out and the necessity for the transfer is a matter in which the Administration must be the sole judge.

2. The General Manager appreciates that Trade Unions may be embarrassed sometimes by the transfer of some union officials, as they may not be able to make arrangements quickly for handing over of charge to successor; and, therefore, it has been agreed that in cases of transfer not involving promotion, Divisional Superintendents, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineers, District Officers etc. should advise appropriate officials of the Branch and the Central bodies of Trade Union of the proposed transfer. Normally all transfers including those of Trade Union officials are to be carried out as these are ordered in the interest of public service but there may be some special cases where Trade Unions may not be able easily to relieve a transferred office-bearers and make other arrangements, and in that case they may represent their difficulties to the officer ordering such transfers for consideration in the way of seeking extra time in which the orders of transfer could be carried out or for temporary postponement of such orders. Any such representation as mentioned above is to be made by the Branch Union to the Dy. C. M. E. etc within one week of the date of his letter, advising its Central Organisation at the same time who, if

they agree with the Branch, could represent the matter to the General Manager. This representation from the Central Organisation must be made to the General Manager within 15 days of the original transfer advice by the DS/Dy. Chief M. E. etc.

The D. S. or the D. C. M. E. , if he does not agree with the representation, should forward a copy of it at once to the Chief Personnel Officer together with points of disagreement, and C. P. O. will then put it up to the General Manager for orders. Pending his decision, orders of transfer should not be issued. If, after the decision of the case by the General Manager and issue of transfer orders based on his decision, the employee concerned fails to carry out the order, he renders himself liable to disciplinary action, as the decision of the General Manager is final."

Facilities for Trade Union Work

In spite of the provisions made in the Establishment code, the administration did not consider it necessary to introduce staff council till recently. The staff councils were intended not only to run as rivals and counter to the trade unions but the move was aimed with a view to create a section of 'Loyal' and 'faithful' agents of the administration with special privileges. With a view to make the staff councils ineffective and defunct the Union contested all the seats and secured over 90%. This was an unmistakable pointer to the Administration of the Union's strength.

In addition to the above scores of other facilities were secured during the period viz. (i) point for point reply to the Union's representation (ii) courteous behaviour by officers with the

representatives of the union (iii) exhibition of posters in the Railway buildings and provision of notice-boards therein (iv) setting up of polling booths within the Railway premises for ballots and elections of Branches (v) personal review by the General Manager of cases of harassment and unjust punishment of union workers (vi) no limit to unions agenda for discussions with the Administration (vii) Leave facilities for organisational work of the union (viii) grant of deputation service to union officials (ix) rent of railway premises to the union for office purposes etc.

Improvements to conditions of service of Class IV staff

The recommendation of the Class IV Staff Promotion committee was published at the end of 1959, benefiting them considerably. Incentive schemes in Railway workshops were introduced. The plight of the casual labour had been one of the primary concern of the union and agreement was reached with the Railway Administration that 50% of the candidates for recruitment of Class IV would be from amongst the casual labourers of the Railway.

Corruption on Railways

The report of the Corruption Enquiry Committee with Acharya J. B. K. as Chairman was published in 1957. The Union gave evidence before the committee at length and dealt with the sources of such corruption. The views of the Union, as expressed in my Report is as follows :

"Corruption"

As in all other departments of the Government and public life, corruption

exists in Railways too. Corruption in the Railways has been focussed and brought to lime-light by setting up of an Enquiry Committee with Acharya J. B. Kripalani as Chairman. The Report that deals with various aspects of corruption and remedial measures has been accepted by the Government. In practical application, we find that the Administration's efforts are diverted to certain particular directions only, which unfortunately, tend to cover up major guilts and by persons with position and power. Further, conception of corruption includes corrupt and unfair practices like undue recruitment, promotion, transfers, posting of staff, removal from service without assigning any reason whatsoever etc, and favouritism and nepotism in the matters of management and running of the railways like contracts, constructions, purchases etc. A substantial number of persons in positions, top, middle or bottom are not free from such corrupt practices. They are helping the growth of corruption and leading the country to disaster. Nevertheless, the Union is anxious to eradicate corruption from the life of the nation including railwaymen. Though reluctance on the part of the Administration to take the Union into confidence in this regard, has made this task of the Union difficult, the Union has succeeded to a considerable extent to check corrupt practices amongst the ordinary subordinate railwaymen. The stand of the Union is to pin point the bad spots and give wide publicity to main source of corruption. The Union feels that while it is desirable to root out corruption it is indeed reprehensible to act as agents and speak out information secretly since such a practice cannot help at all to root

out corruption, particularly when such corruption is practised in a chain from top to bottom."

The Annual General Meeting of the Union was held at Dhanbad on 28th & 30th November, 1959 and the following office-bearers were elected : -

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| President | - Rajendra Singh M. P. |
| Working President | - Kiron Chowdhury |
| Vice-President | - Bimal Chandra Dey |
| | 2. Dulal Chandra Chatterjee |
| | 3. Kedar Nath (Cabinman) |
| | 4. Jibesh Prasad |
| | 5. Deb Raj Adhikary |
| General Secretary | - Ram Chandra Chakravarty |
| Asstt. Genl. Secretaries | - 1. Bireswar Chakravarty |
| | - 2. Manoj Mohan Basu |
| | 3. Amarsh Sen |
| | 4. Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury. |
| Organising Secretaries | - 1. Paritosh Banerjee |
| | 2. Subhas Mitra. |
| Treasurer | - Anadi Nath Bhattacharya, |

Report of the Second Pay Commission and Railwaymen's movement against the same:

The report of the Second Pay commission was published in press on 1st December 1959 together with a statement by the Finance Minister made in the Lok Sabha on 30th Nov.'59. The All India Railwaymen's Federation met in its Working Committee meeting at New Delhi

on 15th and 16th December 1959, made an analysis of the recommendations of the Commission and expressed its disappointment on the same. The Eastern Railwaymen's Union also met in the Central Council meeting at Dinapore on 30th and 31st December '59, reiterated the decision of the Federation and urged on all concerned to mobilise their strength to launch a vigorous movement to secure withdrawal of the retrograde steps suggested by the commission and fulfilment of just and legitimate demands of the railwaymen for a living wage and better service conditions. On 15th of January 1960 a "Protest Day" was observed throughout the country at the instance of All India Railwaymen's Federation. At all the centres of the Union unprecedented largely attended meetings were held and processions and demonstrations were taken out on the "Protest Day". The meeting at Subodh Mullick Square, Calcutta was attended by above 30,000 railwaymen wherein large number of railwaymen from distant place also attended. The resentment against the report of the Pay Commission amongst the railwaymen was spontaneous and there was a pressure on the Unions from the bottom at various centres to launch a movement of resistance. The Eastern Railwaymen's Union also observed a 'Protest Week' from 1st to 7th Feb, '60 in a befitting manner and the response from the railwaymen throughout the Eastern Railway was unique. During this 'Protest Week' more than 20,000 railwaymen of Calcutta area marched to Governor's House to present an appeal addressed to the President of India.

Following the movement by the railwaymen different labour organisations

of the Central Govt. employees adopted resolutions expressing their disappointment and resentment on the recommendations of the Pay Commission. While many of these organisations including the National Federation of Post and Telegraph Employees adopted a conciliatory attitude at the beginning, but due to pressure from the rank and file of the workers they had to seriously consider for launching a movement and preferably a co-ordinated one with all sections of Central Govt. employees.

The main reasons for disappointment and resentment were as follows :

(i) The recommendations of the Commission nullified all the principles hitherto enunciated by the various commissions for fixing the minimum living wage including that of the national policy of a need-based minimum wage and discarded its relation to productivity, national income, social and ethical consideration or State as a model employer.

(ii) The Commission discarded the norms fixed by the 15th Indian Labour conference for a need-based minimum wage and challenged the universally accepted formula of Dr. Akroide in regard to the daily caloric requirements and calculated the cost of the two principal meals a day at 56 np. only.

(iii) The Commission also discarded the principle enunciated by the First Pay Commission (1947) for fixing the minimum and maximum remuneration of an employee in future, viz. "We are nevertheless convinced that the State must now take some steps forward in the direction giving effect to the living wage principle in dealing with its employees;

and as a matter of social policy the lowest rate of remuneration should not be lower than a living wage and that the highest salary should also as a matter of social policy be kept down as far as possible, consistent with essential requirements of recruitment and efficiency".

As against this the Commission's recommendations were based mainly on the out-moded and irrational principle of Islington Commission (1912-15) - "the only safe criterion is that the Government should pay so much and so much only to their employees as is necessary to obtain recruits of the right stamp...." and revealed a huge difference between the minimum and maximum salary in the public sector as compared to other free and democratic countries.

(iv) The commission did not make any specific recommendation for the grant of Dearness Allowance with the increase in cost of living to protect the real wage of the employees. It also discarded the recommendation of the First Pay Commission in regard to the linking of dearness allowance with the cost of living.

(v) The Commission recommended curtailments of many of the existing benefits and privileges, the important ones being reduction in leave entitlement, casual leave and holidays, substitution of free medical aid by contributory one, enhancement of rent of quarters, reduction of number of free Passes and Privilege Ticket Orders, withdrawal of free transport facilities of personal effects, direct recruitment in intermediate grades, narrowing down the promotion avenues, reduction in the number of posts in higher grades, etc. and made other adverse recommendations on service conditions and rules.

(vi) The total cost of recommendations of the Commission according to their own calculation is 39.60 crores including the interim relief of 11 crores granted earlier whereas the effect of adverse recommendations and curtailments, etc. in the Railways alone, rendered a net saving of about 57 crores to the Government annually.

The reactions were no less on the labour organisations in the private sector and they were much alarmed particularly over the Commission's attitude on the minimum wage recommended by the 15th Labour Conference. The report of the First Pay Commission (1947) had been the basis and guiding factor for almost all subsequent commissions, tribunals, arbitrations etc. in the private sector and they were naturally concerned of the Second Pay Commission's report and apprehensive of its repercussions.

The resentment amongst the railwaymen was more because they wanted a Wage Board and were opposed to the setting up of this Pay Commission. It may be recalled that at Poona convention held in August 1957 the All India Railwaymen's Federation protested against the Government's decision for the Pay Commission and decided to serve strike notice in support of their demand of a Wage Board. It was only at the intervention of the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who asked the Federation to give a fair trial to the Pay Commission that was set up that the demand of the Wage Board was kept in abeyance and the strike decision was abandoned.

Efforts by railwaymen for negotiated settlement of the grievances:

The All India Railwaymen's Federation through the resolution of the Working Committee meeting of 15th and 16th December 1959, made efforts for a negotiated settlement of the issues. Unfortunately, the attitude of the Railway Minister and that of his Ministry was not to make any change in the recommendations of the Pay Commission or any of the decisions of the Government thereon. Only issue that they agreed to consider was in regard to recommendation of curtailment of Pass and P. T. O. privileges and nothing else. The letter from the Member Staff dated 22nd Feb. '60 to the President to the Federation clearly explains the attitude of the Railway Ministry.

The General Council of the All India Railwaymen's Federation met in Delhi on 22nd, 23rd and 24th Feb'60, considered the letter from the Member Staff dated 22nd Feb' 60, formulated a five-points demand, desired a satisfactory settlement of the demands by negotiations and in the event of failure directed the General Secretary to have negotiations with other organisations of the Central Govt. employees for a co-ordinated action. Accordingly, an explanatory memorandum on the demands was prepared and submitted to the Railway Ministry. A letter to the Prime Minister was addressed by the General Secretary of the Federation requesting his intervention. The Prime Minister under his letter dated 8th March'60 directed the Federation to approach the Railway Minister for the purpose and after much effort a meeting between the representatives of the

Federation and the Railway Minister could be held only on 11th April'60. In this meeting the Railway Minister emphatically stated that he fully agreed with the Government's decision on Dearness Allowance, minimum wage etc. and rejected the demands for abolition of Rule 148 (now 149) proviso to Rule 1708 of the state Rly. Establishment Code regarding summary dismissal of railwaymen without assigning any reason. He also did not agree to a separate Wage Board for the railwaymen or reference of issues to arbitration on demand. He did not agree that the third tier of the Permanent Negotiating Machinery viz. settling the disputes by reference to adhoc tribunal was a failure and pleaded for its further trial. In regard to demands for 'no curtailment of existing privileges' he was however agreeable to consult the Federation if the Govt. thought it necessary to curtail the privileges in respect of passes, PTOs, transfer passes and medical aid only. The atmosphere of discussion was not cordial due to the rigid attitude adopted by the Railway Minister and it was considered by the Federation that no useful purpose would be served by pursuing such type of negotiations.

In the meanwhile in pursuance of the decision of the General Council of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and on its invitation an exploratory talk was held on 9th March '60 between the representatives of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, All India Defence Employees Federation and Con-Federation of the Central Govt. Employees and Workers (including the National Federation of P&T employees) and it was decided to have a joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the four concerned All India organisations in

Bombay on 2nd and 3rd April '60 for further consultations and necessary decisions. Accordingly the Executive Committees of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, All India Defence Employees' Federation, National Federation of the P & T. Employees and Con-Federation of the Central Govt. Employees and Workers (representing All India Non-Gazetted Audit and Accounts Association, All India Customs staff Federation, All India Income Tax Staff Federation, All India Civil Aviation Department Employees Union, All India C. P. W. D. workers Union, All India Regional Director of Food Employes' Federation, Overseas Communication Service Employees' Union, Medical Stores Department Employees, Union, etc) met in Bombay on 2nd and 3rd april '60 formed an all India Joint Council of Action with Sri V. G. Dalvi (President, N.F.P.T.E.) as Chairman, Sri Peter Alvares (General Secretary, A. IR. F.) as Secretary and the following 30 as members, formulated a six-points demands, and decided for a coordinated action viz-strike from the midnight of 19th June'60 in the vent of failure of a satisfactory settlement of demands by 15th May' 60. It may be mentioned that the important demand of the All India Railwaymen's Federation for a Wage Board had to be abandoned for the co-ordinated movement with the other Central Govt. employees.

Members Joint Council of Action, All India Railwaymen's Federation.

1. V. R. Malgi, Central Rly.
2. Umraomal Purohit, Western Rly.
3. R. C. Chakravarty, Eastern Rly.
4. J. P. Chowbey, Northern Rly.
5. Jainarain singh, N. E. Rly.

6. Bidhubhan Sen, N. F. Rly.
7. Satyen Kar, S. E. Rly.
8. G. B. Sukhu, Western Rly.
9. R. S. Bhatnagar, Central Rly.
10. Amaresh Sen, Eastern Rly.
11. B. P. Roychowdhury, Eastern Rly.
12. Maniben Kara, Western Rly.
13. S. Guruswami-President Southern Rly.
14. D. S. R. Anjaneyulu.
15. K. Ramamurti.
16. Gopal Singh.
17. Omprakash Gupta.
18. Chandra Sekhar.

All India Defence Employees' Federation.

19. R. A. Rai.
20. Deven Sen-MLA.
21. S. M. Banerjee-M. P.
22. S. M. Josh -M. L. A.
23. K. G. Srivastava.
24. K. M. Mathew.

Confederation of Central Govt. Employees.

25. Nath Pai-M. P.
26. D. S. Rajratram.
27. M. N. Manna
28. E. X. Joseph.
29. K. M. Nair.
30. J. Godinho.

DEMANDS :

1. Payment of Dearness allowance on the basis of the First Pay Commission's recommendations.
2. The grant of a National Minimum Wage for Central Government employees in the

light of the principles enunciated by the 15th Labour Conference, and the determination of differentials between Class IV, III, II, and I, as well as between unskilled, semi-skilled, and highly skilled categories on a rational and equitable basis.

3. The appointment of Ministry/ Departmentwise Standing Board consisting of equal representation of organised labour and the concerned Ministries/Departments with neutral Chairman, to settle disputes relating to scales of pay and other service conditions commensurate with the diversity of occupation, responsibilities, risks and hazards, connected with the duties of various categories in different departments and Ministries.

4. No curtailment of any existing amenities, rights and privileges.

5. (a) Reference to arbitration of disputes referred by either parties; and

(b) Recognition of one Union/ Federation in one Industry or Government Department. Where more than one Union or Federation exist, the representative character should be determined through a referendum held once in two years.

6. (a) Withdrawal of Rule 148 and Proviso to Rule 1708 of the State Railway Establishment Code, Vol, I, Rule 5 of the Temporary Civil Service Rules 1949 and Rules 4(a) and 4(b) of the Central Civil Service Conduct Rules ;

(b) Judicial enquiry into all cases of arbitrary removal from service under above Rules ;

(c) Legalisation of conditions of service by statute; and

(d) Inclusion of civilians working in the Defence Establishment along with other Central Government employees for the protection given under Article 311 of the Constitution of India.

From a careful study of the demands it would reveal that they were not new or fresh demands and the Govt. was committed to most of them earlier in one or the other way. Also excepting the demands no.1&2 in none of the other demands there was any additional financial implications.

Negotiations refused & Strike Notice served:

Immediately after this decision Sri V. G. Dalvi Chairman of the Joint council of action addressed the Prime Minister on 7. 4. 60 for a negotiated settlement which was replied by his principal Private Secretary on 9. 4. 60 informing that the Prime Minister was always willing to meet the representatives and but for his other heavy engagements at the moment he would have done so.

Following the decision of the All India Joint Council of Action and directive of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, the Eastern Railwaymen's Union held its central council meeting in Calcutta (Sealdah) on 28th, 29th and 30th April and 1st May 1960, resolved to conduct a strike ballot to obtain the verdict of the members on the demands and authorised the Working Committee to act with full powers of the Central Council in respect of all subsequent actions in accordance with the advice and directives of the Federation and Joint Council of Action. A local co-ordination committee (which was converted to Local Council of Action) was formed on 7th May 60 with

representatives of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union, South-Eastern Railwaymen's Union, National Federation of Post & Telegraph workers, West Bengal Circle, All India Defence Employees' Federation, Eastern Zone and Confederation of Central Govt. Employees & Workers Association & Unions, West Bengal, with Sri Deven Sen, M. L. A. as the Chairman and Sarvasree R. C. Chakravarty & K. G. Bose as Joint Secretaries of the Council. The Office of this Local Council of Action was located in the Sealdah Branch Office of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union at 162, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta. Under the banner of this Council of Action the 'Demand Day' in Calcutta was observed at Monument Maidan on 25th May 1960 with more than 70,000 attending the meeting.

The Working Committee of the All India Railwaymen's Federation met at Delhi on 15th May '60 i.e. on the target date fixed for the completion of negotiations with the Govt. and reviewed the whole situation and decided that a meeting of the Joint Council of Action be convened immediately to chalk out a positive programme for implementing the decision taken in Bombay convention of the Central Govt. employees. Accordingly meeting of the All India Joint Council of Action was held in Bombay on 29th, 30th & 31st May '60. Although the Joint Council of Action had earlier fixed 19th June '60 as the date of strike, in consideration of the fact that the Prime Minister was busy in discussion with the Prime Minister of China and was away for attending the Commonwealth Conference etc. the Council in this meeting deferred the date of strike to midnight of 11th July '60 with the hope that the Prime

Minister would be free in the meantime to discuss the issues with the leaders of the Joint Council of Action.

Unfortunately against this hope of the Joint council of Action the Prime Minister through his letter dated 10th June '60 informed the Chairman of the Joint Council of Action Sri V. G. Dalvi regretting his inability to meet and discuss the issues with the Joint Council of Action as it would serve no useful purpose. He categorically stated that he could not discuss the revision of Pay Commission's recommendations and the Government's decision on them. This stand of the Prime Minister caused great resentment and frustration amongst all sections of the Central Govt. employees including the railwaymen and they felt very much aggrieved. The Joint council of Action met at Delhi on 23rd and 24th June '60 and having considered no other alternative left before it, finally resolved to, serve the notice of strike to the respective authorities on the demands and directed the constituent units accordingly.

The Joint council of action in this meeting also formed a Standing Committee with the following members for the purpose of conducting the strike :

- Sri V. G. Dalvi (chairman)
- „ Peter Alvares (Secretary)
- „ S. Guruswami (Railways)
- „ R. C. Chakravarty (Railways)
- „ S. M. Joshi (Defence)
- „ S. M. Banerjee (Defence)
- „ Nath Pai (Con-Federation)
- „ D.S. Raja Ratnam (con-Federation)

.. P. S. R. Anjaneyulu

(Post & Telegraph)

.. K. Ramamurti (Post& telegraph)

Out of ten, I was the only person who was an employee.

The strike ballot was taken by the Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the Eastern Railway from 19th to 22nd June '60 with the following results :

Number of Members	...	71,829
Members participated in ballot	...	57,471
Voted in favour of a strike	...	56,860
Voted against strike	...	323
Votes cancelled	...	288
Non-members participated in ballot	...	37,882
Voted in favour of a strike	...	36,947
Voted against strike	...	591
Votes cancelled	...	416

The Working Committee of the Union met in Calcutta on 24th, 25th and 26th June '60, reviewed the whole situation, decided to serve strike notice upon the General Manager, E. Rly. on 25th June '60 formulated necessary instructions for strike, formed a Supreme Council of Action and took certain other important decisions. Accordingly, the strike notice was served upon the General Manager on 25th June '60 at 13-00 hrs. amidst a huge mass of railwaymen and great applause. The General Secretary (Myself) in an interview with the General Manager at 16-00 hrs. on 25th June '60 clarified the stand of the Union and assured him absolute peace and safety of Rly. property during the strike and requested him to safeguard against unnecessary provocation to the workers.

Ever since the publication of the report of the Pay Commission the Eastern Railwaymen's Union held series of meetings in all the important centres and Branches of the Union. After service of strike notice also series of meetings were held and processions and demonstrations were taken out in all the Branches of the Union. The city of Calcutta witnessed two unprecedented gatherings at the Monument Maidan one on 29th June '60 addressed by Sri Peter Alvares, General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and Secretary of All India Joint Council of Action and another on 7th July '60 addressed by Sri Nath Rai, M. P. Vice-President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and President of the Con-Federation of Central Govt. employees.

Efforts for settlement to avert strike :

Subsequent to the service of Strike notice a discussion took place on the 2nd July 1960 between the Standing Committee of the Joint Council of Action and the Union Labour Minister Sri Gulab Lal Nanda. In the said discussion Sri Nanda disclosed the Government's attitude on the above demands and made it emphatically clear that there was no scope of discussion so far the demands on Dearness Allowance and Minimum Wage were concerned. The delegation deeply regretted Government's rigid attitude to these two vital demands and in absence of any sympathetic understanding the negotiation failed.

From the statement of the Union Labour Minister made before the Parliament on August 9, 1960 it appears that he did everything possible for a settlement. A careful analysis of the said

statement itself would show that how vague and contradictory the assurances were that came from him in the meeting of 2nd July '60. It is unfortunate that the representative of the labour who attended the said meeting understood that on the issue of curtailment of existing rights and privileges no clear assurance was there and in regard to other demands only a scope for further negotiation in the future was offered. In regard to the demand of minimum wage it was made clear to the Labour Minister that the representatives only wanted the Government to agree to accept the norms and standard recommended by the 15th Labour conference as an ideal to be achieved progressively in future to which the Labour Minister categorically regretted his inability to commit in the matter. Regarding the grant of Dearness Allowance also the request of the representatives to reduce the period of review from 12 to 6 months or grant such allowance for a rise of 5 points on an average of 12 months was not acceptable on the ground that 'the principal recommendations of the Pay Commission could not be tampered with'. The submission of the representatives that the recommendations of the Pay Commission itself offered scope to the Government to reconsider and review the grant of Dearness Allowance also proved futile. The Labour Minister only assured that if there was rise in cost of living by 10 points on an average for 12 months the government would undertake a review of Dearness Allowance as proposed by the Commission and if the Unions were not satisfied with the Govt.'s review and wanted decision of an impartial authority (arbitration) the same would be done provided the Strike was withdrawn

unconditionally. He was however unable to discuss or commit the rate of compensation.

The Labour Minister no doubt agreed to the formation of some kind of standing machinery for resolving disputes by negotiations, but on the question as to whether any specific adverse recommendation of the Commission could be referred to the said Standing Machinery for a negotiated settlement and failing which to arbitration, his reply was in the negative.

The feeling of the representatives was that the Labour Minister could not commit anything beyond the Cabinet decision and the Cabinet, stood more on prestige than on statesmanship and appreciation of workers' point of view with sympathy in its correct perspective.

On the 7th July 1960, Sarvasuri R. C. Chakravarty and K. G. Bose, Joint Secretaries of the local Joint Council of Action of the Central Govt. employees issued the following statement in connection with the proposed Strike from the midnight of 11th July, 1960 :

"Press, public and the Central Govt. employees at large are fully aware of the latest development of the negotiation held between the Labour Minister Shri G. L. Nanda and the members of the Joint Council of Action. To the utter misfortune of the Central Govt. employees the attitude of the Govt. exhibited during the negotiation was not at all helpful. It seems to us that the negotiation was undertaken as eye-wash only without the least sincerity and with the definite purpose to confuse the public and the employees. We have emphatically made it clear that the workers are determined to achieve their just and legitimate demand

and with that intention a joint front has been built up. We firmly believe that the public at large have also been convinced of the justness of our demands. We are surprised to observe that when the Govt. Spokesman Shri Nanda was negotiating with the leaders of the Central Govt. employees, Congress M. Ps. Congress organisation and I, N, T. U. C. had been taking steps to create provocation in the minds of the Central Govt. employees and to spoil the atmosphere for negotiation. This attempt is condemnable. We are also sorry to note that our respected Prime Minister Shri Nehru has attempted to rouse the public passion to set them against the Central Govt. Employees and has also given a whip to the newspapers to rouse public sentiment against the strike. Such move on the part of the revered leaders of the nation is most unfortunate and is bound to create bitter feelings between the employer and the employee. The Prime Minister and certain responsible leaders of the Congress party have challenged the loyalty and patriotism of the Central Govt. employees towards the country and the nation. This is most deplorable and the Central Govt. employees have established times without number their patriotism and loyalty towards the nation and the country and there should not be the least doubt about it in the minds of the people.

"Various other attempts are also being made to confuse the Central Govt. employees and the public on the eve of the strike move. Recent announcement by the Rly. Ministry about the improved pay scales and other benefits for the railwaymen is nothing but a hoax. If a close analysis is made of the details of the scales of pay announced, it will be seen

that in most of the scales, workers will have lower pay both at the starting and at the end of the scale with lower fixation, as well. It is only with the Dearness Allowance that the workers will get an increased amount from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- on an average. but at the same time if the losses are accounted for, such as increased deduction of House Rent, cut for the compulsory Provident Fund contribution, reduction in earned leave, introduction of contributory medical scheme, reduction in the number of higher grade posts and retrenchment consequential to the employees being rendered surplus on account of the increased working hours, losses will be must more than the gain. In all the scales of pay same rate of increment have been maintained excepting in the case of lowest grade of the Class IV where increment of -/8/- has been increased to Rs.1/-. Such decision of the Rly. Ministry is not at all encouraging to the Railway employees.

"It is also reported that Territorial Army volunteers are being mobilised to break the strike. They have been called to report to the camp without due notice. This is considered illegal. The members of the staff had volunteered to the Territorial Army with the clear understanding that they will be required to serve the nation during war and national emergency alone. The utilisation of the Territorial Army for any other purpose particularly for breaking the strike is not only beyond the object of formation of the Territorial Army but also is considered as a mean attempt. The employees consider this as a provocation and we want to announce that barring very few almost all have refused to be utilised as strike

breakers. The Govt. has gone a step forward and did not allow many of such employees who refused to side with the Govt. as strike breakers to perform their duties in Calcutta Telephones. This action on the part of the Govt. is condemnable.

"Announcements are being made daily that volunteers, army people Congress workers etc. will be utilised to run the Railway and Post & Telegraph services during the strike. We are confident that considered public will not respond to such a call to stand against the movement of the Central Govt. employees. We also know for certainty that with few such untrained hands the Govt. will not be able to maintain the services. If the Govt. is so sure to maintain the service with volunteers, we fail to understand Why announcements, one after another are being made that normal functioning in the essential services will not be undertaken and many such services have already been suspended from date in the Post & Telegraph and Railway Departments. We would appeal to the Govt. not to provoke the strikers.

"Reports are every day reaching the office of the Joint Council of Action that the administration is undertaking intimidation, threats and provocation to create panic in the minds of loyal and peace loving Central Govt. employees and have been attempting to obtain their commitment to work during the Strike unlawfully. Unions have already lodged protest to the authorities in this respect and they want to make it very clear that such action has been aggravating the present tense situation.

"We heard with apt attention the Radio speech of Pandit Nehru. It is very painful and disappointing to note that the

Prime Minister instead of finding solution of the problems and suggesting any concrete steps to have an amicable settlement has tried again to rouse the country's passion and sentiment against the cause of the Central Govt. employees. The speech of the Prime Minister was more emotional than logical and as such we feel there was nothing convincing for the Central Govt. employees to change their decision to go on Strike from the midnight of 11th July '60.

At last we would appeal to the Central Govt. employees not to be a prey to the provocation of the administration and remain firm to respond to the call of J. C. A. to go on Strike from the midnight of 11th July '60. We would also appeal to the Press and the public to lend their support and sympathy to the just cause of the Central Govt. employees in their movement and also appeal to the Govt. to refrain from such provocative action."

The leaders of the Joint Council of Action however continued their efforts in all earnestness for a negotiated settlement through some mediators particularly through Late Feroze Gandhi, the eminent member of the Indian Parliament upto 11th July 1960. The Standing committee of the Joint Council of Action which met in New Delhi on the 10th July 1960 with great hopes for a settlement, was prepared to give up the demands for minimum wage on mere assurance that the Government would make a declaration that they were agreeable for progressive realisation of the Minimum Wage as enunciated by the 15th Labour Conference and pleaded for grant of dearness allowance on the basis of point to point rise in the cost of living (consumers Price index) and requested for grant of Dearness

Allowance on 10 points increase on an average of six months or 5 points increase on an average of 12 months which however were not acceptable to the Govt. As a last resort to avert the strike the leaders of the Joint Council of Action urged on 11th July '60 the grant of compensation for an increase of 7 point which was the average for the 12 months in 1959. The Government did not agree to this as well. The Government thus forced a strike on the employees.

From the very beginning the Government refused to negotiate with the employees' organisations. The statement made by the Finance Minister on the floor of the Parliament that there will be no negotiation with the organised labour was persistently followed by the govt. till last. The Government only called for an 'unconditional surrender' of the employees.

The service of strike notice itself is an effort and attempt for a negotiated settlement of disputes and avert the strike, because under the existing industrial law the conciliation becomes obligatory only after the issue of strike notice in essential services. As such the employees organisations very rightly made this effort and offered a scope to the Govt.

Government abdicated their responsibility to avert strike — promulgation of the Ordinance banning strike :

Section 23 of the Industrial Disputes Act prescribed the circumstances under which workmen are debarred from going on strike. Provision of Section 12(1) of the said Act makes it obligatory and mandatory for the Conciliation Officer (appointed by the Ministry of Labour) to hold conciliation proceedings if the dispute relates to public utility services or is of national importance

and a notice under Section 22 has been given unless the Govt. consider that the notice is frivolous or vexatious or that it would be inexpedient to make such reference. According to other provisions of the said Act there cannot be any strike during the pendency of the conciliation and/or arbitration.

It was thus open to the Govt. to refer the disputes to arbitration or conciliation and thus prevent any strike materialising if the public interest so demanded. Instead of taking recourse to the law of the land made by the Government itself in settling Industrial Disputes the Govt. preferred to abdicate its responsibility and chose the path of banning the strike and declaring it as illegal by promulgating the Essential Service Maintenance Ordinance on 8th July 1960 which virtually superseded all existing labour laws.

It may be recalled here that every time whenever the employees in Essential Service of the public sector served strike notice the strike was banned and declared illegal by issue of an Ordinance. It was only in 1946 that when a strike notice was served by the All India Railwaymen's Federation, the then British Government though promulgated an Ordinance, averted the strike referring one of its demands to arbitration and arriving at a negotiated settlement on other issues.

Unfortunately our National Government though times without number pledged its faith in settling Industrial disputes by negotiations and/or arbitration. They did nothing of the sort in this particular case to avert the strike and settle the dispute. The second Pay Commission's recommendation in this regard viz. that disputes should be settled

by reference to arbitration, was also not honoured and followed by the Government. The intention of the Government by not taking recourse to the Industrial Disputes Act for settling the disputes appears that the Government was determined to deprive the workers of a tribunal on their demands.

Respose to Strike :

Railwaymen at majority centres on the Eastern Railway responded effectively to the call of strike and left work after zero hour of 12th July 1960. There was complete and total collapse of movement of trains from Lalgolaghat and Bongaon to Jhajha (exclusive) and Gaya. The workers in and around Calcutta, Howrah, Lillooah, Bandel, Sealdah, Chitpur, Budge Budge, etc. responded to the call properly and stopped work along with other Central Govt. employees. The Railway Stations, Yards, sheds, Workshops, Godowns, etc. were looking deserted. Though the Railwaymen of Calcutta area had the advantage of inspiration and encouragement from the large congregation of striking employees of other Central Govt. services and more helpful public opinion, they had to depend mostly on their own due to the vast scattered area and working conditions uncommon to others. The task of the workers on line and in other areas was no doubt comparatively tough. The workers of Howrah area deserve a special congratulation in that they were able to maintain their morale and strength of mind on the face of normal running of train services in the South Eastern Railway on 12th July '60.

The impact of strike was most in the Coalfield area i.e. Dhanbad Transportation Division, where the repression on the

workers also had been most. The strike in this area had been a source of inspiration for the Adra District (Coalfield area) of South Eastern Railway. Strike in Dhanbad Transportation Division could have continued for some days more in spite of oppression and repression had it not been withdrawn from 17th July '60. Similar was also the position in certain other centres of Asansol, Howrah and Sealdah Division. The role played by the workers of Barkakana, Pathardih, Katrashgarh, Dhanbad, Gomoh, Andal, Asansol, Sitarampur, Panagarh, Burdwan, Sakrigalighat, Ranaghat, Bongaon, Kanchrapara, Naihati etc. have created a golden chapter in the history of Railway Trade Union movement. The workers at Rampurhat, Azimganj, Jamalpur, Barwadih and Gaya though were a bit late, played upto the mark in keeping with the dignity of the organisation. The attempts of workers at Jhajha, Madhupur, Danapur, Patna, Dehri-on-Sone and Garhara for the strike were praiseworthy. The railwaymen at Moghatah particularly of the yard and Loco also gave evidence of their support for the strike by ceasing from work for more than 8 hours on 12th July '60 even though almost all the leaders and important workers of the Union had been arrested in the evening of 11th July 1960. The Union officials both at the Centre and Branches with the exception of few who and large played their part sincerely with risk, courage and conviction. The workers and sisters at Burdwan, Barkakana, Pathardih, Katrashgarh and Dhanbad etc. played exemplary part and were the source of inspiration to the striking employees.

Sri Bimal Chandra Das, Vice-President, Sri Amaresh Sen, Asst. General

Howrah branch of the Union were the first amongst the arrested persons and were arrested by the police at 13.00 hrs. on 11th July '60 while addressing a gate meeting at Howrah DS office. Following their arrests the General Secretary of the Union Ram Chakravarty was arrested at 19.00 hrs. on the same day at Sealdah. Sri Kedatr Nath, organising Secretary of the Union who was a cabinman was arrested just at zero hour from the Madhupur Cabin under heavy armed guards along with the Branch President, Secretary and other officials. The Branch President and Secretary at Moghalsarai along with large number of other officials and active workers were arrested in the evening of 11th July '60. The Branch President and Vice-President at Burdwan along with a batch of workers were also arrested at zero hour of 12th July '60. Following this a series of arrests of Branch officials and active workers were effected from 12th to 16th July '60 and even after that. The Branch President, Dhanbad Branch, Branch President, Naihati Branch and a few others were arrested after the withdrawal of strike. Another Vice-President of the centre Sri Jibesh Prosad was arrested at Patna on 12th July '60. The number of arrests particularly in the State of Bihar was comparatively heavy and that too the majority of the arrests were from Coalfield area. According to the information of the Union altogether 2,706 employees were arrested in Eastern Railway.

Unfortunately while the Eastern Railwaymen were deeply in the struggle, response from their colleagues in the neighbouring railways excepting the North-East Frontier Railway had not been upto the expectations. The Northern

and North-Eastern Railwaymen failed miserably. While the Eastern Railwaymen were struggling hard, the Administration could get the services of some black-legs Locomotive Running staff from certain neighbouring centres of Northern Railway for their attempt to run the train services in the Eastern Railway. The South Eastern Railwaymen though struggled hard at certain centres like Kharagpur, Adra District, Tatanagar etc. they failed in major portion. With the exemption of the State of Assam from the strike, the N. F. Railwaymen responded well in the remaining areas. Next courageous and praiseworthy role was played by Western Railwaymen where though in certain Divisions there was no strike, in the rest the strike was successful. Excepting the Bombay Division where the Central Railwaymen really played an effective part in the strike, the response in other areas was absent or poor. In the Southern Railway there was no strike in the ex. M. S. M. portion and the strike in ex. S. I. and ex. Mysore though not successful but considering the organisational position, and ineffective role of the Southern Railway Labour Union (which was taken in the Local Council of Action as a member unit), the attempts made in very many places thereby causing temporary dislocation in the running of train services deserve appreciation. The strike in Chittranjan Locomotive Works was a complete success and that in Integral coach Factory, Perambur the strikes were largely successful.

It is not possible to give a detailed picture of the part played by other Central Govt. employees in the strike. But it can be said without fear of contradiction that excepting the states of West Bengal, Gujarat

and major portion of Maharashtra, in no other state all other three constituent units of the Joint Council of Action (All India Defence Employees Federation, National Federation of Post & Telegraph employees and Con-Federation of Central Govt. employees) could play a uniform part in the strike. If one unit was successful the other failed and of the same unit if one affiliated Union succeeded other could not. The failure was uniform for all the constituent units of J. C. A. in Delhi and Punjab. If the states of West Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra are excluded, excepting the Audit & Accounts and Civil Aviation, other affiliates of the Con-Federation failed to respond in strike. In the state of Maharashtra also the withdrawal of strike by the Con-Federation earlier to the decision of Joint Council of Action has taken away much of the glory of the little achievement they had. The Defence also played a poor part. It was only in the State of West Bengal where their strike was successful for all the days. Even Maharashtra where they succeeded next, the strike at Bombay, Poona, Kirki or other centre was partly successful and could not continue for all the days. They failed in other states. Though the strike of Post & Telegraph was withdrawn in Punjab earlier to zero hours of 11th July and in Maharashtra (Bombay) earlier to general withdrawal by J. C. A. one or the other of their 9 affiliated unions were on strike in all States

Repressive measures adopted by the Govt. and the Railway Administration to suppress the strike :

The entire coercive apparatus available at the disposal of the Government and the Railway

Administration were put into action to suppress the strike. Loyalty bonds were introduced and recruitments of industrial black-leggers were attempted in the Railways and also in all other departments of the Government. Additional remuneration in the shape of 'hard duty allowance' was assured to these black-legs as temptation and arrangements for free board and lodge were made for them during the strike period. Long before the promulgation of the Ordinance and immediately after the service of the strike notice by the Unions on 25th June 1960, meetings of the Union in Government land or premises were banned, leave particularly to the members of the unions serving strike notice, were cancelled or refused and a keen watch on the movement of the trade union workers were kept.

The impact of coercion was more on the railwaymen. In addition to the Railway Protection Force and the Government Railway Police Force which the Railways were already having huge additional Police force from the Civil Administration and armed personnel were posted on a war footing at all important places of the railways coupled with these the services of National Congress (ruling party), village Panchayat, Bharat Sevak Samaj Congress Seva dal (organisation for social service), National Volunteer Corps, Scouts, National Cadet Corps and Territorial Army etc. were requisitioned and utilised to suppress and break the strike. The rival organisations in the Railways under the aegis of the Indian National Trade Union Congress actively helped the Administration and the government in propagating against the strike, recruiting industrial black legs, acting as spy in submitting lists of railwaymen for the

purpose of arrests and intimidation and accompanying police in spotting them out and identifying them. Goondas and unruly elements armed with deadly weapons were hired by the National Congress Party and they were encouraged to threaten railwaymen in the colony and their quarters with dire consequence if they joined strike. The National Congress held public meetings in most of the places and incited the public by pointing out the strikers as traitors to country and urging them to deal with the strikers suitably. All sorts of passion and feelings including provincial and communal were left loose and encouraged by the ruling party to cope with the peaceful and non-violent strikers. In addition to terrorising the peaceful railwaymen in very many places the womenfolk and family members of the strikers were turned out of Railway colony and quarters and their personal belongings were thrown out. Arrested persons were tied with rope in their waists and hand-cuffed and were paraded through public places and Railway areas with a view to break the morale of the strikers. In very many places police resorted to tear gas and baton charges on the peaceful strikers and firing at Dohad on the Western Railway resulting death of 5 workers. In addition to banning of assembly of more than five persons (Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code) Curfew orders were also imposed in certain places. There were indiscriminate arrests of Trade union leaders and strikers and in their quest to find out the listed men for arrest, the doors of the houses and quarters were broken in many places and family members were assaulted

The All India Radio which is controlled by the Government, deliberately

catered incorrect and mutilated reports and resorted to false propaganda about the strike. By provisions of the Ordinance an overall ban was imposed on the newspapers preventing them to publish such news that are in favour of the strike. The trade unions and their leaders were much handicapped by these restrictions imposed on the newspapers. In addition, the news about the strike were scooped in such a manner that one State could not get information and position of strike in other States and no newspaper could publish all-India picture of strike situation during the strike period. The government Press communique that were issued during the period were misleading and incorrect.

In all the Railway colonies announcements with the help of microphones were made during the strike period covering false report of failure of strike in other places and urging upon the strikers to join duty failing which they would be treated as dismissed from service. Further to these, orders of suspension and/ or dismissal from service were served on thousands of railwaymen during the strike period and such orders were exhibited in public places and widely published in the newspapers. In brief, the Government adopted all methods, lawful and unlawful, to terrorise and demoralise the employees and thus break the strike. In spite of all these, in the Railways alone about 50 per cent out of a million of railwaymen participated in the strike and on the Eastern Railway the participation was about 1,20,000 out of a total employees of 1,70,000.

Withdrawal of Strike :

The strike was withdrawn unconditionally in the night of 16th July

'60 and the decision was broadcast by the All India Radio same night and published in the newspapers next morning. The decision was taken by- as the resolution for withdrawal reads- "The members of the Joint Council of Action of Central Govt. Employees who are free and available in Delhi along with other representatives of the Unions taking part in the strike."

A careful reading of (i) the report of the meeting of 16th July 60 submitted before the Joint Council of Action by Sri D. S. Rajaratnam General Secretary of the Con-federation of Central Government Employees who assumed to the position of Secretary of the Joint Council of Action after arrest of Sri Peter Alvares together with (ii) his circular letter, dated 18th July '60 and the resolution adopted on 16th (annexed to this report), will explain the reasons and back-ground of the unconditional withdrawal if not to the full extent, to certain extent atleast. It will be seen that out of 17 persons who took the decision of withdrawal 5 were members of the Joint Council of Action (viz. Sarvasree S. Guruswami, A.I.R.F., Chandra Sekhar, N.F.P.T.E., D.G. Srivastava, A.I.D.E.F., D.S. Rajaraatnam and K. M. Nair, Con-Federation of C.G.E.) and most of the Unions to which these persons and the other 12 initially belonged either did not strike or had already withdrawn the strike. Sri Guruswami who presided over the meeting on 16th July 60 and carried on negotiations with the authorities of the Govt. and certain Cabinet Ministers from 14th July '60 did neither attend any of the subsequent meetings of the Joint council of Action and all India Railwaymen's Federation nor made any statement clarifying the issue of

withdrawal. Our President Sri Rajendra Singh M. P. who was present in the meeting of 16th had to contradict certain statements and reports of Sri D. S. Rajaratnam and others in the subsequent meeting of the Joint Council of Action held in Delhi on 28th, 29th and 30th July'60 to ratify the decision of withdrawal of strike on the 16th.

Resolution adopted by the Joint Council of Action and associated organisations at its meeting held on Saturday the 16th July 1960 from 8.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. together with the report of the said meeting and the resolution of the Joint Council of Action on 28th 29th and 30th July 1960 are appended below : -

Resolution

"The members of the Joint Council of Action of Central Government Employees who are free and available in Delhi along with other representatives of the Unions taking part in the strike met to take stock of the Strike situation.

"This meeting pays its respectful homage to the martyrs who lost their lives in the course of the present struggle.

"This meeting warmly congratulate the lakhs of Central Govt. employees in all its departments who have responded to the call of the organisations and braved unprecedented hardships and risks.

"This Joint Council of Action explored every possible avenue for an honourable settlement to avert the strike but the Government instead of treating the struggle as a bonafide trade dispute replied by repression by enactment of an Ordinance and arrest of more than 15,000 persons so far. The Government has used its coersive apparatus to suppress the

strike instead of settling it by normal trade Union methods. The entire propaganda machinery of the Government including its Radio and the Press amenable to its influence have been placed into service to suppress the truth about the strike to demoralise the striking employees and to mislead the public. Notices of suspension and termination of services have been served on tens of thousands of employees to intimidate them into abject submission. Even the attempt to contact the leaders in prison have been rendered impossible by the refusal of the request of Shri Guruswami to interview some of the members in jail.

"After a careful appraisal of the situation throughout the country this meeting resolves to withdraw the strike immediately and calls upon the participant organisations to act accordingly. It is hoped that the Government will reciprocate this gesture appropriately.

"This meeting urges upon the Government to ensure honourable resumption of duties by the strikers without any disability by giving necessary instructions including withdrawal of pending cases, prosecutions, remission on sentences, release of those arrested in connection with the strike, cancellation of discharge and suspension orders and any other disciplinary proceedings against strikers including members of territorial Units.

"This meeting tenders its grateful thanks to the millions of workers the general public and those sections of the press throughout the country who have demonstrated their sympathy and support to the cause of the Central Govt. employees. It expresses in particular its

appreciation of those workers who went on sympathetic strike on the 14th July in support of the demands of the employees, on the advice of the Central Trade Union organisations.

"This meeting hopes that the grave decision hereby taken without any sense of false prestige will lead to improved relations between the Central Government, its employees and their organisations and adequate consideration of their demands.

This meeting appeals to Central Government employees to maintain and to promote its fraternal solidarity on which alone future success can be ensured."

Report of the meeting of 16th July
1960

The following members of the Joint Council of Action of the Central Government Employees who were first and available in Delhi along with other representatives of the Unions taking part in the strike met to take stock of the strike situation.

- *1. Shri S. Guruswami)
2. " Rajendra Singh)
3. " R. P. Chatterjee)
4. " N. S. Bhatia)
5. " B. R. Bamotra)
- *6. " Chandrasekhar)
7. " D. G. Namotker)
8. " G. D. Jhingan)
9. " V. S. Menon)
10. " P. G. Manjarekar)
- *11. " K. M. Nair)
12. " K. R. S. Nair)

All India
men's
National
of P.G.
Con-
Central
Employees

13. " K. Anandan Nambiar) Southern Railway Labour Union.
- *14. Sri K. G. Shrivastava All India Defence Employees Federation.
15. " Rajani Mukherjee P & T Industrial Workers Union, Calcutta
16. " K. Ramanujam) Con-federation of Central Govt. Employees.

*17. " D. S. Rajaratna,)

*Are members of the Joint Council of Action N. B. Items 10, 11, & 12 are members of the local Joint council of Action, Bombay.

S. Guruswami was in the chair. He gave a brief account of the general strike during the preceding days at various centres. He said that the response to the call of the J. C. A. was splendid and according to his estimate nearly 50% of the employees struck work. Of these nearly 14,000 men were arrested and many more were either suspended or discharged. In the firing at Dohad nearly 7 persons were killed. He took the sense of the house whether the strike should be withdrawn or not unconditionally. The house unanimously agreed to unconditionally withdraw the strike immediately and advised the constituent units to do likewise. Shri S. Gurusami wanted a proper resolution to be framed and gave a brief account of his efforts to get an assurance from the Union Government of no-victimisation in case the strike was withdrawn. He stated that his efforts in this direction were fruitless.

Shri Guruswami gave a frame-work of the resolution and the main points to be included in the resolution. Other members including M/s. K. G. Shrivastava, Rajendra Singh, Rajani Mukherjee, V. S. Menon

and Rajaratnam suggested **some points to be included in the resolution. Thereafter the following resolution was framed and adopted unanimously. The meeting was then adjourned till 10-30 a.m. of the next day.**

In the adjourned meeting of the 17th July 1960, the following decisions were taken :

(1) Members of J. C. A. who are at Delhi, along with influential person should meet the Minister for Home Affairs to seek withdrawal of court cases, release of prisoners, etc. At state levels the Chief Ministers or Home Ministers should be approached through influential persons for the same purpose.

(2) Respective Cabinet Ministers should be approached by organisations to seek withdrawal of suspension and discharge orders, disciplinary proceedings, etc.

(3) Where strikers are being prosecuted for alleged acts of sabotage, etc. best legal defence at the lowest court should be arranged by the respective organisations.

(4) Participant organisations should furnish full details of strike, viz. staff strength, number of persons who struck work, number of arrests, discharge, suspensions, etc.

(5) Reports about behaviour of officers after withdrawal of strike should be sent to C. A.

Sd/-D. S. Rajaratnam

Resolution of the Joint Council of Action in its meeting held in Delhi on the 29th & 30th July, 1960

"This meeting of the Joint Council of Action ratifies the decision taken on the 16th July 1960 by the members of the Joint

Council of Action and representatives of various Central government Employees' Unions who were free and available at Delhi.

"The council is satisfied that the decision was taken according to the best judgement and independently of any pressure from any source. The council wants to make it clear that both the decisions to go on strike and to call it off were taken with the sole object of furthering the interest of the employees. It is unfortunate that propaganda campaign is carried by interested circles with a view to giving a political colouring to a basically trade-unions dispute.

"This council places on record its deep sense of pride in the courage, discipline and unity displayed by the employees in the face of extreme provocation and wanton repression.

"In their zeal to crush the strike the Government showed little respect to either for the sanctity of the Constitution or the dignity of the individual. Mass arrests, indiscriminate lathi charges, police firings, beatings and assaults, turning out the employees and their families from quarter, calculated disrespect to the womenfolk of the employees, the treatment meted out to the members of territorial army - these and other similar acts of intimidation are offences too serious to be justified on the pretext of a national emergency which was neither proclaimed nor existed as a matter of fact. The morale of the employees was sought to be undermined by tendentious propaganda. The massive machinery of propaganda was marshalled against the employees with a view to distorting the facts and discrediting the strike as anti-national. Public sentiments

were attempted to be roused by characterising the legitimate economic demands as a deliberate attempt to upset national economy and subvert civil power.

"In spite of these heavy odds the majority of the Central Government employees responded to the strike call and remained peaceful and non-violent throughout the strike period. Their sacrifice, heroism and solidarity have added a glorious chapter to the history of the trade union movement of the country. The struggle of the Government employees has strengthened the foundation of democracy.

"The council pays its grateful homage to those who lost their lives in the course of the strike. The Council humbly acknowledges its gratitude to the public for its sympathy and support when the extension of either was liable to invite the wrath of the authorities. The council expresses its fraternal thanks to the central Trade Union organisations which supported the cause of the Central Government employees and stood by them in the hour of their trial. The council thanks those individuals who rendered great services in defending the interest of the employees.

"The council has viewed with growing concern the general attitude Government have adopted towards employees who went on strike. It was expected that in view of the withdrawal of the strike, employees would be allowed to resume their duties and normalcy would soon be restored. More than 16000 employees were placed under arrest and about 30,000 placed under suspension. A large number of employees have been convicted, dismissed and discharged for participation in the strike. Those who joined duty even

are often made to undergo great humiliation. The Government have withdrawn recognition of Unions with long record of service and representative of vast majority of employees. But far more reprehensible and harmful to the cause of the employees and the trade union movements the proposed banning of all strikes by government employees. All these measures run counter to the assurances given both by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. These measures if persisted in will inevitably lead to the creation of an atmosphere of antagonism and bitterness affecting the efficiency of the services. The J. C. A. therefore urges the Government to take back all employees including convicted in connection with the strike. The relaxations announced by Government so far are, in the opinion of the J. C. A. , very inadequate.

"The Council feels that its principal effort should be directed to obtain :-

- (1) the release of the employees who are in custody;
- (2) the withdrawal of prosecution for participation or other association with the strike;
- (3) the dropping of departmental proceedings against the employees who went on strike;
- (4) the remission of sentences on employees convicted for offences in connection with the strike;
- (5) the reinstatement of the employees under suspension or dismissed from service;
- (6) the quashing of the proceedings under the Army Act against employees who were members of the territorial Army;

(7) Restoration of recognition, withdrawn from Unions and Associations".

The unconditional withdrawal of strike without even obtaining an assurance of no victimisation had caused confusion and resentment amongst the larger section of the workers. Different interested political and non-political elements resorted to mutual recriminations and vilifications with motives and various rumours were spread immediately after the withdrawal of strike to misguide all concerned about the facts of withdrawal. A section of the interested elements attempted to throw the responsibility on Sri Asoke Mehata, Chairman of the Proja Socialist Party either to shirk their own responsibility or to hide their misdeeds and cowardly actions. It was none of my concern or that of our Union to enter into a political controversy or otherwise and hold brief for anybody but it is necessary for the railwaymen to know the facts about the withdrawal of strike.

Unfortunately ever since the strike decision was taken and notice was served though the responsibility of the negotiations with the authorities of the Govt. rested officially on the Standing committee of the Joint Council of Action, many persons and political leaders outside the Standing Committee of the Joint Council of Action voluntarily assumed the responsibility of negotiations. It is unfortunate that some of the constituent units of the Joint Council of Action resorted to unilateral negotiations. The leadership of the Joint Council of Action was not strong enough to check them and left the matters more or less to take its own course. Sri D. S. Rajaratnam, General

Secretary of the Con-federation of the Central Govt. Employees although was present in the meeting of the Standing Committee held on 10th July'60 advocated strongly for a strike, left for Bombay on the morning of 12th July'60 to convince Sri Peter Alvares and others about the imperative necessity of withdrawing the strike and failing in his attempt came back to Delhi to convince others and pursue the negotiation with the authorities of the Govt. through available sources. Sri K. Ananda Nambiar of Southern Railway Labour Union which was admitted in the local council of Action as a member, arrived in Delhi on 13th July'60 and met some Cabinet Ministers of his own for a negotiated settlement of the strike. Sri P. Ramamurthi, a member of Rajya Sabha also continued his efforts with the Cabinet Ministers from 12th July'60 for a settlement of his own. Sri K. G. Srivastava, Vice-President of the All India Defence Employees Federation and member of the Joint Council of Action was all through present in Delhi and joined in the efforts of Sri Nambiar and Sri Ramamurthi, Sri P. S. R. Anjaneyulu, Secretary General of N. F. P. T. E. addressed a letter to the Prime Minister from Delhi Jail expressing his anxiety over the situation and seeking his intervention for a settlement. Sri S. Guruswami, President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and a member of the Joint Council of Action arrived in Delhi from Madras on pressure from different sources and started meeting the Cabinet Ministers and other authorities from 14th July'60 for withdrawal of strike on the assurance of 'no victimisation'. All these gentlemen along with available members of the J. C. A. and local office-

bearers of different constituent units conferred informally from time to time. Since there was no strike in Delhi and the persons present were alarmed over the situation in other places (wherefrom pressures for withdrawal were there), their efforts were diverted for withdrawal of the strike from the very beginning. Sri Rajendra Singh, M. P., our President who met Sri Guruswami and others of his own, opposed the manner of negotiations and pleaded against a hasty and unconditional withdrawal. The authorities of the Govt. treated this anxiety on the part of the leaders as weakness and they made their stand rigid and were not prepared to give the assurance of no victimisation even. A frantic call was sent to Sri Asoke Mehata in the evening of 15th July'60 by those who were present in Delhi to come to Delhi immediately with the hope that he would be able to exercise his good offices upon the Prime Minister and other Cabinet Ministers in favour of an honourable withdrawal. Accordingly Sri Asoke Mehata arrived in Delhi on 16th July'60 and after listening to the persons present viz. Sarvasree S. Guruswami, D. S. Rajaratnam, K. G. Srivastava, Chandrashekhar, Rajendra Singh, K. A. Nambiar etc. advised them to consult the leaders of the Standing committee particularly in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi (who were under prison bars) before taking any decision. On being asked about his personal opinion for withdrawal of strike, he categorically stated that the Joint Council of Action should take its own decision in the matter without any influence from any source. On the request of Sri Guruswami (who was anxious to obtain support of the major political parties of the country

particularly of Communist and Proja socialist parties to the decision that might be taken by the J. C. A.) Sri Asoke Mehata agreed to issue a statement supporting the decision of the Joint council of Action. Sri Asoke Mehata was further requested to know the mind of the Prime Minister about the strike and strikers and use his good offices on the Prime Minister for a settlement of the strike on assurance of 'no victimisation of workers'.

In the meanwhile the members of the local council of action at Bombay belonging to National Federation of P&T Employees and Con-Federation of Central Govt. employees having taken the decision of withdrawal of strike on the 15th July'60 arrived in Delhi on the 16th to convince others to follow the same course on an all-India basis. Although it was decided in the morning of 16th July to consult the leaders of the Joint council of Action under prison bars in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta before taking a decision and as a matter of fact Air Passages were booked for the purpose, the said course was abandoned by the aforesaid persons on the ground that the situation was so grave that the decision could not be delayed even by a day. Our President Sri Rajendra Singh however was not consulted about this change in decision.

The members present then met in the evening in the office of the N. F. P. T. E. at 9, Pussa Road, Delhi and decided an unconditional withdrawal of the strike on an all-India basis of their own. The tragic aspect was that when Sri Asoke Mehata was conferring with the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister was already aware that the Joint council of Action had decided to withdraw the strike unconditionally. In spite of this, keeping

to his assurance, Sri Ashoke Mehata issued a statement supporting the withdrawal of strike same night which was published in Press on the 17th morning. Following Sri Mehta's statement Sri S. A. Dange also issued a statement supporting the withdrawal which was published in Press on 19th July '60. Sri Dange also conveyed his congratulations to Sri Guruswami on the decision of the Joint Council of Action to withdraw the strike and on employees' heroic conduct of the strike.

The Joint council of Action in its subsequent meeting held in Delhi on 28th, 29th and 30th July'60 to ratify the decision taken by 5 of its members on 16th discussed the facts leading to withdrawal of strike and acknowledged that the decision was taken according to the best judgement of the persons present and independently of any pressure from any source. It also expressed its regret that it is unfortunate that a propaganda campaign is carried by interested circles with a view to give a 'political colouring to a basically trade union dispute'. A reading of the minutes of meeting of the Joint council of Action held on 28th, 29th and 30th July'60 will depict a clear picture about the withdrawal of strike and remove much of the confusion in this regard.

In due regard to the decision of the 16th July'60 the Eastern Railwaymen's Union withdrew the strike notice on 17th.

Some of the weaknesses and experiences of the strike :

It is wrong to say that there was difference of opinion amongst the employees over the question of strike and that is why quite a substantial number did not join. Overwhelming majority of

railwaymen who voted in favour of strike were serious and sincere about it. Yet the strike was not uniform and to the expectations. The reasons may be summarised briefly as follows :

(a) The workers and their organisations could not expect of the Govt. taking so much of oppressive measures to break a peaceful strike.

(b) The representatives of labour depended much on the good sense of the Government and expected a settlement even upto the last moment.

(c) The leaders of the Joint Council of Action and its constituent units hoped for a compromise and as such did not make preparation for the strike seriously.

(d) The Joint council of Action became a source of weakness instead of strength as because different constituent units expected that others would make up their deficiency in preparation for the strike. The dependence was more on the railwaymen.

(e) Unfortunately most of the members of the Joint council of Action or Standing Committee were not frank about their preparation and gave incorrect picture presumably on the assumption that strike would not be there and as such they should not reveal their weaknesses. Even on the 10th July of 1960 in the meeting of the Standing Committee reports about preparations had proved to be incorrect to the expressions of the resolution i. e. - "The Committee heard the latest reports about the preparedness for the strike over different centres and felt satisfied that inspite of promulgation of the Ordinance the morale and determination of the employees remained unaffected".

(f) The Radio Broadcast of the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to the nation and promulgation of the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance had effects on the public as well as on some sections of employees.

(g) The negotiations were carried in such a manner and their publicity in the press had led to an impression amongst the employees that most of the demands were given up and the fight was for grant of Dearness Allowance and that also to the extent of a very meagre amount. The workers thus had doubt about the seriousness of the strike.

(h) Withdrawal of strike notice by a large number of Unions (both affiliates and non-affiliates of different constituent units of the J. C. A.) before and during the strike and their publication in the press had effects on the workers.

(i) The Joint council of Action and its different constituent units particularly the All India Railwaymen's Federation lacked in financial resources necessary for such a big struggle. It had also no permanent office equipments.

(j) Various false propaganda was made by the Govt. through its newspapers about the struggle of the workers.

(k) Wrong impressions were created by the ruling party amongst the public in some places to raise their passions against the employees and led to absence of public sympathy in the States.

It was hoped that both the Government and the workers organisations would take lessons for the future.

Victimisation of the striking employees:

Since the strike was withdrawn unconditionally it was expected that the Government would adopt liberal attitude towards the employees and unless there were proved cases of violence or sabotage nobody would be punished. To the credit of the employees the strike was absolutely peaceful and there had been no case of violence or sabotage worth-mentioning anywhere in India, and Eastern Railway in particular. The attempt of the Government and particularly the Railway Ministry to treat a few cases of dropping of fire of the engines as sabotage also failed since such dropping of fire was for the safety of the engines. Contrary to the expectations, a series of punishments were inflicted on the employees on charges of mere participation in Strike and in most cases without holding any enquiry in the matter and allowing reasonable opportunity of defence.

The striking employees had lost their wages for the period of strike. Subsistence allowance drawn by the employees under suspension during the suspension period was recovered from their salary after they were allowed to join duty treating the period of suspension as leave without pay. Punishments of reversion to a lower post, stoppage of increments for long periods with cumulative effect, forfeiture of privileges, transfers from one station to another in remote places, etc. were too frequent. In spite of Govt's assurance that nobody would be suspended or penalised only for joining the strike, thousands have been taken up for participation in the strike, declared illegal under Essential Service Maintenance Ordinance, 1960 and penalised. All the employees who were absent during the strike period were

treated as new entrants and the benefits of earlier services in regard to leave, Passes, Provident Fund, Pension, gratuity etc. were forfeited which however had been restored subsequently. A reign of terror prevailed in almost all the departments of the Govt. of India and particularly in the Railways and under pain of severe penalties employees were forced to work extra hours to complete the quantum of work allotted to them whimsically.

Problems faced by the Eastern Railwaymen's Union :

Immediately after the withdrawal of strike the Union was faced with problems unprecedented in its history. Many of its important workers were under prison bars, most of the temporary employees stood discharged, large number of permanent employees were arrested and were discharged. A showcause notice was served on the Union proposing withdrawal of its recognition. The recognition of the All India Railwaymen's Federation was withdrawn and there were threats from all quarters of the Administration and the Government to break the morale of the railwaymen and the Union workers and humiliating and whimsical treatment were meted out to the employees and particularly to the Union workers during the duty hours. According to the calculation of the Union about 20,000 temporary employees were served with notice of termination of service which however was subsequently withdrawn, altogether 2,706 employees were arrested and sent to prison, 1,458 were detained under preventive custody and 33 employees were arrested on summary trial just after the strike. They lost their jobs. Further, 4,132 permanent

employees were placed under suspension and about 1,10,000 suffered the consequence of break in service that followed as a result of strike.

The biggest problem for the Union was to arrange for the bail of the employees who were under prison bar. Fantastic bailable amounts ranging upto Rs.25,000/- in some cases were demanded particularly in the State of Bihar with the result that a large number of employees had to remain in jail custody for long periods. The problem of convicted employees who had lost their jobs was no less. In addition, large number of chargesheets against the employees particularly who were under suspension started pouring in necessitating arrangement of proper defence in the departmental proceedings. The union had a very tough time. On the one hand the Union workers had to approach the railwaymen with begging bowls for contribution to defend their co-workers in the court of law and on the other hand to make untiring efforts to save their colleagues from the wrath of the Administration in the departmental proceedings simultaneously keeping the normal organisational activities going on. They were also to save the recognition of the Union.

Through the grace of Almighty the position gradually eased. Police failed to substantiate their charges against our workers before the court of law in whatever case they tried. The Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance ceased to operate at the expiry of its life on the midnight of 18th Sept.'60. With the lapse of the Ordinance the cases that were pending under its different Section automatically fell through and quite a

large number of cases thereby were dropped and the cases other than under the charge of the Ordinance were left to be dealt with. The convicted employees also came back to their services on appeal to the higher court on retrial. Due to able and efficient guidance in the matter of departmental proceedings in almost all the cases the charges could not be proved and removal or dismissal could not be effected, although due to vindictive attitude on the part of the Administration most of them suffered punishments of stoppage of increments with or without loss of seniority, reversion, stoppage of promotion, censure, warning, etc. The order of break in service was also withdrawn by the Rly. Ministry subsequently on 16th Nov. '60. The untiring efforts of a few friends of the workers in the Parliament and in the gradual softening the attitude of the Government with the change in their policy also helped the situation. Although the attitude in the cabinet and at the ministerial level was softened, it was a matter of great regret that the local Administration continued its policy of vindictiveness with a prejudicial outlook for a considerable time and pursued the same against certain picked up workers. Sarvasree S. K. Upadhyaya & R. K. Singh President and Vice-President of Moghalsarai Branch of the Union had been removed from service after the union on an old charge of 1956. An Apprentice of Moghalsarai Loco Shed also was removed. Series of transfers of Union workers continued.

I will be failing in my duty and will not be correct in my statement if I do not acknowledge the help, assistance and sympathetic consideration that I received

for my Union from Sri Asoke Mehata, Sri Nath Pai, late Sri Feroze Gandhi and the members of the Rly. Board and its Chairman who had ungrudgingly listened to our problems, sympathised with the sufferings of the workers and extended their helping hands to the extent possible.

I will also be failing in my duty if I do not mention the help we received from Dr. B. C. Roy and Srikishna Sinha, Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Bihar. I met both of them and pleaded for withdrawal of the police cases against those at least for those who were not accused of violence or sabotage. I was also able to convince them that excepting those involved in Police cases on serious criminal charges, the rest should be taken back to duty and proceeded with departmentally for any dereliction thus avoiding the pressure of unemployment in the state. Both the governments set up Special Cell for dealing with the issue of unemployment and other matters connected with strike. I met these two Chief Ministers a number of times and the Chief Minister Uttar Pradesh once. Dr. B. C. Roy entrusted this task to S. N. Roy, retired Chief Secretary who was maintaining regular liaison with the Eastern and South Eastern Railways and I was permitted to see him as and when necessary to narrate the position.

I used to refer the Police cases pending and also the cases of departmental suspension etc. even after withdrawal of police cases.

I cannot but help mentioning an incident of threat of arrest of General Managers of Eastern and South Eastern Railways M. M. Khan and S. N. Wadhwa. The news spread like a wild fire. Rajani Mukherjee a member of the Joint Council

of Action who was with Dr. B. C. Roy at the material time came to our Union Office to tell the story. Dr. B. C. Roy was not satisfied with certain matters and wanted the General Managers to explain the same. For the purpose they were asked to meet him. The General Managers ignored these orders on the misunderstanding that they were answerable to Central Government and Railway Ministry only and need not explain matters to the Chief Minister of the State. Dr. B. C. Roy told Mr. Kalipada Mukherjee, the then Home Minister, West Bengal who in turn asked for warrant of arrest if necessary for immediate presence of the General Managers before the Chief Minister. The Home Minister also wanted to know if the orders were being complied with immediately. The orders were obeyed and many saw the General Manager Eastern Railway being escorted by the Deputy Commissioner of Police from the Railway building to the Chief Minister's Office which was at a stone's throw from Eastern Railway HQRs. After this the attitude of the Railway Administration considerably softened.

Allegations of political motive behind the strike :

It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister and the Government made allegations that the strike was a political move to subvert the existing civil service. Speeches that were made by a few political leaders from the trade union movement supporting the demands of the Government employees were taken in full capacity as trade unionists and not as members of their association with one or more trade union organisation in the country.

neither any political party approached the joint council of Action of the Central Government employees with the proposal to overthrow the Government nor the Joint council of Action approached any political party with any such proposal. If some political party or parties at any stage have tried to make a political capital of the historic struggle of the Central Govt. employees and tried to belittle and spite the other, certainly the employees cannot be blamed for that or their decision for an united struggle cannot be condemned.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation and the Eastern Railwaymen's Union cannot help but feeling that the Government deliberately attributed political motives behind the strike and dubbed it as a 'civil rebellion' only to cover up their unjustified actions to break the strike by extra-ordinary methods and their failures to bring a settlement. In none of the letters from the Prime Minister to the Joint council of Action political motive was attributed or the expressions 'civil rebellion' 'trial of strength', etc. were used. To the knowledge of the Federation and the Union the Prime Minister levelled these allegations for the first time on the 9th July '60 in the meeting of the congress Parliamentary Party after the promulgation of the Ordinance and obviously with political object. From the statement made in the Parliament by the Prime Minister it will be seen that he amended the allegations to the extent that "every general strike is a political strike and no general strike can be a general strike without being a political strike and without having far reaching political consequence apart from economic consequences.....". In the said statement of the Prime Minister itself the answer to

the question whether there was any political motive to subvert the civil power was there or not can be obtained.

I would like to make it clear that the demands of the workers were purely economic and to seek justice to their demands they proceeded according to the law of the land and no political motive can be imputed to it. They had surely no intention to have a trial of strength with the government from whom they were to secure justice to their demands. Further if dispassionately analysed, each and every demand or struggle of the workers whether of Government Department or of Private Sector is bound to have political and economic consequences in the developmental planning of the country.

I would however like to submit that with the independence of the country and after the creation of the Indian National Trade Union Congress as an appendage to the National Congress Party, there is hardly any trade union in the country whose leaders are not connected with one or the other political parties. The few trade unions that still now exist which are free from the influence of political parties are dying out due to the Government policy of boosting up the INTUC. This policy of the Government is responsible for political competition, capturing the labour field, industrial unrest, loss of production etc. The course for industrial peace and prosperity for all concerned is to have one Union in an industry or profession through periodical referendum of the employees and create conditions for the employees to run their trade unions in exclusion of non-employees without any fear of victimisation and harassment.

Reaction amongst labour :

It was not known if the Government had cared to find out the reactions of the employees. The employees had lost their faith and regard on the labour policy of the Government and its assurances. The sanctity of the existing labour legislation was lost. In addition, the fear complex that was being created in the minds of the employees due to the repression, victimisation and harassment that were going on, was sure to affect the efficiency of the services.

Repercussions of the Government's action on the Industrial Concerns of the Private Sector :

It would be interesting to note the repercussions on the industries of private sector about the Government's labour policy and policy of industrial relations. The following statement of Sir Biren Mukherjee, Chairman of the Indian Iron & Steel Co, Ltd., who was considered as one of the chief spokesmen of the industrialists in the country, which had been published in the Statesman (Calcutta Edition) on 21.11.60 was sufficient to understand whither the wind was blowing:-

"The strike of Government employees has given an illuminating indication of the difference between the policy of the Government in respect to the handling of a strike and its treatment of its own employees and its policy in relation to strikes in the private sector. The dismissal of many of its employees, the disciplinary action of various kinds against others and even imprisonment under the Preventive Detention Act were perhaps very necessary, and it is not my purpose to call Government's action in question for all

strikes are anti-social in their effect and cannot be taken as a matter of course whatever justification there might be from the employee's point of view. The point I wish to make however is that no employer in the private sector is allowed in self-defence to adopt any of these or similar courses but is obliged to stand the consequences of a strike with all that these entail".

The Railwaymen do not want any superior treatment to that of their industrial fellow workers in the private sector. They want the inferior treatment to be removed and they should be put at par.

Support for the cause and sympathy for the striking employees :

All the Trade Union organisations in India excepting those under aegis of the Indian National Trade Union Congress supported the demand of the workers and sympathised with their struggle. The Railwaymen and other Central Government employees will remember with gratitude their help and assistance in calling a day's strike all over India on the 14th July'60 in support of the movement.

Trade union in almost all the countries of the world adopted resolution and issued statement in support of our demands and criticised the oppressive measures adopted by the Government of India in suppressing a peaceful, legitimate strike. International Transport Federation to which the All India Railwaymen's Federation is affiliated sent a delegation to India headed by its General Secretary Mr. Peter Devries to study the situation. Eastern Railwaymen's Union had the privilege of an exclusive discussion with

this delegation on 17th October 1960 and explained in full details the matters relating to strike. The International Transport Federation also handed over a token assistance to Sri Peter Alvares, General Secretary, A. I. R. F. for relief to the suffering employees. The two World Trade Union Organisations, I. C. F. T. U. and W. F. T. U. also supported the cause and sympathised with our sufferings. Thanks to Sri M. S. Hoda our ex. Vice-President who had played a great part in placing the correct picture of our struggle before the Trade Union Organisations in European countries and successfully counter-acting the dirty and nefarious game of the I. N. T. U. C. in trying to mislead them. Needless to mention that I supplied the requisite materials to Hoda.

A great resentment also prevailed amongst the striking Railwaymen on the Eastern Railway against abrupt and unconditional withdrawal of strike when the strike was on with full vigour showing no sign of melting. The strike in coalfield area of Eastern Railway was so great and successful under the able leadership of N. M. Chowbey that the country had started facing shortage of coal and the Government would have yielded and compromised with the workers had the strike been allowed to continue for another couple of days. The Railwaymen blamed the leadership responsible for this blunder of withdrawal of strike.

Immediately after the withdrawal of strike political manoeuvring between the Communist Party and Praja Socialist Party followed. S. A. Dange's concern was to save his party workers from the possible victimisation and his directive before strike

was not to involve or expose them much. The role of the communists during the strike was not liked by the striking workers and they were placed in a disadvantageous position which they wanted to overcome. The withdrawal of strike and involvement of Asoke Mehta's name with it gave the communists a chance to vilify Mehta and Praja Socialist Party. This created confusion amongst the non-political section of the Eastern Railwaymen. Confusions further followed about the role of S. Guruswami, Baswan Singh, Rajendra Singh and Peter Alvares in the strike. S. Guruswami was also President of the newly formed Southern Railway Union after T. V. Anandam had left AIRF to join N.F.I.R. He instead of staying with the workers, was in Delhi during the strike with the hope to negotiate a settlement. Baswan Singh was the President of the N. E. Railway, Mazdoor Union. He instead of being at Gorakhpur or any station of N. E. Railway, was in Delhi when the strike started in the mid-night of 11th July 1960 and travelled from Delhi to Patna by train thereafter. Rajendra Singh President of the Eastern Railwaymen's union was given an assignment by the Central Council to stay at Moghalsarai from start to finish of the strike but he was in Delhi during the period. Peter Alvares was the President of the Central Railway Union and V. R. Malgi was the General Secretary. Excepting Bombay Division there was practically no strike on the Central Railway and whatever strike was there in Bombay Division was due to V. R. Malgi. Even in Bombay proper suburban trains had to be forcibly stopped by George Fernandez to inspire Railwaymen. Peter Alvares saved his face by getting arrested.

Has the strike failed ?

In spite of weaknesses and defects of the movement and struggle neither the strike nor its objects have failed. If the National movement for political freedom and independence of the country have not failed to achieve its objectives, the movement of the employees for economic freedom cannot also fail. None of the National movements was perfect compared to that of ours participated by a larger number. If a section of Central Govt. employees only participated in the strike as claimed by the Govt. the country has achieved independence at the sacrifice of a section of people or of an insignificant percentage compared to the population of the country. If the larger sections of the people had sympathy for the National movement, still larger number of the Central Govt. employees though could not participate in the strike, had similar sympathy. We have not lost anything but gained much. The fear complex about a strike and struggle is gone, consciousness amongst the employees has increased and love for the Union has deepened. We have been able to draw the attention and sympathy of all concerned including the workers of foreign countries to our problems. By our peaceful behaviour in the strike we have set an example which even the National movement of 1942 failed to do. We have given an exhibition of patriotism and loyalty to our country amidst provocations inside and outside. We have caused our Government to think for holding the price line and give better treatment for us. We have learnt lessons and so the Government. These are no meagre achievements.

Recognition of the Union and the Federation :

The General Secretary of the Union was served with the following show cause notice, dated 22nd July 1960 by Sri M. M. Khan, General Manager, Eastern Railway for withdrawal of recognition of the Union:

"In terms of para 1 of the Rules of the Recognition of Associations of Non-gazetted Railway Servants, in part B of Appendix XIII of the Establishment Code, Volume I (1951 Edition), you are hereby given 7 (seven) days' time from date to show cause why the recognition granted to your Trade Union via the Eastern Railwaymen's union under letter No-PC-137/2 dated 10.8.59 should not be withdrawn for the following reasons :

(1) The Eastern Railwaymen's Union has actively associated itself with the strike declared illegal under the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance, 1960.

(2) Organising, conducting and directing the strike declared illegal under the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance, 1960.

(3) Instigating your members and inciting other railway employees to take part in, to go or remain in, or otherwise act in furtherance of the strike which has been declared illegal by the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance, 1960.

(4) Knowingly collecting money in furtherance of and in support of the strike, which has been declared illegal.

under the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance, 1960.

(5) Inciting Railway employees to indulge in serious misconduct, unauthorised absence, intimidation of loyal workers, disobedience of lawful orders, obstructing the Railway track and picketing and shouting of abusive slogans".

The Union demanded the basis of the charges as well as a categorical statement as to what terms of recognition had been violated by it, to which no satisfactory reply was received. This show cause notice of the General Manager was considered as wrong and malafide and being aggrieved, the matter was moved before the Hon'ble Calcutta High Court on 27th July '60 ie, two days before the expiry of the time given by the General Manager. The Hon'ble High court was pleased to issue a rule and granted temporary injunction restraining the General Manager to act further in the matter. The Hon'ble High Court made this temporary injunction absolute on 10th August '60 till decision of the suit.

In spite of injunction of the Hon'ble High Court the Eastern Railway Administration was not prepared to have dealings with the Union and grant necessary facilities incumbent upon recognition. Even the facility of holding Central Council meeting to reply to the show cause notice given by the General Manager was not granted till such time the Hon'ble High Court was again moved and an order to the effect was obtained. On necessary facilities having been granted the Central Council meeting of

the Union was held on 8th October '60 considered the show cause notice and replied to the same. The injunction granted by the Hon'ble High Court Calcutta continued and the Union retained its recognition.

Along with the withdrawal of recognition of all Unions and Federations in the Central Govt. services on 29th July 1960 the recognition and facilities granted to the All India Railwaymen's Federation was also withdrawn.

A CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS OF RAILWAYMEN'S MOVEMENT ON SECOND PAY COMMISSION IS GIVEN BELOW :-

Govt's announcement in the Parliament for setting up a Pay Enquiry Commission ...	8. 8. 57
Withdrawal of strike notice by N. F. P. T. E. & others ...	8. 8. 57
A. I. R. F. convention at Poona disapproving Pay Commission, demanding Wage Board and deciding for a strike ...	13.11.57
Appointment of the Second Pay Commission under Finance Ministry's Notification ...	21.11.57
Strike Ballot on the Eastern & other Railways ...	25.11.57
Submission of Memorandum to the Pay Commission by the Eastern Railwaymen's Union ...	27.11.57

- A. I. R. F. National Council of Actions meeting at New Delhi deciding strike from 14. 12. 57 ... 12-13. 10. 57
- Discussions & negotiations on A. I. R. F. demands with the Railway Minister ... 19-22. 11. 57
- Joint meeting of A. I. R. F. and N. F. I. R. representatives with Railway Minister for amalgamation ... 19-20. 11. 57
- Discussion on A. I. R. F. demands with the Prime Minister ... 23. 11. 57
- A. I. R. F. National Council of Actions decision to defer Strike Notice in the light of assurances given by the Railway Minister & Prime Minister ... 23. 11. 57
- Submission of the Interim Report to the Govt. by the (Second) Pay Commission ... 14. 12. 57
- Submission of the full Report to the Govt. by the (Second) Pay Commission ... 24. 8. 57
- Statement by the Finance Minister in the Lok Sabha regarding the recommendations of the Second Pay Commission ... 30. 11. 59.
- Publication of the Second Pay Commission Report ... 1. 12. 59.
- A. I. R. F. Working Committee meeting in New Delhi ... 15-16. 12.59
- Central Council meeting of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union at Dinapore ... 30-31.12.59
- All India Railwaymen's Protest Day ... 15. 1. 60.
- A. I. R. F.'s letter to the Railway Minister ... 15. 1. 60
- Eastern Railwaymen's Protest week ... 1-7. 2. 60.
- March to Governor's House by Calcutta area Railwaymen to present appeal addressed to the President of India ... 5. 2. 60.
- A. I. R. F. Working Committee meeting in Delhi ... 21-23. 2. 60
- Discussion between A. I. R. F. and the Railway Board ... 22.2. 60.
- Letter from the Member Staff, Railway Board to the President, A. I. R. F. ... 22. 2. 60.
- A. I. R. F. General Council meeting in Delhi ... 22-24. 2. 60
- Preparation of an explanatory memorandum on the demands of A. I. R. F. General Council ... 5. 3. 60
- A. I. R. F.'s letter to the Prime Minister ... 5. 3. 60
- A. I. R. F.'s letter to the Railway Minister ... 7. 3. 60
- Prime Minister's reply to A. I. R. F. ... 8. 3. 60
- Preliminary meeting between representatives of All India Railwaymen's Federation, All India Defence Employees' Federation & Confederation of Central Govt. Employees & Workers(Including National

Federation of P&T Employees) in Bombay on the invitation of A. I. R. F. ...	9. 3. 60	wherein stand contrary to the decision of the Central Govt. employees in Bombay on 3. 4. 60 was taken ...	19-25. 4. 60
Railway Minister's letter in reply to A. I. R. F. ...	10.3. 60	Central Council meeting of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union ...	28-30. 4. 60
A. I. R. F.'s letter to the Railway Minister together with the explanatory memorandum on demands ...	16. 3. 60	Formation of a co-ordination committee (Local council of Action) at Calcutta ...	7. 5. 60
A. I R. F. Working Committee meeting in Bombay ...	2-3. 4. 60	A. I. R. F.'s memorandum to the Railway Board on recommendations of Pay Commission with reference to pay fixation ...	9. 5. 60
Meeting of representatives of All India Defence Employees' Federation, Confederation of Central Govt. employees and Workers, National Federation of P&T employees & All India Railwaymen's Federation in Bombay and formation of All India Joint council of Action of Central Govt. employees ...	2-3. 4. 60	A. I. R. F. Working Committee meeting in Delhi ...	14-15. 5. 60
Letter from the Chairman Joint Council of Action to Prime Minister ...	7. 4. 60	All India Demnd Day of Central Govt. employees ...	25. 5. 60
Prime Minister's letter to the Chairman, J. C. A. in reply ...	9. 4. 60	Letter from Chairman. J. C. A. to the Prime Minister ...	27. 5. 60
Meeting of an A. I. R. F. delegation with the Railway Minister ...	11. 4. 60	Meeting of the All India Joint Council of Action of Central Govt. employees in Bombay ...	29-31. 5. 60
Letter from the Chairman, J. C. A. to the Prime Minister ...	16. 4. 60	Prime Minister's letter to the chairman, J. C. A. in reply regretting his inability to discuss ...	10. 6. 60
Meeting of the National Federation of P&T employees at Gauhati		Strike Ballot taken by the Eastern Railwaymen's Union ...	19-22. 6. 60

Meeting of the All India Joint Council of Action in New Delhi ...	23-24. 6. 60	All India Day to call public attention to the demands ...	7. 7. 60
Formation of Standing Committee of the J. C. A. ...	24. 6. 60	Mass Rally of the Central Govt. employees in Calcutta area at Monument Maidan addressed by Nath Pai, M. P. ...	7. 7. 60
Meeting of the Working Committee & Council of Action of the Eastern Railwaymen's union at Howrah ...	24-26. 6. 60	Prime Minister's Radio Broadcast to the Nation ...	7. 7. 60
Letter from the Secretary, J. C. A. to the Prime Minister ...	25. 6. 60	Promulgation of Essential Service Maintenance Ordinance, 1960 and issue of Govt.'s orders thereon ...	8. 7. 60
Service of Strike Notice by the Eastern Railwaymen's Union on the General Manager, Eastern Railway ...	25. 6. 60	Negotiations for a settlement through Late Shri Feroze Gandhi ...	9-11. 7. 60
Letter from the Prime Minister to the Secretary J. C. A. in reply ...	27. 6. 60	Meeting of the Standing Committee of J. C. A. ...	10. 7. 60
Mass Rally of the Central Govt. employees in Calcutta area at Monument Maidan addressed by Shri Peter Alvares ...	29. 6. 60	Strike of Central Govt. employees ...	12-16. 7. 60
Negotiations on the demands by the Union Labour Minister with individual leaders ...	30.6-1. 7. 60	Withdrawal of strike ...	17. 7. 60
Negotiations on the demands by the Union Labour Minister with the Standing Committee of J. C. A. ...	2. 7. 60	Notice for withdrawal of recognition of all Central Govt. Employees, Union including Railways ...	22. 7. 60
Statement of the standing committee of J. C. A. on the results of the Negotiations with UNION LABOUR Minister ...	2. 7. 60	Withdrawal of recognition (facilities) of A. I. R. F. ...	22. 7. 60
		Notice for withdrawal of recognition of the Eastern Railway Union ...	22. 7. 60
		Temporary injunction by Hon'ble High Court Calcutta against withdrawal of recognition of Eastern Railwaymen's Union ...	27. 7. 60

Meeting of the all India Joint Council of Action	...	28-30. 7. 60
Withdrawal of recognition of all unions & Federations of the Central Govt. employees	...	29. 7. 60
Permanent injunction granted by the Hon'ble High Court, Calcutta against withdrawal of recognition of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union	...	10. 8. 60
Debate in the Lok Sabha regarding strike	...	8-9. 8. 60
Lapse of Essential Service Maintenance Ordinance	...	19. 9. 60
Study into the Strike by International Transport Federation	...	15-17.10.60
A. I. R. F. and Eastern Railwaymen's Union's evidence before Shri R. L. Mehta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour appointed to investigate pre and post Strike situations	...	1. 12. 60

Speech of Nath Pai

In the debate in the Lok Sabha regarding strike held on 8th and 9th August 1960 Nath Pai delivered his historic speech. The speech is reproduced below :

"I had hoped that we would succeed in trying to place before the country a

clear record of the events that led to the strike in spite of all the ridicule and the contempt which the Prime Minister has thought fit to pour on the heads of those who, in their own way, had tried to learn from his own teachings earlier, to whom he had been consistently saying that the starving men must resist, and for whom all his sympathies were reserved all these years. That was the tragedy of miscalculation ; that we took his teachings too seriously and tried to act upon them according to our lights.

"But in spite of all the unkind things which he thinks it fit that he should say, even when according to him, the battle is over, I will try to confine myself to the bare facts of the issue. Why did the strike become unavoidable? Was an act of all those who wanted to act in harmony with a foreign power ? The simple reason, had the real reply to this, is that we do not have a machinery in this country for settling differences, for ventilating grievances and for resolving issues by negotiation so that these drift into disputes and the disputes develop into conflicts.

The Prime Minister's Words

" It is true that we have a machinery and in Shri Nanda we have a man of integrity, sincerity and ability. It is a remarkable thing that all these virtues are reduced to futility because of the inaction of the Government. May I be permitted to quote a letter of the Prime Minister himself who agrees with my analysis, in his letter to the Chief Ministers of states, dated June 30. This is what the Prime Minister says, and here is the question which I am raising as to why the strike became inevitable. He says :

We have thus far not evolved any adequate machinery for the rapid

settlement of disputes of this type. The Government's way of dealing with such matters is a leisurely way, and months and years pass sometimes before we come to grips with the problem; a problem which perhaps could have been solved with greater ease, becomes more difficult-frustration takes place and passions are aroused, and these lead to a conflict which is ultimately good for no one."

"This is my plea too. This is what the Prime Minister has said to his provincial colleagues and lieutenants. This is one tragedy of life in this country that in spite of all the lessons we never try to act unless sufficient pressure is generated. It is only a question of acting.

"Shri Ramanathan Chettiat (Pudukottai): Sir, on a point of order. How is the Hon. Member's quotation relevant. The Hon Member opposite is reading a letter purported to have been written by the Prime Minister to the Chief Ministers of the States. It is a confidential document. How can he get the document and read it?

Shri Nath Pai : The reply to that is very simple.

The Speaker : Order, order, I have heard the point of order. There is no point of order (Laughter)

Shri Nath Pai : May I satisfy him by saying that what the Prime Minister writes is part of literature.

The Speaker : I think it was quoted yesterday.

An Hon Member : Yes, Sir.

Sri Nath Pai : The other point is the attitude in the higher echelons of the administrative machinery of the country. These offices reek with the stinge of snobbery. The higher officials feel nothing but contempt for what they call the Class

III and Class IV clerks and babus. Unfortunately, the others reciprocate that lack of respect, and we get this unhappy atmosphere in our departments. But who is mainly responsible for this state of affairs?

Here, may I again have the audacity of quoting the Prime Minister on this issue also ? He has said :

'Among those who have served in the I. C. S. or other inferior services, there will be many Indians or foreigners whose services we may welcome when we have become free, but of one thing I am quite sure : that no new order can be built in India so long as the spirit of the I. C. S. pervades our administration, and our public services. The spirit of authoritarianism and ally of imperialism cannot co-exist with that freedom. The new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause that they serve and are bent on achievements.'

"Here is again a confirmation of what I wanted to say. There was this spirit of hostility; there was the spirit of contempt to these employees.

Lip-sympathy for socialism.

"Thirdly, I would like to mention a very serious point. There are some people who can be gracefully defined as the authorities of the country who are not reconciled to the goal of socialism and who have never taken kindly to the objective that this country should march towards socialism, but who because of the fear only of the Prime Minister, to be always succeeds in bullying his allies and his associates, are paying lip-sympathy to the ideas of socialism. This is why a strike becomes inevitable. This is what

happens in the Union Kingdom. May I quote, here from a latest book, *The General Strike* by Julion Symons to show why strike becomes inevitable? It is said in this book:

".....(the view that) some kind of showdown must take place between the Government and the trade union was strong in the Cabinet. Some Ministers were anxious to see the struggle, joined on almost any pretext.Thus, although there were individuals in the Cabinet who would have liked to see a negotiated settlement, both before and during the strike they never provided a coherent opposition to the inflexible attitude to Mr. Churchill".

"Well I do not know: it will be for future historians to say who played the part of Churchill in seeing that every effort made for negotiation, every request we made for a settlement, was contemptuously turned down. That will be task for the future student of history and research to find out.

Then because of the cumulative effect of this and because of the past experience of the employees, the situation began to develop where they were not finding any way. But still did we become desperate: I was very pained when I listened to the Prime Minister. I could understand his anger; but I could not understand from our Prime Minister this disregard for truth. He says that the first complaint we raised was about the salaried holidays. With your permission, I would quote a little later what he wrote in reply to my letter of the 16th January. In our letter all the relevant issues were given in detail for his kind consideration. It is very unfair for them to come and say that "We saw some demonstration" and say "why

not add a little fuel to the fire to make fun of a general strike". This is how the plea ended:

"I feel a genuine effort should be made to thrash out acceptable solutions and the matter should not be allowed to drift. I therefore plead with you once again to take action, in convening a conference which will be charged with the task of meeting the legitimate demands of the employees where the Pay Commission has given them a raw deal".

The Prime Minister was kind enough to reply the next day, and he stated that there was no need for such things. But to say that suddenly we come one day and demand all other things, without having made any effort to persuade the Government to see the legitimacy of our claims is patently unfair and is not in keeping with the true facts.

The Sanctity of Award

There was this House in which a plea was made by me; which was yesterday quoted by an Hon. Member. I continued my effort with all other Ministers. I had written a letter to the Hon. Minister, the reply being marked "personal", it will not be fair to quote from it. But the approach of the Government remained the same. What was it: It was in the words of the Home Minister, "the fundamental sanctity of the award". The award came from a High-powered body, and therefore, it must be respected, not enough. But has it been the record of the Governments with regard to the Pay Commission? Had it not itself made the recommendations of the Pay Commission? Is it even to-day accepting all the Pay Commission's recommendations, may I ask?

The Home Minister said that we are going to ban the strikes. The Pay Commission has given its verdict clearly against the banning of the strike. The Pay Commission said that the present law is adequate to deal with any situation. Regarding the withdrawal of recognition, the Pay Com. has said something to which his present attitude is opposed. The Pay Commission has said that strikes need not be banned in this country, the present law is enough for it and with regard to the unions, a general liberal attitude may be adopted. Is this the respect for the sanctity of award? When only the employee comes and says "Let us modify it to remove some of our grievances", he is accused of defying the sanctity of the Pay Com. recommendations.

"I want to ask the Government whether the same consideration was extended to all the other commission. particularly- as a student of law as a very immature one, but as one who knows the law, I should ask-what has happened to the recommendations of the Law Commission presided over by the best Judicial minds of the country? With contempt they have been pigeonholed and when we were trying to raise the same issue about some of their major recommendations, what did Government do? But we leave that aside and ask, has the Government followed a consistent policy with regard to the Pay Commissions? Had it always followed a consistent policy of upholding the sanctity of the Pay Commission, then the first Pay com. recommendations would not have been flouted the way they were.

Premium on building pressures.

"I am sorry he thinks fit to use the word 'threat'. It was the registration of a

protest, raising the cry of appeal, and it requires a great stretch of imagination to distort it as a threat. On three occasions in 1948, 1951 and 1957 on every occasion, when every thing else failed, the Government employees got up and said "In that case if every other door is locked and barred against us, we may have to go on strike". It was under this accumulated pressure that grants of Rs. 5/-Rs.10/- and Rs.15/- have been made. It is a tragedy of our national life, that a premium has been placed on building pressures and then only justice has been done. This happened to the first Pay Commission's recommendations and the Government could be persuaded to implement them only under accumulated pressure of Government employees. The same happened again with regard to the second Pay Commission.

What was happening? Beginning with December to the end of January was the effort. We appealed to the Home Minister to use his unparalleled authority and influence to thrash out solutions to meet legitimate grievances. It was an extraordinary thing to hear a figure of Rs.750 crores as the possible burden for the five year period if the demands were met. May I say that the images came to my mind as I listened to his touching and moving speech was that of our Prime Minister who was the idealist of 1926 who was in tears at the plight of the British working class and the other of the Prime Minister of India of 1960, whom the Government of his own employees failed to do justice. What a tragedy it is that his appeal should go unheeded. There is something wrong in the appeal and a large number of

**Group Photo of Workers of the Eastern Railway Mens' Union, Dinapur Imprisoned in Dinapur Jail
During the Central Government Employees' Strike on the 12th July 1960.**



*Standing L/R—K.P. Gupta, R.N. Sinha, G.P. Jha, Kapildeo Pandey, Harihar Tiwari, S. K. Banerjee, R. S. Singh, Anirudh Singh and Ragho Prasad Sinha.
Sitting on Chair L/R—Mathura Pandey, G.P. Gupta, M.P. Varma, M.M.P. Sinha, H.S.P. Varma, J.P. Gupta and Jagdish Singh
Ground floor L/R—Jagat Ram and Munna Ram.*

EASTERN RAILWAY MEN'S UNION, DEHRI-ON-SONE,

Group of some members who Participated in the Central Govt. Strike 1960.



Sitting on Chair:—Sarvshri C. R. Roy, A. N. Mukherjee (Asst. Secretary), R. V. Singh, H R. Ojha (Secretary), R. C. Chakravarty (General Secretary),
 Y. P. Singh (President), S V. Chaubey, Shyama Prasad,
 Standing 2nd Row:—Sarvshri Jagannath Prasad, H L. Rai Chaudhry, H D. Pandey, A. N. Guhathakurta, Awadh Narain,
 Radheshwar Misra, R. P. Siuba, Bhikham, Ram Saran Nayur,
 Standing Last Row:—Sarvshri Sheopujan, Sheomukh, Ram Chela.

think it just correct and even honourable to disregard and defy that appeal. This was not an act of mutiny or rebellion. It was a pointer to him that there may be something wrong in the approach we are making.

Riding a Tiger?

"That appeal of the employees was distorted into a threat and having taken this wrong posture, wrong measures were adopted by the Government. The whole thing began to break, on that? Because of my obstinacy and that of my friends, because of our immaturity and our inability to ride a tiger. I have not met men who ride tigers. I quite plead I do not know how to ride a tiger, but it was not the tiger that was generated. Why distort him as a tiger?

"An appeal was made to him. It was a simple question of slightly-modifying the dearness allowance formula of the Pay Commission's recommendation, that formula was inadequate. Why? let me tell them very simple economic facts. Even the Eastern Economist, which has been of course, clamouring for my prosecution and so cannot be taken as very kindly to us and fond of us, points this out regarding the dearness allowance. The one crucial point on which ultimately the negotiations broke in spite of the innumerable formula which we proposed was this. Not one formula was submitted for their consideration, but a variety of them. As Shri Asoke Mehta, Shri Massani and some others have ventured upon it. It was, therefore, the Government's adamant attitude and its determination to teach a lesson to those who wanted seriously to talk about a Welfare State and a fair share that led to the Strike.

"I am sorry that he feels that we should come in a repentant mood. Repentant about what? Repentant about having the courage of your conviction?

"What was wrong in it? Times without number I stated here that it is not appeal to the Government, it is not a threat to its authority, it is not a challenge to its authority. And we made it very clear that every government employee in this country will die, if he is a postman defending a post box, rather than let it fall into the hands of an enemy and if he is a railway boy he will defend his railway plate by laying down his life rather than see it go to a foreigner. Still they came back and say "all this is done contemptuously" and then an appeal is made that a foreigner cannot have derived benefit from this. After all this earnest plea (I have the earnest conviction that we should not than later drop these) we were subjected to unjustifiable attacks and accusations which were very unfair.

The 1936 General Strike

"Such a strike happened in 1936 and how did the Government behave with regard to it? The history of that was not one-tenth of the employees who were employed. What happened in India? How was the strike handled?

Shri G. B. Pant : When the Government servants strike in India, Nath Pai : I am referring to the general strike in Britain. And how did the Government then behave? It is comparable to what happened in this country. The role played by the apparatus of the State was turned against the employee. It was a unique spectacle.

Here were small, unknown insignificant men, we know. There was the apparatus of the Government with all its resources, with all the prestige of the men after whom this era will perhaps be named. It was an unequal fight. But was at least Dharma followed? Was there any talk of Prayaschitha? Was any regard for truth shown? What happened to All India Radio? In England this is how the BBC behaved during that episode and this is what the historians have to say :

"The attempt to maintain impartiality was genuine. The BBC broadcast messages from the General Council as well as messages from Downing Street. It quoted speeches of trade Union leaders in Parliament and out of it. It referred to the British Worker as well as to the British Gazette".

Mr. Churchill was thinking that the BBC's broad-casts would be turned to full use to suppress the strike. But there were men in the BBC like Mr. Reith, after whom the lecture series were started, who had honesty and courage to say "I am not a propaganda instrument of any party or any Government. I am here to carry on the reduction and information to the British people". I do not know when the All-India Radio will rise to that standard. It has one temporary gain, a temporary victory against whom victory has no meaning. But it has lost something permanent, and that is a tragedy for all of us. Nothing is more dangerous for a country than the people of the country should lose complete faith in the integrity and impartiality of its chief instrument, chief agency of information, and that is the tragedy by its partisan spirit the All-India Radio has brought upon it, To point

out to this house, the real wages of the employees have since 1947 gone down, while there is talk of prosperity, 40 per cent increase in national income, 20 per cent increase in per capita income, etc.

A share in the Growing prosperity.

Where is all this going? The late Dr. John Mathai had demanded one thing and we are going to repeat that demand in this House. An enquiry must be instituted into the channels into which this new wealth is finding its way. Where is this wealth going? Every year figures are given about increasing national wealth. Into whose pockets or safety vaults is this wealth going and what is the share of the average man in it?

The Home Minister in his masterful handling of rhetoric yesterday said, It is like asking Paul to give away half his loin cloth to Peter. The Government employees were not asking them to do any such injustice. The Government employee was pleading on behalf of the millions of Pauls and Peters in this country who are going about naked for a small share when there is an accumulation of wealth in certain sector. May I point out, therefore, that this plea for dearness allowance being linked with the cost of living index was a most legitimate one? Here is the consolidated opinion of a paper, which is not very fond of us, I think, of our policies :

"When the new pay scales come into effect very shortly, it is estimated that the average value of the consumer price index for 1960 might be around 125. The employee would need about Rs. 86, Rs. 6 more than his minimum pay in order to neutralise fully the rise in price level".

'So even to give him what he was getting in 1947 here is all this talk about growing prosperity. Is it too much of an offence, is it very anti-social or anti-national to ask not for a share in the growing prosperity, but at least let us have what we were getting in 1947. Shri Ashoka Mehata : And given by the Pay commission.

Shri Nath Pai : Yes, the salary of Rs.80/- is not even what he was getting in 1947. This particular paper shows how year after year there has been a gap in his real earnings. This is available at page 137, because I do not want to take your time. In every year beginning from 1947, except the two years when nature helped us with a bumper crop and there was a slight improvement, in every one of the 13 years, there was a big drop and fall in the real earnings of the employees. Is this very much convincing proof of our being very sincere about a fairer share ? This is the tragedy. We thought slogans we mouth about Welfare State, socialism and all that are seriously meant and the poor employees thought, of course, that they could make a legitimate effort.

The Adamantine Attitude.

It was the Government's adamant attitude on this very simple and legitimate issue of dearness allowance on which broke the negotiations. If it was a political weapon in our hands why did you not try to prove us wrong by accepting one of the many formulas ? We would have been proved wrong if you would have insisted on it. This was the only economic demand out of the six, because on the demand of the basic wage it was fully indicated to Shri Nanda that we are not going to press, provided Government

accepted the principle of it and the progressive reality.

"The Home Minister referred to some effigies being burnt. One is very pained that such things should have happened. We are as much pained as he is that such things should have happened. I condemn it and we are one with him in condemning this kind of practice. But this is an unfortunate hangover from past practices which all of us taught to our people. Let us be patient and not try to exploit this in this unjust manner. I am one with him in condemning this. But I would go deeper, in spite of my immaturity and ask: what is this continuation of, what is this hangover of : It is the hangover of those days when we thought of doing this thing as a legitimate expression of our disagreement. I would like, therefore, not to see more, though I agree in condemning it, than there is really in it.

A Touching Episode.

Then I come to the violence business. May I just narrate one small touching episode which we witnessed ? They are talking of that victory over the Government employees. They are fit to do that. I am sorry for any mistakes we have committed. I will reciprocate the magnanimity Shri Nehru now and then brings when he is not very angry with somebody that mistakes might have been committed on either side. We might have done it. But we are not guilty of one thing, which we cannot accept whatsoever may be the accuser and when all these passions settle down, when we are a little removed from the oven and when the heat is lost perhaps a better verdict will be passed. We had made superhuman efforts in seeing that in evolving solutions

to the employees' demands those solutions must not be permitted even in the remotest degree to injure the larger interests of the community. We did it and if, even then, we failed in persuading those who had the power to listen to us it was the misfortune, it was the inefficiency of our persuasion though we pleaded in earnest. We called upon the employees in Assam not to go on strike : so also in Ladakh and in the border areas. Is this an evidence of irresponsibility ? Is this case of lack of consideration for the interest?

"Then a lot of back-slapping is done about the firmness. We would like our Government to act with firmness. We would be very happy and we would be the first to congratulate and do whatever we can to stiffen that firmness. But against whom is this firmness? We have never seen such a firm attitude against the Salazar's mockery of India's fiat on the territory of India in Goa. We do not see such kind of firmness against the mockery which Pakistan makes now and then on our sovereignty. We do not see such manifestations of firmness against Chou en Lai, who was assured "We will negotiate, negotiate till the bitter end. When our own little Class III employee comes and begs for clemency, mercy and consideration you say "you are a rebel".

Quarrel with Nehru

I would like to make this point very clear, and that is, that if there was the slightest danger that the civilian authority would collapse we would have been the first soldiers to defend it because our quarrel is with Jawaharlal Nehru. Yes, it is so, the Hon. Prime Minister. His knowledge of history is better; his politics is also better. Bagehot Maitland, Dicey

and Laski will be turning in their graves, and he is the friend of the last, and a great student of political science too. His analysis is if communications are temporarily jeopardised civilian authority collapses, is an extraordinary thesis. The army was there, the police and the home guards and the entire loyalty of the country to you as Government was there, and ours was a quarrel. What is that ? Ah ! childish ! I cannot certainly think that when his anger subsides even he will entertain this kind of feeling. This quarrel we have was not as our Prime Minister which he remains, but as an employee, as the head of an employing agency, how can it be distorted? How can it be disregarded? How can it be completely ignored? Only yesterday Shri Lal Shastri said something in the House and that is the essence of our plea and it is this. The prices of textiles have gone up as much as by 40 percent. If the prices are going up like that, a peasant will revolt by increasing his price and if the prices go up the whole apparatus of our plan will fail. What is being done against those people who are indulging in this kind of antinational activities? What happened to the Essential Commodities Act which has been passed?

An Hon. Member: We are not satisfied that is the trouble.

Shri Nath Pai: What has happened to the Essential Commodities Act after the release, when he really symbolised the aspirations and also the agony of the country, the Prime Minister in 1944, after his release said " If I have the power I would hang these blackmarketeers by the posts". This is what he said in 1944. Hon. Member ; Yes, nearest Laski was Shri Nath Pai " I do not know the

many cases the Essential Commodities Act has been applied in this country. What check has been placed on the activities of these people who are making all these un-conscientious gains?

"The Home Minister talked of Rs.80/- being given and when we asked for a little modification he thought that it was unfair and unpatriotic. Though he was extremely restrained in his language, he said "you are asking me to make the poor people bear the burden". It is the privilege of the Government employees to starve and suffer. But I ask, is this the pattern of life for the whole society till we pass this transitional period and reach the stage of self-generating economy? Is it being attained? He cannot be given Rs.5/- more now but we read in the papers there are people in the social Welfare State who can buy cars for Rs.80,000. What an example of fair share, social justice, profit being begged and everybody being given a fair deal ! I would like to say there is no bitterness in our heart nor any animosity. There is, of course, no repentance. There is sorrow and sadness because many of our illusions have been broken for ever. I do not want to dilate about it much. We had an illusion-yes, we had an illusion-that when the first concerted effort of an organised section of our community was there and when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was still at the helm of affairs, they would be regarded by him as allies and colleagues and they would be patted on the back by him instead of getting the big rod from him.

May I make an earnest plea, namely that every thing must be done by all of us to see that there is no spirit of animosity and of conflict maintained in the department. Let it not be the only

monument of the Government's victory against immatured politicians. Shri C. K. Bhattacharya (West Dinajpur) : Not against the employees but against those who wanted to mislead the employees.

Shri Nath Pai : Let that not be broken homes by the ashes of frustrated hearts and by the smouldering fires of suppressed bitterness and disappointment. I would in the end say that it should be the endeavour of all concerned to create a new spirit-dedication, an idealism among the employees, an awareness of the glory of participating in the mighty adventure of building a new India. That will be our endeavour, I do not know if those who are defeated should entertain such hopes. But we refuse to accept that we have done something for which we should expect forgiveness. We did the right thing and it will help democracy in this country and show that there are some small men who will raise their little voice against whosoever they may be when they have the conviction that they are standing for the right thing".

Proposed Labour Relations Bill for Central Govt. Services

Following the withdrawal of the Bill the Government announced their intention to introduce a new Bill for control of relations with their employees, to prevent a strike in the Central Govt. services, to introduce a Whitley type of machinery for negotiation and to prevent non-employees holding any office of the trade union. The text of the Bill was not laid on 21-4-61 when the Labour Minister, Guljarilal Nanda had an informal discussion with the Secretary General of the National Federation of Public and Telegraph employees about the Bill.

provisions of the Bill. Following this discussion the Labour Minister also discussed with a few railway employees nominated by the Govt. on 20th May '61 and also subsequently with Sri Peter Alvares, General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation.

From whatever was known about the Bill the Eastern Railwaymen's union and the All India Railwaymen's Federation were of the opinion that the provisions sought to be made in the proposed Bill were highly retrogressive and anti-democratic and takes back the labour-management relation in the public sector by several decades.

Amongst various objectionable provisions in the Bill the important ones were -

(a) It suggested a cumbersome machinery for negotiation of the grievances of workers through Departmental Council for each Department of the Government, failing which through a National Council composed of representatives of both industrial and non-industrial sections of the Departmental councils although two smaller Standing committees for both the sections (industrial and non-industrial) would be there without any power to settle their respective issues.

(b) The Departmental Councils, National Council and Standing Committees would be the medium of consultation and reaching agreement and in the event of disagreement the issue would be referred in the first instance to a separate and smaller committee of the council for a settlement, failing which the matter might be referred for arbitration by either side. There is no time limit for such consultation or arbitration with the result that the issues might be dragged for years together.

(c) The arbitrable matters had been restricted to (i) pay and allowances; (ii) weekly working hours and (iii) leave only and nothing else and even then the Govt. retained the right to refuse arbitration or not to accept the award in 'public interest.' Further the recommendations of the second Pay Commission on these three matters could not be arbitrable for a period of 5 years.

(d) Although the Industrial Disputes Act provided the right to strike to the industrial workers and this right had been accepted as a fundamental and democratic right of the workers in all free countries of the world, the strike was banned both in industrial and non-industrial sections of public sector.

(e) Without removing the handicaps from which an employee trade union official suffered for his trade union activities and without granting immunity from the operation of departmental rules for his trade union activities, the non-employees were debarred to hold office in the Union or become its members just to keep the trade union organisations under the clutches of the Administration.

(f) The Union might be recognised at the discretion of the Govt. provided it had in its roll 15 per cent of the strength of establishment, thus providing a scope for multiplicity of Unions while one union in one industry was the demand of the workers.

Many of the provisions of the Bill were against the specific recommendations of the Second Pay Commission. It did not contemplate any change in the existing labour laws, ban the strike, prevent the non-employees from holding office but felt that machinery of settlement of disputes should be so prompt.

and effective that the grievances of the workers could be resolved satisfactorily and timely and disputes might be settled by reference of issues to arbitration, thus minimising the scope of a strike. The Commission has stated- "We are not suggesting amendment of the law. What we have in view is that a change should be brought about by the employees themselves abjuring the use of the strike weapon and demonstrations and the Government accepting a convention that they would refer to arbitration any dispute concerning important matters, such as pay and allowances, leave entitlements and hours of work which are not settled by negotiations. We think that such an arrangement will be possible within the frame-work of the present law. What is needed, in our view is a fundamentally new approach to which the existing law constitutes no obstacle and for the promotion of which no new legislation appears necessary."

The Whitley type of machinery that was in existence in U. K. and other countries was for civil services alone and not for industrial workers in public sector. Industrial workers get full benefit of Industrial Disputes Act but it was not the case in India. Non-employees were not prevented from holding office in Unions and/or represent in councils on behalf of Unions. Strikes were also not banned. Items of issues under negotiations or arbitration were not limited or restricted. Though the Govt. retained the right to modify an award of arbitration there had not been any case where awards were so modified or arbitration had been refused, although contrary examples were there when Union refused to accept an arbitration award. Most of the disputes

were of course resolved by negotiation and mutual agreement because of the spirit and outlook of the authorities which was completely absent in this country.

There was a considerable agitation against the bill and all the political parties and their Trade Union wings including the National Congress and INTUC were vehemently opposed to the provision which debarred non-employees to hold office in Trade Union. The Government had to succumb ultimately and the proposed Bill was subsequently dropped and a Joint Consultative Machinery was introduced from October 1966.

I was personally in favour of running the union by Railwaymen in service provided they were granted immunity from the operation of departmental rules for their trade union activities.

Security of service vis-a-vis arbitrary removal

The Railway Administration had found it convenient to remove a Railway servant who had somehow or other incurred displeasure of the officers under the application of Rule 149 of the Indian Railway's Establishment Code Vol. I. The reading of the Rule, however did not suggest any such arbitrary power to the appointing authorities by which services of a permanent Railway employee could be terminated without following the normal disciplinary procedure or without assigning any reason whatsoever. When the Chairman of the Railway Board gave evidence before the Second Pay Commission, the Chairman said that the power was used with great care and only in cases in which the power was used did not deal with the General Manager, but came up to the Government where the Minister

satisfied himself as to the necessity and fairness of the action taken. The Chairman also gave the figure of such termination from 1952 to 1957 as 169 only. Unfortunately since then the figure of such termination in the Indian Railways had exceeded 1,000.

The Chairman of the Pay Commission, the Government and the Railway Board had not considered if existence of such a Rule which purported to give power to the appointing authorities in the Railways was justified or not. Such power was not enjoyed by the authorities in other departments of Central Government services. Such an action of arbitrary termination was in violation of the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act and is retrenchment within the meaning of the Act. Whereas under the Industrial Disputes Act retrenchment can be effected only under certain circumstances and retrenched employee is entitled to compensation, such circumstances were not considered in terminating the services of Railway servants under Rule 149 and they were not given any compensation.

The guarantee and security of service provided for a Government employee under the sacred Constitution of the Indian Union was defeated and frustrated by application of this Rule. It was a misnomer and a tragedy that while President of Indian Union alone enjoyed such a power of removing a Government servant from service without following the normal disciplinary procedure and without assigning any reason under certain circumstances only (Articles 310 and 311 of the Constitution), under the Railway Rule the appointing authorities in the Railways, who might be even a lower Gazetted Officer in the case of lower paid

class IV staff could terminate the services of an employee at his pleasure without assigning or recording the reasons and circumstances.

From the letter of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India addressed to Shri. Atal Behari Bajpayee M. P. on 18th June, 1960 and from Railway Board's letter No.E 52 RG 5-12 dated 16th December, 1954 and No.E (DA) 57 RG 6/54 dated 16th July, 1959 addressed to the General Managers of All Indian Railways and others it was crystal clear that the purported powers under Rule 149, was admittedly being used as a punitive measure in lieu of normal disciplinary procedure. Cases were not initiated where after initiating the disciplinary procedure against an employee, when the Railway Administration found it difficult to prove the charges, the disciplinary proceedings were dropped and the services of the employees concerned terminated by application of Rule 149.

Under the Railway Rules the reasons for termination of services were required to be recorded in the service book of the employee and the reason was recorded as "Rule 149". It is not known to the Union if in any other civilised Government such jugglery and dishonesty exist, where a Government servant is deprived of the right to know the charges against him, to reply to the charges and to offer his defence against such charges. In this country even a criminal of worst type is allowed these facilities in the Criminal Law whereas a Railway servant is deprived of the same.

It is commonly said from the side of the Government as well as the Railway Administration that this Rule was

during the British Regime and the National Government is only carrying the legacy. It will be interesting to note that although the rule existed for the non-pensionable Railway servants since 1930 there had not been a single termination of service under application of this Rule during the British Regime. Even after the independence of the country the Rule continued for non-pensionable Railway servants and only recently the rule was modified for application on the pensionable Railway servants too. The first termination of service under this Rule was in the year 1952 in the old East Indian Railway (now Eastern Railway) and the first victim was Shri P. K. Mukherjee, a travelling Ticket Examiner at Howrah and Organising Secretary of this Union. The application of this rule was really very few till 1957. Presumably because under another Rule viz. Paragraph 2 of Rule 1708 of the Indian Railway Establishment Code Vol. I, a General Manager of the Indian Railways enjoyed special power under which he could remove a Railway employee from his service as a disciplinary measure without following the normal disciplinary procedure viz. issue of charge-sheet, holding of departmental enquiries etc. but the General Manager was required to record the reason of removal in writing. It was really an uncomfortable position when the recorded reasons were required to be produced in the Court of Law and the Court was not satisfied with the reasons recorded. Officers in the Railways wanted unfettered powers to remove Railway employees whom they considered as unwanted and they naturally reverted to the dishonest procedure under Rule 149. Since 1958 upto now the termination under the said Rule has increased out of

proportion and has assumed the shape of a menace. Unless we are able to fight out this menace, the security of our services is no better than that enjoyed by a domestic servant. It may be recalled that the removal of this rule was one of the demands for which the Railway employees went on strike in July, 1960. The following are a few cases of termination of services out of many under application of Rule 149 on the Eastern Railway :-

1. Shri Taroon Chatterjee, Stock Verifier, Accounts Dept., Calcutta.
2. " Nanigopal Chakravarty, A. G. C. Belur.
3. " Kartick Chandra Das, Ticket Collector, Naihati
4. " B. Ram, A. P. W. I., Hazaribagh.
5. " P. N. Pandey, Cabinman, Hazaribagh.
6. " Ganoa, Trolleyman, Hazaribagh.
7. " A. Rasul, Gangman, Hazaribagh.
8. " Gulia, Gangman, Hazaribagh.
9. " Bishun Ram, A. Y. F. Dhanbad
10. " A. C. Pramanik, Cabinman, Dhanbad.
11. " Madan Ram, Shuntman, Dhanbad.
12. " R. B. P. Yadav, Driver, Patratu.
13. " Rajendra Prosad, Asst. Driver (Dissel), Barkakana.
14. " K. Pandey, A. S. M. Paltan Singh, Leverman, Dhanbad.
15. " Paltan Singh, Leverman, Dhanbad.
16. " S. N. Sarkar, T. B. C. Paltan Singh, Leverman, Dhanbad.
17. " K. N. Sahay, Guard, Paltan Singh, Leverman, Dhanbad.
18. " Prakash Chakravarti, A. Y. F. Howrah.
19. " Sachin Mukherjee, Gangman, Sealdah.
20. " S. N. Sarkar, Guard, Ramgarh.
21. " P. N. Banerjee, T. T. E. Bandel.

22. ,, Bageshwar Pandey, Shuntman, Burdwan.
23. ,, Lakkhoo Mahato, Driver, Loco, Gomoh.
24. ,, B. N. Prosad, T. T. E. Gaya.
25. ,, B. K. Brahma. Clerk, C. P. O. Calcutta.
26. ,, Anta Mia, Driver, Ferry, Sakrigalighat.
27. ,, Ram Balak Singh, Clerk, Time Office, Jamalpur.
28. ,, Birendra Nath Dasgupta, Chemist, Jamalpur.
29. ,, A. K. Hazra, Guard, Asansol.
30. ,, N. B. Talukdar, A. S. M., Ukhra.
31. ,, Mohd. Nayeem, T. C. Asansol.
32. ,, Dhiren Acharya, Clerk, C. C. S. Calcutta.
33. ,, Subrata Chatterjee, Clerk, Traffic A/cs, Calcutta.

Recognition of the Union and the All India Railwaymen's Federation :

It may be recalled that although recognition of other Unions of the Central Government Employees were withdrawn after the General strike of July, 1960, the recognition of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union had continued on the strength of injunction granted on 10th August, 1960, by the Hon'ble High Court. Calcutta pending decision of the suit. The Union was very keen and anxious for a decision of the suit under which the validity of the Ordinance of July, 1960 was also challenged but unfortunately the Government and the Administration were equally anxious to delay the decision of the Hon'ble Court on the suit. Two other Railway Unions namely N. E. Railway Mazdoor Union and N. F. Railway Mazdoor Union whose recognitions were withdrawn got back the facilities enjoyed

by them on account of recognition on the strength of injunctions given by the Hon'ble High Courts of Allahabad and Pandu pending decision of the suit. Subsequently the facilities of the N. F. Railway Mazdoor Union was withdrawn by the Railway Administration when the Union lost its case in the Hon'ble High Court, Pandu.

The Unions of the Central Government Employees including the Railways who lost the recognition, continued to agitate for restoration of recognition as a result of which the public opinion in and outside the Parliament was getting sympathetic towards their cause. The All India Defence Employees' Federation took a decision that its leaders would go on fast from 15th September, 1961 for restoration of recognition and stoppage of victimisation of trade union workers. Other constituent units of the Joint council of Action which was responsible for the strike including the All India Railwaymen's Federation decided to support the cause of the Defence employees and launch a strong movement throughout the country for restoration of recognition and stoppage of victimisation. Due to pressure from all corners the Government restored the recognition of the Unions and Associations on the same terms and conditions applicable at the time of its withdrawal and intimated all concerned accordingly under Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs' letter No.13/12/60 Ests. (B) dated 14. 9. 61.

The General Manager, Eastern Railway under his letter No.PC/ 51/1960-INJ dated 8th November, 1961 addressed to the General Secretary, Eastern Railwaymen's Union, withdrew the show Cause Notice

as contained in his letter No. PC. 51/1960-C dated 22nd July, 1960 proposing to withdraw the recognition of the Union. Although the Government's decision was communicated on 14th September, 1961 and recognition of the other Railway Union were restored within September, 1961 the Eastern Railway Administration took about 8 weeks thereafter to withdraw the show cause issued to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. The recognition of the All India Railwaymen's Federation was also restored immediately after the Government's decision.

All India Railwaymen's Federation

After 15 months of derecognition, the All India Railwaymen's Federation was recognised in September, 1961. The Federation could not devote to the solution of the problems and grievances of Railwaymen during the derecognition period. The main effort of the Federation during the derecognition period had been to reinstate such Railwaymen who had been removed or dismissed from service due to the last general strike. In the matter of recognition and victimisation, the Railwaymen will remember with gratitude the services rendered by Sri Nath Pai, Vice-President of the Federation and a few other members of the Parliament. Even after the recognition the Federation could not do much in solving the major problems and redressing the important grievances of the Railwaymen. This is mainly due to absence of effective secretariat with a well equipped office and apathetic attitude of the Railway Ministry. With the increasing centralisation of powers at the Railway Board's level, very little matters were left to be decided at the Railway's level. In the Permanent

Negotiating Machinery there was provision for four meetings in a year between the Federation and the Railway Board. Unfortunately while there was need for more meetings to resolve the disputes, even the four meetings were not held in a year.

The financial position of the Federation was also not sound. Affiliation fees by the affiliated Unions are not paid regularly. The need for shifting the Central Office to Delhi was felt since long and although the office had been shifted to Delhi in May, 1962 it could not be properly equipped for want of funds.

Our Union had been feeling the need for reorganisation of the Federation and at the instance of the General Secretary of the Federation the Union gave certain proposals for reorganisation. Although the said proposals were not accepted due to prejudices and groupings, we felt the need of reorganisation of the Federation on the lines of National Federation of P.&T. workers as imperative in the interest of Railwaymen. This was only possible if the Railwaymen took increasing interest in their Federation.

It was unfortunate that proper evaluation of the strike of July, 1960 has not been possible at the Federation level. In spite of certain affiliated Unions miserably failing to implement the mandates in regard to strike due to some reason or other, it has also not been possible for the Federation and other affiliated Unions to know the reasons for such failures and take remedial measures. The strike of July, 1960 has shown that while some units of the Federation were strong, others were too weak.

It was often said that the federated unions were more or less independent

in regard to their own affairs and their tie with the Federation was loose. Unless the Federation was replaced by a strong unitary All India Union the defects and weaknesses could not be remedied. This theory was baseless and if we look to the structures of Federations in different countries as well as in our country we find that the position of all India Railwaymen's Federation vis-a-vis its affiliated Unions was in no way bad. While it was not necessary always to take disciplinary action for failures on the part of the affiliated Unions it was absolutely necessary to know its weakness and defects with a view to assist the Union in rectifying the same. Suppression of weakness in a Trade Union, particularly on the face of struggle was dangerous and landed other partners into sloop. Eastern Railwaymen's Union has a bitter experience of this during the strike of 1960.

The Convention of the Federation was held at Udaipur in July, 1962 after 3 years. The attendance of the Railway Minister in the convention was one of the most important events. Perhaps this was the first time in the history of the Federation ever since independence of the country, that the Railway Minister made direct contact with the labour and tried to understand their problems. The Western Railway Employees Union organised the Convention in a manner befitting the name and tradition of the All India Railwaymen's Federation.

The Federation maintained its affiliation with the International Transport Federation and contacts with other international organisations through our Vice-President M. S. Hoda who acted as representative of the Federation.

After the withdrawal of ~~provisional~~ affiliation of the Dakshin Railway Employees Union for disobedience of the Federation's mandate, there was no union affiliated to the Federation in the Southern Railway. The Convention of the Federation at Udaipur granted affiliation to Southern Railway Mazdoor Union which was organised by a section of workers belonging to the old Southern Railway Employees' Union who unfortunately left our Federation and joined the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen some years back.

Chinese aggression on Indian Union and Railwaymen's duties to the National cause.

While we were meeting at the Annual General Meeting of the Union at Moghalsarai on 22nd October the country had been flashed with the alarming news of Chinese aggression on the northern border of Indian Union and illegal occupations of Indian territory. The feeling of the General Body of common Railwaymen was so high that there was spontaneous urge of rallying round the National Government to face the menace of the aggressions.

The Annual General Meeting passed the resolution condemning the illegal aggression of the Communist Government of China and pledged the unflinching support of the Railwaymen to the Government of Indian Union. The General Meeting realised that a great responsibility had evolved on the Railwaymen and they must discharge the responsibility properly and effectively. The Railwaymen had proved beyond doubt that they were patriots and anything else second and they were

prepared to tolerate any aggression on the sovereignty and integrity of their sacred mother land.

The Annual Meeting gave a clarion call to the Railwaymen -

"We the railwaymen run the most vital industry of the country and maintain the life-line by moving the wheels. If we move the wheels faster and faster to meet the needs of our brothers who are fighting to defend the border of the motherland and that of the Government we can claim no less credit for the victory that is sure to come. Let us prove to the people of this great country by our action that while we can strike to achieve our legitimate demands, we can equally if not more rise upto the occasion and stand firmly as one man behind the Government at the hour of National crisis. Let us remember that no price is too great for the freedom and for that, everything else has to be sacrificed, if necessary."

and adopted the following programme to be pursued till the last intruder is driven out of our sacred country :-

- (1) Respond by action to the call of our Prime Minister to the Nation through his radio-broadcast on 22nd October '62;
- (2) Sink all differences - internal as well as with the Government and present a solid united front before those who seek to endanger our freedom and integrity ;
- (3) Counter-act all rumours aiming to create panic and disruption amongst the Railwaymen and the people and

maintain a high degree of morale with faith and conviction that the ultimate VICTORY is ours;

- (4) Stick to the post may whatever happen, step up production and move the wheels of the engines faster to meet the need of the nation and the government and also encourage others to do so;
- (5) Practise and adopt austerity in every sphere of life;
- (6) Contribute to the Prime Minister's National Defence Fund which has been started to help Indian soldiers who are valiantly fighting against the Chinese invaders;
- (7) Purchase National Defence Bonds, Defence Deposit Certificates, National Defence Certificates etc., introduced by the Government ;
- (8) Donate blood for the fighting Indian forces;
- (9) Join and encourage others to join the Territorial army, National Cadet Corps, National Volunteer Force, Home Guard Organisation etc.;
- (10) Co-operate with the Defence of India Ordinance 1962 promulgated by the President of Indian Union on 26th October 1962 to meet the situation arising out of the Chinese aggression;
- (11) Co-operate with the committees set up at all levels to help the authorities in maintenance of law and order, counteract rumours, encouraging the workers in factories and fields to increase production;
- (12) Obey and co-operate with every decision of the Government like a disciplined soldier";
In pursuance of the aforesaid

and programme, meetings, group meetings, classes and debates were held throughout the Eastern Railway system and vast majority of the Union workers devoted their full energy to see that the decisions of the Union were faithfully implemented. The Working President, Sri D. P. Joshi and the General Secretary undertook tours addressing big rally of Railwaymen in almost all the 45 Branches. The Vice-Presidents and the Asstt. General Secretaries also undertook similar tours. Due to the efforts of the Union workers, a large amount was donated to the National Defence Fund from the Eastern Railway and the production at all spheres was raised to the credit of the Railwaymen.

Following the decisions taken by Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the Annual General Meeting on 22nd October '62 an Industrial Truce was arrived at in the Joint Meeting of all Central Employers and Worker's Organisation on 3rd November 1962 and it was resolved that no effort should be spared to achieve maximum production, and managements and workmen would strive in collaboration in all possible ways to promote the defence effort of the country. In the said meeting while the Worker's Organisations gave certain undertaking, the Employers and the Government also assured inter-alia of settlement of the grievances and disputes of the workers promptly by taking maximum recourse to voluntary arbitration if necessary, stabilisation of prices of essential commodities and their supply at fair price.

Although the pledge given by the Eastern Railwaymen in the National emergency was unconditional it was expected that the Railway Administration

would take effective steps to promote constructive co-operation between managements and workers in all possible ways and would accelerate its machinery for prompt settlement of the grievances. Our experience had been that while the National leaders appreciated our efforts and encouraged us the Administration did not do so.

We must remember that the noble task we had undertaken was not over. The threat of external aggression was continuing. Massive mobilization of soldiers by China on our border was going on. The attitude of Pakistan also appeared to be hostile. In my Annual Report I wrote as follows. "The nation will win and survive and as such we must strive harder and harder, and produce more and more so that our enemies were not able to compete with us. We must remember the difference between a democratic country where the labour is voluntary and a Communist or a totalitarian country where the labour is forced one. Our National Government and our Prime Minister has called upon us for willing cooperation and we must reciprocate by our action for the cause of the Nation. We must not act at the instigation of this or that political party whose aim is to embarrass the National Government by making a capital of our miseries at this crucial juncture and thereby hamper the production. We must understand that our miseries will be many times more if we lose democracy or freedom."

Lessons of Strike of July '60

While the Railwaymen were proud of the historic struggle they had waged for securing their demands fulfilled, the time

had come to make a dispassionate analysis as to which side was gainer - workers or the Administration. There could have been a tremendous gain for the workers and their movement had the leadership been able to make use of this struggle. The leadership had miserably failed or they for fear of losing their positions, did not want militancy in the Trade Unions. The Administration was able to create division amongst the leadership almost everywhere and the division in the Eastern Railwaymen's Union was a glaring example of the same. Quite a good number of leaders of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union (Some of them were members of the Joint Council of Action) were won over by the Administration and allowed to go unpunished. Not only this, some of them were promoted even by violating the rules. Due to fear complex and perforce of circumstances good number of workers virtually became stoogies in the hands of the Administration and started action as their agent. By a dispassionate analysis the Union has lost many good workers and failed to get new ones.

Although the demands for which the strike notice was served, the strike was launched actually on a very minor point of difference. While the Labour Minister's assurance was that if there was rise in cost of living by ten points on an average for twelve months the Government would undertake a review of the allowance as proposed by the Commission and if the Unions were not satisfied with Government's review and wanted decision by an arbitration the same would be done. The leaders of the Joint Council of Action wanted on 11th July '60 a few hours before the strike the grant of compensation for an increase of seven

points. A school of thought amongst the Railway Trade Unionists do exist, if it was prudent to have a strike on this minor difference and lose the other possible achievements through the Labour Minister's commitment, viz.

- i) no curtailment of existing rights and privileges, and
- ii) further negotiation in future for other demands excepting the grant of minimum wage according to the norms fixed by the 15th labour conference.

They therefore feel that there had been a diplomatic defeat. Another school of thought feels that there was a competition between the political parties more particularly the Communist and Proja Socialist Party for supremacy of the leadership of the working class. Unfortunately no political parties seriously took that the strike was coming and as such did not make any preparation, with the result that barring one or two there was no strike by Unions who were under the control of this or that political party. A few Trade Unions, like ours which were independent and free from the influence of the political parties took it seriously and launched the strike.

It is a further feeling that to conceal their weakness the political leaders did not allow proper evaluation of the strike and did not take up seriously with those who failed.

It was an universally accepted fact that the best strike was on the Eastern Railway. Following the strike a series of

punishments followed to terrorise and demoralise the Railwaymen in general. Railwaymen had a good will for their union due to its bold lead during the strike but the leaders of the union had not been able to rise upto the occasion in making proper use of the good will in favour of the organisation and making it stronger. M.A. Ashraff a shrewd Chief Personnel Officer, was on the Chair. He had an efficient set of staff to man his secret cell. Although the Chief Security Officer had a regular Intelligence Service and had informers amongst Union workers and leaders, Ashraff depended more on his informers of Secret Cell and union. When the Railway Board was much perturbed with the solidarity and strength of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union, Ashraff undertook the responsibility of creating a division and breaking the Union. Although over 15,000 workers and leaders were placed under suspension after the strike, mysteriously enough quite a few of the office bearers and top leaders of the union were not suspended or punished. This created suspicion amongst the Railwaymen. These leaders as they claimed, went underground during the strike, but their activities were not seen in promoting the cause of the strike from such underground.

There was another section of leadership in the Union. They played their role in the strike but were subsequently panicky and afraid of losing their job. Even reluctantly they went into the clutches of the Administration and by their subsequent activities did great damage to the Union.

These two elements combined together started opposing me in the Union

with a view to remove me from the General Secretaryship. I was very much frustrated and did not submit nomination for General Secretary's post in the Annual General Meeting of the Union held at Gaya on 28 to 31 July 1961. This was misunderstood as if I was trying to escape my responsibility and soften the attitude of the Administration to go unpunished. Moreover Bimal Dey who was a candidate for General Secretary and submitted his nomination was not accepted to overwhelming majority for his confusing role. He instead of submitting his resignation from Vice President (which post he was holding during the Strike of July 1960) to the Eastern Railwaymen's Union submitted the same to Eastern Railway Administration for reasons best known to him, which the Administration circulated to all concerned. I had to continue as General Secretary by an overwhelming decision of the General Body. These elements tried their very best to win the elections in the subsequent Annual General Meeting of the Union held at Moghulsarai on 22nd to 25th October 1962 and contested each and every post of office-bearers in the Union but failed miserably. Most of these elements were expelled from the Union earlier but brought back to the organisation by me with dignity and honour in the year 1958. I had the opportunity to get rid of them at the Annual General Meeting held at Gaya on 31st July 1961 but their submission attitude and assurance to behave well prompted me to plead forgiveness for them.

In the Annual General meeting of the Union at Moghulsarai Rajendra Prasad and Paritosh Banerjee were elected President

and Organising Secretary and D. P. Joshi a veteran Trade Unionist and Praja Socialist Party leader in Lucknow, was elected as Working President. Two of the ex Assistant General Secretaries viz. Nanigopal Chakravarty and Taroon Chatterjee who were just removed from service under application of Rule 149 contested the election and won. Bimal Dey who resigned from the Office-bearer of the Union sometimes after strike and was with the opposition group, contested as Vice President and lost securing only 41 votes. B. P. Roy Chowdhury who lost the election was a man of Peter Alvares and a Praja Socialist. Paritosh Banerjee who was maintaining a neutral role, joined this group after their defeat at Moghalsarai. Although Peter Alvares was backing the group secretly for sometimes past, he came out openly after the group's defeat at Moghalsarai. He did not accept the elected representatives of the union in the AIRF Working Committee and as Zonal Secretary inspite of the decision of AIRF Convention and his clear written earlier commitment and instead continued with the defeated candidates like Bimal Dey, B. P. Roy Chowdhury, M. M. Basu, Y. P. Singh etc. as representatives of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the Federation.

The demands of the militant section of the Railwaymen were (a) a proper and effective functioning of the Federation with decentralisation of powers and shifting of Headquarters from Bombay to Delhi and (b) replacing the non-railwaymen by railwaymen gradually in the functioning of the Federation which was accepted in principle. I had a long discussion with Peter Alvares at Udaipur along with a few others and he agreed

for a Railwayman General Secretary for the Federation in the next convention. During the said discussion I reminded Peter Alvares of his promise made after his election as General Secretary in Poona Convention of the Federation that he would leave the General Secretaryship after recognition of the Federation and go back to politics. Peter wanted to know who was the railwayman in my view as General Secretary of the Federation to which I named two names V. R. Malgi and Umraomal Purohit. Priya Gupta opposed to the suggestion of replacing Peter and felt that although I named Malgi and Purohit my intention was to become the General Secretary. I however could not realise then that Priya Gupta himself wanted to become General Secretary of A. I. R. F. and his subsequent steps were towards that end. He was furious and our meeting ended abruptly. After this, things started moving differently.

I was Treasurer of the Federation from 1957 to 1963 without any power and function to discharge. The bank account was operated by the General Secretary Peter Alvares and I was maintaining the accounts, preparing statements and sending the statements to me, the Treasurer, for my signature. I blindly signed statements for the years 1958-59 and requested Peter to send me proper expenditure statements for future. I also requested him to inform me about the time to take up the including affiliation fees received and major expenditures. But he did not do so. The officials of the International Railwaymen's Federation made a donation to the India Railwaymen's Federation during their visit to India (Calcutta & Bombay)

for relief to the victims of the strike but no such relief was given. I was not told how the money was spent. The expenses of the Federation were mostly expenses of one person Peter Alvares, its General Secretary. Guruswami the President of the Federation had grievance that he was not receiving his grants regularly and his expenses were not being reimbursed. I was helpless as Treasurer. I had no knowledge of the accounts of the Federation for four years i. e. 1959-60 to 1962-63 were audited and submitted to the Registrar of Trade Unions as they were not seen or signed by me. My repeated requests to submit proper details and vouchers of expenditures, were of no avail.

All these had scared Peter Alvares about me and my union. He saw danger in the slogan of 'a Railwayman' as General Secretary of the Federation and considered me as his rival. He was fortunate of having Priya Gupta as his supporter. Priya Gupta had an image for being victim of Rule 149 and for contesting the General election as member of Parliament on P. S. P. ticket. As the Assam portion which was major portion of the N. F. Railway was exempted from the strike of 1960 by the AIRF and Joint Council of Action, there was no adverse criticism regarding the performance of N. F. Railway Mazdoor union and the role of Priya Gupta in the strike. Priya Gupta was very much against the manner in which the strike was withdrawn and highly critical of Guruswami and others where there was no strike. He however changed his stand subsequently.

Immediately after the withdrawal of strike there was a demand from the

striking section to take up with the unions responsible for no strike. Proposals were made several times to discuss and analyse the weakness and reasons, but such discussions could not be held. The non-strikers and defaulters in the All India Railwaymen's Federation were in overwhelming majority. Although they were lying low at the beginning and were apprehensive of actions against them, subsequently they rallied round Peter Alvares in destroying a militant union Viz. Eastern Railwaymen's Union. In their greed for power these elements destroyed the hope of an Independent Free (free from the influence of Administration and political parties) and militant Trade Union for the Railwaymen and by the Railwaymen.

Rajendra Singh who contested the General Election could not be re-elected as member of the Parliament. As member of Parliament he had the facility of free travelling by train anywhere in the country. As President of the Union he had also the facility of free travel but such facility was restricted upto the jurisdiction of the Eastern Railway which was Moghulsarai. Rajendra Singh had his business in Delhi with his nephew as partner and he was required to go to Delhi frequently. All India Railwaymen's Federation had a few card passes available between any station to any station on Indian Railways for use of the office-bearers of the Federation. Card Passes for President and General Secretary were by name and rest were for one 'office-bearer of AIRF'. I was given one such card pass by Peter Alvares for organisational purposes. Rajendra Singh was using that card pass frequently for his travel to Delhi and other places with

the knowledge of Peter Alvares. Sometimes in 1963- before the AIRF General Council Meeting at Coimbatore on 20-22 May 1963, Peter Alvares wrote me to say that the said card pass should not be allowed to be used by Rajendra Singh who was not an office-bearer of AIRF and asked me to return the same. I showed the letter to Rajendra Singh and wanted back the card pass to send the same to Peter. Rajendra Singh asked me not to worry as he would have a talk with Peter Alvares which he did and continued to use the Card Pass. It is true that Rajendra Singh after the Annual General Meeting of the Union held at Moghalsarai on 22-25 October 1962 did not directly involve himself in the internal dispute and did not side with the defeated candidates - but gradually walked into the parlour of conspiracy against me. I had a feeling that it was decided amongst Peter Alvares, Rajendra Singh and their followers together with Eastern Railway Administration and Railway Board that I should be out of Railway Trade Union movement and as a preliminary step should be suspended. As Rajendra Singh hesitated to initiate the suspension first, Peter Alvares undertook the task.

In the General Council meeting of the Federation held at Coimbatore on 22-23 May 1963 it was decided by a majority of vote that R. C. Chakravarty be debarred from representing AIRF in any matter for a period of six months."

President of the Union Rajendra Singh wrote to the General Manager Eastern Railway on 17th June 1963 informing that he had suspended R. C. Chakravarty

General Secretary and A. N. Bhattacharjee, Treasurer of the Union.

The Chief Personnel Officer Eastern Railway M. A. Ashraff circulated the suspension to all concerned on 19th June 1963.

Rajendra Singh as President allegedly convened an extra-ordinary General Body meeting at Dehri-on-Soane on 13th July 1963 and set up a parallel body of office-bearers with Paritosh Banerjee as General Secretary. Peter Alvares accepted this set of office-bearers and informed the Railway Board by a letter dated 14th July 1963. This was docketed by the Board to the Eastern Railway next day. They had earlier tried to dislodge me through a no confidence motion in the Central Council meeting held at Sahibganj on 25-27 March, 1963 but failed miserably. The no confidence motion was moved by Y. P. Singh and seconded by Rameswar Prasad and supported by none else.

They all found it next to impossible to remove me from the position in a democratic manner or in accordance with the Constitution and Rules of the Union. Thus they had to conspire and take recourse to arbitrary and unconstitutional means to get rid of me. They believed in the Proverb "nothing is unfair in love and war" and acted accordingly for power.

There was no constitutional sanction of the action taken by the Coimbatore General Council meeting of A. I. R. U. There were provisions in the AIRF constitution for 'suspension' and disciplinary action, but after giving an opportunity to show cause and following certain procedures. As there was no offence or intended damage to AIRF, charges could not be framed or levelled.

My only offence was to demand a Railway man in service as General Secretary of AIRF. Even the overwhelming majority of non-strikers had support in their mind for the demand. They were convinced that it was easy to remove a Railwayman office-bearer in case of his doing any wrong but it was very difficult to get rid of an outsider specially with political affiliation. Peter considered this a great office. I heard that B. C. Ghosh an Advocate of Patna High Court who fought Priya Gupta's case of removal under Rule 149 and was attached to N. F. Railway Mazdoor Union came to Peter's assistance and gave his opinion that debarring an office-bearer from functioning for certain period was not a disciplinary action and was AIRF's prerogative. Railway Board was duly instructed of this action by Peter Alvares and the Board in turn informed the General Manager Eastern Railway by early June 1963.

There was also no constitutional sanction behind the suspension of the General Secretary of the Union by the President without reference to the central council. This was not done and complaints lodged to the Administration had no effect.

A study of the results of election at the Annual General meeting of the Union held at Moghalsarai on 21st to 25th Oct. 1962 together with setting up of parallel body of office-bearers in the so-called extra ordinary General Body meeting at Dehri-on-Sone on 13th July 1963 by Rajendra Singh will show how the defeated and disgraced persons were brought to power through back door.

The election of office bearers by secret ballot was held under the control

and supervision of the President Rajendra Singh and all requisite facilities were extended to the contesting candidates. 208 members of the General Body present out of 212 participated in the ballot.

The following results were obtained on counting of the ballot papers in presence of the contesting candidates :—

PRESIDENT

Votes Pollad
in favour

Sri Rajendra Singh,
Hony. Member,
New Delhi Elected

uncontested

WORKING PRESIDENT 1

1. Sri Devendra Prosad Joshi,
Hony, Member,
Lucknow 145 (elected)
2. Sri Debraj Adhikary,
Booking Clerk,
Naihati 52

VICE PRESIDENTS 5

1. Sri Dulal Chandra Chatterjee,
Guard, Dhanbad 156 (elected)
2. Sri Jibesh Prosad, writer
under IOW Patna 162 (elected)
3. Sri Chandrika Prosad
Chowdhury
APWI, Pakur 141 (elected)
4. Sri M. S. Hoda Chargeman,
Workshops, Jamalpur 164 (elected)
5. Sri Kedar Nath Cabinman,
Madhupur 164 (elected)
6. Sri Patit Paban Roy
Clerk, Signal Shop
Howrah 7
7. Sri Yogendra Prosad Singh
Goods Clerk,
Dehri-on-Sone 50
8. Sri D. S. Yadav,
FIC Loco Asansol 49

9. Sri Bimal Dey
ALWI, Howrah 41

GENERAL SECRETARY 1

1. Sri Ram Chandra
Chakravarty, 167(elected)
2. Sri S. K. Upadhyay
Ex Railwayman
Hony. Member,
Moghalsarai 38

ASSTT. GENERAL SECRETARIES 4 Votes Polled in favour

1. Sri Rabindra Nath Ghosh
ABC Howrah 153(elected)
2. Sri Nanigopal Chakravarty,
Ex. Railwayman Hony.
Member Howrah 168 (elected)
3. Sri Taroon Chatterjee,
Ex. Railwayman Hony.
Member Calcutta 156 (elected)
4. Sri A. N. Cakravarty,
Clerk, CYM-HG Howrah 16
5. Sri Manoj Mohan Basu,
Clerk, CCS office KG
Calcutta 55
6. Sri Bishnupada Roy
Chowdhury Estimator
CME's Drawing Office
Calcutta 39
7. Sri T. P. Sinha
Guard Gaya 130(elected)
8. Sri Subhas Chandra Mitra,
Clerk, DPO's Office
Sealdah 56

ORGANISING SECRETARIES 2

1. Sri Bibhuti Bhusan Dey
Ticket Collector
Ranaghat 158 (elected)
2. Sri Paritosh Banerjee
ABC Howrah. 150(elected)
3. Sri Baleshwar Pandey
Shunter Loco Asansol 59

TREASURER 1

1. Sri Anadi Nath Bhattacharjee
Statistical Assistant
Chart Room
Fairlie Place Calcutta 171 (elected)
2. Sri AmalKumar Roy, Clerk,
Construction Accounts
Calcutta 30
3. Sri Susanta Kumar Ghosh ,
Clerk, DS Office Howrah 0

The president announced the following as having been elected as office bearers of the Union.

1. **PRESIDENT** Sri Rajendra Singh
(Honorary Member)
-uncontested.
2. **WORKING PRESIDENT** Sri Devendra Prasad Joshi
(Hony. Member)
3. **VICE- PRESIDENTS**
- (i) Sri Dulal Chandra Chatterjee
Guard, Dhanbad.
- (ii) Sri Jibesh Prasad
Writer under IOW,
Patna.
- (iii) Sri Chandrika
Prasad Chowdhury
APWI Pakur.
- (iv) Sri M. S. Hoda
Chageman
Workshop
Jamalpur.
- (v) Sri Kedar Nath
Cabinman
Madhupur.

4. **GENERAL SECRETARY** Sri Ram Chandra
Chakravarty, DFI
Howrah.

5. **ASSTT. GENL SECRETARIES**
- (i) Sri Rabindra Nath
Ghosh
ABC Howrah.

- (ii) Sri Nani Gopal Chakravarty (Hony. Member).
- (iii) Sri Taroon Chatterjee (Hony. Member).
- (iv) Sri T. P. Sinha (Guard, Gaya).
6. ORGANISING SECRETARIES
- (i) Sri Bibhuti, Bhusan Dey, Ticket Collector, Ranaghat.
- (ii) Sri Paritosh Banerjee, A. B. C. Howrah
7. TREASURER Sri Andi Nath Bhattachrjee, Statistical Assistant Chart Room Fairlie Place Calcutta.

N. B. :

Two of the Assistant General Secretaries Viz. Taroon Chatterjee and Nanigopal Chakravarty having subsequently resigned the vacancies were filled up by A. L. Roy Chowdhury and Bibhuti Bhusan Dey at the Central Council meeting of the Union held at Sahibganj on 25th - 27th March 1963.

The following persons were purported to have been elected in the so-called extra ordinary General Meeting alleged to have been held at Dehri-on-Sone on 13th July, 1963.

- President** Rajendra Singh
- Vice-Presidents**
- * Bimal Chandra Dey.
 - * Debraj Adhikary
 - A. M. Williams.
 - * D. S. Yadav.
 - Amaresh Sen

- General Secretary** Paritosh Banerjee.
- Jt. Genl. Secretry** * Y. P. Singh.
- Asstt. General Secretaries**
- * Subhas Mitra.
 - * B. P. Roy Chowdhury.
 - * S. K. Upadhyaya.
- Organising Secretary** Bimal Krishna Bhattacharya.
- * Baleswar Pandey
- Treasurer** * Amal Roy.

* Contested at the Annual General Meeting of the Union held at Moghalsarai on 21-25 October 1962 but were badly defeated.

After the setting up of a parallel set of office-bearers in the so called extra ordinary General Body Meeting held at Dehri-on-Sone on 13th July 1963 the Eastern Railway Administration superficially maintaining a neutral role officially stopped facilities of recognition to the elected body of the Union. Even earlier although Rajendra Singh as 'President suspended me and A. N. Bhatucharjee - General Secretary and Treasurer only, the Administration virtually sopped negotiating with other office bearers as well. The Administration's attitude was hypocritic and its actions were to play one against the other. Of these correspondence I am quoting below three letters (1) from the General Manager Eastern Railway to the two Eastern Railwaymen's Union (2) Rajendra

Railwaymen's Union's letter to the General Manager and (3) Registrar of Trade Unions letter to Sri Paritosh Banerjee the so-called General Secretary of the Union 'elected' at the extraordinary General Meeting at Dehri -on-Sone which would give a clear picture of events that happened.

Telephone : 22-6811 (14 Lines)

Telegram : 'GENERLY'

**EASTERN RAILWAY
GENERAL MANAGER'S OFFICE
17 Netaji Subhas Road
Calcutta-1**

Ref. No. E/1160/3/Union/TU
Dated - 28th August, 1963

From: The General Manager,
Eastern Railway,
Calcutta.

To: (1) The Eastern Railwaymen's Union,
Central Office
23 & 24, Strand Road
Calcutta.

(2) The Eastern Railwaymen's Union,
162, Bepin Behari Ganguly Street,
Calcutta.

Dear Sirs, Re: Affairs of the
Eastern Railwaymen's
Union.

From the several letters received by this Administration (itemised in Annexure A to this letter) from the President, the working President and the General Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union, and the discussions which the President and the Working President had

with the C. P. O. of this Railway, it appears that.

(i) The President in exercise of his powers conferred on him under the Constitution and Rules of the Union, suspended Sarvashree R. C. Chakravarty and Anadi Nath Bhattacharjee from the offices of the General Secretary and the Treasurer respectively of the Union, with effect from 17. 6. 63 subject to ratification by the Central Council of the Union :

(ii) The working Committee of the Union (that had been called at Patna on 17. 6. 63 by the General Secretary at the instance of and to suit the convenience of the President and which had been postponed by the latter in a letter dated 16. 6. 63 addressed to all members of the Committee and copy endorsed to the General Secretary) appears to have met on 17. 6. 63 and is said to have passed a resolution seeking explanation of the President and debarring him from exercising any of his powers as President;

(iii) A Central Council meeting called by the President at Patna on 26. 6. 63 appears to have been held on that date and place and is said to have passed, amongst others, resolutions to the following effect :-

(a) Ratifying the action of the President in suspending the General Secretary and the Treasurer, as required by the Constitution and Rules of the Union: and

(b) Suspending, on its own motion, the Working President, and the Vice-Presidents and one of the Asst. General Secretaries

(iv) A working Committee meeting

of the Union appears to have been held at Howrah on 27. 6. 63 when the President was suspended from exercising his powers and a satisfactory explanation of his conduct was demanded ;

(v) A Central Council meeting called on behalf of the General Secretary at Howrah on 27th & 28th June, 1963 appears to have been held on the dates mentioned, and to have amongst other matters, passed resolutions to the following effect :-

(a) disapproving the action of the President in suspending the General Secretary and the Treasurer, asking the General Secretary to issue a charge-sheet against and declaring as unconstitutional all the actions taken by the President from 17. 6. 63; and

(b) Endorsing all decisions said to have been taken by the Working Committee at its meetings held on 17. 6. 63 and 27. 6. 63.

(vi) The Working President, General Secretary, one of the Vice-Presidents, Treasurer and one of the Asstt. General Secretaries filed a Civil Suit in the City Civil Court and a rule was issued by that court against the President. The court also issued an adinterim injunction restraining the President from interfering with existing incumbent of the posts of Working President, General Secretary, Vice-President and Asstt. General Secretary in their work.

(vii) On 13th and 14th July, 1963 an Extra-ordinary General Meeting of the Union was called by the President and a completely new set of Central Office-Bearers were elected.

(2) In course of several discussions which the President and the Working President had separately with the C. P. O. of this Railway, it was unequivocally made clear by the latter that it was not the intention of the Administration to inter-meddle in the disputes or decide between the two parties and all that the Administration desired was to see that the rights and privileges granted to the Union are duly and properly exercised by the Union as one whole in accordance with the terms and conditions of the recognition and faction intersect between the rival groups should be avoided. For this purpose it had been, and is, the earnest desire of the Administration that the dispute between the two parties is resolved by themselves and they should all act unitedly. It was in the furtherance of this aim that the Administration extended the facilities of special casual leave and passes to the members of the Central Council of the Union to attend the meetings called by the President at Patna on 26. 6. 63 and the General Secretary at Howrah on 27th & 28th June/63 in the hope that this might resolve the disputes and differences.

(3) As it has not been possible for the two parties to arrive at a settlement so far and as requests from both sides are being received for the extension of the facilities provided in the terms and conditions of recognition, the time has now come when this Administration has no alternative, but to request both sides to settle the differences by whatever lawful means open to them. In the meantime, it will be appreciated that it will not be possible for the Administration to extend facilities to either party in the Central Office or in the Branches where both sides are claiming to be office bearers.

(4) This issues with the Personal approval of the General Manager.

(5) Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully

Sd/-N. S. Vembu

for General Manager.

D/A:-Refd.to

ANNEXURE 'A'

References of the several letters received by the Administration referred to in para 1 of letter No. E/1160/3/Union/TU, dt.28.8.63

... ..

1. Letter No. President/C dt. 17.6.63 from the President, ERMU to G.M., E. Rly.

Re : Suspension of Shri R. C. Chakravarty from the post of Genl. Secy., ERMU

2. Letter No. President/C dt. 17.6.63 from the President ERMU to G. M., E. Rly.

Re : Suspension of Shri Anadi Nath Bhattacharjee from the post of Treasurer, ERMU

3. Letter No. G/61 dt. 20.6.63 from the Genl. Secy., ERMU to G.M., E. Rly.

Re : Decision taken at the meeting held on 17.6.63 at Patna, enclosing copies of the decision.

4. Letter No. President/C dt. 27.6.63 from the President, ERMU to G.M., E. Rly.

Re : Resolutions passed at the Central Council meeting held on 26.6.63 at Patna enclosing copies of the resolutions.

5. Letter No. C/22/WC/2, dt. 27.6.63 from the Working President, ERMU

to CPO, E.Rly.

Re : Resolutions passed (i) by the Working Committee and (ii) by the Central Council in their meetings held on 27.6.63 at Howrah-enclosing copies of resolutions.

6. Letter No. C/25/WC/2, dt. 29.6.63 from the Working President, ERMU to CPO, E. Rly.

Re : Resolutions passed in the (i) Working Committee & (ii) Central Council meetings held on 27, 28 & 29th June '63 at Howrah - enclosing copies of the resolutions.

7. Letter No. EX/Org/GM/VII/63-DOS dt. 14.7.63 from the President, ERMU to G.M., E. Rly.

Re : Election of office-bearers in the extraordinary general meeting held on 13th & 14th July '63 at Dehri-on-Sone furnishing a list of office bearers elected.

EASTERN RAILWAYMEN'S UNION

23 & 24 Strand Road,

Calcutta-1

No. G 61

To

Dated, 4.9.1963

The General Manager

Eastern Railway,

Calcutta.

Dear Sir,

Re: Affairs of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union

Ref:Your letter No.E/12/60/31/ Union/TU dt. 28.8.63

I acknowledge receipt of your above quoted letter. The letter was placed before the members of the executive, who were present at Calcutta on 28. 8. 63.

It appears that the decision as communicated vide your above quoted letter has been arrived at on incorrect assessment and erroneous appreciation of facts. It also appears that all the communications made from this office and discussions that took place between the Working President and General Secretary on one side and the Chief Personnel Officer and the General Manager of the Railway on the other have not been taken into consideration in arriving at the decision.

The correct position is reproduced below again :-

1) According to the desire of the President for taking swift disciplinary action against certain officials of the Union for their indisciplined behaviour, the General Secretary in exercise of his powers conferred on him under the Constitution, Rules and Bye-laws of the Union suspended them on 10. 6. 63.

2) The Working Committee of the Union met at Patna on 17. 6. 63 and took certain decisions inter-alia ratifying the aforesaid actions of the General Secretary and debarring the President Sri Rajendra Singh from exercising his powers. The Working committee meeting at Patna was convened under proper notice which did not indicate that it was convened at the instance of and to suit the convenience of the President. The Rules and Bye-laws of the Union are very clear which empowers the General Secretary alone to convene meetings which can only be postponed under certain specific circumstances and not at anybody's desire. The letter in question dated 16. 6. 63 addressed to the members of the Committee and purported to have been signed by the President was

distributed to the members only on 17. 6. 63. As the President had no such power and also as he refused to attend the meeting of the Working committee himself being present at Patna on 17. 6. 63 the members present proceeded with the meeting and took the decisions. The decision of debarring the President from exercising his powers was personally communicated to him at Patna on 17. 6. 63 by one of the Assistant General Secretaries. Instead of avoiding to attend the meeting and attempting to postpone it in excess of his powers, the President should have attended and placed his views before the members.

3) The President thereafter not in exercise of his power conferred on him under the Constitution and Rules of the Union, but in excess of his powers suspended Sarvasree R.C. Chakravarty and Anadi Nath Bhattacharjee from the offices of the General Secretary and Treasurer of the Union vide his letter dated 17. 6. 63. The President under the Rules has power to suspend a Branch Office-bearer in emergency and not any office-bearer of the Central Body.

4) On the receipt of the President's letter dated 17. 6. 63, 83 members of the Central Council out of 115 objected to the said action of the President on 21. 6. 63 and requested him to attend the meetings of the Central Council and Working Committee convened at Howrah on 27th & 28th June '63. A wire was also sent to him to the said effect by the Central Council members.

5) An emergent Central Council Meeting and ordinary Working committee meeting in accordance with the Rules of the Union was called by the General Secretary on

27th & 28th June, 1963 at Howrah to consider inter-alia the aforesaid actions of the President.

6) On seeing the Notice of the Central Council meeting convened at Howrah, the President called an ordinary meeting of the Central Council (not emergent as would be evident from the notice itself) at Patna on 26. 6. 63 with a back-dated notice which was not received by most of the members. The meeting itself was bad as it was not convened with clear 15 days notice as required under the Rules and the President had no such power to convene the meeting.

7) The Administration, however, did not circulate the suspension of the Branch Officials made by the General Secretary on 10. 6. 63 and ratified by the Working Committee Meeting held on 17. 6. 63 as well as the decisions of the Working Committee in suspending the Organising Secretary Sri Paritosh Banerjee and debarring the President from exercising his powers, but circulated the actions taken by the President in suspending Sarvasree R. C. Chakravarty and Anadi Nath Bhattacharjee, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively on 19. 6. 63. The Chief Personnel Officer made a reference to the Working President of the Union under his letter No.E/1160/3/Union/TU dt. 24. 6. 63 seeking clarifications in regard to the decision of the Working Committee Meeting at Patna in debarring the President from exercising his powers (which were given) and enquiring if the Central Council members could be spared on usual facilities for attending the meeting at Howrah on 27th and 28th June 1963. The next day the Administration of its own spared the members of the Central Council including associate members and

invitees who attended the Central Council Meeting at Sahibganj on 25th, 26th & 27th March 1963 to attend the Central Council Meeting at Howrah on 27th & 28th June 1963 and set of persons whose names were given by the President for attending the Central Council Meeting at Patna on 26th June, 1963.

8) The reasons adduced by the Chief Personnel officer for such an action on the part of the Administration was that the Administration wanted to give chance to both the sides to hold meetings and see for itself if the President's actions in suspending the General Secretary and Treasurer were approved and ratified and if there was no approval, he would withdraw the Circular No.E/1159/1/Union/TU dt.19. 6. 63 to all concerned intimating the suspension of the General Secretary and Treasurer by the President.

9) On being pointed out by the Union that the list submitted by the President for Patna meeting contained a large number of persons who were not members of the Central Council and that the list of Central Council members recorded by the Registrar of Trade Unions contained 112 members, the Chief Personnel Officer informed that about 112 names were common in both the lists and that the Administration would either treat those persons as Central Council members who attended the Central Council Meeting at Sahibganj or would accept the names viz., 112 for the purpose of holding out if the President's actions were approved or disapproved. The Chief Personnel Officer also assured that it was possible for the Administration to bring out the actual attendance in the Central Council Meetings and to verify the correctness of the decisions taken at

necessary by reference of the persons attending who were railway employees. He, under his letter No. E/1160/3/Union/TU dated 25. 6. 63 asked both the President and the General Secretary of the Union to submit the attendance of the meetings together with the resolutions adopted bearing signatures of the members attending, on the body of the resolutions.

10) In accordance with the decision of the Administration, the Union submitted the attendance register and the resolution bearing the signatures of the members attending the Central Council and Working Committee meetings at Howrah on 27th & 28th June 1963, which inter alia disapproved the aforesaid actions of the President and placed him under suspension. The attendance was 81 out of 115 Central Council members.

11) The President, however, did not submit any such attendance register or resolutions signed by the persons attending the Patna meeting. The Administration was well aware that this he could not have done as because hardly 10 members of the Central Council out of 115 attended the meeting at Patna.

12) Since then the Union had been requesting the Administration to inform the results of its verification of the attendance etc. in the respective Central Council meetings as well as the genuineness of the decisions taken and also for the withdrawal of the Administration's Circular dt. 19. 6. 63. The Working President, General Secretary and the other office-bearers were told every time that the matter was under examination and result would be communicated shortly.

13) As the dispute or the controversy was

between the President of the Union on one side and rest of the Central office-bearers and the Central Council members on the other, and as it was felt that if the President was restrained from pursuing his unconstitutional and illegal actions it would help the Administration in withdrawing its circular dt. 19. 6. 63 circulating the suspension of the General Secretary and Treasurer at the instance of the President. A case in the City Civil Court Calcutta was instituted and an adinterim injunction was obtained restraining Sri Rajendra Singh and others from interfering with the rights of the General Secretary and Treasurer and certain other office-bearers. Although assured through discussions the Administration however, did not withdraw the circular dt. 19.6. 63 in question to allow the Union to function effectively on the plea that the opposite side according to its information were moving in the court of law to establish the validity of the President's action and their alleged ratification by the Patna Central Council meeting.

14) In the meanwhile, it was reported that an Extra-ordinary General Meeting convened by the President, was held at Dehri-on-Sone on 13.7.63 wherein a new set of office-bearers were stated to have been elected. The proceedings and the decisions of the said purported Extra-ordinary General Meeting have not yet seen the light of the day and are not known to the members. Although you have mentioned about this in the Annexure to your letter under reply, you have not sent a copy of the same which you are requested to do early. The fact was that none of the Branches or members of the General Body were aware of the

said meeting and did not receive any notice till 12.7.63. The Branch Secretary of the Union at Dehri-on-Sone could only know in the afternoon of 12.7.63 that an Extra-ordinary General Meeting of the Union was going to be held at Dehri-on-Sone the next day i. e., on 13.7.63. In terms of the Constitution and Rules of the Union the meeting was invalid as no proper notice was given and the appropriate authority did not convene the meeting. Moreover, the attendance of the General Body Members in the said meeting could not have been even one fifteenth of the total strength not to speak of one-third required to form the quorum. It is further to be noted that the constitution, Rules and By-laws of the Union do not provide any scope for election of office-bearers and Executive members in the Extra-ordinary General Meeting which can only be done in the regular Annual General Meeting for which due notice has been issued by the General Secretary of the Union on 16. 8. 63 and the meeting will be held at Jamalpur on 20th, 21st, 22nd & 23rd September 1963. All these were explained to the Administration through discussions.

15) The alleged decisions taken at the purported meeting held at Patna as well as the so-called elections held at the Extra-ordinary General Meeting on 13. 7. 63 at Dehri -on-Sone were forwarded to the Registrar of Trade Unions by the President with the request to record the changes and accord his sanction. The decisions of the Central Council Meeting taken at Howrah were also forwarded to the Registrar of Trade Unions for recording the changes in the office-bearers as the President and certain others were placed under suspension. The Registrar, after

due examination of the matter, decided to maintain the status quo.

16) In course of the discussions that the General Secretary had with the General Manager on 10. 8. 63 the aforesaid position as well as the above decision of the Registrar of the Trade Unions were inter-alia communicated to him. The General manager accordingly agreed to make a reference to the Registrar of Trade Unions and assured that if the Registrar had maintained the status quo, the Administration might find out a way to resolve the stalemate in the functioning of the Union pending decisions in court of Law.

17) On a further reference by Sri Paritosh Banerjee, the so-called General Secretary stated to have been elected in the purported camera Extra-ordinary General Meeting on 13. 7. 63 seeking clarification of the status quo, the Registrar of Trade Unions under his memo dt. 28. 8. 63 has made it absolutely clear that he was unable to take cognizance of the office-bearers reported to have been elected on 13. 7. 63 in the meeting held at Dehri-on-Sone till such time its validity is established in a court of law and would treat the Executive Committee elected in Oct. 1962 at the Moghalsara Annual General Meeting as the Executive Committee of the Union till such time the said elections are not declared valid by any order of court of law. A copy of the said letter of the Registrar of Trade Unions duly attested is enclosed herewith for your information.

18) Your decision communicated in the above quoted letter also calls for the settlement of the disputes between the President on one side and the rest of the

Central Council members and Central Office-bearers on the other through lawful means (which presumably includes decision through a Court of Law) and in the meanwhile, not to extend facilities provided in the terms and conditions of recognition to either party in the Central office or in the Branches, where both sides are claiming to be office-bearers.

19) The difference between your decision and that of the Registrar of Trade Unions is that while the Registrar of Trade Unions decision maintains the status quo to allow the Union to function your decision does not recognise the status quo and practically stops the functioning of the Union which does not appear to be just and fair.

20) Up till now to the knowledge of this Union, the stand of the Administration was that it was unable to decide the validity or invalidity of the President's actions in suspending the General Secretary and the Treasurer and their alleged ratification by the purported Central Council Meeting at Patna. This is the first time, it appears, that the Administration has taken cognizance of the so-called elections of office-bearers held at the purported Extra-ordinary General meeting of the Union on 13. 7. 63 and is treating the said body as parallel to the existing one duly elected in the Annual General Meeting of the Union in October 1962. It is only in cognizance of the said body of office-bearers purported to have been elected on 13. 7. 63 that the Administration has taken note of the creation of parallel bodies in the Branches. Till the issue of the letter under reply, although such parallel bodies were in existence the Administration was dealing with the Central office-bearers whose lists were forwarded by the Union, excepting

Sri R. C. Chakravarty, General Secretary and Sri Anadi Nath Bhattacharjee, Treasurer whose status according to the Administration was under dispute due to their suspension by the President.

21) The Union is one and indivisible and registered with the Registrar of Trade Unions with one registration number. The Administration has by mutual agreement conferred recognition to the Union with certain rights and privileges which are to continue with the continuance of the recognition. Along with the grant of certain rights and facilities, the Administration has made it obligatory upon the Union as a primary condition of recognition to fulfil the statutory obligations and in doing so has parted with its authority in such statutory matters.

22) you will appreciate that the Union has co-operated with the Administration in this dispute and still now is prepared to cooperate in arriving at a lawful decision. The points involved in this dispute are arising out of the Rules of the Union and relating to the changes of its office. According to the item No. 2 of the terms and conditions of recognition to this Union by the Eastern Railway Administration on 10. 8. 59, the Union is governed in all matters by the provisions of the Trade Unions Act. Under the provisions of the Trade Unions Act it is statutorily necessary among others that the Constitution & Rules of the Union and their amendments from time to time and the changes of Executive Committee including the office-bearers are approved and recorded by the Registrar.

23) You will appreciate that the lawful means open to this Union is to seek remedies provided under the Indian Trade

Unions Act and the Union has done so by placing the case before the Registrar of Trade Unions. The President of the Union and his associates also felt similarly and approached the Registrar of Trade Unions who has given his decision.

24) Even in law suits you will appreciate, there are appeals and one can go up to the Hon'ble Supreme Court for seeking legal remedies but till such time the decision of a lower court is set aside by a higher one, such decisions are treated valid and acted upon.

25) The difficulty expressed by the Administration in dealing with the Union due to existence of two parallel bodies is not appreciated in view of the decision of the statutory authority, the Registrar of Trade Unions before whom there is one body viz, the body elected in the Annual General Meeting in October 1962 which the Administration also has been recognising till the issue of the letter under reply.

26) Cessation of rights and facilities enjoined with the grant of recognition and refusal to negotiate with its properly constituted body are in effect doing away with the recognition of the Union. The reasons adduced for such an attitude on the part of the Administration viz., existence of parallel bodies is not tenable. The advice to settle the internal differences which has nothing to do with the terms of recognition, through legal methods just to be entitled to the rights and privileges of recognition is not justified. The rules of recognition do not envisage such steps nor the said rules permit withdrawal or suspension of recognition indirectly as has been done and you will kindly appreciate that it will not be entirely wrong if the members feel that such an

indirect course has been adopted by the Administration to break the Union.

May we, therefore, request you to reassess the whole position in correct perspective and allow the Body elected in October 1962 to function until it is declared invalid by any order of court and thus do justice to the Union.

An early decision will be much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-R. C. Chakravarty
GENERAL SECRETARY

Encl: One.

Government of West Bengal.
Office of the Registrar of Trade
Unions, West Bengal, New Secretariat
Buildings, Calcutta-1,

No.

From: Shri S. N. Roy,
Additional Registrar of Trade
Unions,
West Bengal,
To: Shri Paritosh Banerjee,
Eastern Railwaymen's Union,
162, B. B. Ganguly Street,
Calcutta-12

Dated.

Sub: Dispute regarding
Office-bearers of the
Eastern Railwaymen's
Union.

Sir,

With reference to your letter dated
19. 8. 63 seeking clarification of certain

points in connection with this office letter No.2845 T. U. R. dt. 8. 8. 63 addressed to Sri Y. P. Singh, I am to inform that the Executive Committee reported elected in October 1962-63 not having been declared invalid by any order of Court will be deemed to be the Executive Committee of the Union for 1962-63 subject to any order of Court and will be maintained by this office until the disputes referred to in this office letter referred to above have been decided by any Court's order. I am also to inform that the validity of the purported election of office bearers reported to have been held in the extraordinary general meeting on 13. 7. 63 has been disputed by Shri R. C. Chakraborty, General Secretary for 1962-63 who also appears to have issued notice convening the Annual General Meeting for 1963-64 for holding general election, in September, 1963. This office also has no information whether the injunction order issued by the City Civil Court on 11. 7. 63 in T. S. No. 433 of 1963 has been vacated. The office-bearers reported to have been elected on 13. 7. 63 for 1963-64 cannot, therefore, be recorded in this state unless a Court's Order is produced declaring its validity.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/. S. N. Roy

Additional Registrar of
Trade Unions, West Bengal.

Memo No. 3193/2/TUR dated 28. 8. 1963.

Copy forwarded for information to :-

- (1) Shri R. Singh, President, Eastern Railwaymen's Union,
162, B. B. Ganguly Street, Calcutta-12

(2) Shri R. C. Chakraborty, General Secretary, Eastern Railwaymen's Union, 23 & 24 Strand Road, Calcutta-1

Sd/- S. N. Roy

Additional Registrar of
Trade Unions, West
Bengal.

I and Anadi Bhattacharjee were also removed from the directorship of E. R. C. Employees' Co-operative Credit Society by giving effect to the amended provisions of the Bengal Co-operative Societies' rules that suspended or punished employees could not continue as Directors of Railway Co-operative Societies. Sarvasatya Mohan Basu, B. P. Roy Chowdhary, Bimal Dey, B. T. Burman and Ramdulal Banerjee and the officers of the Railway Administration who were in the Minority Committee by virtue of their being nominated Directors voted to elect me was done to take "revenge" of the fact that the contestants suffered in the election at Moghalsara. While I cannot not have been much objected to removal of a few directors under the shadow of certain rules specifically intended for the purpose, the provisions of these amended Rules on implementation has debarred majority of the 99% share holders from being elected as delegates to the Annual General Meeting or Directors on account of provisions other than ensure (due to provisions allowing the Administration to remove Societies by their Satelets. Such was the actions of my opponents.

Paritosh Banerjee in the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Peter Banerjee in the all India Railwaymen's Federation



Demonstration of the E.R.M.U. before the Parliament on the occasion of "No truncation" of EIR Movement in 1952



1954 - Burdwan Central Council Meeting (ERMU Joint)

Sitting in chair - i) M. N. Rao - KGP, v) M. M. P. Singh- DNR, vii) N. K. Moitra - KGP,
viii) K. R. Murti - KGP,
ix) Gouri Pati Rao - WAT, x) P. K. Mukherjee - HWH, xi) R. C. Chakravarty - HWH,
xii) P. C. Dasgupta - HWH,
xiii) S. N. Singh - President, xiv) N. N. Sanyal - KGP, xv) K. M. Bhadra - KGP

the name of Praja Socialist Party rallied round all the supporters of the Party against me and my supporters in this fight. Sri Bidyut Bose the then General Secretary of the West Bengal Praja Socialist party and Sri Bagaram Tulpule General Secretary of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Common friends, who interested themselves in the matter were offered blank cheques by me with full authority to enquire into the allegations. Bagaramji after some enquiry himself deputed Sri Deven Sen head of the West Bengal Hind Majdoor Sabha for the purpose. Sri Sen who subsequently felt that the disputes and quarrels between the Eastern Railwaymen's Union and the defeated candidates of the Union at Moghalsarai Annual Meeting had emanated out of bitterness at the Federation level and suggested through his letter to Peter Alvares for settlement of the affairs by mutual discussions between Sri Alvares and me. Obviously there was no response from Peter. To Bidyut Bose I offered my full cooperation and through my letter wrote on 12. 5. 63. "I expect your sincere judgement in these matters be it in my favour or against. I should be told in clear and categorical terms if I am wrong and if not., these disrupters should be checked from their nefarious activities in the name of the party or openly denounced. If they are honest and sincere, they should place facts to the leaders of the Bengal Party in whose jurisdiction the games are being played and not to the leaders far away from the area and for whom it is not possible to judge things in correct perspective". I also met Asoke Mehata Chairman of the P. S. P. and narrated the incidents. Sri Mehata gave a patient hearing to me. Sri Mehata's views as I

understood were :- (i) Both sides should be agreeable to his arbitration and make an approach to him with statements of points of dispute to be arbitrated (2) The Praja Socialist Party had no directions in the matters of the All India Railwaymen's Federation (3) If any body was doing any wrong thing in the name of the party in the Federation or outside and thereby giving occasion for grievance to others, on receipt of complaints from the aggrieved party, he would place the matter before the National Executive for its decision.

I approached to Peter Alvares to agree to Sri Mehata's arbitration and to make a joint approach with me to Sri Mehata for the purpose to which he refused. Sri D. P. Joshi Working President made a complaint to the National Executive without any result. Hence the leaders felt themselves helpless or thought it imprudent to interfere.

Following the defeat in the Moghalsarai election a suit was filed in the City Civil Court, Calcutta by these disruptionists challenging the validity of the election and instead of seeking a decision the case was allowed to linger.

The games of the opponents were to damage the Union at all costs. Our efforts were to save the Union from the damage. They had nothing to lose but gain. We had nothing to gain but loss. They were in the offensive, we were on the defensive.

In this context we met at Jamalpur in the Annual General Meeting, on 20th to 23rd September 1963. I again offered to relinquish but it was not agreed by the General Body.

The following were elected office-bearers of the Union in the said meeting :-

President : Devendra Prasad Joshi.

Working

President : Jibesh Prasad.

Vice

Presidents : 1. Kedar Nath, Cabinman

2. Dulal Chandra
Chatterjee.

3. Chandrika Prasad
Chowdhury.

4. Beman Behari Bose.

5. Rabindra Nath Ghosh
A. S. M.

General

Secretary : Ram Chandra
Chakravarty.

Asstt.Genl.

Secretaries: 1. Rabindra Nath Ghosh
A. B. C.

2. Bibhuti BhusanDey.

3. Tarini Prasad Sinha.

4. Ajit Lal Roy Chowdhury.

Organising

Secretaries: 1. Mandhata Prasad
Varma.

2. Sushil Kumar
Chakravarty.

Treasurer : Anadi Nath
Bhattacharjee.

The General Body was very much aggrieved at the attitude of Peter Alvares and the All India Railwaymen's Federation. Sri S. Guruswami President had died on 2nd September 1963 giving a free hand to Peter Alveres. The

disrupters invited the A. I. R. F. to hold its convention on the Eastern Railway just to demonstrate their strength and accordingly the Federation convened its convention at Gaya on 9th 10th 11th and 12th October, 1963. It was resolved unanimously to lodge a protest to the AIRF convention and demonstrate Eastern Railwaymen's feelings that was terribly injured.

On the morning of 9th October 1963 the City of Gaya witnessed an unprecedented unique scene. Every coach, up and down mail and passenger was pouring on Gaya platforms hundreds of Railwaymen, gangmen, workshop labour, class IV and class III staff of all categories from Moghalsarai to Lalgolaghat. As there was no space to accommodate them (most of the Dharamsalas having been booked for AIRF delegates) they were out on the streets in disciplined manner in processions shouting slogans. The processions created panic in the minds of AIRF leaders and leaders of the Singh group on the Eastern Railway. Peter Alvares was hiding and did not come out openly due to fear although we took adequate precaution against any physical violence. At about 10 in the morning a train carrying gangmen from Shaibganj. Loop Section (Santhal Parganas) arrived Gaya. The train was fully packed up and hundreds were on the roof. These Adivasi Gangmen were in their original costume with bows and arrows in their hands. They were in the streets in a peaceful procession shouting slogans. The Civil Administration was perturbed and the Sub-divisional Officer then promulgated Section 144 and banned all meetings both indoor and outdoor. Majority of the delegates were on the

the streets of Gaya to see processions which they had never seen before. Panicky as the leaders were they announced the A. I. R. F. convention as over without holding the convention at all some time during noon of 9th October 1963 and left Gaya helter skelter. According to modest estimate more than 25,000 Railwaymen assembled at Gaya at the call of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union to protest against the arbitrary action of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. I was so overwhelmed at the love of Eastern Railwaymen that I would remember till my death.

Punishment of Strike :

I was senior Divisional Personnel Inspector in the Eastern Railway, Howrah when I served the strike notice as General Secretary of the Union. I was placed under suspension with effect from 12th July 1960 and continued under suspension till 17th December, 1962. Mine had been the longest suspension in Indian Railways due to the strike of July 1960. My charges related to organising the strike in violation of the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance and the proposed penalty was dismissal from service. As in the Disciplinary Action Enquiry I refused to make any statement or be cross-examined, the onus of proving the charge rested on the prosecution. The prosecution viz. the charge sheet issuing authority the Chief Personnel Officer in spite of best efforts, was not getting any witness to substantiate the allegation although the Administration was having some documents including a secret one issued by me to the Branches after promulgation of the Ordinance and got intelligence reports about my confidential meetings. None of the Branch Officials was agreeable to come forward

and even certain eminent members of the public gave witness to the disadvantage of the prosecution. When such was the position, mysteriously enough Sankar Chatterjee Branch Secretary of the Union at Howrah and leader of the Communist group in the Union appeared as witness to substantiate the documents issued by me. I was awarded the major penalty of reversion to two grades lower as Head clerk for a period of 5 years in violation of the Rules and fixed at the minimum of the scale. My substantive position was Assistant Personnel/Welfare Inspector and could not have been reverted in the clerical cadre. This was rectified through a court case afterwards and I was treated to have been reverted as Junior Welfare Inspector instead of Head clerk.

Thus I suffered a penalty of 5 years reversion plus suspension for 2 years and 5 months causing heavy financial loss both in salary and Provident Fund. I had no contribution to Provident Fund during suspension period and contribution at lower rate during the period of punishment with consequential loss. I have already stated that amongst the office-bearers of the Union quite a few were allowed to go unpunished and others suffered minor penalty.

'Recognition' is an inherent weakness in Railway Trade Unions. At the material time 1962-64 there were three recognised unions on the Eastern Railway viz., Eastern Railwaymen's Union, Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and Eastern Railway Employees' Congress and competition of platform was not infrequent. It was the formation of the Eastern Railway Employees' Congress, its rivalry with the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress had increased considerably and after Jagjivan

Ram had left the Railway Ministry there was an attempt on the part of the Eastern Railway Administration to withdraw the recognition. J. N. Bose the General Secretary of the Employees' Congress approached me for help to overcome the menace which I gave and he obtained an injunction preventing the Administration to act on the show cause notice.

Thereafter an internal quarrel followed and the union was splitted into two groups, one headed by J. N. Bose and another by Jagdish Upadhyaye. The Administration took the advantage and although there was no formal withdrawal of recognition, in practice the Administration stopped the facilities of recognition and advised both the groups to establish their claims in Court of Law. Litigation followed and both the groups were running to various Courts for the purpose. This exercise in the Employees' Congress was still continuing when Rajendra Singh caused break in our Union in 1963.

In the case of our Union as well, the Administration advised both the groups to establish their claim in the court of law, virtually suspending the facilities of recognition in practice. This attitude of the Administration caused obstructions in the way of functioning and a psychological depression was slowly setting in. The break away group of Rajendra Singh were out of power and position in the Union ever since the Annual General meeting at Moghalsarai in October 1962 and as such they had nothing to lose by this attitude of the Administration. Rather they were jubilant for the discomfiture suffered by us. In this context the Central Council of the Union after prolonged deliberation took the decision to seek

legal remedy and filed a suit in the High Court Calcutta in January, 1964 known as suit 52 of 1964 - Ram Chandra Chakravarty and others Vs Rajendra Singh and others. I was personally not very happy because I felt that a Trade Union dispute could not and should not be solved through litigation. I had the glaring example of Eastern Railway Employees' Congress before me where the two groups were fighting Court cases without solution for years together. I started thinking if I had any axe to grind in the Trade Union and I could find none. I was gradually drawing the conclusion that my livelihood did not depend on the Union like may others who were endangering the existence of the Union in opposing me. Rajendra Singh and his group along with vilification and character assassination let loose a propaganda that I was the root of all troubles and if I was out they could adjust with rest without disturbing the existing composition of the Branches of the Union. They were also expressing their desire for a compromise under the leadership of Rajendra Singh to end the impasse and many of our Branches were getting temped. I could see the change in the attitude of the communist block in the Union who were getting indifferent presumably at the dictation of the party and making a whispering campaign in favour of unity. My mental preparation was complete and I decided to quit. Although I convened the meeting of the Working Committee in early April 1964 and invited Rajendra Singh to have the compromise talk with the Working Committee members, I personally did not attend and allowed others to take decision in my absence. I also informed them of my decision to quit. So did D. P. Joshi

President. The lead in the talk was taken by B. S. Bhatnagar Branch Secretary Moghalsarai, Jibesh Prosad Working President at Patna, T. P. Sinha, Asst Genl Secretary at Gaya, Sankar Prasad Chatterjee Branch Secretary Howrah, B. B. Dey Asst Genl Secretary at Ranaghat and R. N. Ghosh Vice-President at Ranaghat. Sankar Prasad Chatterjee was then the leader and spokesman of the communist block in the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. In this meeting of the Working Committee they believed Rajendra Singh and accepted him as sole arbitrator who in his arbitration nominated a set of Office-bearers for the Union usurping all the posts for his group excepting 5 out of 15 which were given to men of my group who had actively helped Rajendra Singh and his group to come to power through back door. They were B. S. Bhatnagar of Moghalsarai, Jibesh Prosad of Patna, Sankar Prasad Chatterjee of Howrah, Bibhuti Bhusan Dey and Rabindra Nath Ghosh of Ranaghat. All of them excepting Jibesh Prosad were turned out in the next election.

Rajendra Singh and his group after assuming power started superseding the elected Branch committees and replacing them by their henchmen in adhoc Committees which were promptly recognised and circulated by the Administration. The structure, composition and personnel of majority Branches out of 52 were changed in course of two to three months after the Unity thus creating a terror in the Union. Another Suit viz. Suit No.1884 of 1964 Salil Kumar Bose and others Vs. Rajendra Singh and others was filed to prevent the atrocities. Annual General Meeting of the union was convened to be held at Naihati

on 30th September and 1st October 1964. (Naihati was considered as stronghold of Rajendra Singh's group). Properly elected delegates of the Branches of my group were not accepted and instead all attempts were made to have a clean majority in the Annual General Meeting foreseeing contests in all the offices. Thousands of Railwaymen of Sealdah Division and Kanchrapara Workshop held a protest march and encircled the venue of the Annual General meeting at Naihati. Scuffle followed and in the said Annual General Meeting two sets of office bearers were elected one with S. B. Lahiri as General Secretary and the other with Paritosh Banerjee. Claims were preferred by both the groups to have been properly elected and two parallel set of office-bearers of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union continued to function again. Needless to say that Paritosh Banerjee's group was enjoying usual patronage of the Railway Administration.

I was completely aloof till the Annual General meeting at Naihati after handing over the charge on 10th April 1964. In spite of requests and approaches from the suffering Union Workers I did not involve myself and was not present in the meeting at Naihati. My opponents however were not happy. They had an inferiority and fear complex which made them making all sorts of provoking and misleading propaganda against me. They were using ghost in my name, and spared no pains to defame and belittle me to the railwaymen in general. They caused a CBI enquiry against me for acquiring property disproportionate to my means. source of income which after enquiry culminated in the issue of a charge sheet, the charge being 'not obtaining prior

permission for purchasing property' although the Administration acknowledged that due intimation was given. A vexatious and prolonged departmental enquiry continued just to keep me busy.

The Communist block in the Eastern Railwaymen's Union who supported me in this scuffle at the beginning was gradually getting indifferent and inclined to Rajendra Singh and his group. Before the division of the Party into CPI and CPI(M) there were turmoil and confusion amongst the Communist workers in the party and the Union and they were seen in both the groups. A section of them were with the group identified as S. B. Lahiri's group and the other with Paritosh Banerjee's group.

Obviously the Administration did not recognise this election at Naihati with S.B. Lahiri as General Secretary although it had followings many times more than the group with Paritosh Banerjee as General Secretary. I was dragged in by S. B. Lahiri and superseded Branch Workers to help them without any office. I was with this group of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union till March 1968 after which it merged with the other group.

I relinquished the office of General Secretary on 10th April 1964. In 1963 after the assassination of President Kennedy of U. S. A. the Govt. of India declared holiday which however was not a paid holiday for Railway workers. There was a sporadic strike at Lilloah Workshop for the demand of paid holiday and following the strike the Railway Administration declared a lock out in the Workshop. The workers came to me and I took up the cause. The lock out was considered to be unjust and appeared as

illegal to me. A court case was filed challenging the validity of the lock out and side by side agitation was built up to reopen the workshop. Although the workshop was reopened workers did not get their pay for the period of lockout. After a long period the court decided the lock out as illegal and workers' victory was celebrated. As I stood by the side of the workers they also stood by although our struggle.

Prime Minister Nehru died on May 24, 1964 and Lal Bahadur Shastri became the Prime Minister raising hope in the minds of workers. Pakistan attacked India and a war followed demanding the Railwaymen's unstinted support for war efforts. Lal Bahadur died on January 11, 1966 and Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister. Though Indira was much more practical than Nehru in solving many of the outstanding problems of the country, the reactionary labour policy of Nehru regime did not change.

As an aftermath of Railway Act of 1960, Joint Consultative Machinery to settle disputes was proposed by the Railway Board in early February 1964 which however was not accepted by the All India Railwaymen's Federation. The Federation accepted the Machinery on a trial basis in its General Council meeting of early July, 1966 and the Machinery started functioning from September 1966. Rule 148 and 149 R. I. of State Railway Establishment Code Vol I was struck down by a majority decision of Supreme Court in 1964. This was a major victory for Railwaymen in general. Although the Government accepted the recommendations of the Bonus Commission with some modifications on September 1966, demand of Bonus for the railway

was not acceded to. The office of the All India Railwaymen's Federation was shifted to Delhi in 1965 under the charge of Priya Gupta Asstt. General Secretary visited by Peter Alvares General Secretary from time to time. The organ of the Federation 'Indian Railwaymen' started its publication on 26. 1. 1965, R. A. Khedgikar a veteran leader of the G. I. P. Railwaymen died on February 25, 1966.

Following the election of the Union at Naithati meeting in October, 1964, the Branches that were superseded by Rajendra Singh - Paritosh Banerjee's group were revived and militancy in the Union was introduced. It appeared that the old Eastern Railwaymen's Union was there. The position was so that Paritosh Banerjee and his group did not dare to hold open meetings for fear of being man-handled by the Railwaymen who considered them as men of the Administration. On one such occasion Paritosh Banerjee and B. P. Roy Chowdhury were assaulted on Rampurhat platform in early morning of 17. 12. 1965 and others narrowly escaped. Although I had nothing to do with this assault I was implicated along with few others and on complaint of Paritosh Banerjee and others a case- G. R. case no. 550 of 1965 State Vs. Ramchandra Chakravarty and others in the Rampurhat S. D. O. Court was instituted. This case continued for three long years and was dismissed in early 1968 for want of evidence.

A series of meetings processions and demonstration were held throughout the Eastern Railway in support of the demand of recognition. Unprecedented demonstrations were held at the Divisional Superintendent's office at Danapur, Dhanbad, Asansol, Howrah and Sealdah

and before the General Manager Eastern Railway at Fairlie Place, Calcutta on June 4, 1966 led by S. B. Lahiri the General Secretary of the Union and attended by me. In the demonstration which continued for 6 hours more than 25,000 Railwaymen took part. It was the biggest demonstration that the General Manager's office had ever seen. S. B. Lahiri, Sailen Ghosh, Bata Krishna Mitra, were placed under suspension and subsequently punished. S. B. Lahiri was removed from service. Thanks to the stamina of Lahiri who although removed from service continued the struggle for a long period against odds ; Lahiri was reinstated some time in 1968 on appeal.

An All India Railwaymen's conference was held at Moghalsarai on 19th and 20th February, 1966 under the auspices of Eastern Railwaymen's Union, organized by R. K. Mukherjee. George Fernandez inaugurated the conference on 19th Feb. This was perhaps the first appearance of George in the gathering of Eastern Railwaymen. His dynamic personality and speech impressed many. Representatives from all the Railways attended, amongst them were Jainarain Singh of E. Railway and his followers, an All India Railway Mazdoor Union too there was a rift with both the groups claiming to be the lawful office-bearers, one group led by K. L. Gupta and K. R. Chatterjee and the other with Jainarain Singh and Prakash. Peter Alvares backed the group with K. L. Gupta. Subsequent to the conference George Fernandez was elected as President of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union with S. B. Lahiri as General Secretary. George as President held several meetings on the Eastern Railway including workshop staff at Sealdah.

Kanchrapara and Jamalpur. He was a very busy man and could not devote much time for the Eastern Railwaymen. Had he been able to do it, in my opinion, he could have built a really militant organisation not dependent on recognition of the Union by the Administration on which he could have relied in future. Amongst all Indian Railways ground material on the Eastern Railway was then most fertile.

In subsequent years when George became President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, that militancy in the Eastern Railwaymen's Union had faded away although Bimal Dey a socialist and staunch supporter of George Fernandez was the General Secretary with no opposition and S. B. Lahiri's parallel union was non-existent.

In the E. I. R. Employees' Co-operative Credit Society, after myself and Anadi Bhattacharya having been removed from the Managing Committee on the basis of amended Rules that suspended or punished railwayman could not hold office in the Managing Committee during the suspension or punishment period, the vacancies were filled up by cooption with men of Paritosh Banerjee's group. The said Managing Committee was also superseded by the Registrar of Cooperatives after sometimes and an election was ordered in September 1967. In the said election both the groups of Eastern Railwaymen's Union (that of S. B. Lahiri and Paritosh Banerjee) contested. Along with others I was also a candidate and according to number of delegates returned we were expecting to be elected by a comfortable majority. With the division of Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the Naihati election in September 1964

and division in the Communist Party of India communists were in both the groups. Although they differed amongst themselves in many matters they worked together in securing my defeat and for coming to power in the society befooling and betraying both the groups of S. B. Lahiri and Paritosh Banerjee. This incident was an eye opener to S. B. Lahiri and many of us and we were realising the futility of continuing with separate identity just to serve the interests of the Communists.

After suffering the punishment of reversion from Senior Personnel Inspector to Head Clerk for a period of 5 years, I was restored and posted at Danapur in December 1967. The Eastern Railwaymen's Union with S. B. Lahiri as General Secretary and George Fernandez as President was merged sometime in May 1968 in its conference at Gaya and my help and services were no longer required. I had no Trade Union activity worth mentioning from June 1968 to 31 January, 1978 when I retired from Railway Service. I was however in touch with the Railwaymen and their organisation and contested two elections of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union one at Patna and the other at Bahgalpur between 1971 and 1973 just to test if I was still remembered by the Eastern Railwaymen. I was moved by their love for me.

AIRFS' call for 24 hours token strike in Railways on 19th September, 1974 was a total failure on Eastern Railway and also on most of the other Railways. Railwaymen in general could not trust the leadership. Western Railway Employee's Union and National Railway Mazdoor Union of Central Railway served the strike notice on 2nd September.

'68 along with others, withdrew the notice unilaterally on 16th and 18th September '68 respectively in defiance to the A. I. R. F. decision. Peter Alvares suspended the office-bearers of the said Unions including Maniben Kara and V. B. Mahadeswar and initiated for their disaffiliation as a disciplinary measure which however was subsequently compromised.

A discontent amongst the affiliated Unions of A. I. R. F. against Peter Alvares was growing and Priya Gupta took over as General Secretary promoting Peter to the position of President. This also could not help Peter for long and many of his supporters were turning against him. In the A. I. R. F. Convention held at Secunderabad on 15th to 19th October, 1973 George Fernandez was elected as President by majority of votes in contest with Peter Alvares who was then President. Priya Gupta, a staunch supporter of Peter Alvares who was elected as General Secretary in the said convention either did not work for Peter's success observing neutrality or failed in spite of efforts. He also could not adjust with George as President and the quarrel between the two came to surface during and after the strike of 1974 causing damage to the image of A. I. R. F.

George Fernandez had a long cherished desire to lead the Railwaymen's struggle. He was an arch follower of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and was bitterly against the Congress Party and Nehru family, who according to him, did not treat Lohia fairly. His fight against the ruling Party with the Railwaymen's help was thus political which did not matter much with the Railwaymen. George had an image due to his role in the strike of

1960. His formation of N.C.C.R.S (National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's struggle) with various homogeneous and heterogeneous labour organisations was aimed at creating confidence and courage amongst the Railwaymen which unfortunately became a source of weakness instead of strength. The all India strike that started from 6 hours of 8th May and ended on the morning of 28th May 1974 was generally a failure. The main reason was absence of necessary preparation by the leadership and lack of worker's confidence in them. The leadership of the A. I. R. F. and affiliated Unions depended much on the charisma of George instead of making necessary preparations for the strike. The panicky Railway Minister and the Government had the lessons of 1960 before them and took possible precautions. The old and usual game of dividing the leadership and creating mutual suspicions were of course there. This resulted in bitter internal quarrel causing removal of Priya Gupta from the office of General Secretary at the first instance and at the second, removal of George Fernandez from the post of President. George was wrong in studying the nerve of the Minister and the leaders were wrong in the reading of George. Thus a great opportunity of having a militant organisation for the Railwaymen and dynamic leadership was lost. It was alleged that the Railway Minister, Mr. Mishra who was bitterly against George Fernandez worked up his exit from the Federation from behind the curtain. Mr. Dey who was the General Secretary of the Union at the material time failed to rise up to the occasion and lost confidence in the Eastern Railwaymen.

his leadership and for the strike. The death of V. R. Malgi General Secretary of Central Railway Mazdoor Union and a great leader on the eve of strike was a severe blow to the Railwaymen's organisation. In his death I lost one of my best friends. I will ever remember my contacts with him when I frequently visited Central Railway Head Quarters in 1971-72 in connection with absorption of Ex-Martin Light Railway staff in all the Zonal Railways including Central Railway. His knowledge about Railwaymen's problems was thorough, his delivery was convincing and his sobriety was superb. In my opinion he could have been an ideal General Secretary of A. I. R. F. but humble as he was he did not agree to the proposal.

I have come to the concluding portion of my memoirs. Before I finish I would like to say a few words. I had a feeling that I was treated very unfairly by my colleagues in the Trade Union. But after seeing the treatments received by scores of veteran Trade Unionists like B. K. Mukerjee (one of the founders of E. I. Railwaymen's Union), J. N. Gupta (founder of B.A. and E.I. Rly. Employees Associations), D. P. Joshi, A. M. Williams, Peter Alvares, Priya Gupta, George Fernandez, A. P. Verma, V. D. Mahadeswar, Ved Prakesh, Jainarain Singh, Govind Menon, G. Ramchandran, A. V. K. Chaitanya, N. C. Roy Chowdhury, Bidhu Sen, Rejendra Singh, Paritosh Banerjee, B. P. Roy Chowdhury, Bimal Dey and many others, I could realise that such unfair treatment are usual evils in a Trade Union life. I have also seen the difference in behaviour and outlook of the same person in power and out of power. Perhaps I was also no exception.

Fortunates like S. Guruswami and Maniben Kara who were in flying colours till their end can hardly be seen. On a dispassionate analysis I have found that sober persons like P. C. Dasgupta, V. R. Malgi, Umraomal Purohit, J. P. Chowbey etc. are more useful in the Railway Trade Unions than militants like George Fernandez, Priya Gupta, Ram Chakravarty, S. B. Lahiri, etc.

I had met Peter Alvares twice after he was removed from the President of A. I. R. F. once after Secunderabad convention and another immediately after the strike of 1974 and a month or so before his death and had long talks. I had also long talks with Rajendra Singh quite a few times before his death. When I was on special duty for absorption of Ex-Martin Light Railway Staff in different Zonal Railways. I met M. A. Ashraf ex Chief Personnel Officer Eastern Railway (who was the main architect in building the Union) at Secunderabad while he was F. A. & C. A. O. in South Central Railway. I was invited to a lunch by him where he of his own told me certain things. It is neither prudent nor desirable at this stage to dwell upon those talks with Peter Alvares, Rajendra Singh and M. A. Ashraf or the talks I had with Paritosh Banerjee, B. P. Roy Chowdhury and Bimal Dey in latter days when they were out of power and position.

I was General Secretary of the Union for little over 7 years of which four or five years were wasted in internal quarrels. More than one year was spent for preparation of the strike and for poststrike issues and sufferings of the Union. I could peacefully work only for two years or so. Best period of my Trade Union career was as an

to P. C. Dasgupta for 10 long years. I have hardly seen such a sound Trade Union Leader. I am grateful to him. I am also grateful to B. K. Mukherjee, Prof. A. N. Mallik and P. N. Sengupta with whose blessings I started my Trade Union life. I am thankful to hundreds of my colleagues who helped me ungrudgingly. I am also thankful to thousands of such active Railwaymen who had been the source of inspiration to me.

I have tried to be faithful and honest in narrating the facts. In writing this memoir I have taken help from Annual Reports, proceedings of meetings and other documents of the Union and from the history of A. I. R. F. If there is any error, omission or commission it is not intentional. I regret and apologise if I have wounded any body's feelings in my writing of this memoir. I do no longer nurture any grievance against any body and bear malice to none.

JAI HIND

A Golden Chapter of century old trade union struggle on the S.E. Rly.

(K. M. Bhadra)

(K.M. Bhadra born in Khulna (now in Bangladesh) in 1912 joined the then B.N. Rly. as ASM and worked for 12 years only. He was dismissed from service in 1956 under the provisions of article 311 (2C) of the Indian Constitution. He had evaded the warrant of arrest during the strike of 1949 and had gone underground for nearly 6 years. He was a detenue for one year during 1963-64 during Chinese aggression on the Sino-Indian border. He was arrested on more than three occasions for strike calls on the Railways. He had organised a Kishan Movement in Midnapore district for Tebhaga (1/3rd of the produce to the owner and 2/3rd of the produce to the peasant/share-cropper).

He had the privilege to work in association with V.V. Giri, Jyoti Basu, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Prof. W.V.R. Ramlingam, V.R. Kalappa, S. Guruswami, Satya Priya Banerjee, B.T. Ranadive, A.K. Gopalan, Bankim Mukherjee, S.A. Dange and other leaders of repute. During the eventful period of over 50 years he held a number of posts in the AIRF, B.N. Rly. Labour Union, B.N. Rly. Workers' Union, E.R.E.U., E.R.M.U. He is at present Vice President (Central) of S.E. Rly. Men's Union.

Outside the railways he was President of the Haldia Project labour Union & B.B.J. Workers' Union (Haldia Project). He is a Founder member of C.I.T.U. His survey of the trade union movement on the S.E. Rly. in particular gives a vivid picture of the past. A person of his stature is yet to be found).

The history of Indian Railway employees' trade union movement by itself is a history of the industrial and economic development of the country, of ever since the colonial rulers (British Raj) had set up Railway Transport system in 1853.

With the advent of capitalistic production under the aegis of British Rulers in India, two companies were floated in London viz : (1) Great Indian Railway Company and (2) Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company in the year 1845 for construction of Railroad in India.

Two divergent opinions in the matter of setting up of Railways in India revealed that :

(1) Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of India presented to the British

Government a memorandum *inter alia* stating the ultimate commercial target to make India as supplier of raw-materials to British Industries of great Britain ; and

(2) Export goods from Great Britain to India to be made for creating a big market in India.

Exploitation and profit motive was the prime concern in the Construction of Railroad in India.

The Great Philosopher Karl Marx observed in a despatch to New York Times on the future results of British Rule in India that :

"..... It is obvious that the capitalists in Great Britain wanted to establish Railway Lines in India with the object of

cheap cotton and other raw-materials for their manufacturers in U.K. But once the transport system with its machinery is set up in a country where Iron and Coal deposits are in abundance, it is not possible to halt its spread in various branches. It would not be practicable to run the Railways efficiently in a vast country like India without establishment of various ancillary industries to feed the Railways as well as other industries and machineries which may not have a direct link with the Railways

Essentially the Railway system would be the fore-runner of modern industries in India

On 10th April, 1853 the first train ran between Bombay and Thane 20 miles stretch. Simultaneously train should have been run between Howrah and Hooghly, but the ship carrying the Locomotive to Calcutta was wrongly diverted to Australia. The same arrived at Calcutta in 1854 and the first train ran in Bengal between Howrah and Hooghly on 15th August 1854. At the end of 100 of years of Indian Railways, it was realised that transport was civilisation.

By 1958-59 a fleet of 8813 engines, 27738 coaches and 524931 wagons carrying about 3655 millions of passengers (over 10 millions every day) and 329.5 million tonnes of freight earning traffic having on its roll 1533000 employees regular and 400000 casual contract workers constitute the biggest single industry in India. It is estimated that there would be 370-400 billion net tonne km. freight traffic, 310-330 billion passenger km (non-suburban passenger traffic) and 105-110 billion passenger km suburban passenger traffic by the end of this century. This requires a large infrastructure and resources mobilisation together with

increased fleet of workers. The existing fleet of both electric and diesel locos is almost 3 decades old. Plans are afoot to introduce high tech. Electric/Diesel Locos and passenger coaches with more sitting capacity. For all these new high tech. system, more foreign borrowings will be sought for, which will burden the Railways's indebtedness. Consequently axe will fall on the employees by way of reduction of staff. Serious crisis is thus developing involving the entire working class in so far as the job security is concerned, and the stupendous task to face them squarely falls on us keeping in view, the philosophy to which we are wedded to and to serve the interest of the nation while guaranteeing job security as well as employment potential for the coming generation.

Workers on the March

From 1845 constructions of Railway lines drew lakhs of workers who were exploited the most and the collective nature of hand work vis-a-vis low wages and bad treatment under the colonial rule gave rise to protests and mass agitation at times. But, the formal trade unions were still unthinkable.

In this process (8 years of train running) in Howrah Section about 1200 Loco and engine staff struck work demanding 8 hours duty against 16 hours, as also against the ill-treatment meted out to these Railway employees as natives. This happened in the year 1862 having the distinction of being the first collective action by the millions of the workers on the fundamental demand of 8 hours duty a day which became the ever vibrating slogan of the working class that shook the world on a May-day in 1884 when the Hay Market in Chicago in U.S.A.

In the wake of National Movement in the early years of the century efforts were made to

form Trade Unions in E.B. Railway, E.I. Railway and B.N. Railway by the social workers named Pramatosh Bose, A.K. Ghosh, Liaquet Hossain and others whose activities were spread over from Calcutta to Assansol/Jamalpur etc. and from Calcutta to Kharagpur as also from Calcutta to Dacca and their efforts met with partial success.

It may be recalled that strikes were resorted to in various Railway centres in India in between 1906 and 1908. In this matter notable action was taken by the Railwaymen in E.I.R., G.I.P.R., A.B. Railway, E.B.R. and B.N.R. drawing inspiration from the Swadeshi movement. The strikes were mainly centred round the economic demands like wage increase and for shortening of working hours.

In 1908 following Tilak's arrest and imprisonment, the Working Class of Bombay came out on the streets and the movement continued for 14 days in which the Railwaymen played a heroic role.

Struggle starts in B. N. Railway

"The Statesman" dated 15.1.19 and 21.1.19 reported that U.K. was plagued with British Railwaymen's strikes, demanding 8 hours duty. The Miners launched a strike demanding 40 hours week. The Miners' Federation struck work demanding also nationalisation of Mining Industries.

The post-war economy brought in its trail unprecedented spiralling of price level in U.K. as also in India which rose to a colossal height of 14%. A general strike of 2 lakh workers took place in Bombay on 2.1.1919 against price rise.

In such a situation the most notable feature was the strike in B.N. Railway at Kharagpur Workshop from 6.1.1919 on the following demands :-

- (1) Wages of daily-rated unskilled workers be enhanced from 4 Annas (Re : 0.25 P.) to 8 Annas (Re : 0.50 P.).
- (2) Wages of skilled daily-rated workers be enhanced from 7 annas/8 annas (Re : 0.44 P/O. 50) to Re : 1.00
- (3) Abolition of Contract Rates and Introduction of monthly rates salary system.
- (4) No discrimination of colour regarding service conditions.

The following were the strike leaders :

- (1) Sankar Prasad.
- (2) Mazar Ali.
- (3) Nathan.

These three strike leaders and 16 other workers were prosecuted and sentenced to 6 months' rigorous imprisonment by the District & Session Judge, Midnapur on 12.1.1919. Nearly 3000 workers of Kharagpur Workshops joined the strike at a time when the Trade Union Organisations were yet to be shaped in India.

This working class action against the exploitation of colonial power had a tremendous effect on the formation of B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union in the near future. Such courage and sacrifice by our predecessors will always remain a source of inspiration for the present and future generations.

These working class stalwarts were the harbingers of Trade Union Movement with a dream of life on the revolution of the Proletarian Classes in Russia in 1917.

On the Bengal-Nagpur Railway it was on 14.11.1920 that the workers of Kharagpur assembled and formed a Union with the name of All India Railway Labour Union at Kharagpur. This was inaugurated by a prominent Lawyer N.C. Sen, Barrister at

Law, Ajodhaya Prasad Routjee and K.C. Sengupta of Calcutta, Eventually the office Bearers of All India Railway Labour Union, Kharagpur were elected as under :

President : N. C. Sen, Barrister-at-Law.

Vice President : Ajodhaya Prasad Routjee.

Acting Secretary : K. C. Sengupta.

This Union started functioning amongst the Railwaymen at Kharagpur both inside workshops and outside on the open line. This was the first trade union organisation formed on the the B.N. Railway by the Railwaymen.

The said Union held its next first General Meeting on 23.4.1921 and unanimously changed the name of the Union to B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union.

Initially, the Union was formed in 1920 with the object of securing redressal of all Indian Railway employeecs' grievances.

In the new B.N. Railway Labour Union the following Office Bearers were elected.

President

N. C. Sen (Barrister-at-Law)

Vice President

A. P. Routjee,

General Secretary

A. N. Bose,

Trustee & Treasurer

Kashinath Muttu

The First Annual General Meeting of the B. N. Railway Labour Union was held in 1922 wherein the following Office Bearers were elected

President

N. C. Sen, (Barrister-at-Law)

Vice President

Kashi Nath Muttu, (Incharge of Office)

Vice President (Org.)

V. V. Giri (Barrister-at-Law).

General Secretary

T. P. Choudhury, M.Sc.

General Secretary

W. Venkata Railu Naidu

(Incharge of Office)

Treasurer

B. Dandapani Panthulu.

Trustees

1. M. M. Bhave — Kharagpur.

2. B. Dandapani — Kharagpur.

3. A. K. Moghey — Garden

Reach

4. A. K. Bepte — (Umrer)/CP.

5. Syed Abdul Kader — Kharagpur.

Advisory Board Members.

1. S. C. Ghose, Retired Member of Rly. Board, Calcutta.

2. S. N. Halder, Barrister-at-Law, Calcutta

3. I. B. Bose, Barrister-at-Law, Calcutta

4. Piyus Kanti Basu, of Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta

5. Prof. Mrinal Kanti Basu, Editor, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta

From the Minutes of the first Annual Meeting it would be seen that the following resolution was adopted :-

"the First Annual General Meeting demanded amongst other things 75% increment in wages, reduction of the present eligibility to provident fund, bonus from 10 years' service to 2 years' service, equalisation (with Europeans) remuneration and privileges for the same nature of work irrespective of caste, race, colour etc., a month's leave in a year to the daily workers, revision of leave and pass rules, improvement in staff quarters etc."

The Union was able to settle down demands through several special committees. New Wagon Shop at Kharagpur, Gas Factory and Gangmen's Shop at Danton.

Kharagpur Railway Workers decided to give an ultimatum to the Agent of B.N. Railway in the wake of rise in prices of food stuff and other necessities of life following the first post-war economic crisis. In fact a strike notice was also served on the Agent of B.N. Railway, Calcutta on this issue.

The Working Class Struggle and its aftermath

The Historic strike and lock-out at Kharagpur Workshops in the year 1927 was watched by the whole country with grave concern. There was also jubilation amongst the working class. However, after the strike difference of opinion persisted regarding the mode of conducting the situation of post-strike period. In consequence a group from the B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union formed a new and separate Union styled as B. N. Railway Employees' Union which was registered under Trade Union Act, 1926 and the registered number was I in Bengal. The following Office Bearers were elected.

President

I. B. Sen, Barrister-at-Law, Calcutta

Vice President

A. N. Banerjee, Calcutta

General Secretary

N. K. Sarkar

Treasurer

Jaharlal Ganguly

In latter years the following Office Bearers were elected.

President

Satyapriya Banerjee, M.P.

Vice President

Kanailal Bhattacharyya, M.L.A.

Vice President

K. M. Bhadra.

Vice President

A. N. Banerjee.

General Secretary

N. K. Sarkar

Asstt. General Secretary

S. K. Bhattacharjee

Treasurer

Jaharlal Ganguly.

This union together with the Labour Union continued to be affiliated to A.I.R.F. till 1953.

A Third Union emerged

Due to difference of policy to tackle the strike of 1927 a section of the Office Bearers formed a third Union at Kharagpur on 23rd May, 1928 in a largely attended meeting. The new union was styled as B. N. Railway Workers' Union and was also registered under Trade Union Act with the following Office Bearers.

President : Mukunda Lal Sarkar

Vice Presidents : B. N. Sarkar

Abdul Kader

General Secretary : W. V. R. Naidu

Org. Secretary : B. S. R. Murthy

Asstt. Secretaries : D. S. Sarkar

Rahiman Shariff

Treasurer : K. Suryanarayana.

After 2 years this union was united with the B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union.

According to various records it is found that by 1919 about 18 Trade Unions were founded on the Railway which naturally led to the formation of a National Trade Union Centre together with other Industrial Unions under the style of All India Trade Union Congress.

History was always created by the Railway workers' onward move for emancipation from exploitation. Thus grew up the All India Trade Union Congress which was founded on 7th July, 1920. A meeting was held at Parel, Bombay with Lala Lajpat



Kharagpur Union Building - 5.11.57

Sitting from left - S. Subromoniyam, N. N. Chakraborty, K. P. Chakraborty,
Narayan Choubey - MLA,
A. K. Gopalan - MP, S. Guruswami, B. J. Rayalu, R. N. Banerjee, K. M. Bhadra,
Ghurunath Rao



Parliamentary Delegation to KGP office after strike in 1957

Sitting - Mohit Moitra - MP, Jatin Chakraborty - MLA, Saroj Roy - MLA,
Satya Priya Banerjee - MP, Baroda Mukutmani - MLA,
Md. Ismail, Nepal Bhattacharya - MLA, Renu Chakraborty - MP
Standing - i) Rabin Banerjee, ii) K.M. Bhadra, iii) Dr. Ranen Sen - MLA,
v) Purnendu Dutta Roy, vii) N. N. Chakraborty

Rai as its first president with a total membership of 2.5 Lakhs. It was recorded that representatives of no less than 18 Railway Trade Unions participated in that meeting as its founder members.

India was plagued by strikes by Railway workers in between 1919 to 1922 which gave a fillip to the working class movement in general and railway Trade Union Movement in particular. This led to the formation of All India Railwaymen's Federation, in the year 1924. The first President of the A.I.R.F. was Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad, a retired Railway Officer and Mukunda Lal Sarkar was the first General Secretary. The first session of All India Railwaymen's Federation held on 16th February, 1925 and the following were elected as office bearers :

President	: Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad.
Vice Presidents	: N.M. Joshi V. V. Giri E. L. Iyer B. N. Mukherjee
General Secretary	: Mukunda Lal Sarkar
Treasurer	: V. R. Kalappa

In that session it was resolved that there should be

- i) 75% wage increase.
- ii) Shorter time frame for eligibility to join Provident Fund.
- iii) No discrimination in service conditions and other facilities between Europeans/Angle Indians and Indians.
- iv) One month's leave annually.
- v) Liberalisation of Pass Rules, and
- vi) Improvement of Railway quarters etc.

A greater movement was organised for the fulfilment of these demands and some

sections were getting restive for a show-down.

Due to crisis in post-war economy (1st world war), the railway Board appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Vincent Ravan as Chairman, State Railway Workshop Committee to study and recommend on the Workshop matters. The committee produced a document recommending retrenchment of 7500 Railwaymen. By and large retrenchment took place in various railways and railway workshops. 8000 workers were retrenched from N. W. Railway's Mogulpura and Karachi Workshop and 4000 workers from Gorakpur of B. N. W. Railway. The Committee also recommended retrenchment of 1700 workers from Kharagpur Workshop. Strike was thus inevitable as a protest against the retrenchment notice, and the strike started on 11th February, 1927. At that time Rai Saheb was the President of B. N. Railwaymen's Labour Union. Massive participation of Railwaymen touched the figure of 100,000 strikers. The Labour Union as also the Indian Leadership became hesitant as the strikers drawing support from the public and the leaders of Swadeshi Movement. After a month the strike was withdrawn on 10th of March, 1927.

Attack on the workers in the face of retrenchment went on unabated. Rai Saheb Prasad in his speech on 13th March 1927 materialise. Therefore, the Railwaymen were very much agitated when the retrenchment notice was sought to be implemented by the Agent of B. N. Railway on 14th March 1927. No less than 20,000 workers from Kharagpur went on tool down strike on 9th September, 1927 in protest. The Government

employed 3rd degree method to break this strike. Hired Railway Auxiliary Force composed of Europeans and Anglo Indian employees was employed. The staff were lathi-charged and even shoot down orders on the striking workers were given. The District Magistrate clamped down Section 144 banning all gatherings and meetings in support of the strike. About 10 workers were seriously injured due to firing and more than 50 workers received bullet injuries. One M. Anthony was seriously injured and rendered incapacitated.

In those days Daily Newspapers like the Amrita Bazar Patrika, the Forward, the Basumati etc. supported the strike and demanded withdrawal of retrenchment notices on the workers. During the strike period the then National Leaders of Congress J. M. Sengupta, Sarat Chandra Bose, Dr. Sundari Mohan Das as also the Trade Unionist Kishori Lal Ghosh, N. M. Joshi, and Prof. Mrinal Kanti Bose supported the strike and held meetings exhorting the workers to stand by in solidarity. During the strike Shapurji Saklatvala M.P. in U. K. came to India. He wanted to hold a meeting at Kharagpur, but permission was refused. Mr. Saklatvala condemned the attitude of the Government in a letter to the Governor of Bengal. The International Transport Workers' Federation also lent their support and sent some funds to the strikers through the General Secretary of A.I.T.U.C. The strike had been so intensive and had engulfed the area in a flaming situation that the British Government waged a war against the people of Kharagpur as a whole. It was estimated that at least 8,80,018 man-days were lost during these strikes. The strike was ultimately called off on 8th December, 1927.

Amongst the various personalities who visited Kharagpur and stood by the strikers were Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta, Dr. B. K. Ahmed (Communist Leader), S. A. J. Dutt, Shib Nath Banerjee, Dharani Ghosh, Gopendra Nath Chakraborty, Singarvehr Chatter and other prominent trade union leaders. The British Trade Union Leaders Mr. Arthur Parcell and Mr. Joseph Halloworth who attended AITUC's Session at Kanpur also visited Kharagpur to express solidarity with the strikers. It is also worth mentioning that the issue of lock-out of Kharagpur Workshop by the Central Government was raised in the Bengal Legislative Council and Central Legislative Assembly. V. V. Giri (Father of V. V. Giri) M. L. A. in the Central Legislative Assembly raised a resolution motion to declare the lock out as illegal and for full payment to the workers without any victimisation. Vithalbhai Patel as President of the Assembly accepted the motion and the same was adopted by the House. The Government was in a quandary and they had to concede the demands by which the strike was over.

It should also be noted in connection with this strike that K.N. Joglekar, an accused in Meerut Conspiracy case had supported the cause of the Railwaymen and this was done at the Dock during his trial. He also condemned retrenchment policy of the Government. This Historic Strike of Kharagpur Workshop had inspired the entire working class and gave a fillip to the Railwaymen to organise bigger struggles in future.

It would be worthwhile to mention that the doyen of Indian Railways, Mr. S. Guruswami, who was the then General Manager of the Railway Movement S. Guruswami visited the strikers and aired his views on the way the strike was conducted.

without any settlement. Guruswami was born on 28th Sept. 1904 at Nathakadu, Darampuram in Coimbatore District of Madras where his father was a postmaster. He obtained his B.A. degree from Trichy College. Guruswami came to Calcutta in search of a job. His contact with V. R. Kalappa and then with V. V. Giri in B. N. Railway Labour Union brought him into the Trade Union field. He worked nearly for 2 years in the National College, Jadavpur, which was a parallel organisation to the British Government's educational institutions set up by the Congress stalwarts like Bipin Chandra Pal and others as a National Institution. Guruswami was one of respected leaders of AIRF where he was an Asstt. Secretary and then General Secretary for nearly 23 years and as its President for 6 years. He was the President of S. E. Railwaymen's Union (Ex B. N. Rly) at the time of his death in September, 1963. He tendered evidence before the Royal Commission of Labour and highlighted the burning grievances and demands of the Railwaymen who suffered badly with a low pay (hire and fire policy), longer hours of duty and discrimination with the Europeans and Anglo Indians and also for Trade Union rights.

In 1938 Guruswami as the representative of A.I.R.F., made his maiden speech before the International Labour Organisation of Geneva which created a furore amongst the delegates particularly, the way he marshalled his facts and figures to show how pathetic were the conditions of the workers in India specially, the Railwaymen under the cruelty of British Raj. He also adomed many Committees and Commissions regarding labour problems where important decisions were recommended for labour welfare.

The Government's attack on the working people continued and the retrenchment on the Railways was more than 17% of the total Working force. Besides discrimination was made as Anglo-Indians and Europeans were left untouched during the reduction of strength of workers.

"Retrenchment on the Indian Railways has begun in a drastic fashion. But the axe is that axe is being led not on the fat white-skinned officers but on the poor Indian employees and sacrificing the poor Indian employees at the altar of higher officers is a mere apology for retrenchment and expressed the hope that All India Railwaymen's Federation would take up the matter with the Government in right earnest."
(A. B. Patrika)

The retrenchment policy was planned to bring about a permanent and rapture between the Railwaymen themselves by raising a Chinese wall i.e. pre-1931 staff and post-1931 staff. The pay scales and grades were lowered. Acceptance of lower scales for 3 years was utilised by the Government and the lower scales of pay of Railwaymen who were appointed after 1931 was permanently imposed. Thus the principle of equal pay for equal work was blown to wind. In this serious situation a decision for a General Strike was taken by All India Railwaymen's Federation at Kharagpur and Ajmer. Unfortunately the leaders of the A.I.R.F. did not give the call for a General strike which created a rift amongst the Railwaymen and the strength of the trade union. At Kharagpur agitation was launched by the B. N. Railway Labour Union for some time.

A big strike was launched in

Railway which lasted from 15th December 1936 to 20th February, 1937 resulting in a loss of more than 1 million man-days. 27 Train Examiners in Adra were dismissed by the Railway authorities in connection with this strike. Efforts of the labour Union for reinstatement of the dismissed workers did not succeed. The strike spread over the entire B. N. Railway system but the Government and the Railway Administration came out with a heavy hand to suppress the strike. The authorities also issued orders of dismissal of further 100 workers. At that juncture the Railway Board cancelled the recognition of the Union. The British Raj tried to keep the Railway aloof from the strike and spent lavishly for the strike-breakers. It was estimated that Rs. 1,20,000 in those days were squandered by the Authorities. It was estimated that 26,500 workers of B.N. Railway struck work in sympathy with the dismissed workers. Ultimately the strike acquired such an alarming dimension that the Indian National Congress in its session at Faizabad passed a resolution extending its sympathy with the strikers and calling upon the people to support the strike. But the strike was called off without any satisfactory settlement. During that period a month-old strike was conducted at Shalimar under the leadership of V.R. Kalappa, Pandit Kashinath Mutt, A. N. Bose, Biswanath Das and others against discrimination and punishment. The strike, however, met with partial success.

The B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union was noted for its participation in the National Movement also. On various occasions there had been working-class agitation also. One such occasion was the election from the Railway Trade Union constituency for the then Bengal Assembly (Undivided Bengal) in

1946, where only those sections of Railwaymen enrolled with the Indian Trade Union and coming under the application of Factories Act were the voters. It was conducted by secret ballot by the Returning Office of the Constituency, the District Magistrates of the jurisdiction. Naturally on the B.N. Rly. Loco-shed staff and Kharagpur Workshop Staff who were members of the B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union were voters. The Election was held by the Magistrates to form an Electoral College with one member per 200 members through secret ballot. There were two contestants in the Constituency-one Prof. Humayun Kabir (Cong.), Vice President of A.I.R.F. and the other Jyoti basu (CPI), President B. N. Rail Road Workers' Union. While Prof. Kabir made a dent in Eastern Railway, Jyoti Basu bagged almost all the votes in B. N. Railway and he was elected as an M.L.A. defeating Prof. Kabir by a marginal difference. At Kharagpur a Committee was formed to conduct the election in which K. M. Ghosh, A. B. Chatterjee, M. Chatterjee, Mahabub Nanda, P. Upadhyay had a programme to rouse the Railwaymen participating the voters to support the candidature of Jyoti Basu. Jyoti Basu was also elected as Vice President of A.I.R.F. Thus great enthusiasm was created and the victory celebration after the election gave a boost to future movements.

First Pay Commission

The role of B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union in organising the proposed All India Railway Strike from 27th July, 1946 was significant. The entire Railway system was well prepared for the ensuing strike in that when the ballot result came out, it was found that 90% was in favour of strike and only 10% were

against the strike. Lengthy discussions took place in various meetings of the Unions throughout India. The General Council Meeting of A.I.R.F. held in Bombay after the strike notices were served by the concerned Unions on 1.6.46, ratified the decision. The then Congress Leaders particularly the Prime-Minister designate made a fervent appeal to AIRF not to precipitate an all India general strike just at the time of formation of 'Interim Government' in the country. He said that the nation was in the threshold of independence. But the patriotic zeal of the Railwaymen could not be stopped and a Committee of Action was appointed with the following members to co-ordinate the activities of the affiliated unions and deal with all matters relating to the strike including negotiations for a settlement.

1. R. A. Khedgikar
2. Shibnath Banerjee
3. D. S. Vaidya
4. M. Kalyanasundaram
5. G. H. Kale
6. Humayun Kabir
7. Jyoti Basu
8. Mirza Ibrahim
9. Abdul Razack
10. Rajani Mukherjee
11. A. M. Williams
12. Shivdishan Singh
13. J. N. Mukherjee
14. A.M.A.R. Fatmi
15. M. A. Khan
16. S. Guruswami

In a meeting it was noted that the Federation was conscious of its responsibilities to the community and the hardships arising out of a strike and expressed the hope that the Government would intervene and take suitable action to avert the catastrophe.

Following this various efforts were made and lastly the Government came out with the declaration of appointment of the First Pay Commission under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Sir Srinivasa Varadachariar, Ex-Judge of the Federal Court of India with eight other members as under :

1. Hossain Imam, Council of State
2. N. V. Gadgil, B.A. LLB/MLA
3. Frank Anthony, M.L.A.
4. Sardar Mangal Singh, MLA
5. N. M. Joshi, MLA
6. Vadilal Lallubhai, MLA
7. C.V.S. Rao, CIE, MLA and
8. K.R.P. Aiyangar, Secretary,

The terms of references *inter alia* were :

To decide the conditions of service, the structure of pay scale and standards of remunerations, leave terms, conditions of retirement, the machinery for negotiating and settling questions relating to the conditions of services, the principles on which the remuneration of industrial workers and differentiated employees of government should be based etc. Alongside an Adjudicator was appointed under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Rajadhyaksha to go into the question of hours of duty, compulsory periodic rest, leave rules etc. in replacement of the 1st and meagre amenities. The 3rd issue was retrenchment of services of 2,000 temporary staff in Grain Shops in various establishments who were dismissed by the Transport Member of Govt. of India Mr. Edward Benthal. The 4th issue was 3 months pay as bonus to the members of staff drawing salary upto Rs. 250/- per month. It was the first time under colonial rule that the issue for which the employees were groaning under unimaginably low wages assumed importance and a Pay Commission

could be forced by the collective wisdom and strength of more than a million Railwaymen united under the leadership of A.I.R.F.- the only national Trade Union Centre for the Indian Railwaymen. Thus the shackles of century's old exploitation was broken through, though not upto the desired level. In this connection the role of the B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union (now S. E. Railwaymen's union) was worth mentioning.

In the year 1945 series of propaganda meetings and agitational programmes were drawn up in which Kharagpur, Adra, Chakradharpur, Bilaspur and Waltair figured prominently. In this direction the services of the General Secretary, B.N. Das, P.V. Rajamannar, K.S. Nagarkar B.B. Ghosh, S.N. Bose, N.K. Moitra, K.M. Bhadra, Mahadeb Chatterjee, Haran Banerjee, M.N. Rao, D. Gurunath Rao, A.N. Anantha Narayana, P.A. Achari, Anil Banerjee, Bhagwan pati, R. Mritunjay Rao, S.N. Sinha, K. Prasad Rao, R. P. Reddy, P.B. Kotiah, Gangman Sitanath, Pointsman M. Prasad, R.N. Chakladar, A.K. Roy, Sayed Sovan and others were immensely helpful. There was a spurt of trade union activities and hardly any Railway employee of B.N. Railway was left unapproached for his share of the responsibility in this gigantic task.

Those were the days when the country was smarting under the birth pangs of independence of the country which ultimately was attained on the 15th August, 1947, with an Interim Government a year back. But the disruptive and communal forces, aided and abetted by the British Raj raised their ugly heads and serious communal violence engulfed the country. The independence of the country came at a high price by partitioning the country into two states - India

and Pakistan on the two nation theory. Naturally the Railway was also divided and also the Railwaymen. A period of anarchy started. Communal riots, carnage and violence were the order of the day. The Calcutta Killings and other episodes were a nightmare. From the Union side Peace Committees were organised at various centres like Kharagpur, Khurda, Chakradharpur etc. to maintain friendly relations against communal hatred against the different communities and to maintain peace at all cost.

The General Council Meeting of 1947 was held on 28th and 29th January, 1947 at Jamia Milia Hall at New Delhi. The main question of acceptance of the recommendation of the First Pay Commission was on the Agenda. Differences surfaced on the question of inclusion of existing employees into the frame-work of Pay Commission.

During 1947-48 there were as many as 18 strikes/stoppages of work at Kharagpur particularly in the Workshops. The allotment of Rs. 55-130 pay scale to the artisan staff, as the Railway Board proposed this scale into Rs. 55-85 and Rs. 85-130 taking advantage of efficiency bar. This however became an all-India issue and there were protests from all other Railways also. Ultimately the Railway Board had to yield and allow the pay scale of Rs. 55-130 to all artisan staff which was also the minimum pay scale for the clerical staff.

On 2nd February, 1949, the General Manager S. E. Railway issued an order of termination of services of A. P. Mondal, P. Chatterjee, S. N. Mondal, ASB, etc. Bose, Goods Clerk at Bailchhat under the provisions of rule 14.

Establishment Code of the Railways without giving them any chance of show cause. This infuriated all the Railwaymen of Kharagpur District. The top leaders of B. N. Railway Labour Union simply gave lip service and did not take up the issue in right earnest. An action Committee was therefore, formed with me as its Secretary. I organised the entire district and an ultimatum was issued to the General Manager to reinstate these employees in service, failing which there would be a total strike. The victimised staff and others started hunger-strike from 6.2.49 at Ballichack Station and several thousand railwaymen from far and near assembled in solidarity. The General Manager was forced to withdraw the notices of termination of service by sending B. Mazumdar from Headquarters with the authority to reinstate them. This onslaught on the railwaymen was a severe blow and the organised railwaymen combated the same effectively which ultimately strengthened the Union.

In 1947 Jayaprakash Narayan was elected President of the A.I.R.F. While inaugurating the General Council Meeting of the A.I.R.F. at Liluahi in 1948, demand was made for increase in the Dearness Allowance according to Pay Commission's award. But the overall condition including economic situation in the country following the achievement of Independence was totally serious and hence J. P. Narayan opined not to press forward the demand immediately. The ruling party, the Congress made a dent in the Railway Trade Union movement and split it up by forming another Trade Union as Indian National Trade Union Congress and then setting up Indian National Railway Workers Federation with Harihar Nath Shastri as its President. The Government being reluctant to

concede the demand of payment of Dearness Allowance @ Rs. 5/- per 20 point rise in the cost of living index, severe discontent grew up due to price rise. The AIRF in its meeting at Nagpur by the end of 1948 raised the demand and decided to take a strike ballot. The result of the strike ballot was overwhelmingly in favour of a strike. Thereafter in the subsequent meeting of AIRF on 16th and 17th February, 1949, the Federation instead of serving a strike notice on the Government decided to go in for negotiation. Prolonged negotiations between Jayaprakash Narayan and Gopalswamy Aiyanger, the then Railway Minister were held and ultimately the Government agreed with a paltry sum of Rs. 10/- as D.A. The leadership accepted the offer and withdrew the strike notice call on the ground that India is in 'infant state' and the Government needs more time to settle the issue. But the workers in the Railways did not accept the offer. The AIRF expelled many of them. D. Basu, Kalyan Sundaram etc. The group gave a strike call on 9th March 1949 but in the teeth of war-like conditions of 7000 railwaymen throughout the reign of terror, the said strike began. More than 2000 Railway employees were dismissed from service under the framed rule 'Safeguarding National Security (Railways) Act, 1949' which was as draconian as other notorious laws like MISA, etc.

During 1950-53 there were several movements also, The Gangmen of the Railwaylines at Narasimhapur, Panskura and Bhogpur. A large number of gangmen and station staff was harassed. Besides the Railwaymen and station staff the Porte Kholi Railway Colony at Kharagpur

came out in a body against the mismanagement of water supply and other lack of amenities. The officers were kept confined in their offices. The police were called and there was pitched battle with the police with the women-folk of the colony, since the men folk were demonstrating in the office areas. There was a strike in the Kharagpur workshops in June, 1950 which was extended to the loco, traffic, carriage and other departments of Kharagpur.

One United Union

In 1952 twentyeight Railway systems in India were regrouped into 6 Zonal Railways. This evoked protest from the staff as well as from the public. In the wake of re-grouping East Indian Railway was truncated from Howrah to Mogulsarai and the whole of B. N. Railway was integrated with Eastern Railway - renamed after regrouping. Thus one Union had to be formed for the entire Eastern Zone and thus E. I. Railway Employees Union, B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union and B. N. Railway Employees' Union were amalgamated into one Union under the name and style of Eastern Railwaymen's Union in an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting. These 3 Unions met at Waltair and formed the Eastern Railwaymen's Union with headquarters at Calcutta with registered No. 3550.

The following were the elected office Bearers

1. S. N. Singh
President / Waltair.
2. Thakur Jugal Kishore
Working President/ Mogulsarai
3. Kiron Choudhury
Vice President / Sealdah
4. K. M. Bhadra
Vice President / Kharagpur
P. Dayal
Vice President / Patna

6. N. N. Sanyal
Vice President / Kharagpur
7. B. P. N. Singh
Vice President / Patna
8. P. C. Dasgupta
General Secretary / Howrah
9. R. C. Chakravarty
Asstt. General Secretary / Howrah
10. N. K. Moitra
Asstt. General Secretary / Kharagpur
11. N. K. Sarkar
Asstt. General Secretary/Garden
Reach
12. S. Choudhury
Asstt. General Secretary / Fairdia Place
13. D. R. Adhikari
Org. Secretary / Naihati
14. N. Gouripati Rao
Org. Secretary / Waltair
15. D. Gurunath Rao
Treasurer / Kharagpur

There was a prolonged agitation in the country on the new zonal system of the Railways and ultimately the Government had to relent conceding the separation from Eastern Railway, old B. N. Railway as South Eastern Railway.

As a consequence thereof, bifurcation of the Union into two i.e. Eastern Railwaymen's Union and South Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the year 1955 took place. The South Eastern Railwaymen's Union was formed and registered under No. 3580 and the said Union is still functioning with affiliation to A.I.R.F.

In 1955 there was a wildcat strike of / against massive corrupt practices of the Officers particularly by Mr. Massey in the matter of recruitment of staff in Class IV category, and other issues like award of pay ASM for his inability to attend court as witness. The local Union Leader J. K. Dasgupta

resorted to Hunger Strike before the office of the Coal Manager, Adra protesting against the corrupt practices and transfer of delinquent officers from Adra. At that juncture S. E. Railwaymen's Union was derecognised by the Administration. The strike was also a protest against the earlier harassment of staff who were intended to attend Court in various cases. The whole division came to a grinding halt when all the SMs and ASMs of Adra District stopped work. Loco, carriage & wagon, signal staff as well as gangmen struck work along with the SMs & ASMs. Within a short time the strike spread out like wild fire on the entire Chakradharpur district and also on Bilaspur District. Ultimately the arrested Railwaymen had to be released. As a Central Union Leader K. M. Bhadra conducted the struggle in a befitting manner for the release of the arrested leaders - J. M. Biswas, N. C. Roy Choudhury, K. C. Deb Goswami and J. P. Verma and others from the Purulia Jail. The matter as settled with DGM (P) / Garden Reach, Harihar Banerjee. A Mass rally and a gigantic procession thronged the entire Adra Colony creating a new history of Railwaymen's movement.

On the 21st January 1956 a mammoth gathering of the Railwaymen demonstrated against the Chief Mechanical Engineer, Kharagpur on the demand for 22 lister Truck Drivers and 167 Riveters of Wagon Shop to be declared as skilled staff according to the recommendation of the First Pay Commission, and for payment of Pay Commission's recommended scale of pay, since these categories were not within the purview of Waterhouse Tribunal for classification of Artisan Category. The demonstration did not lead to any fruitful result as the Administration did not concede

to the demand. The agitation, therefore, went on and it was decided to take a strike ballot, by the union Workshop Branch. In that ballot 92% staff were in favour of strike and thus the strike was launched. The demands of the two categories of staff for being given the scales of pay of skilled category having been denied by the Administration, the staff were very much restive and the situation deteriorated. The AIRF's leadership did not intervene and the callous attitude of the Authorities continued. At Kharagpur the Police rushed in and raided the Workers' colonies to arrest the strikers. The family members of the strikers had to defend for themselves against the brutal police repression. Altogether 1400 Railway employees were arrested including 100 women workers with their families. Still the strike was not called off. The Leadership given by the Workshop leaders R. Bhowmik, G. Chalapati Rao, Bakwattar Singh, K. M. Bhadra and others led to all round success. Guruswami was urged upon to discuss the matter at Board's level, but he returned from Delhi unsuccessful. Therefore the Union Working Committee decided to call off the Strike unconditionally. After fortnight the post-strike situation was conducted very seriously and tactfully. All the arrested railwaymen were released including the ladies the very next day. The Administration victimised many staff - removal from service etc. But the struggle went on for nearly one year. Two of the victimised staff Bala Apalaswamy and Kama Reddy could not be reinstated. A Parliamentary delegation comprising Shri Priya Banerjee, Renu Chakraborty, K. Sen, Nepal Bhattacharjee and others visited Kharagpur and visited the workers' colonies and investigated into the type of police

repression. A large gathering condemned the Government's action and demanded no victimisation and immediate release of the arrested leaders. After a long drawn battle the demand of the employees was fulfilled.

In June 1960 strike, called by the Joint Council of Action of all Central Govt. employees including the Railways on the demand of need-based minimum wage as accredited by the 15th Indian Labour conference in 1957, the strike preparation throughout S.E. Railway was on a high pitch. Kharagpur and Adra Divisions were well prepared to go in for strike on the 12th July 1960. The strike continued for 5 days which was unilaterally withdrawn on the advice of Ashok Mehta, a Socialist Leader. The Congress sponsored N.F.I.R. was patronised by the Government and various concessions were given to them to break this strike. But a section under the influence of N.F.I.R. had also joined the 1960 strike. The Government came down with a heavy hand in arresting thousands of Railwaymen and keeping them in jail for a long period under the provisions of Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance, 1960. Notice of removal from service were issued on 20,000 railwaymen for participation in the strike which was declared illegal by the Government. There was an uproarious scene inside the Parliament against the Government atrocities. Supporting the cause of the employees' demands, the MPs deplored victimisation policy of the Govt. against its own employees who were merely focussing their legitimate demands which were even recommended by the Government side in the Labour Conference presided over by Guljarilal Nanda, the then Union Labour Minister. This strike, however, was reckoned to be the

footprint of the greater struggle of Central Govt. employees after a long period of isolation.

The recognition of the AIRF was withdrawn following 1960 strike which was restored after long consultations when AIRF agreed to function in the Joint Consultative Machinery, a bi-partite forum of the Government and its employees for settlement of disputes.

In the year 1968 the Central Government employees unitedly gave a call for a strike on 19th September, 1968. Dearness allowance became due then and the Government refused to grant the same immediately. Thousands of Railway employees were vindictively punished. The call for turning the one-day strike into a continuous strike if the authorities resorted to victimisation, did not, however, materialise as the Unions in Central, Western and Central Railways affiliated to AIRF withdrew the notices of strike at the last moment. A section of P&T Workers resorted to a rule movement in furtherance of the call which also did not last long. The Government Board again withdrew the recognition of AIRF and all its affiliated unions from the Railways. The entire collective bargaining process to settle the grievances of employees in the bipartite forum turned into a fiasco. It was in this period that the loco Running Staff's working hours were reduced from signing-on to signing-off. This was supported by the AIRF and the loco Running Staff. The Fireman at Kazipet in South Eastern Railway had gone on 2 months' strike and a one days' strike in 1968.

In 1968-69 South Eastern Railway Union organised a movement in a similar manner against the installation of computers.

S.E. Railway - IBM 1401 and parametric machine. On 30th March, 1969 there was a Hunger strike programme before the General Manager's Office. The Union Leaders who participated in that hunger strike were J.M. Biswas, MP, K.M. Bhadra, Sarat Sinha Roy, Ashim Bagchi and many others. The leaders forced their entry into General Manager's room. J.M. Biswas accosted the then General Manager Jagjit Singh for not yet revoking the Order of suspension on Union Officials. About 1000 employees took part in the demonstration. The General Manager conceded the demands of the Union for revocation of suspension order on the remaining 10 Union leaders.

In June 1970 there was a strike at Adra consequent on the attack on a loco shunter by the police. The strike was not limited to Adra alone. Chakradharpur, Bilaspur and Kharagpur division worker's struck work in their solidarity with the struggling workers of Adra. The strike was settled after a week when assurance was given by the Railway Board that there will be no victimisation and the authorities were forced to grant casual leave on the days of the strike which came to a close on 15th June, 1970. It may also be mentioned here that the General Secretary, N.C. Roy Choudhury and the Garden Reach Branch Secretary Shanti Chakraborty who were attending the AIRF Meeting were invited to negotiate the strike issue at Board's level and they hurriedly returned by flight to Calcutta and then to Adra to withdraw the strike as settled above. On the way at Santragachi a very big gathering was organised by the Santragachi Branch in which K.M. Bhadra, Sidhu Dutta, G.N. Ghosh and others took prominent part. The General Secretary N.C. Roy Choudhury and Shanti Chakraborty,

Garden Reach Branch Secretary also addressed the meeting giving an account of the terms of settlement etc. The Railwaymen at Santragachi refused to resume duty unless Adra Comrades resumed duties and the schedule was adhered to.

Within a month there was another spontaneous strike at Bhalai against the arrest of the General Secretary by the Police when he was in the midst of negotiation with the Railwaymen who were agitating against the high-handedness of some officials. This strike continued for 4 days and in support thereof, Garden Reach Head-Quarter staff struck work for a day. The strike was called off at the intervention of the President of S.E. Railwaymen's Association and the General Manager.

The history of Railway Trade Unions in more than S.E. Railway. Another strike of Loco Running staff through the intervention of the Government to reach an agreement for 10 hours duty for loco running staff from signing-on to signing-off. This had a tremendous effect on the morale of the Railwaymen. The Loco Running Staff Association is a recognised body.

The accumulated grievances of the Railway employees and particularly of the full-fledged trade union rights in a cumbersome situation on the existing systems. The AIRF took the initiative to call a conference of all the Trade Unions of Railway employees and also of the unions centres. On 27th February 1970 a conference conclusively decided to form a National Co-ordination Committee for the Railwaymen's struggle, (NCCRS) and the All India Railway General

C.I.T.U., A.I.T.U.C. and B.M.S. responded to the call. All India General strike started from 8th May, 1974 which continued till 28th May 1974. This glorious strike of the Railwaymen was applauded by the people at large. The factories all over India were facing the crisis of shortage of raw-materials. The Railway Minister L.N. Mishra did not yield. Even the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi could not concede primary demands of Rs. 425 crores to meet in part the demand for parity in wages with the public sector employees. At the same time the Govt. squandered Rs. 1500 crores to break the strike, for which there is no answer. In this strike 50,000 Railwaymen were arrested 30,000 railwaymen were dismissed from service under rule 14 (ii) of the Discipline and Appeal rules for non-gazetted staff and more than 5000 temporary casual staff were summarily dismissed under rule 149 of the Railway Establishment Code. Over one million railway employees suffered break-in-service for participating in the strike. All these show that democratic rights of the workers were taken away completely and the entire population was aghast at the sight of cruelty and torture. This trend continued even after lifting of Emergency in 1977. Then the General Election was held in which the Janata Party came into power defeating the Congress. As a policy decision of the Janata Govt. the last vestige of victimisation of Railwaymen due to 1974 strike was unconditionally withdrawn.

India being an under-developed country the new Industrial and economic policy aimed at introducing new tech. Computerisation and other latest scientific devices to speed up production need some thinking. In this connection we could take note of the warning issued by the International Labour

Organisation on the boom of electronic devices that has already been experienced in the Developed capitalist countries in the shape of retrenchment, health hazard, diminishing employment potential, social ills etc. To rush with any such policy without going into the various pros and cons, and without taking the working class into confidence by the mere show of slogan of workers' participation in management under the Corporate Enterprise Group may be disastrous in the long run and it is time, therefore, to have a fresh look on the new policy of the Govt.

VICTIMISATION GALORE

In spite of the change of the Government victimisation of Railway Employees and the Union Workers was ruthlessly imposed. A special mention will clear the position. The Union Leaders and active workers were made victims on the pleasure doctrine of the President of India 'a replica of the pleasure of the queen or the King' under Article 191 to continue in service or not. Authorities rushed to impose Art. 191 on the Constitution without assigning any reason or affording the victimised any opportunity to show cause, in dismissing them from service. The following list of victimised employees in Railway Trade Union Movement since 1954 onwards and in that order, the first heading the list was the first target, amongst the civilian employees of Govt. of India.

S. E. Rly.

1. K.M. Bhadra, ASM - KGF.
2. A. K. Bagchi, TNC - ANR.
3. Brinda, BTM - TATA
4. Satyen Kar - Clerk / GRC.
5. N. N. Chakraborty, Clerk - Calcutta
6. K. M. Bhattacharjee, Stock Yard - KGF.
7. P. V. Swamy, Tech. Clerk - KGF.

8. K. Venkata Rao, Sign Writer - KGP W/S.
9. S. K. Ganguly, Clerk - Calcutta.
10. Md. Ashraf, BTM - SRC.
11. R. L. Reddy, BTM - MIB W/S.
Eastern Rly.
 1. Nanigopal Chakravarty, G.C. - HWH
 2. Tarun Chatterjee, Clerk - Fairlie.
 3. B. K. Bramha, Clerk - Fairlie.

The entire Railway Trade Union Movement is very much agitated on this issue and this demand was long negotiated and high-lighted during the Janata Regime in the Centre during 1977-79, but the Railway Administration bungled without giving any satisfactory conclusion and result. With the passage of time the Railway Administration have taken it handy to impose Rule 14(ii) of DAR in dismissing 700 Railwaymen, mainly of Loco Running staff due to their agitation in 1981. In this case also no facilities to show cause are afforded to the alleged delinquent employees. The present Government of India,

though committed to reinstate those employees who were arbitrarily removed from service and victimised, in fact has been maintaining a callous attitude. The Railway Ministry in the floor of the Parliament between September and November, 1991 assured the Opposition Members that the Cabinet would take favourable decision on his recommendations. But, nothing tangible has come out.

Another episode of victimisation ranges with the unfortunate casual labourers to the magnitude of 2,50,000 who were gainfully deployed to give equal out-turn with the permanent staff and putting up, above 10 years of continuous service with some artificial break but not yet regularised in the existing vacancies. This type of exploitation of these rural proletariats go unabated in spite of the intervention and judgement of the Supreme Court of India directing to regularise their services as regular employees.

The song of the Railwaymen - night and day - captivated me

J. M. Biswas

Mr. J. M. Biswas born in 1926 in the Tangail District of Bengal (now in Bangladesh) had his early education in Tangail. After partition of the country his family settled at Naihati. He was admitted to B. A. Class in Ripon College (now Surendranath) Calcutta. During this period he joined the student movement. He later joined the Communist Party of India of which he was the Secretary of Barrackpore District Organising Committee. He played a leading role in the All Bengal Refugee Council of Action and was imprisoned twice.

After graduating from Calcutta university he joined in the claims office of the then Bengal Nagpur Railway in 1947. He was arrested during the Railway Strike of 1949. He joined the Bengal Nagpur Railway Employees Union and was Secretary of Anara Branch in 1950. He later became Asstt. General Secretary and Vice President of A.I.R.F. He launched Hunger strike before the office of Coal Manager, Adra against Police atrocities which resulted in total railway strike in Adra and Kharagpur Division. During 1960 Railway strike he was jailed and humiliated in a number of ways by the Railway Authorities. He was removed from Railway service in 1964. In 1967 General Election he became M. P. defeating hero of W.B.P.C.C. Atulya Ghatak in the Bankura Parliamentary constituency by a margin of 26,000 votes. He resigned from C.P.I. in 1975 and later he joined H.M.S. and became its National Secretary. He became the General Secretary of S.E. Rly Men's Union and is still continuing in the same position. He is also the Vice President of A.I.R.F.

I repatriated to West Bengal after partition in 1947 along with the members of my family including parents, younger brothers and sisters, and settled in Naihati in the District of 24 Parganas. After coming to West Bengal I was admitted to B.A. Class in Ripon College, Calcutta and at the same time I joined in the Student Movement under All India Students' Federation. I joined the Communist Party of India (undivided) of which I was the Secretary of Barrackpore District Organising Committee. Under the decision of the then Communist party, I joined the Refugee Movement and was one of the Founder Members of All Bengal Refugees' Council of Action. I was the General Secretary of All Bengal Refugees' Council of Action during 1948-49.

Gradually the Refugee Movement spread over throughout West Bengal under the leadership of All Bengal Refugees' Council of Action. During this period I was arrested on two occasions but subsequently released.

After graduation from Calcutta University, I joined the South Eastern Railway in May, 1947 as a Clerk in the Claims Office, Calcutta. In 1949 I was arrested along with some others under P.D. Act for organising All India Railway Strike on the 9th August, 1949. After remaining in prison for about one month I was released and joined my service. Thereafter I appeared at the Railway Service Commission and was selected for the post of Guard and I was posted in Adra Division of South Eastern Railway in Adra area as there was objection from the West

Bengal police about my posting in West Bengal.

While working as a clerk I joined the Bengal Nagpur Railroad Workers' Union, of which K. M. Bhadra was the General Secretary. This Union was organised by the then Communist Party of India as a parallel organisation to B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union and B. N. Railway Employees' Union.

After being posted as Guard at Anara Railway Station, I joined the B. N. Railway Employees' Union of which Nil Krishna Sarkar was the General Secretary. Subsequently I became the Branch Secretary of B.N. Railway Employees' Union in 1950 of Anara Branch. Thereafter the two Unions viz. B. N. Railway Indian labour Union and B. N. Railway Employees' union were amalgamated and the name of the amalgamated union was S. E. Railwaymen's Union. In 1953 when after the regrouping of Railways both the B. N. Railway and the East Indian Railway merged into one Railway to be known as Eastern Railway, the unions of both these Railways were merged into one Union under the name and style of Eastern Railwaymen's Union. On bifurcation of this Zonal Railway into Eastern and South Eastern Railways in 1955, Eastern Railwaymen's Union was also bifurcated into two unions viz. Eastern Railwaymen's union and S. E. Railwaymen's Union. I was the Branch Secretary of Anara in 1951. I organised the S. E. Railwaymen's Union in Adra Division and opened about 8 Branches in various parts of this Division.

During the period from 1950-54 there were several agitational programmes in Adra Division including stoppage of work under my leadership. In November 1955 I launched a Hunger Strike before the Office of the Coal

Manager, Adra to lodge protest against the high-handedness meted out to the Railway Employees by the Bihar Police. One Assistant Station Master, S. N. Banerjee of Suisha Railway Station in Adra Division was arrested by the Bihar Police without any reason. The purpose of the said Hunger Strike launched by me was to get S. N. Banerjee released from the Police Custody. The hunger strike started from 18th November, 1955. There was a total disruption of Railway service of Adra and Kharagpur Division of S. E. Railway for 12 hours in support of my Hunger Strike. Finally S. N. Banerjee had to be released by the Bihar Government from jail custody and brought before me and then only the hunger strike was called off and normalcy of train services was restored.

I became the Organising Secretary of S. E. Railwaymen's Union in 1955 and Assistant General Secretary in 1956 as also one of the leaders of CPI faction on the Railways. In 1958 I was elected Vice President of All India Railwaymen's Federation. During the Railway strike in the strike in S. E. Railway Zone was a complete success under my leadership. I was arrested by the Police and taken to Patna Jail. After my release from jail I was transferred from Anara to Nagpur in Maharashtra, and there were four major penalty charge sheets against me and a few Court cases in connection with my organising the 1960 Railway Strike.

I carried out my transfer order in 1963 leaving my family at Anara. Immediately after my transfer I was removed from Railway Service under D & A. My family was thrown out of the Railway Quarters forcibly by the Railway Administration with the help of the police.

The Railwaymen of Anara constructed a hut for me outside the Railway area in which I started residing with my family—wife and children.

In 1966 the political parties in West Bengal were divided into three fronts viz : (a) Congress, (b) PULF (Progressive United Left Front with Communist Party of India, Bangla Congress, Forward Block etc. and (c) ULF United Left Front with Communist Party of India (Marxist), Revolutionary Socialist Party, Socialist Unity Centre etc. In 1967 General Election the Congress nominee Atulya Ghosh - a member of All India Congress Committee and also a Syndicate Member of the Congress Party decided to contest from Bankura Parliamentary Constituency. My work place Anara area was within this Constituency. The PULF unanimously nominated Pravat Banerjee, Vice Chancellor of Burdwan University as their candidate. Besides this there were two other Independent candidates. I was elected by a margin of 26,000 votes defeating my nearest rival Atulya Ghosh in that Election. After my election to the Parliament I devoted more for the Railway Trade Union Work.

As decided by the Communist Party of India to form a parallel Federation on Indian Railways under the name and style of Indian Railway Workers' Federation, I became one of the Organisers of that Federation and after its formation I became one of the Secretaries.

In Secunderabad convention of A.I.R.F. Peter Alvares was replaced by George Fernandez as the President of A.I.R.F. and under his Leadership N.C.C.R.S. was organised taking representatives from all the Categorical and Craft Unions and Associations along with A.I.R.F. I was a representative of I.R.W.F. along with S.A.

Dange, Parvati krishnan, P. K. Kumaran etc. in the NCCRS. Two days before the 1974 strike I was taken into police custody by the Calcutta Police. I was detained in Dum Dum Central Jail till 28th of July, 1974. After coming out of jail I wrote a book analysing the reasons of failure of 1974 strike vis-a-vis the role played by the different political parties.

After failure of 1974 Railway Strike I took the leadership of Organising the S. E. Railwaymen's Union again and left no stone unturned for reinstatement of thousands of victimised Railwaymen.

During this time I developed sharp difference of opinion with the Communist Party of India due to its policy of supporting Indira Gandhi which was strongly criticised by me. Finally in September 1975 I resigned from the Communist Party of India and along with me about 200 party card holders of Purulia District of which I was the District Secretary and 200 Party Members of Railwaymen resigned from the Communist Party. The party ousted me from the Working Committee of All India Trade Union Congress. In December 1975 when there was General Body Meeting of S. E. Railwaymen's Union at Waltair, endeavour was made by the Communist Party to oust me from the Union which gave rise to a split in the Union, and ultimately the Union was splitted into two-one body headed by Indrajit Gupta and the other headed by me.

Finally the body headed by me got recognition from the S. E. Railway Administration and the body headed by Indrajit Gupta died its natural death. Since 1976 I was the Assistant General Secretary of A.I.R.F. At present I am the General Secretary of S. E. Railwaymen's Union and Vice President of A.I.R.F.



At Garden Reach - 1992

Standing from left - N. C. Roy Chowdhury, S. K. Bag, S. R. Mitra, S. L. Mukherjee
Sitting from left - R. C. Chakravarty, J. M. Biswas, K. M. Bhadra

The S. E. Railwaymen's Union under my leadership has been organised to the highest position. Its membership has increased to three times than what it was in 1974. The present membership of this Union is 1,17,000.

Afttr resigning from the Communist Party of India I have not joined any other political party. I have also organised a Trade union Education Institute under the name and style of J. P. Institute of Trade Union Education & Research at Garden Reach, Calcutta. I have been preaching for Free, Independent and

Democratic Trade Unionism, and the response of the Railwaymen to this approach is very positive. I am also a Trade Union Education Officer of All India Railwaymen's Federation and the International Transport Workers' Federation, London.

The S. E. Railwaymen's Union which was affiliated to All India Trade Union Congress, got itself dissociated from that Organisation and got affiliation of Hind Mazdoor Sabha under my initiative. I was elected one of the National Secretaries of Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

A Human Chain along the Railroad from Calcutta to Barmer

(The Rajasthani)

P. K. Basu

Mr. P. K. Basu of the Ex. Eastern Railway Employees' Association rendered yeoman's service in the formative stage of the E.I. Rly Employees' Association. His sense of purpose and direction was exemplary, with youthful vigour and tenacity he moved up and down the old E.I. Railway stretching up to Moradabad for the formation of a well-established Trade Union movement in the Eastern Zone of the country. His centre of activity was Lucknow where he was posted. A smiling face, a sincere and devoted person on all accounts, he discharged his responsibility with great success in any job that was given to him. He is a brilliant speaker, a truthful person and man of principle. He made tremendous sacrifice. Dearth of workers and paucity of funds did not deter him from his objective. He had built a new wave of trade union consciousness amongst the railwaymen of the Eastern and Northern Railways. He was associated actively with AIRF and had played a dominant role in the process of merger of two Federations of Railwaymen. Although the merger was short lived, he did not lose heart and remained firm on his objective.

He was Secretary of E.I. Rly Employees' Association, Lucknow, Asstt. General Secretary (Central) E.I. Rly. Employees' Union, General Secretary of Northern Railwaymen's Union Delhi. After regrouping of Railways, he became member of Working Committee AIRF and founder member of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen. On railway service seven years after he had left the Union he rose to the rank of a Gazetted Officer in the Personnel Branch on the Northern Railway and retired as Sr. Personnel Officer and throughout his career, he had to bear the "Stigma" of being a Trade Unionist and this had put him in embarrassing position in further advancement in his career.

In 1942 the E.I. Railwaymen's Union already had its Head Office in a small Room in the Munalal Dharamshala Building at Charbagh, Lucknow. B. K. Mukherjee who was then an outsider, was the General Secretary and P.S. Tandon, a Ticket Collector at Charbagh Railway Station, was the Asstt. General Secretary. The Office used to be run mostly by Tandonji who was respected by all Railwaymen. The influence of the Union was more pronounced in both the Workshops at Lucknow. This union was the only recognised body competent to represent the grievances of the Railwaymen. Being the only organised

labour the E.I. Railwaymen's Union was the sole representative of the Railwaymen and the voice of the Union used to be heard and respected by the Administration. But there was dearth of workers, finance, and consequently the union was not very well organised. In the Workshops however, the position of the union was very strong.

During the World War II the city of Calcutta was considered unsafe. The East Indian Railway Administration decided to shift some of its offices from Calcutta to Varanasi and Lucknow. So a large number of Railwaymen who were working at Calcutta

had to come to Varanasi and Lucknow. Along with the Office of Accounts Officer (S.T.) a few workers of E.I. Railway Employees' Association came to Lucknow. Although the E.I. Railway Employees' Association was formed in mid-thirties, its area of influence was confined to Howrah, Asansol, and Danapur divisions and the workshops at Lilloah and Jamalpur. The Association was confined mostly to the white collar staff. The Association had a small but well-organised secretariate in their Head quarters' Office at 23-24, Strand Road, Calcutta. Prof. A.N. Mallik, M.A. (Oxon), a covenanted Officer of the East Indian Railway resigned from the Railway and at the fervent request of the Railwaymen he agreed to become the Working President of the Association. Unlike the presidents of today, Prof. Mallik used to come to the Office daily and represent the grievances of Railwaymen. AM. Williams, a serving Railwayman was the General Secretary.

Some of the workers of the Association including R.C. Chakravarty after coming to Lucknow decided to open a branch of the Association. They did open a branch and took a room on rent at Pandariba. I along with a few friends also used to visit the Pandariba Office. We thought that the Association could only be established if we started the membership drive. But in those days it was, indeed, a difficult task to enrol a Railwayman as a member of the Union/Association. However, we continued our drive and made R.N. Choudhury, Head Clerk in the office of the D.E.D. — President of the association and shifted the office to his house of 86, Udaiganj, Lucknow.

Sometime later one of the clerks of D.E.D. office was made the Secretary.

Gradually the members of the Association started moving to different offices and the workshop and the Power House. In this way the membership of the Association rose to about 500. When the offices which came from Calcutta were shifted back to Calcutta a vacuum was created.

After a few months we arranged for a meeting in the Railway Institute. We requested A.M. Williams to come and address the meeting. He came and stayed at my house. It was our first venture and as luck would have it, it was well attended. A.M. Williams was a brilliant person and could speak fluently in English, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and a few other languages but he did not speak in Hindi or in Urdu at Lucknow. Instead he preferred to speak in English before a gathering where almost all the persons were ignorant of that language. All proceedings of the meeting were conducted mostly in English and a few resolutions were passed in English. However there was a big gain. The message of the Association reached every nook and corner of the Railway establishments.

It is necessary to indicate the attitude of the Railwaymen towards the Labour Unions prevailing at that time. While in the workshops where there was a large concentration of labour, it was comparatively easier to enrol them as members because of the consciousness, it was extremely difficult to make a break through among the white collar mass employed in different offices as they among the supervisors and other white collar staff like ASMs, Guards, Chargehands, Goods Clerk, Parcel Clerks etc. These white collar staff were under a misapprehension that the Administration would not like their participation in Trade Union movements in the Railways although, the British Government

Managers in those days had categorically stated that they had no objection to Railwaymen joining the Unions. The constitution of the E.I.R.E.A. stipulated that the General Secretary of the Association must be a Railwayman in service. Thus only the President and the Working President of the Association could be outsiders. The position with regards to the E.I.R. Men's Union was that the General Secretary and even the Branch Secretaries of the Union could be outsiders.

To illustrate the attitude of the white-collar workers towards the moves taken by the Association an example can be cited. There was a large concentration of clerical staff in the Divisional office complex as some of the offices from Calcutta were housed there. The Association took a resolution and represented to the General Manager that a Railway dispensary should be established in the Divisional Office complex at Hazaratganj. The general Manager in turn wanted to know the opinion of the Divisional Supdt. A draft reply to General Manager was put up stating that there had been no such demand for a dispensary from the local staff and this resolution of the Association appeared to be made out for the convenience of the staff of offices temporarily shifted from Calcutta. R.C. Chakravarty, myself and a few others made out a representation asking for the establishment of a dispensary and took it to every staff of the Divisional office for signature so that the Divisional Supdt. realised that the proposal for a dispensary was based on the best interests of the local staff. We failed to secure the signature of even 5% of the employees. Ultimately however when we could persuade one of the stenographers and a head clerk of the establishment branch

to move along with us and approach everybody we did meet with some success. The representation signed by the local staff was handed over to the Divisional Supdt. The Divisional Supdt. was personally sympathetic to the cause and recommended to the General Manager for the establishment of the dispensary and suggested that the Ante-Room of his chamber could be, for the time being, utilised for the dispensary. The dispensary was established. Another illustration to show that the class III staff used to follow the foot steps of their superior Incharge is the case of practically all the staff of the goods shed joining the Association. The supervisor was one Mr. Holguette. We showed him the General Manager's Circular, printed on the back of the pledge form of the Association. Mr. Holguette, having seen this, joined the Association and with him, practically all the rest joined as members. In the workshop and other places where there was a large concentration of Class IV staff, the position was also almost the same, — the only difference was that in the case of work-shops and other places like that of the Gangmen & traffic staff, only the head of the group had to be convinced about the utility of joining the union. Once the mate becomes the member, the Gangmen under him would follow. Similar was position in respect of other places. However, with the untiring efforts and continued devotion of R.C. Chakravarty and a few others like me the work of the Association started at Lucknow slowly but steadily.

One of the advantages of the Association was that the British employers were aware of the sincerity and the honesty of purpose with which we the workers of the Association were labouring hard to ameliorate the conditions of the working class, whose monthly salary was

at that time Rs. 12/- and the monthly salary of a class III staff was only Rs. 30/-. This awareness in the minds of the officers resulted in their objective examination of the grievances brought to their notice. At a later stage of our service we noticed painfully the attitude taken by our own officers towards the representations made by the Unions. Most of them used to consider Trade Unions as an unnecessary evil.

With the shifting of the offices back to Calcutta from Lucknow, the office of the Association was shifted from the residence of Mr. Choudhury at Udaiganj and established in a Garage at Pandariba. N.N. Roy, an accounts clerk, N.C. Jain, a Goods Clerk, R.D. Sinha, an accounts clerk, J.P. Nigam, an accounts clerk too, Deen Mohd. a keyman and a few others from the Electrical branch, the workshop and of the Traffic yards were regular workers of the Association. N. N. Roy and myself were very punctual in attending the Union office which used to remain open from 5.30 PM to 8 PM. There was no electricity in the Garage and so we used to work with the help of a kerosin lamp. Some time it became very difficult to pay even the rent of Rs. 8/- for the Garage and on many occasions we had to pay from our own pocket. The rate of subscription was only one day's pay in a year and this one day's pay in respect of the members belonging to Class IV categories was only 6 annas (37 paise) a year and when for holding a mass meeting Rs. 50/- was required.

The financial constraints prevented us from holding mass meetings off and on. We, therefore, started visiting the workers in their colonies and sitting on charpys used to discuss Trade Union matters with them. This kind of approach yielded better results and by and by

many workers started joining the Association. At the instance of R. C. Chakravarty the pioneer of the association, Branches of the Association were established at Moradabad, Allababad and a few other places. The Moradabad Branch was headed at the initial stage by Kanan Mukherjee, Electrical Foreman. Moradabad but the men behind the growth of the Association and its activities were Chitta Chatterjee, Bireswar Chakrabarty, Shiv Shankar Agarwal, O.P. Baghi and at a latter stage Julfiquer Ahmed. The Branches of the Association were also established at Rosa, under the leadership of S.D. Saxena and Uppadahaya, at Bareilly it was N.K. Srivastava who took the lead and at Dehra Doon one Guard whose name I forget, was the Secretary of the Branch. At Allahabad one Anasari as the Secretary, at Kanpur T. N. Sinha was the President and S. P. Gupta the Treasurer. Branches were also established at Khurja and Hathras. At the initial stage all these branches on the Moradabad and Allahabad division were under the control of the Lucknow branch. As and when these branches could prove the requirements of the Association's Constitution with reference to pledge forms, subscription receipts, expenditure made and quota of 30% paid to the central office at Calcutta and establishment of more than 500 members, the Central Council of the Association used to grant them recognition as an Independent Branch of the Association.

The results obtained in individual cases helped the entry of some good workers. The ability of obtaining favourable decision in individual cases depended mostly on the manner and method of representation made to the Administration. The representation of collective grievances was also a normal

function of the Association. Increase in the amount of Dearness Allowance, Revision of pay scale, changes in the hours of employment, matters of leave and medical facilities were always highlighted before the workers individually, in group and mass meetings. The net result was that although the Association did not have sufficient members in the upper divisions, the few workers on these three divisions worked very sincerely for the cause of the Association which resulted in the Association having its place of pride as a Trade Union in these divisional offices. The constant guidance of R. C. Chakravarty helped the growth and efficient functioning of the Branches.

The E.I. Railwaymen's Union had its Head Office at Lucknow, B.K. Mukherjee was the General Secretary. The Union had its origin in the workshops. Its influence was spread all over the Railway and the Workshops. B.K. Mukherji was a wholtime worker of the union but hardly used to get any salary. The E.I.R.M.U. some times used to hold mass meetings and some times launched strikes in the workshops. It was well known to the Railwaymen in the Allahabad, Lucknow and Moradabad divisions of the Railway and was a force to reckon with. The Branch at Moradabad was under the executive control of Mr. Sharma, Guard and the Branch at Allahabad was looked after by its Secy, Mishra, an outsider though Lalji Malaviya, a clerk in Divisional Office was the main person behind the organisation at Allahabad. The Union derived its strength mostly from the organised labour of the workshops, who could at any time call for a strike and embarrass the Administration. Eminent personalities like Shib Nath Banerji, Rajaram Shastri, Harihar Nath Shastri, D.P. Joshi, D.C. Shastri

etc. were associated with it. The intensity of the organisation was the product of their association with the railwaymen.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation was demanding the Establishment of a Pay Commission to go into the question of revision of the pay scales of Railwaymen. They were also demanding that a tribunal be formed to go into the question of the long hours of employment, position of appropriate rest hours and leave. The Federation was also demanding the formation of a Workers' Classification Tribunal to suggest changes in the classification of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour. In view of various resolutions passed by the Federation and the representations made to the government by them, it became essential for the Railway Unions to muster strong. So our activities were stepped up and we started working very hard, some times, taking our own leave, to publicise the demands of the Federation to each and every Railwayman and call for sacrifice required to be made to achieve the goal. Some time in 1946 perhaps, the Federation took the decision of launching a Strike. This resolution was required to be adopted by individual unions on the Railways. The Association adopted the resolution of the Federation.

A meeting of the Central Council of the Association was held at Moradabad to ratify the decision of strike and directions were given to the branches to take a strike Ballot strictly in accordance with the law, Prof. A.N. Mallik, who presided over the meeting was particular about the fulfilment of the requirements of law. We dispersed from Moradabad with a firm determination to take the strike Ballot a grand success at Lucknow. We took the Ballot on the Moulal Nehru

Ground in accordance with the rules allowing only the members of the Association, who had signed the pledge forms and paid their subscription to cast their Ballot. The ballot papers were printed and sent to the branches by the Central Office of the Association. The fact that we were following the legal provisions in conducting the strike Ballot did not escape the notice of the Railway Officials as also of the Provisional Govt. As far as I remember nearly a thousand members cast their votes in favour of the strike and none against. In this connection of strike Ballot we have to put on record the unstinted support given to us by Yogesh Chatterji the Revolutionary Socialist Leader. Yogesh-da used to accompany us to all the meetings we arranged for at the working places of railwaymen's residential colonies and even in Mohallas of the city where the Railwaymen used to collect at the house of a Railwayman. On the other hand the method of taking Ballot by the E.I.R.M.U. was different. The Union took the Ballot from the railwaymen irrespective of the fact whether they were members of the union or not. In any case the propaganda and the preparation for the strike made by the union were far more aggressive than that of ours. This is because the Union had the privilege of having both the workshops at their command ; these men of the workshops by themselves could make any demonstration, rally and even strike successful.

A meeting of the All India Railwaymen's Federation was held at Bombay to decide the date of strike. I was one of the delegates from the E.I.R.E.A. A.R. Khedgikar, who was presiding over the meeting, allowed only six men from each union to participate in the discussion. The date of strike was fixed. The

pressure of the All India Railwaymen's Federation on the Govt. of India through meetings, rallies, demonstrations etc. was so heavy that even the imperialist British Govt. had to agree to the appointment of a Pay Commission, appointment of a Tribunal to go into the question of hours of Employment and a Workers Classification Tribunal to classify the workers in the shops and sheds. The Govt. also sanctioned an Interim relief of Rs. 10 Crore, leaving the distribution of the money according to the recommendations of the Federation. It was a triumph of the Federation in the history of Trade Unions on the Railways. Even then the attitude of the Railwaymen towards the Unions was not so helpful.

A cell was set up in the Central Office of the Association to prepare a memorandum for submission to the Pay Commission. Similarly a Committee was also formed to prepare the Railwaymen's case for presentation to the Adjudicator. A committee was also formed to prepare the case of the Railwaymen for presentation to the Workers Classification Tribunal headed by Mr. Woodhead. These committees at the Central office had to be fed with information from all the branches. The memoranda submitted by the branches used to be compiled at the Central Office. It was indeed, a very difficult task. The work was completed at Central Office by P.C. Das Gupta, K.L. Das Gupta, S.K. Chowdhury and S.R. Mitra. They were entrusted with the timely completion of the same. The burden of the responsibility was ultimately compelled S.R. Mitra to go to a nearby sanatorium. But we got over the difficulties. The Central Pay Commission commented that the memorandum submitted by the E.I.R.E.A. had impressed upon the

the most. The exercise was a clear demonstration of the wisdom, ability and foresight of P.C. Dasgupta.

The partition of the country took place in 1947. A large number of Railwaymen came from the N.W. Railway and a large number of Muslim Railwaymen left for Pakistan. The persons who came from N.W. Railway had to be rehabilitated. Thus the Trade Unions were faced with yet another problem. These persons were accommodated in the transit camps and we had to look after them. By this time both the Association and the Union were well established and we did contribute our mite in ameliorating the difficulties of our comrades from N.W. Railway.

Meanwhile we had shifted our office from the garage to a considerably big room on the Lotouche Road, opposite the Bengali Hotel near the Charbagh, Railway station and with the transfer of N.R. Roy, I had taken over as the Secretary. It was our normal routine to open the office immediately after office hours. We used to work in the office for about three hours and thereafter we used to go to the colonies.

As the large majority of the Muslim Workers of the workshops had gone to Pakistan and those who had come from Pakistan were not physically or mentally prepared to give their best, the production in the workshops came down below the normal standard. The organised labour i.e. the Union and the Association had to play their part to maintain the efficiency of the workshops. By that time the Association had also a good organisation in the workshops and we were capable of commanding a good section of the workers. Both the Labour Organisations exhorted the workmen to raise the production. One of the means adopted by us was to whip

up the national sentiment and the patriotism of the Railwaymen. This yielded results beyond the expectation of the then administration. And the production rose sky High - A record improvement. There were some demands of the workers which were pending before the Administration. The Administration's view was that the production of the workshops had reached its peak and the workers were apparently satisfied but the Union leaders were the villain of piece. This view was unfortunately prevailing in the Head quarters' Office, with the result that none of the grievances were settled. The net result was that both the workshops went on a strike. The strike continued for more than a fortnight and although the E.I.R.M.U. was playing the main role, the E.I.R.E.A. could no longer be ignored. Since there was a stalemate between the Administration and the Union it became rather difficult for the Union to ask the labour to resume duties. S. Guruswami, General Secretary of the Federation had to come to Lucknow. He talked to the Chief Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Buckley. The Chief Commissioner of Railways told him confidentially that the Govt. had taken the decision to up grade Lucknow as a 'B' class city and as soon as the strike was called off the Govt. orders would be issued. Guruswami disclosed this in the mass meeting saying what the Chief Commissioner had told him confidentially and advised the Railwaymen to call off strike. The strike was called off.

By this time Jaya Prakash Narayan took over as President of the A.I.R.F., besides being the President of E.I.R.M.U. The E.I.R.M.U. had also by that time elected A.M.A.R. Fatmi, a clerk in the Divisional Accounts office, Danapur, its General secretary. With the partition of the Country,

a portion of B.A. Railway fell within the jurisdiction of India. Thus the B.A. Railway Employees' Union and the B.A. Railroad Workers' union also came under the East Indian Railway. J.P. gave a call for amalgamation of all the Unions into one, so that there could be only one union on the East Indian Railway.

By this time the E.I.R.E.A. became a potential force of labour. The Branches of the E.I.R.E.A. were functioning at Dehradun, Moradabad, Bareilly, Rosa, Aligarh, Hathras, Tundla, Kanpur, Allahabad and of course, at Lucknow. The urge for having one union on the E.I. Railway was imprinted on the minds of the workers of both the Union - E.I.R.E.A. and the E.I.R.M.U. After negotiations between the two organisations two sets of office bearers, one headed by the President and the other by the General Secretary were formed. For the outsiders besides the post of president of the organisation it was decided that only the Workshop branches may have outsiders as President. The option of choosing the set of office bearers was given to E.I.R.E.A. In the General Body meeting at Mughalsarai, the E.I.R.E.A. offered to accept the set of office bearers headed by the General Secretary. The name of the amalgamated union was decided to be the E.I.R. Employees' Union. Thus both the Unions merged together and formed the E.I.R.E.U.

At Lucknow D.P. Joshi, a Socialist leader was the leader of the E.I.R.M.U. and Dulichand Shastri also a Socialist was the President of the Alambagh, branch of the Union. One G. C. Paul, an outsider, was the paid secretary of the E.I.R.M.U. of Charbagh branch. The association elected for the groups headed by the Secretary and the E.I.R.M.U. was requested to communicate the names of

group headed by the President. Being the Secretary of the E.I.R.E.A. I automatically became the Secretary of the amalgamated body. Pal first sent me the name of one Mr. Khanna a Foreman of the Loco Workshops as the nominated president from the E.I.R.M.U. But before I could circulate the same to all concerned, Pal came and handed over to me a revised list of office-bearers, in which he became the President of Union. He stated that the previous list had been superseded by the Branch council and his name could now be circulated as the President of the E.I.R.E.U. I distinctly remember that the same day I had circulated the list at about 11 O'Clock in the morning. In the same afternoon a large group of workers, came to me in the Union Office and wanted to know how I had mentioned the name of Pal, who was also sitting there. When I told the workers that the list had been signed by Pal as Secretary of the E.I.R.M.U. I had no option but to circulate the same, the workers challenged Pal and some of them caught hold of him by the neck. At that time Joshi, who had also come to the Union office, took away the keys from Pal and turned him out of the office, saying that he was no more any body in the Union. As almost all the members of the Branch council of E.I.R.M.U. were present there, they elected D.P. Joshi as the President from the E.I.R.M.U. side. Thus the Lucknow branch of E.I.R.E.U. came into being with D.P. Joshi as president and myself as the General Secretary. With this amalgamation of the two unions some very active, energetic and devoted workers could be found in the workshops and elsewhere. Prominent among them were Triyugi Narain Bajpai, Prasad Prasad Mishra, R.B. Mishra, Mohan Prasad Sita Ram Tewari, Tulsi Ram, J.S. Das, Sewa Das etc. in the workshops and R.D.

Sinha, J.P. Nigam, V.P. Mahajan, P.L. Kapoor, D.S. Mishra and N.K. Jain in the Divisional Office. S.K. Rana and P. N. Dutta both the Senior subordinates in the workshops were very active and devoted office bearers of the union. Thus the E.I.R. Employees' Union had a large number of active and devoted workers in all the fields of the Railway in the Lucknow Division.

Having taken over as the Secretary of the Lucknow Branch of the E.I.R.E.U. in the first meeting in the branch council, I moved a resolution withdrawing representatives from the different committees of the workshops, viz purchase Committee, sampling committee etc. The resolution was adopted amidst some criticism. The measure caused such an uproar from those members of the union who were representing the Union on these committees that many of them withdrew themselves from the Union. Young people like Bajpai and others mentioned earlier could get ample opportunities to flourish in Charbagh workshops employing about 4,500 men. We used to call for withdrawal of labour even for short period of two hours only. The United Union — the E.I.R. Employees' Union became so organised and strong that a demonstration or a rally of about 10,000 men could be held with little efforts by announcement at the time of opening of the workshops in the morning and at lunch-break. The workers in the yards and station were so well organised that to stop or hold back a train was not a difficult job for the Union.

The then Minister of State for Railways, K. Santhanam was to come to Lucknow. We came to know about this at about 7 p.m. when we were in the Union Office. Only a few hours were left for the Hon'ble Minister's arrival at Charbagh Railway Station. We decided to

hold a demonstration with Black Flags at the very midnight at the station. And we did stage a huge Black Flag demonstration. A mass meeting had already been arranged the next day before we did know anything about the Minister's arrival. Police did never object to our holding meeting as they were convinced that the meeting would be peaceful. We also did not wait for their permission for holding the meeting. After the Black Flag demonstration at night, the Police authorities conveyed to me verbally that permission to hold the meeting was being withheld and that I should proceed accordingly. A good security cover for the Minister was arranged by the local police and the City Magistrate was accompanying him. The minister wanted to talk to the members of the Works Council (Members of this body were all active workers of the Union). The Minister talked to the members of the Works Council about all the welfare measures he was contemplating for the Railway workers.

As pre-arranged the workers asked the Minister if he would address the workers from the platform of the Union who were holding a mass meeting the same evening. The Minister readily agreed. As a result of propaganda made by us about the minister's addressing the meeting, the mass meeting in the evening was attended by a large number of men. The Officers of the Railway had come because of the Minister's presence. A large number of senior subordinates besides the workers attended the meeting. D.P. Jais, the president of the Branch took the chair. The Minister was seated on the dais. D.P. Jais asked me to speak in English and R.D. Saha to interpret it. Never before had I addressed such a big meeting of 20 to 30 thousand people. Having taken the mike, I said "I would

assure the Railway Minister that he is absolutely safe amongst his own railwaymen and such a huge police force is unnecessary since no amount of police repression can suppress the fury of the railwaymen. As it was explained in Hindi by R.D. Sinha, there was thunderous applause. The Minister instructed the City Magistrate to withdraw the police and the police force withdrew. My second sentence was "Let me introduce Mr. Santhanam who left the Indian National Congress in 1942 and came back to the congress after the British had left India". My dear friend Sinha explained it like this, — Mr. Santhanam 1942 Mein Desh Ki Saath Gaddari ki thi lekin Azadi ka bad Maza Lutney key liye phir congress mein aye hai". Having heard this there were again clappings with addition of Zindabad and Zondabad. I was overwhelmed by the ovation of the workers.

We then moved on to building the organisation at the Running sheds now called Loco Sheds. The workers of these sheds were not at all organised. We started holding gate meetings in the morning as also in the evening, visiting the workers in their colonies almost daily as a normal routine. Individual grievances of the workers were so many that it gave ample opportunity to us to get them redressed by representation in the Divisional Office. Thus by and large we succeeded in raising the Trade Union Consciousness among the workers and we got results. There was one worker whose name was Bans Bahadur. For one reason or the other he used to get a charge sheet almost once a week. And some times even twice; every time I had to draft his reply, some times type it out too when my part time stenographer was not available. One day I got annoyed with Bans Bahadur and

told him "you are not a "Bahadur" but a coward. If you were "Bahadur", You would have shown us examples of your bravery as none could dare to dismiss you from service so long as you remained a member of the Union". To my utter surprise I saw Bans Bahadur early in the morning the next day at my house. When asked what made him come to my house so early in the morning, Bans Bahadur said that he had been placed under suspension by the Assistant Mechanical Engineer at about 3 a.m. He stated that having thought of some work of bravery he blew the siren the mid-night for a major accident indicating that the mainline was blocked and immediate relief was needed. On hearing the siren the Loco Foreman Mr. Emden and others immediately rushed to the shed. The A.M.E. also did the same. They discovered that there was no accident of any kind anywhere on the division. When asked as to why he had blown the siren Bans Bahadur just showed a Sr. Chargeman of the Shed and he had instructed him verbally through a khalasi to blow the siren. A scene was shown that Bans Bahadur was placed under suspension immediately. While receiving the suspension order he told the A.M.E. that he was six and half feet tall Anglo Indian who was very hostile to the Union, that since he was a member of the Union they could do nothing to him and as such he came to my house early morning to inform me of the incident. I congratulated him and gave him a big flag of the Union and asked him to stay about in the Loco shed colonies with the flag and tell everybody that none could touch him since he was a member of the Union. Bans Bahadur religiously followed my instructions daily right from 8 a.m. in the morning to 4 p.m. in the afternoon. The result

was that every employee of the Loco Shed used to look forward to see how the Union could save Bans Bahadur. From the Union itself gate meeting and meetings in the colonies used to be held. Bajpai, Raghuvans Mishra and R. B. Mishra were all gifted speakers. The reply to the charge sheet was written by me in which we took the stand that in the absence of any rules in writing prescribed for blowing the siren Bans Bahadur was absolutely right in listening to his superior officer. As for not acting according to the convention of blowing the siren on verbal orders he could have been penalised. A few days later a nephew of Bans Bahadur, who was a clerk in the Divisional Office as also an active worker of the Union came to the Union office in the evening to inform us that the Removal orders of Bans Bahadur had been sent to the Shed a few hours back and that the same would be served on Bans Bahadur the next morning. Most of the people present there accused me of taking an unjustifiable risk with the service of an individual for furthering the case of the union. But Bans Bahadur was very firm in his conviction that since he had carried out my instructions he could not be removed from service by the Administration. I asked him to come and sit at my house from 7 O'clock of the next morning.

On receipt of the removal order the Foreman called almost every worker of the shed, showed the removal order and ridiculed the Labour Unions. Exactly at 10 O'Clock I met the Divisional Personnel Officer and asked him to call back the removal order from the shed and fix up a time with the Divisional Superintendent for discussion of the case with him. The Divisional Personnel Officer Mr. Tripathi, was a very experienced person and

his advice used to be accepted by the Divisional Supdt. and also by other officers. I told Mr. Tripathi that if my request was not acceded to there would be a serious labour unrest all over Lucknow which, in turn, would hamper the movement of trains carrying food grains and coal to different places. Since I was giving this notice in advance the responsibility for labour unrest would lie on the officers of the Administration who would make this trifling issue of holding back the Removal order for a day or two, a prestige issue. Mr. Tripathi assured me that he would talk to the D.S. and call back the removal order. At the time when Mr. Emden the Foreman was talking to the workers and making a fun of the claim made by Bans Bahadur, Mr. Tripathi phoned him to send the removal orders to him by a special messenger. Next day I discussed the matter with Divisional Supdt. and asked him to show the procedure laid down in writing for blowing the siren. There was none and it was accepted by the D.M.E. that the siren used to be blown on the verbal instructions sent through any available staff from the Divisional Supdt. was persuaded by me to accept that what Bans Bahadur had done was according to the procedure that was followed in the shed and he could not be held guilty. It was decided that Bans Bahadur would be put back to duty immediately and his so-called mis-behaviour with his superiors may be considered later. Bans Bahadur was put back to duty same day. With the re-instatement of Bans Bahadur a huge procession was taken. The Union was firmly established in the running sheds all over the area.

The Lucknow Branch of E.I.R.E.U. was no doubt one of the best and well organized branches of the union. Jaya Prakash Narayan

as President of the Union addressed a number of mass meetings — one such at Aminabag and also a press conference on behalf of the Union, Dr. Ram Monohar Lohia had also addressed a large mass meeting held under my presidentship. P.C. Das Gupta and R.C. Chakravarty had also on a number of occasions addressed mass meetings and held press conferences.

Sometime in 1951 the A.I.R.F. decided to go on a nation-wide strike. I was also the Asstt. General Secretary of the Union and, perhaps, the youngest member of the Working Committee of A.I.R.F. of which J.P. was the President. The responsibility for organising the strike in the upper Divisions was, therefore, given to me by P.C. Das Gupta and Chakravarti. The tempo of the workers was so high that there was no doubt in any one's mind about the success of the struggle in this region. At Lucknow, T.N. Bajpai, R.P. Mishra, R.B. Mishra, D.S. Mishra, R.D. Sinha and a number of other workers of the Union were actively assisting me. D.P. Joshi was, of course, with the organisation. The morale of the workers was very high. A few days before the specified date of the strike there was a meeting of the A.I.R.F. which was attended by J.P. and Guruswami. We asked them whether there was any possibility of a last minute compromise with the Govt. J.P. showed us a bunch of correspondence between him and Jawahar Lal Nehru whom J.P. used to address as "Bhai". Guruswami was very emphatic in replying in the negative. The council of action of the A.I.R.F. of which I was also a member, was to meet at Bombay only a few days later. But only a few days before the date of the proposed strike I decided not to go to Bombay but devote the time in organising the strike at Lucknow.

One morning as we were going for the propaganda with loudspeaker and banners fitted on a Tonga, I saw in the Newspaper that the A.I.R.F. at its Bombay meeting had decided to abandon the proposed strike call. I remember that Bajpai, Raghubans, R.B. Mishra and others who came to my house as usual for going on publicity for the strike became completely demoralised at the Federation's decision. R.P. Mishra lay flat on the ground saying "Morcy Gechi Dada". The problem was how to face the workshop labour who had been continuously told by a Communist leader (Mr. Sarabjit Singh) that the Union would ultimately compromise with the administration and betray the cause of the workers. We decided to shake off our embarrassment and proceeded to the Workshops gate as usual. When we reached the gate we saw Sarabjeet Singh had already arrived and started accusing the Union leaders. R.B. Mishra was asked to speak and he said that no reliance could be given to the Newspaper as the same paper had earlier stated falsely that the A.I.R.F. was going to the Supreme Court. A man had been sent to Calcutta to ascertain facts. The workers were assured that we did not leave the field and were in the same spirit as before. The result was that the control of the workshops remained with us. Dulichand Shastri, who was the Secretary of the Aminabag, workshops Branch, however, did not go to the workshop on the plea that it would be very difficult on his part to justify the action of the A.I.R.F. in calling off the strike. The result was that the Communists led by one Narayan Singh, an employee of the Workshops, got an opportunity to criticise our Union before the workers that the Union had betrayed the workers as apprehended. The result was that

the Alambagh Workshops remained for some time out of our control. It took some time to regain the same.

The emergence of the E.I.R. Railwaymen's Congress, an organisation affiliated to INTUC was one of the shifts in the period. The administration extended their recognition to the Congress and as such they were entitled to all the privileges which the E.I.R.E.U. used to have in matters of representation to the administration viz : holding of meetings and the organisational facilities like special passes, leave etc. A.P. Sharma who was earlier the Secretary of the Mugalsarai Branch of the E.I.R.E.A., had joined the Congress as one of its top leaders. He recruited J.P. Choubey who was then employed in the Running shed Lucknow as the Secretary of the Lucknow Branch of the Congress. The purpose for which the E.I.R.E.A. and E.I.R.M.U. were amalgamated into one and formed the E.I.R.M.U. was practically nullified. Again there were two Labour Unions on each Railway and two Federations at the National level. In spite of this the strength of the E.I.R.M.U. started growing higher and higher day by day. After the calling off of the strike by the Federation there was lull for some time but the little benefits that we achieved at the time of calling off the strike was again helpful to us in revamping the organisation to its previous level.

Then came the regrouping of Railways. The three upper Divisions of the E.I.R. were to form a part of the Northern Railway in the course of the regrouping of Railways. The E.I.R.E.U. took the stand that the regrouping of Railways would not be conducive to efficiency and would be detrimental to national interest. In any case the Union

vehemently opposed the bifurcation of the East Indian Railway. Mass meetings, Gate meetings, demonstrations, rallies were held almost every where on the East Indian Railway against the bifurcation. Significantly the Branches of the Union on the three upper Divisions of the E.I.R. were second to none in their opposition to the bifurcation. At the same time, certain officers of the E.I. Railway were canvassing for the bifurcation and acting behind the scene to oppose the Union. One public meeting in a big hall at Amritsar was organised by some of the men acting in the instance of some of the Officers. One Mr. Malaviya a Congress leader (I think he was Mr. K.D. Malaviya) addressed the meeting and unfortunately termed the demand of the Union which was supported by Dr. B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, as parochial. We were surprised to hear him terming a Trade Union demand supported by the Railway employees of Bihar and U.P. as parochial. The Dehra Dun Branch hosted the meeting of the Central Council of the E.I.R.M.U. which again opposed the bifurcation proposal. It is evident that all the Branches of the Union on the three upper Divisions of the E.I. Railway were vigorously opposing the transfer of the three Divisions to the Northern Railway.

Soon after the Amingaon Conference of the A.I.R.F. Jawahar Lal Nehru to whom our resolutions and memorandum were submitted invited six representatives of the Union to meet him in the Prime Minister's Office at New Delhi. I was one of the six to meet the Prime Minister. The other delegates were Shib Nath Banerji, P.C. Das Gupta, H.L. Chakravarti and two others. As we entered the Prime Minister's Room Pandit Jagan Mohan Said, "Hallo Shib Nath I am meeting you later

a long time". Shib Nath Babu said "when you were in Calcutta I went to see you but Dr. B.C. Roy put me behind the bars". Pandit Nehru shook hands with every one of us and then started reading the memorandum very minutely underlining at many places. Thereafter he said, that it was too late and that he could not possibly issue a decree on the Railway Minister. Thus the regrouping of Railways, bifurcation of the East Indian Railway and consequently of the E.I.R. Employees' Union became a flat accomplice. The Union was bifurcated and the portion falling beyond Mugalsarai on the Northern Railway was known as E.I.R.M.U. (Northern Zone) with D.P. Joshi as President and myself the General Secretary. This decision was taken by the Central Council of the Union in its meeting at a place somewhere near Dhanbad.

The Head Office of the E.I.R.E.U. (Northern Zone) started functioning from the same office of the Lucknow Branch of the Union on the Munna Lal Dharmshala Road, Charbagh, Lucknow.

Our immediate task was to consolidate the various unions on the ex-E.P. Railway, Ex-Bikaner State Railway and the ex-Jodhpur State Railway which also formed part of the Northern Railway. Fortunately these Unions were also affiliated to the A.I.R.F. The Unions on the Jodhpur and the Bikaner Divisions were very well organised. The Jodhpur Union was headed by Vishawdeo Purohit, Mohanlal etc. The Bikaner Union was headed by Sri Krishna, B.K. Acharya & others. These Unions had quite a large number of employees of the Railways as their members with well maintained offices and some funds also in their Bank Accounts. The position of Trade Unions on the E.P. Railway was,

however, shocking because the impact of the partition of the country was very heavy on the Delhi and Ferozpur divisions which formed the E.P. Railway. The Unions were recognised by the Administration on the basis of the personality of the leader of the Union rather than on the position of the organisation and its strength. The Unions affiliated to both the Federations were on a different footing. They were recognised not only because of the strength but the administration had to recognise them because of the policy of the Govt. Besides, these two Unions there were at least two more unions, one known as Dewan Chaman Lal's Union and the other Ayyenger's Union. The Union affiliated to A.I.R.F. was known as Northern Railwaymen's Union. Our aim was to form one Union by amalgamation of E.I.R.M.U., N.R.M.U., Bikaner Union and Jodhpur Union, which were affiliated to A.I.R.F. Com. D.D. Vasisth, a Socialist party leader and an outstanding General Secretary of the E.P. Railwaymen's Union. Sucheta Kripalani was the President. Inder Dutt an employee of the Railway was the working President. I.P. Bani, Rajivansh Sarhadi, Parag Dutt Gaur, Kamal Singh and Mahendra Pal Dutta etc. were active members of the Union.

There was a directive from the Federation to all its affiliated Unions on each Railway to merge together and form one union. D.P. Joshi and myself met Vasisth, Bani and others. We decided to merge together under the name Northern Railwaymen's Union and our Constitution at the initial stage. It was also agreed that both the President, and General Secretary were from the same organisation.

D.D. Vasisth agreed to the proposal and became a Vice President in the merged organisation. D. P. Joshi and myself became

President and General Secretary respectively. Mr. Inder Dutta, who was to be made the Working President, however, wanted that the card pass for the President should be given to him. Joshi agreed to handover the card pass after some months i.e. after he completed his tour of all the branches of Bikaner and Jodhpur Divisions. It was also agreed that Sri Krishna of Bikaner and Vishwadeo Purohit of Jodhpur would be made the Asstt. General Secretaries. All formalities being completed, a meeting of all the Unions was convened at Sarai Rohila where the decision of one union viz the Northern Railwaymen's Union all over the Northern Railway was announced. The Constitution of the E.I.R. Employees' Union was adopted as an amendment to the constitution of the N.R.M.U. as registered. Thus D. P. Joshi became the President Mr. Inder Dutt, the Working President, D. D. Vasisth, Vice President, I. P. Barq, the Treasurer and P. K. Bose the General Secretary. Lalji Malaviya became the Jt. General Secretary, Sri Krishna and V. D. Purohit both as Asstt. Secretary.

Right from the beginning the Northern Railway Administration was averse to the E.I.R.M.U. (Northern Zone), though the General Manager did never express it and he appeared to us to be a well intentioned gentleman. When we talked to him he appeared to be very reasonable, sympathetic and willing to do any thing that was possible within his jurisdiction but in actual practice when it came to the point of implementation of what he had said, the officers below him where so conservative that they would not implement anything. One Asstt. Personnel Officer was incharge of the Union Cell and two Jr. cleaks were there to assist him. The D.G.M. (P) was an Engineer who had,

perhaps, never come in contact with any Union worth its name. The knowledge of the officers dealing with the Union was limited to a few pages of the Establishment code. They had never seen any organised Union nor had they ever rubbed their shoulders with the labour movement. Confronted with a well organised union they perhaps, lost their balance of mind and did not know what to do. The P.N.M. meetings used to be called by them as Deputaion meetings. Therefore a confrontation between the Union and the Administration was becoming imminent which we were trying our best to avoid. They did not accord formal recognition to the Union as it was beyond their conception. Since all the Unions were recognised by the previous Railways under the Govt. of India, the successor Railway had no other alternative but to treat the Unions as a defacto recognised Union. But yet in a meeting with the General Manager when we brought this point to his notice, he stated that he would like to have a list of 14000 members. (1/16th of the total no. of employees) to deal with the Union afresh after giving a formal recognition. He also said that in any case he had been and was dealing with the Union as a recognised one and as such there appeared to be no problem. Within a month we had given him a list of 20,000 members from the three divisions viz. Lucknow, Allahabad and Moradabad and the workshops. In the list we had indicated the numbers of receipt of payment of subscription against each name. Yet the position remained as it was, P.N.M. meetings were not being held although we had access to the General Manager and other officers of the Railway which they could not afford to deny. Passes were issued to us by name only without mentioning the

designation of the Union i.e. President or General Secretary. Letters were also issued to us by name giving the address only without mentioning the name of the Union. These senseless acts only used to irritate us and the position passed beyond the limits of our patience. In one of my letters to the General Manager I had to mention to him a story from Panchatantra. In the story the king kept his golden ring in his hands and asked the Pandit of Astrology to tell the name of the thing which the king had kept hidden in his fist. The astrologer after calculation replied that there was a round thing built in metal with a hole in it. When asked to name the thing the learned astrologer said it was a milestone. Having written the story I indicated in my letter to the General Manager that the Pandits of the Establishment code in his office always discover a milestone instead of a gold ring just as the Astrologer did. This is because the Pandits of the Establishment Code had never seen a truly organised union.

In one meeting which D. P. Joshi had with the General Manager, the General Manager stated that much of the misunderstanding between the Administration and the Union was due to the General Secretary of the Union being not available at Delhi. He suggested that the General Secretary and the Joint General Secretary Lalji Malaviya could be transferred to Delhi as per policy regarding formation of the Northern Railway if they desire. In the joint meeting of all the Unions when the Northern Railway men's Union was formed I was elected the General Secretary. It was also demanded by other constituents of the Union that I should shift myself to Delhi. I had agreed to the proposal. Accordingly transfer orders were issued transferring me and Lalji Malaviya to the Head quarters office at New Delhi.

The General Manager suggested in one of the meetings with him that I should take over as A.P.O. (Union) and Lalji Malaviya can take over my place. This would enable the Administration to deal with the Unions objectively. My reply to him was that I was very sorry that I had fallen so low in his estimation that he thought that I could be so easily purchased. The General manager flew into rage and indignation but kept his usual cool. He said good bye and the meeting abruptly ended. Later he however, told D. P. Joshi that what he had told me about my taking over of the Union cell was an appreciation of my ability to put things in the proper way.

After the General Council meeting of the Union at Bareilly where the Divisional Supt. had extended all the facilities that used to be given to the Union by the E.I.R. Administration, I decided to shift to Delhi. Perhaps it was on 3rd June 1953 more than a year after re-grouping of Railways. On reaching Delhi I found contrary to previous intimation about the allotment of quarters which was a condition precedent to my transfer that I was allotted half of ~~unfurnished~~ quarters consisting of only a room, the other half comprising of two rooms etc. was occupied by a clerk. And this accommodation given to me was supposed to be shared by me with Lalji Malaviya. I occupied it and ~~did not~~. Next day on resuming duty when I met the General Manager and told him about the accommodation given to me he jumped upon the Officer who did it and asked him to set it right and give me the proper accommodation. A few days later when I approached the Officer I got an impression that what the General Manager had told him was only a drama. Lalji Malaviya also joined me and

both of us started working for the Union from that place, keeping our families at Lucknow and Allahabad respectively.

As the General Manager's attitude towards the union was not very congenial, we decided to spread the message of the Union in both the Delhi and Firozpur Divisions where the organisation was comparatively weaker than that on other Divisions of the Railway, O.P. Bhagi and I started touring the Delhi and Firozpur Division. We contacted the workers, arranged for mass meetings which were largely attended. The meetings at Kalka, Ambala, Jalandhar and Firozpur were so successful that the people used to say that such big meetings had not been seen by them before. I used to speak in English and my esteemed friend O. P. Bhagi used to translate it in Hindi. We had also visited Bikaner and Jodhpur and at Bikaner Sri Krishna told me that the mass-meeting addressed by me was the biggest and the crowd was far bigger than the one addressed by Guruswami. Seeing our organisational abilities and the positive response to our Union from all over the Northern Railway, the Administration became nervous and the officers responsible for dealing with Unions including the D.G.M. (P) were at cross roads to decide what course of action they should adopt to contain the growing influence of the Union over the Railwaymen. Perhaps they thought that they were paid to suppress the Union activities instead of removing the grievances.

The intellectual bankruptcy prompted the officers of the Union cell to create disruption in the Union and they took advantage of some disgruntled Union officials who lost their position consequent on the amalgamation of the Unions. The amended constitution of the Union was not yet Registered due to some

technical objections raised by the dealing clerk in the office of the Registrar. As such the constitution of the Northern Railwaymen's Union (The changed name of the E. P. Railwaymen's Union) remained valid with the Registrar. At the instance of somebody Inder Dutt in his capacity as the Working President of the Union wrote a letter to the Administration calling for a meeting of the Working Committee consisting of members from Delhi, Firozpur, Bikaner and Jodhpur Divisions only completely ignoring the members of the working committee belonging to the Lucknow, Allahabad and Moradabad Divns. He also pointed out that according to the constitution the jurisdiction of the Union did not include the portion of the E.I.R. and the revised constitution had not been registered and thus the office bears like me belonging to the ex- E.I.R. portion had no locus-standi. This letter was typed in the H.Q. office and handed over to the Union cell. Administration took immediate action in arranging the meeting of the working committee and in their zeal overlooked the fact that the position of Bikaner and Jodhpur was the same as that of E.I.R. portion. The main agenda of the Working Committee was to remove us from the Union and advise the Administration. This would then create an unpleasant situation in which the Administration would have the right to say that since the Union itself was divided and the E.I.R. portion had no constitution, the Administration was not in a position to recognise the Northern Railwaymen's Union of which D. P. Joshi was the President and I was the General Secretary.

I was at Jodhpur when this development took place at Delhi. From Jodhpur when I came to Bikaner I noticed a change in the

attitude of Sri Krishna and others. In the evening when I was wondering about the situation some one came to me and informed that two days ago some officials of the Union had also come there and had a meeting with Sri Krishna and others. The next morning the man who was directed by the Administration for spying over my activities asked me whether I would be attending the Working Committee convened by Inder Dutt. My worst apprehension came to be true and I said that I would not attend any meeting. On arrival at Delhi and opening the door of my room, I found a few carbon papers inside. By reading the carbon papers I came to know all about the plans. These carbon papers were collected by a close friend of mine whom I had asked to keep an eye on the situation.

I found only 4/5 days were left when the working committee meeting would be held in the Bara-Hindu-Rao Building of the Socialist party (from this place the E.P. Railwaymen's Union used to work) I sent telegrams to the members of the working committee from the E.I. portion asking them to attend the meeting. I met V. V. Giri and Harihar Nath Shastri and apprised them of the entire position. By that time I had good rapport with Shastriji. I saw Dr. Seth (if I remember correctly) who was the Registrar of Trade Unions of Delhi state in whose office the registration matter was pending. I impressed upon him the immediate need for registration of the constitution which had been submitted some months ago. The Registrar directed his Labour Officer to settle the issue the same day. It was ultimately settled that the Union had to deposit only Rs. 35/- to register the constitution in supersession of the then existing constitution. Joshiji and I had to wait in the Registrar's office for the signature of the Registrar. There

Dhawan, Welfare Inspector, was deputed by the Administration to keep track of my movements but how could he do so when I used to go out early in the morning and come back in the mid-night. One day I came to know that an Officer from the Head Quarters' office had come to my house a number of times and ultimately kept a sealed envelope with the person who used to stay in the other portion of the house. The letter disclosed that I was to see the General Manager on Monday at 10.30 a.m. (The working committee meeting was to be held on the previous Sunday). I got the registered constitution signed by the Registrar but kept it a guarded secret.

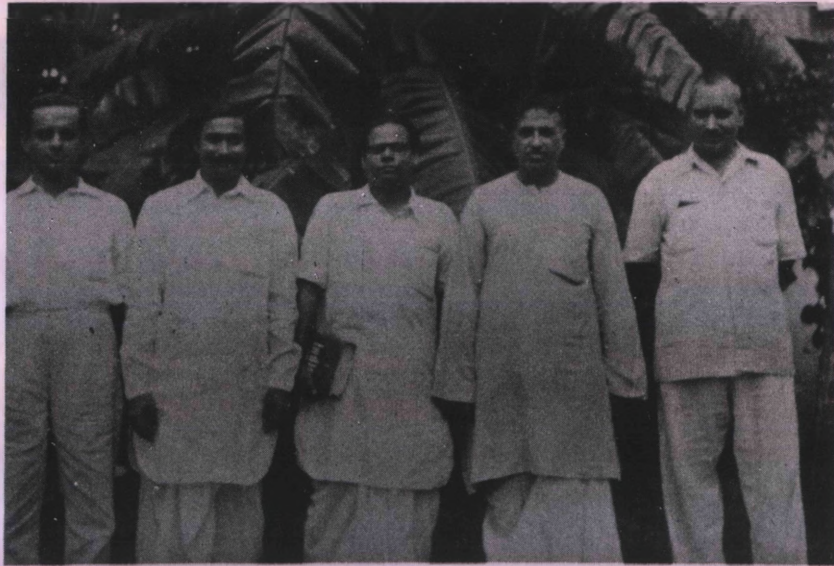
We drafted a resolution condemning the Administration for their sinister move to disorganise an Organised Union by encouraging some of the disgruntled men to act against the interests of the Union. I asked D. P. Joshi to stay back from the meeting as I wanted to give the meeting an all-Railwaymen character (Vasishth also abstained). When along with the members of the E.I.R. Zone we entered the meeting in the Bara-Hindu-Rao office, the persons who had organised the working committee meeting were taken aback and dumb-founded. I asked Sri Krishna, who was an Asstt. Secretary to record the proceedings and accordingly he took the signature of all the members present. The meeting started under the presiding of Inder Dutt (a representative from E.P.R.M.U) I showed them the registered constitution and said that they had no right or right to call for the meeting but since all members were present I did let the meeting continue. I produced the copy of the letter which Inder Dutt had written to the Administration. The organisers became completely unnerved. The Jodhpur and

Bikaner people realised his position and gave full support to me. I moved the resolution, drafted earlier, condemning Administration. The same was passed unanimously, even the members from E.P.R. side voted in favour of the resolution enblock. It was a big surprise to every body as the entire move of the Administration was completely reversed. The Public Relation Organisation of the Administration had kept some men near the Working Committee meeting so that they could rush to the press the news of the debacle in the Union as originally planned by the Administration. But, alas, a different drama was enacted in the Working Committee meeting. We gave to the men of the Administration the resolution expressing full confidence in our leadership and condemning the Administration for trying to create disruption in the Union. Next day, of course, I went to see the General Manager as required by him. The General Manager, however, felt shy in meeting me and, as such, there could be no meeting between us.

We came back to Lucknow. On our way we stopped at Rosa. A big meeting was arranged by the Union there. I explained the entire position. Joshi accused the Administration and asked them to realise the strength of the Union and wake up even then, otherwise they would have to face the consequences. "Union ney kar dala, G. M. ka mook kala" was the slogan coined at this meeting. Thereafter, the unhealthy relationship further deteriorated and it continued till the General Manager was transferred to C.L.W. Inder Dutt and others had filed a suit in the court of Law asking the Court to refrain us from functioning. We contested the case, won it and expelled Inder Dutt and a few others from the Union by a

resolution adopted in the Annual General Meeting of the Union. During this period Guruswami strangely enough remained a silent spectator despite my repeated requests to him to intervene. The reasons what prompted him to do so remained not known even to this day.

Jaya Prakash Narayan and Harihar Nath Shastri discussed among themselves the need for having one Federation at the National level and one Union at the Zonal level. They had decided that both the Federations, viz. The All India Railwaymen's Federation and the Indian National Railway Workers' Federation affiliated to INTUC should merge together. As a first step for this purpose the modalities were worked out. The office-bearers were divided into two groups : one set headed by the President and the other by the General Secretary. The same formula was agreed to, for the Unions on the Railways. Twelve members from the A.I.R.F. and 12 members from the INRWF would form the working committee. The eight office bearers and the Working Committee would jointly govern, the Federation till a Constitution was framed by a Committee of six - three from each side. The A.I.R.F. would get the first option to opt for the set of office bearers. The amalgamation of the two Federations would become effective after the Working Committee of respective Federations adopted a resolution to that effect. The INRWF ratified the agreement. A meeting of the Working Committee of the A.I.R.F. was called in Delhi to ratify the agreement. It was prearranged that after ratification by A.I.R.F. Working Committee, both the Working Committees of the two Federations would meet together. The members of the working committee of INRWF sat in an adjacent room



R. N. Banerjee, Ram Chakravarty, P. C. Dasgupta,
Thakur Jugol Kishore Sinha, M. D. Dubey



S. Guruswami, V. V. Giri.



3rd Row - Standing from left - ii) Nilkrishna Sarkar
1st Row - Standing from left - i) Ram Chakravarty, iii) V. V. Giri, iv) S. Guruswami

of the Constitution Club where the Working Committee met. In the Working Committee Meeting of the A.I.R.F. our friends from Calcutta decided to challenge the agreement between J. P. and Shastriji. After discussion it was decided in the previous night that instead of challenging the agreement we should insist that the agreement should be ratified by the General body meeting of the A.I.R.F. and not by the working committee. I had my reservation about the stand to be taken by our comrades of the E.I.R.E.U. but Joshiji persuaded me to believe that it would be correct to work together with the E.I.R.E.U. of which we were members before regrouping and our Union on the three Divisions of E.I.R. carried with it the legacy and tradition of the Union. In the Working Committee meeting of A.I.R.F. Jaya Prakash Narayan explained in details of his discussion with Shastriji. Yet the E.I.R.E.U. insisted that agreement should be ratified by the General body for which a date could be fixed immediately. Guruswami was in two minds and he abruptly sought the opinion of the members present. The E.I.R. (Eastern Railway) the N.R. and N.E.R. Unions wanted the ratification by the General body meeting. Guruswami immediately stood up and said that since three Railways were against the agreement, the matter should be referred to the General Meeting to be convened within a month. The Working Committee refused to set their seal to what J. P. had decided. In disgust he declared the meeting closed and left. The action of the Working Committee was definitely a blow to J.P.'s leadership of the Federation. In the evening Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Railway Minister had arranged for a Tea party in the Parliament House Lawns where he had invited the members of the Working

Committees of both the Federations. This was done positively with a feeling that the A.I.R.F. Working Committee would ratify the J. P.'s Agreement with Shastriji and a unified Federation would come into being. P. C. Dasgupta, R. C. Chakravarti, D. P. Joshi, a few others and myself were sitting in a corner of the lawn. J. P. walked towards us and said, "Well, gentlemen, the way in which you have treated me today, you need not have begged me so long". As he walked back I felt ashamed, so did all of us. However, after a few weeks the General meeting of the A.I.R.F. held at Mysore ratified the agreement and passed a resolution unanimously to form a common Federation with the I.N.R.F. and opted for the set of office bearers suggested by the General Secretary. The amalgamation of the two Federations took place with the name - "National Federation of Indian Railwaymen". The Associated Union also followed suit, but the Railway Federation movement lost a personality like Guruswami. Out of the 12 members from the A.I.R.F. in the Working Committee of the N.F.I.R. only one, thus I was one of the founder members of the N.F.I.R. D.P. Joshi was another member from the Northern Railway.

The N.F.I.R. working got started with Harihar Nadi as the president. But I had a feeling which was shared by many of my comrades that Guruswami was feeling that the set-up. The cruel hand of death took Shastriji from us as a result of which S.R. Vasavada took Shastriji's place as President of the N.F.I.R. The members S. R. Vasavada and Guruswami were

In view of the directive of the Union with the Northern Railway

Association. In a meeting of the Working Committee of our Union it was decided that we should opt for the group headed by the General Secretary. D. P. Joshi presided over this meeting of the Working Committee and as a matter of fact the proposal to opt for the Secretary's group was his own. Accordingly we sent the proposal to the General Secretary of N.R.S.A. stating that the Union would opt for the group of office bearers headed by the General Secretary. There was no response from the General Secretary Amar Das who was the office Secretary of the INRWA and also a responsible office-bearer of the N.R.S.A. He was contacted by me and I got the impression that there would be no difficulty for the N.R.S.A. in having the Presidential group. This was the opinion of many at Delhi. Comrade Ram Chandra, an M.L.A. , Nationalist & a Trade Union leader of Punjab was the President of N.R.S.A. and P.P. Kulshrestha, an A.S.M. at Kanpur was the General Secretary, J. P. Choubey of Lucknow was the active Vice-President of N.R.S.A. While, at Delhi I was pursuing the matter of amalgamation with the N.R.S.A. officials. Kulshrestha and a few others from N.R.S.A. and S. D. Saxena of our Rosa Branch and a few others of Moradabad Branch of N.R.M.U. met Joshi at Lucknow to explain to him that if the Union opted for the president group of office-bearers, then both the President and the General Secretary as also a Vice-President and the Treasurer, would belong to Uttar Pradesh and it would be conducive to the best interest of the amalgamated Union. For the first time 'Uttar Pradesh' came on the field. Joshi wanted to know if I agreed with this view as a few important leaders of the workshops and Lucknow Divisions had expressed the desire

to obtain my consent before initiating the alternative suggestion. I told D. P. Joshi that what Kulshrestha and others wanted would not materialise as even if the Union opted for the president Group now, the Association would replace their General Secretary by some one from the E.P.R. pr. tion. Apart from that, the question of U.P. and Punjab should not come at that stage since there was no such feeling in the minds of Railwaymen in U.P. It was made clear that the glaring example of this was my continuance as Secretary of the Lucknow Branch, as the General Secretary of the E.I.R.E.U. (Northern Zone) and also as the General Secretary of the Madhya Railwaymen's Union, as the member of the Working Committee of A.I.R.F. both before regrouping of Railways and after-wards, as the founder member of N.F.I.R. All this was possible because the Railwaymen of U.P. had accepted me as their leader though I was not in the soil of Bengal. Joshi, for the proposition given by these men to have the Presidential group was worth trying. It was left to me to decide the issue as desired by my colleagues at Lucknow. In view of the regard, respect and love in which I was held by Joshi, I thought that Joshi should be made the President by our acceptance of the presidential group. This was a debt which I had to repay as it was due to his trust, confidence and guidance to me that I had held the position amongst the railwaymen.

I, therefore, sent a communication to N.R.S.A. that the N.R.S.U. would accept the presidential group of Office-bearers.

The Ball was now in the court of N.R.S.A. to accept the General Secretary of the Presidential group as the General Secretary of the eventual amalgamation of the two organisations. It was no easy task for Kulshrestha, the General Secretary of the

N.R.S.A., as the friends from the E.P. Railway area would not allow both the posts of President and the General Secretary to E.I.R. Section (U.P.). Constant consultations and lobbying went on but Kulshresth could not get the proposal accepted without changing the General Secretary of N.R.S.A. A meeting was convened at the residence of Khandubhai Desai wherein he decided that Faquir Chand should be the General Secretary if the N.R.M.U. opted for the president group. Various names for the amalgamated Union were suggested. Comrade Sri Krishna was very keen that 'Mazdoor' should be there. So the name was decided to be the Uttariya Railway Mazdoor Union. As for the Constitution it was suggested that the Constitution prepared by the N.R.M.U. should be accepted. After exchange of formalities the Uttariya Railway Mazdoor Union was established as a result of amalgamation of Northern Railwaymen's Union and the Northern Railway staff Association. Thus D. P. Joshi became the President and Faquir Chand, the General Secretary. I was one of the Vice-Presidents. The Uttariya Railway Mazdoor Union started functioning from Billimaran office of INTUC, where the N.R.S.A. had its Head Office. The first meeting of the Central Council of the Union was held at Lucknow (in the Indian Institute of Northern Railway).

Having achieved the objective of one Union on Northern Railway and being relieved of the enormous responsibilities of the office of the General Secretary, I got some time to look after my family, so long left at Lucknow. I got an independent two roomed house at Hardinge Bridge Railway colony and shifted my family from Lucknow. Our financial position was bad as a result of

double establishments and other expenditure due to my activities in the Union (in some days most of the office bearers and delegates and workers had to bear their own expenditure). I had to seek financial help from R. C. Chakravarty which he extended to me. I used to attend the Union office and attend to correspondence. The bus fare used to be paid by the Union. There were some good workers; notable amongst them are P. N. Sharma, Hari Ram Chowdhury and others.

At the Federation level there were clouds of suspicion and mistrust among the top leadership. S. R. Vasavada, who replaced Harihar Nath Shastri, the first President of N.R.I.R. was entirely different from Shastriji. Vasavada's attitude was that since he was the President, he was the Supreme head and there should be none to challenge his authority. This was in keeping with the line of action of I.N.T.U.C. working under the leadership of Guruswami, the General Secretary of his life in the service of the Railway. He was the General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. for a long time. He had a definite plan in the minds of Railwaymen. But Vasavada did not give him the recognition he deserved. A clash of personalities was inevitable that happened much earlier than we apprehended. A general meeting of the Federation was convened by S. Chakravarty in Delhi, but S. R. Vasavada, with his support, boycotted the same. The meeting convened all the members who were employees of A.I.R.F. This meeting took place in A.I.R.F. Thus the dream of having one Union on the Industry was shattered.

At that time the amalgamation of the constituents of both the Federation on Northern Railways were almost in the final stages of completion but as at the Federation level

top leaders could not adjust themselves, the amalgamation of the unions at the Railway level got a set-back. This also brought in its trail its adverse effect on the Northern Railway where the amalgamation was complete. A meeting of the Central Council of the amalgamated Union had already been held. It soon became evident that the break-up of the Uttariya Railway Mazdoor Union was imminent. A Central Council meeting of the U.R.M.U. was convened by Faquir Chand at Delhi. It was noticed that the atmosphere of cordiality that prevailed at the Lucknow meeting of the Central Council had already become cloudy. I had worked very hard, neglected my family and suffered humiliation at the place of service where, though I was the senior most in my cadre, persons far junior to me were working at higher places. I could not, therefore, think of again going back to the pre-amalgamation period. With a heavy heart I resigned from the Union and with this my Trade Union activities came to an end.

Soon after this the N.R.M.U. was revived consequent on the formal revival of the Federation. At the time of revival the then leaders of the N.R.M.U. Section, did take a very wise step by calling back D. D. Vasisth as the General Secretary of the union. J. P. Choubey of N.R.S.A. and also of the U.R.M.U. decided to stay with the N.R.M.U. Section. Taking into consideration the privileges in INTUC Union the joining of N.R.M.U. by J. P. Choubey was considered to be a good Sacrifice. With D.P. Joshi as President, D. D. Vasisth as General Secretary, J. P. Choubey, Bajpai and Malaviya and other host of devoted workers of the N.R.M.U. regained its position in the Trade Union movement on the Railway. With Comrade Ram Chandra as President, Faquir Chand as

General Secretary, P. N. Sharma as the Divisional Secretary of Delhi and the Asst. General Secretary of the Union, the U.R.M.U. grew up beyond expectation.

Both the Unions- the Northern Railwaymen's Union and the Uttariya Railway Mazdoor Union - have established their offices at New Delhi and other places on the Northern Railway. In line with a new gesture for harmonious industrial relations, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) and the Administrations offered on lease Railway buildings to the unions for establishing their offices. As a result the Northern Railwaymen's Union established their Head office in a sprawling Railway Bungalow on the Chelmsford Road adjacent to the Cannought Place. The Office is well furnished and well maintained and it is a matter of great pleasure to those who were associated with that organisation in its early stages to see the office in such a good shape. Similarly the Head office of the Uttariya Railway mazdoor Union is housed in a two - roomed building with a big lawn in front on the Punchkuin Road adjacent to Cannought Place, New Delhi. It goes to the credit of P. N. Sharma, the General Secretary, for establishing the office in such a befitting manner - well equipped with furniture, well-maintained records.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation first opened its Head Office in a two-roomed quarters on the Babar Road but then shifted to a big sprawling bungalow on the Snow Hill Road, adjacent to Cannought Place. Although the A.I.R.F., office was established at New Delhi as a result of efforts of Peter Adams, J.P. Choubey took charge of the office from the very beginning and it is due to his untiring efforts that the A.I.R.F. has been able to

organise one of the finest office of Trade Unions. Priya Gupta, the honest, sincere and dedicated General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. used to function in this office till the last days of his life. The National Federation of Indian Railwaymen also established its office in a big bungalow on the Chelmsford Road.

The offices of both the Federations made a very good impression about the dignity of the Indian Railwaymen.

I am one of those very very few Railwaymen, who had the privilege of associating himself with both the organisations. At the same time I was also the youngest member of the Working Committee of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and one of the twelve founder members of the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen. The affection, courtesy, respect and kind consideration shown to me by Peter Alvares, Priya Gupta, A. P. Sharma, Keshav kulkarni, Com Vasisth, J. P. Choubey, T.N. Bajpai, P. N. Sharma, Lalji Malaviya, K.D. Bhagi, Sri Krishna and a large number of other leaders of both the organisations have always remained as a golden treasure in my life.

But this memoir will remain incomplete though it is in many aspects incomplete - if I do not point out one significant event. Com. Bireswar Chakravarti and Chitta Chatterjee were the pioneers in the Moradabad Division. Com. Bireswar was transferred to Allahabad where he again helped the establishment of the Allahabad Branch. Once he came to Lucknow and we introduced him to Yogesh Chatterji, the Revolutionary socialist leader. Com. Bireswar was so impressed with Yogesh da that it did not take much time for him to be initiated in the ideology of Yogesh da. As a result Com. Bireswar left our association and formed a separate Union

completely in opposition to the E.I.R.E.A. and then the E.I. Railway Employees' Union and ultimately the Northern Railwaymen's Union. He published the first ever News letter of Railwaymen known as "Rail Mazdoor Ki Pukar". Notwithstanding the fact that his union was not recognised by the Administration, it was a forceful organisation, indeed, at Allahabad. On one occasion Com. Bireswar, with the help of his workers stopped the 11 Up Howrah-Delhi Express Train at Allahabad station for a long period. He was placed under suspension and disciplinary action to remove him from service was initiated. The Enquiry Committee held him responsible and the Financial Advisor & Chief Accounts officer removed him from service. His appeal against the removal orders was heard by the General Manager, and in this hearing I acted as his defence helper. The charge against him was that he had incited the people to stop the train. It was pointed by us from the proceedings of the Enquiry that no action of Bireswar came within the meaning of the word "Incite" for which he had been held responsible. Dismissing the appeal the General Manager stated that the very presence of Bireswar Chakravarti in the crowd was held as incitement. Com Bireswar was asked by the Head of the Railway to be a person whose very presence amongst the railwaymen could hold back a running train. Bireswar left Allahabad. He maintained contact with the Union and settled down as a Chartered Accountant and an Advocate. In both the fields he occupies, today an eminent person at Calcutta.

It is due to R. C. Chakravarty's persuasion that I joined the Trade Union movement in the Railways. It is his active support and

guidance that enabled me to function almost single handed to establish the Branches of the Association on the three upper divisions of the E.I. Railway. It is his assistance and guidance that enabled me to occupy a dignified place in the Railway Trade Union movement. And again it is his constant demand that I have ventured to write this memoir without any reference to any papers.

While I was in my Trade Union field, days after days, months after months and years after years, I had not been able to pay the

required attention to my family. I am grateful to my wife who had all the time shouldered the burden and gracefully took upon herself the hardships of her husband's Trade Union life.

I dedicate this humble memoir to Late Priya Gupta, General Secretary. All India Railwaymen's Federation. Never before was, perhaps, such a self-less, honest and dedicated Trade Union worker born and , perhaps, a person like him will not be found in the near future.

HISTORY OF N. E. RAILWAY MAZDOOR UNION

Rakhal Dasgupta

Born on 30th December 1932, joined Railway on January 11, 1954 at Amingaon as Clerk in Electrical Department. Joined unbifurcated N. E. Railway Mazdoor Union in the same year in April. Came in contact with Sri Priya Gupta within about three months of joining in service at Amingaon. Elected office Bearer of Amingaon in August in the same year. Transferred to Bongaigaon within one year of service due to Union activities. Elected Office bearer of Bongaigaon Branch and within short spell Branch Secretary.

Took active part in organising 1957 proposed Strike called by N. E. Railway Mazdoor Union, All India Strikes of 1960, 1968 and 1974. Arrested during 19th September, 1968 Strike along with his wife and was imprisoned in Dhubri Jail, went underground and led 1974 Strike.

Elected Member, Working Committee, AIRF in 1964, nominated as Member JCM, Departmental Council from its inception in 1966, elected Treasurer N. F. Rly. Mazdoor Union in 1967, Jt. General Secretary in 1969 and General Secretary in 1988. Elected Zonal Secretary, AIRF in 1980 and Asstt. General Secretary in 1988. Led evidence before 3rd and 4th C.P.C. on behalf of AIRF. Closely associated with the work of Railway Labour Tribunal, 1971, Adviser to Labour Member in Railway Workers Classification Tribunal, 1967.

Went abroad, attended International Seminars at West Germany in 1978, USSR in 1987 and Japan in 1992.

The Railway system came into being in India in April 1853. In the Eastern Part of country Tea Gardens in numbers grew up through the efforts of the British owners. They found it extremely difficult to cultivate, maintain and process tea. The labourers for the purpose were not available in this part of the country. They were to be brought from Ranchi, Santhal Parganas of Bihar, Bastar area of Madhya Bharat. So British Govt. in India laid down Railway lines for transportation of labour from Bihar, Madhya Bharat and other areas and also to move the tea and other materials to Chittagong and Calcutta Ports.

Due to Malaria, Kala-zar and other acute gastroenteritis diseases, the Tea Garden labourers used to desert tea gardens, when the British owners found it extremely difficult to run the gardens. The British Govt. tried to stop

exodus. During the regime of Assam Railway, (ABR), the Railway employees and public raised voice against such actions of British Government under the leadership of J.M. Sengupta. the Railwaymen started organising them. But it did not help as British companies had also started other Railways like Dibru-Sadia Railway, Balipara Railway, Jorhat-Farakka Railway., Bengal-Duars and Chaparmukh-Silghat Railway and Silchar Railway etc. Although the movement on the Railways had covered many parts of the countries and the Railwaymen's Federation was formed in year 1924, much did not crystallise. There were however, some unions building up an organisation.

During 1930, some developments taken place at Chittagong, Dacca,

Digboi, Domohani and some other places. Since different Railway Companies were operating, no integrated Trade Union movement could be developed.

With the taking over of the A. B. Railway by the British Govt. from the hands of Company and gradual control of small Railway companies started by British Govt. the trade Union movement started emerging.

B. A. Railways Employees Association was formed with H. Qrs. at Calcuta. Com. Humayun Kabir and Com. Kikon Chowdhury were elected as President and General Secretary of the Union.

At the out break of Second World War, the price of commodities had started raising out any proportions. B. A. Rly. Employees Association under the guidance of All India Railwaymen's Federation started agitation for supply of essential commodities at cheap rates. This was partially accepted and Grainshop was established for supply of commodities at cheap rates. After that Dearness Allowance was first sanctioned.

The Second World War was over. The British Govt. wanted to retrench a large number of workers. The All India Railwaymen's Federation and B. A. Railway Employees' Association stood firmly. Com. Jaya Prakash Narayan and S. Guruswami were President and General Secretary of A.I.R.F. respectively. Strike ballot was conducted throughout the country to stop retrenchment and to achieve fulfilment of economic demands.

Decision was taken to conduct strike from 27th June, 1946. Slogan was given "Satase June - Chakka Bund". While B. A. Rly. Employees Association under the leadership of Humayun Kabir and Kiran Choudhury were organising the Strike, another Union

patronised by British Govt. under the leadership of Cherag Ali Khan raised voice "Satase June - Chakka Chaloo". But their voice was feeble. Mr. Benthol, the then Chief Commissioner for Railways had to submit. His wishes crumbled down. The British Govt. had to give assurance of 'no-retrenchment'. First Central Pay Commission was appointed.

Due to massive movement of AIRF & B. A. Rly. Employees' Association the Govt. was also compelled to appoint Justice Rajadhakshyay in the year 1946 to adjudicate on the disputes of Hours of work, weekly rest, provision for leave Reserve, Rest Givers and for providing human conditions of working.

The First Central Pay Commission made some basic recommendations. The Commission recommended same scales of pay for same designation throughout the Indian Railway system.

According to Rajadhakshyay Award, there was reduction in Working hours and weekly rest was provided for Provision of Rest Givers and Leave Reserve was made. Improvement of Running room facilities and provision of quarters were also recommended.

Partition took place in August 1947. Thousands and thousands of Railwaymen and their family members along with the civil population had to leave East Pakistan. Relief work started at Badarpur. Beloved Priya Gupta, the Asstt. Electrical Foreman of Badarpur took the lead in relief work with a band of devoted youths. Com. Sankar Das, Com. Sachin Bhattacharyee, P. C. Saha, Arun Chakraborty and others were associated with him.

After partition Assam Railway was formed. B. A. Railway Association took the name of Assam Railway

Labour Association. Com. Hareswar Goswami, Bar-at-law, a young Socialist leader became its President. Com. Suren Choudhury, a veteran Railwayman was elected as it's General Secretary. Com. Hareswar Goswami practically brought Com. Priya Gupta in the Trade Union field. With his active participation in Assam Railway Labour Association, Com. Priya Gupta became a terror to the Railway officers. Condition of Railway colonies were very bad. People had to live in W. D. Wagon body for want of shelters. Some were in thatched quarters. There was no provision of drinking water. Mr. K. C. Bakhley, the then Chief Commissioner for Railways came to Pandu. The workers of Assam Railway Labour Association compelled Mr. Bakhley to move throughout the Railway colony, see things for himself. Com. Priya Gupta compelled him to drink the water of a pond, which was then the source of drinking water for Railwaymen and their family members. Improvement of colony started. Supply of drinking water through community tap was being arranged gradually.

Annual Conference of Assam Railway Labour Association was convened at newly constructed Pandu Power House. Com. Ashoke Mehta came to inaugurate. Jairam Das Daulat Ram, the then Governor of Assam called Mehta in Shillong and said that Priya Gupta was a Communist as per Police report, so he should not inaugurate the Conference. Com. Hareswar Goswami, who accompanied Com-Priya Gupta, stoutly rejected the report. The Conference was held through great jubilation. Com. Priya Gupta was elected Jt. General Secretary of the Union.

Next year at Badarpore Conference, Com. Priya Gupta was elected General

Secretary of the Union. On the next day, Com. Priya Gupta told the delegates that "You have elected me General Secretary, I add my vote and elect Com. Nibaran Bora as the General Secretary". It was ultimately accepted by all.

Regrouping of Railways took place in April 1953. Assam Railway was merged with O. T. Railway. Affiliated Unions of AIRF on both the Railways viz. Assam Railway Labour Association and O. T. Railwaymen's Mazdoor Union were amalgamated at Kather Conference. Com. Bashwan Sinha and Nibaran Bora were elected President and General Secretary of the Union.

The next Conference of the N. E. Railway Mazdoor Union was held at Yamnat in October 1955. All the delegates, with no exception elected Com. Priya Gupta as General Secretary. But Com. Priya Gupta declined to accept, Com. Baswan Sinha was presiding. Com. Santosh Biswas, Alipurduar Jn. Central Organising Secretary declared fast if, Com. Priya Gupta would accept the post of General Secretary. Com. Sinha stood and told in his commanding voice, "Jis Admi ne Iss Union Ko Banaya, Us Agar Issko Dasasamet Ghat ye M... Ghat Me Bisarjan Dona Chat... Bisarajan De Deya. Agar Priya Gupta... Bat manjoor Nehi Hai To Har... Lange". Silence prevailed for a long period. Ultimately Com. Priya Gupta... the pressure of all.

Movement for grant of Compensatory Allowance at Assam was at peak... Bahadur Sastri the then Railway... came down to Guwahati in May 19... At the entrance gate of Assam, ... massive mobilisation at Bongaigaon... station. The special train carrying... passed through. Sastriji could see the massive

presence of Railwaymen at Bongaigaon. At his instance, the special train was stopped at Chaprakata. The entire special train was brought down within an hour to Bongaigaon. There was long discussion for an hour and a half.

Shastriji stayed at Guwahati Circuit House. A massive demonstration was staged by N. E. Railway Mazdoor Union led by Com. Priya Gupta before Circuit House, Shastriji had to come out and address the demonstrators. He said, "I could understand that demand of Assam Compensatory Allowance is a popular demand. I could feel it at entry point of Assam at Bongaigaon".

Of course Shastriji did not take it kindly. He was totally dissatisfied with Com. Priya Gupta. Already there were reports from different corners against Com. Priya Gupta and the Railway Administration had decided to remove Com. Priya Gupta, then Electrical Foreman, Pandu, General Secretary, N. E. Railway Mazdoor Union & Asstt. General Secretary/ AIRF from Railway services. B. Arora, the then General Manager, N. E. Railway issued orders on 8th August 1956, removing Com. Priya Gupta from services. There was a serious situation but Com. Priya Gupta instructed all Union workers to bear with the same.

In the meantime, merger of AIRF with Indian Railway Workers' Federation (INRWF) to form National Federation of Indian Railwaymen was annulled. Erstwhile AIRF group convened a Meeting at Madras. NFIR (Madras) was formed in May 1955. This body did not get back recognition. Assam Allowance was not sanctioned. The N.E. Railway Mazdoor Union conducted Strike Ballot. 97% members voted for strike. It was decided in Gorakhpore Central Council

Meeting held in end of December 1956 for an indefinite period strike in N.E. Railway from 14th February 1957. Com. Basu Chakravarty, the then General Secretary, Eastern Railwaymen's Union was also present in the Central Council Meeting and delivered an inspiring speech. Com. Basawan Sinha, President of the Union chalked out the guidelines to make the strike a total success.

There was spontaneous and tremendous response. Seeing the intensity of the preparation of the strike the Govt. was nervous. In the meantime due to resignation of Shastriji after ARIALUR Rly. accident on 27th November 1956, Jagjivan Ram took over the charge of Railway Ministry. Jagjivan Ram convened a meeting of all Unions on 10th February '57, announced New Deal Upgradation for 1,70,000 Railwaymen, appointed Class IV Staff Promotion Committee, assured better deal with AIRF (MADRAS) i.e. AIRF group met in Madras at New Delhi, made a request to the N.E. Railway Mazdoor Union to postpone the strike decision for the time being and Com. Guruswami, then General Secretary, AIRF (Madras) extended request to both Basawan Sinha and Priya Gupta, President and General Secretary, N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union respectively to postpone the strike decision. At the request of all other organisations the strike decision was postponed. However, the enraged the workers at various places. Com. K.L. Gupta, G.L. Chatterjee and others however, were able to pacify them. Com. Guruswami alongwith Com. Priya Gupta made a tour over the entire NE. Railway explained the details of the negotiations station to station and addressed workers on mike from the train compartment. Com. Basu assured that NFIR (Madras) would support strike as whole.

AIRF was revived in Poona Convention in August 1957. Com. Nath Pai, young M.P. inspired the delegates very much. Com. S. Guruswami and Peter Alvares were elected President and General Secretary of revived AIRF. AIRF got back recognition in 1958 and was allotted office at Delhi (125E, Babar Road) due to untiring efforts of Com. Peter Alvares, Priya Gupta, Ram Chakravarty and others.

NF. Railway was formed on 15th January 1958. The parting with N.E. Railway became inevitable. The bifurcation Conference was held at Pandu in August 1958. Com. Bhabesh Sen, Gobinda Chatterjee, Mahendra Das, Tarun Ghose, Jagadish Bhadra, N.P. Chatterjee and others made untiring efforts to make the Conference a grand success. N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union was formed. Com. Hareswar Goswami and Priya Gupta were elected as President and General Secretary respectively. Present General Secretary, then young with 4 years of Railway service was one of the signatories for the registration of the Union with Registrar of Trade Unions, Assam. The Union started functioning well with untiring efforts of Com. Bhabesh Sen, Mahendra Das and others.

Next Annual Conference of the Union was held in February 1960 at Katihar. Due to untiring efforts of Com. Balai Choudhury, S.N. Misra, then young Jagat Narayan Singh, Raghu Nath Singh, and a band of dedicated workers the Conference was a grand success. Com. Basanta Ghose was elected Vice-President of the Union.

But victimisation of Union workers continued. There was serious erosion in real wages due to price rise. The Central Govt. employees as a whole demanded for setting up of Pay Commission. Pay Commission was appointed in 1957 and submitted its report in

1959. All Central Govt. employees were totally disappointed on the report of the C.P.C. AIRF forged unity with other organisations of Central Govt. employees like Posts & Telegraph, Defence Production, Civil Aviation etc. Com. Peter Alvares was elected Secretary of Joint Council of Action. It was decided to launch a Strike from the midnight of 11th July, 1960. There were difficulties in Assam area due to linguistic trouble. JCA exempted Assam and Tripura from the purview of the Strike.

4 Dn Assam Mail arrived Alipurduar Junction on time at 23-45 Hrs. on 12th July '60. Driver, Fireman, guard and District Mechanical Engineer were standing just by the side of the engine of 4 Dn Assam Mail. They were waiting as the train would leave on time. Just at 00-00 hrs. of 12th July '60 dramatically both the engine and guard fell down from the engine (Signal) and Mr. A.K. Sanyal, "it is just 00-00 hrs. of 12th July '60 we are joining Strike? We dropped fire to save the engine and guard from the engine and guard declaration. The Guard of the train fell down. Within 10 mts. the engine and guard deserted the station. All Loco and Yards were by dropping of fire. It was possibly because of a plan of B.N. Modak. Anil Das, Basanta Ghose and public support and leadership of Com. Nani Bhabesh Sen. The General Manager N.F. Railway Kulkarni came down from Alipurduar Jn. made about the train. But all were in vain. Nath Bose, Bimalendu Choudhury were arrested.

Com. Priya Gupta along with Jagat Narayan Singh, K.C. Ghose

Jang Bahadur Singh and many other comrades were arrested at Katihar. Com. Yubaraj, Ex. M.P., Lakhan Lal Kapoor, Ex. M.P. and others were also arrested at Katihar.

At Siliguri Jn. Com. Nabajyoti Choudhury and many other comrades were arrested. Mothers and sisters of Siliguri gheraoed B.C. Ganguly, then area Manager, Siliguri Jn. and compelled him to stop Police oppression.

The mothers and sisters of the Hill made a splendid work. Smt. Putul Nag and Rita Pradhan took lead and stopped working of Railways in entire D.H. Section.

The Strike was total on N.F. railway. Being directed by Joint Council of Action, the Strike was withdrawn on 17th July '60. The recognition of the Union was withdrawn by the railway Administration. However, the recognition was restored under the direction of Guwahati High Court. Com Basanta Ghose, Hareswar Goswami, Purnendu Choudhury, Saroj Sen, Bejoy Das, Advocates made untiring efforts.

Com. Priya Gupta was elected to the Loksabha on P.S.P. Tricket from Katihar. There was tremendous jubilation amongst Railwaymen all over the country.

China attacked India in October 1962. N.F. Railwaymen stood like rock at their duty post. When currency was burnt, Jail was freed at Tezpur, Sri Rakhai Das Banerjee, station Master, North Rangapara came down alone to Pandu to deposit a cash of 63 lakhs of rupees. Com. Banerjee was removed from service for participation in 1974 Strike. Com. Indibor Konger, Ashit Chakraborty and many other Union workers were transferred away on false report of being anti Govt.

There was no machinery for settlement of disputes of all Central Govt. employees. After 1960 Strike the Government proposed a

machinery in the type of Whitley Council in England. But there were anti-labour clauses like Adjournment of strike for 5 years and against discharged or retired Govt. employees etc. N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union, Eastern Railwaymen's Union, Southern Railway Mazdoor Union, South Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Northern Railwaymen's Union opposed the provisions. The provisions were then dropped and JCM was accepted.

According to JCM Scheme Pay, Allowances, Hours of work and leave were issued for compulsory arbitration. The demand of need-based minimum wages and change in Dearness Allowance formula were raised in JCM. The Govt. refused to accept the demand or refer the matter for arbitration. All Central Govt. employees organisations had again formed Joint Council of Action. Com. Peter Alvares was elected Secretary. Again strike became inevitable.

The Annual Convention of AIRE was held at Jamalpore in August 1968 through normal Eastern Railwaymen's Union's grand scale preparation. Com. Priya Gupta was elected General Secretary and Peter Alvares became President. The date for 'General Token Strike' was fixed on 19th September '68.

Com. Basanta Ghose, Priya Gupta, Basawan Sinha, Peter Alvares toured the N.F. Railway to make the strike a total success. 19th September was a total stoppage throughout N.F. Railway. The Whitley Council to grinding halt in spite of unending activities of categorical organisations and N.F. Railway Employees' Union. Com. Priya Gupta, Com. S.N. Misra, Jang Bahadur Singh, Jang Bahadur Singh, Rajendra Singh, Baleswar and others were arrested at Katihar. Com. Indibor Konger, Dilip Mahapatra

arrested at Pandu. Com. Rakhil Dasgupta with his wife, Com. Biswanath Bose, Anil Paul, Rama Pada Das, Smt. Basana Paul, Khana Sen and many other comrades were arrested at Bongaigaon. Com. Arun Chakraborty, Arun Ganguly and many others were arrested at Badarpore., Com., Baijnath Thakur and others were arrested at Tinsukia.

Railwaymen and Public came out in thousands to protest against arrest of leaders in many places. At Lumding and New Guwahati Police burst teargas shells. At Bongaigaon and Mariani police opened fire. A number of persons received injury. Com. Ramen Acharjee, a Khalasi in Locoshed succumbed to police firing at Mariani. Com. Paresh Sanyal and Prakash Barman both casual labours under IOW/ Dangtal were critically injured. They were shifted to Guwahati Medical College, where Com. Paresh Sanyal succumbed on 21st September 1968. Thousands of Railwaymen were removed or suspended from service. The recognition of the Union was withdrawn. Due to untiring efforts of Com. Basanta Ghose, Bijoy Das, P.K. Bhattacharjee & other Advocates the orders for withdrawal of recognition of the Union was quashed.

Com. Hem Barua, M.P. Vice President of the Union, Biswa Goswami and Lakhan Lal Kapoor, M.P. gave remarkable service. Besides other Union leaders, anti strikers had either to flee from the Railway colony or to beg apology in public for their misdeeds.

The Central Pay Commission was appointed in 1970. The report was published in 1973. The report disappointed the Railwaymen and other Central Govt. employees totally. Strike Ballot was conducted. Total unity was achieved. National Co-ordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle (NCCRS) was

formed. The Strike was decided to commence from 8th May, 1974.

With the memory of 1968 Strike, there was none to oppose the strike. The strike began well ahead of scheduled date in many places because of police atrocities. Region of terror was let loose almost at all places. Hundreds of Railwaymen braved Jail. Com. Biswa Goswami, Nandeswar Talukdar, Bimal Purakayastha and many other comrades were arrested at Guwahati, Pandu area. Com. Golap Barbora and many others were arrested at Naharkatia-Tinsukia area, Com. Biru Chatterjee, K.C. Roy Kamakar, K.K. Ganguly, J.N. Saikia, Sushil Das, S.C. Banerjee, K.C. Ghose, Gopen Mukherjee, P.K. Bose, Arabinda Shome, Biswath Bose and many other comrades were arrested at different places. More than three thousand employees were dismissed from service. This repression could not dampen the morale of the N.F. Railwaymen.

The Emergency was clamped down on the night of 25th June '75. During the period of Emergency the N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union hosted the Annual Convention of N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union in July 1976. A Resolution was adopted demanding withdrawal of Emergency and release of all arrested persons. N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union took active part for resurrection of Democracy. Janata Govt. was established in the Centre in March 1977 and in 1978 in Assam. It is gratifying that Com. Golap Barbora, then Vice President of the Union headed the Assam Ministry.

The Janata Govt. was installed in March 1977. While placing Railway Bill on the floor of Parliament on 28th March '77, Sri Madhu Dandawate declared that all the Railwaymen dismissed/removed from service during 1974 Railway strike would be re-instated and all punishment orders were

cancelled through the same declaration. There was jubilation all over the country. Strike period was converted to leave due. Many other benefits were granted. Cadre Restructuring Committee started functioning. Interim relief for artisan upgradation was sanctioned. Leave encashment and 50% of Pay as Pension were sanctioned. But long cherished Bonus was not sanctioned. N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union under the leadership of AIRF had staged a massive demonstration before Parliament on 7th May 1979 and decided to conduct Strike Ballot from 26th to 28th August '79.

Central Council Meeting of the Union was convened at Tinsukia from 11th to 14th August '79. Com. Priya Gupta alongwith Com. Rakhil Dasgupta came down from New Delhi to attend the Central Council Meeting. On way on the night of 10th August he was feeling breathing trouble. Next morning he reached Tinsukia. Doctors were called in. He was advised by Doctors to take complete rest and not to attend the meeting. As undaunted, when the meeting was proceeding, he left bed and came to the dias and wanted to speak. He spoke. In the meantime Com. Basanta Ghose arrived at Tinsukia by Plane. He came out of the Railway Institute and attended the Flag Hoisting Ceremony. His health condition deteriorated. He was shifted to Dibrugarh Medical College in the morning. Next morning he breathed his last within half-an-hour. The news spread like wild fire. Body was brought to Tinsukia from where it was carried to Pandu by a Special Train. From Pandu his body was flown to Calcutta where his mortals were consigned to flame at 'Kooratala Burning Ghat' in presence of his relatives and comrades on 14th August, 1979. Thus a life dedicated to build up vigorous

organisation stage by stage came to an end at the age of only 58 years.

Inspite of this unbearable shock N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union alongwith others conducted Strike Ballot from 26th to 28th August '79. In the month of November Working Committee Meeting of AIRF was convened to decide the date of Strike. The Govt. yielded to the pressure and a negotiated settlement on Productivity Linked Bonus was reached on 13th November '79 at the residence of the then Prime Minister Sri Charan Singh.

Due to re-structuring and re-classification there has been opening for promotion from Group 'C' & 'D' employees. On the recommendation of Pay Commission there has been increase in the quantum of retirement benefits. But the parity of wages with that of other Public Sector undertakings has not yet been sanctioned.

In N.E. Region Group 'A' Railway Officers have been sanctioned Special Compensatory Allowance. This has been denied to others. N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union is currently fighting for the same seriously. As part of programme a strike was launched in the Mail Room, Railway Hqrs. premises near CEG Office on 22nd June '91. The bureaucrats refused to entertain. Com. Rakhil Dasgupta, Biru Chatterjee, R.K. Das alongwith nine others were arrested. This gave a boost to the movement and on the next day, there was spontaneous demonstration before the General Manager by thousands of Railwaymen.

N.F. Railway Mazdoor Union and AIRF decided to conduct strike ballot in the month of May '92 if, no negotiated settlement was arrived at.

The struggle will continue.

AIRF was not built in a day Jagdish Ajmera

(Mr. Jagdish Ajmera born in 1917 in the Bhavnagar District of Gujarat passed the Matriculation examination in 1938 and studied upto Intermediate in Science. He joined the political movement after coming to Bombay and became a member of the Congress Socialist Party. He took an active part in the "Quit India" Movement of August 1942. He was arrested under D.I. Act and kept in Worli Detention Camp from where he escaped. He was rearrested and sentenced for six month rigorous imprisonment for escaping from Jail custody. After his release from jail he continued in the political and Trade Union activities.

After independence of India, he concentrated his efforts on BB & C.I. Railway Employees' Union. He came in contact with M.N. Roy, Maniben Kara, Dr. Mukherjee, V.B. Karnik, G.B. Sukhi, Williams, Barrister Tarakunde and others. He had been actively associated with the Western Railway Employees' Union for the last 50 years and is at present the President of the Union. He was detained under D.I. Act during the strike of July 1960. During the long period from 1947 to 1980 he was on the various negotiating committees of AIRF. He visited Germany, U.K., Brussels and Switzerland, China, USA and Soviet Union. He edits the official organ of Western Railway Employees' Union—"The Railway Sentinel".

He never cared for fame and name and at no stage did try to obtain them with the enamel of good work. He demonstrated signs of vigour, signs of hope, signs of health and signs of everything that was sine-quo-non for the growth of A.I.R.F. He can pride himself on the excellence of his devotion, loyalty and sacrifice to the cause of Indian Railwaymen.

I worked as a Volunteer in People's Volunteer Brigade started by socialist leader ASOKA MEHTA under the banner of BOMBAY PRADESH CONGRESS COMMITTEE and as a volunteer during individual satyagrah started by GANDHIJI.

In attended a closed door session of the All India Congress Committee at Gowalia Tank Maidan, Bombay on 7th & 8th Aug., 1942 and participated in the 9th August 1942 "QUIT INDIA" Movement. I was arrested and detained under the Defence of India Act without trial and kept in Worli Detention Camp from where I escaped. I was again arrested, tried for escaping from jail and awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment and was kept in Arther Road Prison, Bombay, and Central Jail, Yervada, Pune, from where

I was released on 14.4.1944. After that I took training in Bhosale Military Camp, Nasik, during summer vacation.

At that time, the Congress Socialist Party had a number of cells for different types of activities. I was entrusted with Railway Cell. Main objective was to create party cells and to free the Railway Trade Union from the clutches of the Communist Party of India.

During the trial of the Indian National Army Personnel in Red Fort, Delhi, on 29.2.1946, there was a wave of enthusiasm amongst young people who had left schools and colleges to participate in the Freedom Struggle. At that time, it was understood that we will wage one more bitter struggle to free India from the British. Anti-British and

anticommunist sentiments were on the increase. Many Unions Controlled by CPI-AITUC switched over Socialist.

However, after defeat of Churchill in general election in Britain, Labour Party under Clement Atlee came to power and, India attained Independence on 15.8.1947. The country was partitioned into India and Pakistan followed by a communal holocaust.

I along with other friends concentrated upon Bombay, Baroda & Central India Railway (B.B. & C.I. Railway) Employees' Union (at that time under the control of Radical Democratic Party of late M.N. Roy, Maniben Kara, Dr. Mukherji, V.B. Karnik, G.B. Sukhi, Williams, Barrister Tarakunde & others) affiliated to Indian Federation of Labour and All India Railwaymen's Federation.

I was elected one of the Vice Presidents. Influence of socialists amongst working class in general and railwaymen in particular was increasing. Discontent amongst working class against the communist leadership was noticeable. Jaya Prakash Narayan the most popular socialist leader was elected President of A.I.R.F. on 7.6 1947 at Gorakhpur in U.P. This was a major break-through.

Under the dynamic leadership of J.P. from 1947 to 1953, railwaymen achieved status, fame and name and orderliness. The Permanent Negotiating Machinery for expeditious redressal of grievances of railwaymen was introduced during his tenure. Prior to that, though there was only one central organisation of Indian Railwaymen viz. All India Railwaymen's Federation there were more than one union on each railway system, all affiliated to A.I.R.F.

There was no printed Constitution of A.I.R.F. but it had a militant tradition and

good image, not only amongst railwaymen but also in the trade union movement in the country. There were leaders belonging to Communist Party of India, Congress Socialist Party, Congressmen, Radical Democratic Party and quite a few independents like Diwan Chimanlal, R.A. Khedgikar, Prof. Humayun Kabir, Ladikram & others. There used to be nine Vice Presidents distributed amongst these parties and groups in proportion to their respective strength. Before any meeting started, there used to be a plethora of points of orders and it used to take at least two hours before things settled down and the real business started. Abuses were hurled and there were fights and exchanges of physical blows during the meetings. The office of A.I.R.F. was at 4, Mylapore, Madras— Com. S. Guruswami's residence. However, the end result of A.I.R.F. meeting as drafted and communicated by Mr. Guruswami was never challenged.

The Communist Party of India under the influence of Soviet Russia came to the conclusion that India under P. Jawaharlal Nehru had not achieved real freedom and that Nehru was a barking dog of British Imperialism and therefore directed their cadres and Trade Unions to prepare for 'Bloody Armed Revolution' and 'General Strike' to capture power and called All India Railway Strike on 9th March 49. The Communists tried to disturb the A.I.R.F. General Council Meeting of 16th and 17th Feb. 1949 at Dinapur. Railway Unions controlled by the Communists were expelled from A.I.R.F. for disruption. The Communist Party was declared illegal and the M.L.As from Trade Union Constituencies elected on CPI tickets were disqualified for standing absent from State Legislative Assemblies.

At that time, in Bombay, Howrah - Calcutta, Coimbatore and Madras, there were separate constituencies for M.L.As to be elected from the membership of Trade Unions in Textile, Jute and Railways registered under the Indian Trade Union Act 1926. From Bombay State two M.L.As were elected by the members of BB & C.I Railway Employees' Union (now Western Railway) and great Indian Peninsular Railwaymen's Union (now Central Railway). There was indirect election at the ratio of one delegate for 100 members on the roll of unions. These elected delegates then voted for a person as M.L.A. provided that he was an office bearer of the Union.

There was a vacancy due to disqualification of Communist M.L.A. Shivbishal Singh. We mobilised the Gangmen and other railwaymen and secured more number of delegates. If wanted I would have been elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Bombay State.

The Congress Socialist Party decided that Peter Alvares who was Party Secretary, Maharashtra & Asstt. Secretary of A.I.R.F. should be given the seat in Bombay State Legislative Assembly. He was, however, not an office-bearer of Railway Unions in Bombay. I volunteered to make room for Peter Alvares and resigned from my post of Vice President of BB & C.I Railway Employees' Union, Coopted Peter Alvares as a Vice President, filed his nomination in the office of Chief Labour Commissioner, a Returning Officer, and got him (Peter Alvares) elected as an M.L.A.

One Camp Office of A.I.R.F. was opened in Delhi and Constitution of A.I.R.F. was also printed. Com. S. Guruswami was elected to Rajyasabha on Socialist support. The work of

A.I.R.F. was being conducted very smoothly and in a dignified manner. A.I.R.F. was the sole representative organisation of Indian Railwaymen. All splinter unions on Zonal Railways merged into a single union affiliated to A.I.R.F.

It was however, the most unfortunate that the Indian National Congress, the Political party in power formed Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) on 3rd May 1947 and Indian National Railway Workers' Federation (INRWF) in 1948, thereby further disrupting the trade union movement in India from the evils of which the Indian Trade Union movement had not come out.

Let me make my position clear. First of all, I did not join Railways as an employee. My back-ground in joining Railway Trade Union Movement is socio-political. The supreme objective was to achieve Independence for the country and to usher in democratic socialism where there is no exploitation of man and where every body treats the other as a human being with dignity and self respect and where dignity of labour is recognised.

In those days workers had no rights and they were treated as slaves. It was very difficult to organise workers and yet it was very important to make the workers politically conscious and to get their support in the struggle for independence of the country— India, simultaneously with the economic upliftment. We had Gandhi, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Vir Savarkar, Bhagat Singh and scores of leaders as our ideals. National Press used to play a very positive role in the fight for freedom of the country. In all these cases persons joining the struggles had to sacrifice. It was because

of this that people respected all those who used to wear Khadi and did work in social, trade union or political fields. We had trained ourselves for hard life with discipline, dedication and strong will power. We had got ourselves equipped to conduct under-ground movement, stand searching questioning and physical torture by Special Police, C.I.D. and hard life in Jail.

Another important thing in my life is that I did not change side or political party for personal gains and maintained my consistency with one Union, Western Railway Employees' Union/All India Railwaymen's Federation all my life which gave me great personal satisfaction, railwaymen's affection and confidence.

I joined the Union without any position, worked for some time as Vice-President, as a Secretary for 25 years, as Working President and have been working as President since 1979.

Today, I am 74 years old and yet Railwaymen of Western Railway are not prepared to allow me to relinquish the post of the President of the Union.

I have been present in all important meetings of railwaymen under the banner of AIRF and have been taking an active part in arriving at decisions since 1945 without trying to dominate. It is my nature to assume a low profile and this helps in the long run as you do not become an object of either envy or jealousy.

I may add that I had appeared before justice Rajadhyaksha in 1946 in Bombay to give evidence regarding reduction in hours of work, payment of overtime, holidays, weekly-off etc.

I was one of the persons who had assisted the zonal union (WREU) and the AIRF in

preparing memoranda and appeared as a witness before the First Central Pay Commission in 1947, the second Central Pay Commission in 1959, the third Central Pay Commission in 1973 and the fourth Central Pay Commission in 1986. I had also appeared and given evidence before the Bonus Commission demanding inclusion of railwaymen amongst other industrial workers for payment of bonus under Bonus Act.

I had also helped in preparing memorandum to be submitted before Sadar Saran Tribunal, 1952 and had taken active part for the introduction of permanent Negotiating Machinery 1952 and formation of Departmental Council and National Council under the scheme of Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM) and was instrumental in raising the voice of railwaymen in Parliament through M.Ps - Sucheta Kripalani and Minoor Masani against the arbitrary use of summary powers to remove railway employees under Rule 148 of Railway Establishment Code Vol. I in respect of which the arbitrary use of this rule was restricted to rare cases only.

However, this rule 148 RI/14(B) DAR was used to dismiss thousands of railway employees who had taken leading part in the 8th May 1974 strike. WREU had successfully challenged the action of the administration in High Courts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and got all these persons reinstated with full wages from retrospective date.

I also helped, in the Central Administrative Tribunal, Ahmedabad, the dismissed Loco Running Staff of Locomotive Division of Western Railway for their reinstatement with full wages from retrospective date. They were dismissed

under Rule 14(ii) of Discipline and Appeal Rules for Railway Employees for participating in an illegal strike in 1981. The Union defended their cases even before the Supreme Court.

FOREIGN TOURS

I along with Ram Chakravarty and T.N. Bajpai represented AIRF at the May day function in China and was in that country from 24.4.1955 to 16.5.1955. However, in protest against the proposal by the Chinese Trade Union to join a Bandung type of Trade Union organisation, myself, F.M. Pinto and Baswan Sinha cut short our stay and returned to India though the invitation was for a period of one month.

I was in USA from 6.8.1961 to 19.12.1961 representing HMS under leadership exchange programme.

I visited Russia representing AIRF as a Guest of Russian Railway Trade Union Federation from 31.5.1967 to 19.6.1967. I visited Germany, the United Kingdom, Brussels and Switzerland in connection with trade union Journalism for a month in 1973.

I am editing the 'Railway Sentinel' a WREU official organ in English since 1951. The Sentinel is now published in English, Hindi and Gujarati.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

Bombay

Delegates owing allegiance to Communist Party of India did not allow Jamnadas Mehta, former President of AIRF, who was appointed at that time as High Commissioner of India in Burma, to attend the General Council Meeting of AIRF held in Anjuman Islamiya High School, Bombay on May 4-5, 1946. In this meeting it was resolved that railwaymen would go on an indefinite strike on and from the midnight of 27th June,

1946 in support of their demands—Higher wages, reduction in hours of work, no retrenchment etc.

DELHI

On 18th June, 1946, the meeting of the General Council held in Diwan Hall, Old Delhi, was disrupted due to slogan, shouting and assault on M.A. Khan, Vice President of AIRF who was in the Chair by a section of delegates led by Communist Party of India (CPI) leader Mirza Ibrahim, also of N.W. Railway.

The decision to withdraw National strike of railwaymen was taken in the meeting held on New Delhi on 19th June under the Chairmanship of R.A. Khedgikar as Railway Board agreed in principle for the major demands such as Interim Relief, no Retrenchment of railway employees, before 15th Sept. 1945, to appoint Adjudicator Rajadhyaksha, a Judge of Bombay High Court under Industrial Disputes Act, regarding hours of work, periodic rest, provision of Leave Bonus and payment of overtime, appoint Pay Commission to determine wages, improve Service Conditions and implement the recommendations of the Pay Commission regarding revision of scale of pay of railway employees with effect from 1.1.1947.

GORAKHIPUR CONVENTION

The Gorakhpur Convention of the Railwaymen's Federation held on 27th May 1947 was a big landmark in the history of AIRF. It was at this convention that the dynamic and most popular socialist leader Loknayak Jaya Prakash Narayan was elected President of AIRF in spite of opposition from Communists and Royists. As a result of the election of Jaya Prakash Narayan, the

influence of the socialists in AIRF increased considerably.

LILOOAH CONVENTION

The Liloah convention (Calcutta) of AIRF held from Aug. 30 to 1st sept. 1948 established the non-partisan, free, independent and democratic character of AIRF. At that time, the Communist Party was declared illegal and most of its prominent leaders were under detention. Jaya Prakash Narayan used his good offices to get Jyoti Basu, Vice President of AIRF, now the Chief Minister of West Bengal, released on parole to enable him and other communists to attend and participate in the deliberations of the AIRF Convention. It will not be out of place to mention that Jyoti Basu and other communists attacked and criticised the leadership of AIRF for not deciding to go on strike and for not taking strong position against the Congress Government.

DINAPUR GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

The General Council Meeting of the AIRF held at Dinapur on 16th and 17th Feb. 1949 was disturbed by delegates belonging to Unions dominated by Communists. Electric wires were snapped and slogans against AIRF were raised. The General Council, by majority decision, disaffiliated communist dominated unions of BB & CI Railwaymen's Union, GIP Railwaymen's Union and SI Railway Labour Union and expelled their leaders from AIRF for anti-AIRF activities and for trying to disturb the working of the AIRF.

STRIKE THAT NEVER WAS

It will be of interest to note that the Communist Party and the Railway Unions under their influence had given a call for an indefinite strike of Railway employees to

commence on 9th March 1949. Railwaymen ignored the call and not a single person responded. However, this strike that never took place theoretically continues till to day as it has not been withdrawn by its sponsors.

SILVER JUBILEE - NAGPUR

On completion of 25 years of the foundation of AIRF, Silver Jubilee of AIRF was observed under the Presidentship of Loknayak Jaya Prakash Narayan at Nagpur on the 7th June 1950 where the partisan role of the Congress Govt. was strongly condemned.

MYSORE CONVENTION

It was never expected that after independence, our own Government will encourage trade union movement. Unfortunately, however, the Congress Party established Indian National Trade Union Congress on 3rd May 1947 as a wing of the Congress Party. Thus the seeds of disunity in the trade union movement were sown by the Congress Party. Not only this, they started a rival Federation on Indian Railways in 1948 viz. Indian National Railway Workers' Federation (INRWF). This congress-sponsored INRWF which remained on paper only, had no membership but certain disgruntled railway employees were encouraged by the Congress Government in general and K. Santanam, the then Minister of State for Rlys in particular, to boost up their following.

Railwaymen in general and Jaya Prakash Narayan in particular were not happy at the disunity, at least amongst railwaymen. In a supreme effort at unity he volunteered to step down from the post of President of AIRF and offered the same to Harihamath Shastri.

The Mysore Convention of the AIRF (from 21st to 24th Jan. 1953) endorsed the agreement of unity with INRWF forming a

National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) with Hariharnath Shastri as the President and S. Guruswami as the General Secretary. Thus unity agreement was universally appreciated and welcomed. It aroused very high hopes amongst railwaymen in particular and other workers in general.

Unfortunately, however, Harharnath Shastri died in a tragic air crash on 11.12.1953. S.R. Vasavada became the President in his place. Due to Vasavada's partisan attitude and short-sighted approach, bickerings and mistrust started. Vasavada, without consulting Guruswami paralysed the working of Shankar Saran Tribunal and entered into an agreement with the Government to debar Watch & Ward personnel from trade unions: rights by passing a special enactment converting the Watch & Ward into Railway Protection Force, a paramilitary type of organisation to be maintained from the revenue of railways.

Since 1955 NFIR functioned as NFIR, Madras with Guruswami as the General Secretary and NFIR Vijaywada with S.R. Vasavada as the President. Several attempts were made at unity. Unfortunately, however, congress faction of NFIR every time got out of the agreement. Lastly, the matter was referred to J.N. Majumdar, Retired judge of Calcutta High Court to give his award. AIRF wing in NFIR was prepared to abide by the award of the Tribunal, but NFIR did not appear before the Tribunal. Thus all attempts at unity failed.

NFIR (Madras) AIRF wing functioned without recognition from 1954 till July 1958. It was to the credit of the rank and file that the Railwaymen belonging to Unions owing allegiance to AIRF carried on normal day to day union activities undergoing great hardship, sacrifice and sincerity of A.I.R.F. to

forge genuine unity amongst railway employees that forced the Ministry of Railways to restore recognition to AIRF in July 1958.

POONA CONVENTION

Delegates owing allegiance to AIRF met at Poona from 12 to 14th August, 1957 and decided to revive AIRF. It also gave a call to railwaymen to go on an indefinite strike on and from 13/12.11.1957 midnight. S. Guruswami who was the General Secretary of AIRF was elected President and Peter Alvares, Socialist leader from Maharashtra and former Assistant General Secretary of AIRF, was elected the General Secretary of AIRF. Ram Chakravarty was elected Treasurer.

CLASS IV STAFF PROMOTION COMMITTEE

In the past Class IV staff were considered as menials and had no security of service or any other rights. They numbered about 68 to 70% of the total strength of railwaymen at that time. On persistent demand, a committee known as Class IV Staff Promotion Committee was appointed on May 4, 1957 by Jagjivan Ram who was at that time the Railway Minister. Maniben Kara, President of the Western Railway Employees' Union was one of the members. On the recommendations of this committee 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % of the posts in Class III categories are today filled up from Class IV staff. The result is that the percentage of class IV staff in Indian Railways is at present less than 30%.

12th JULY 1960 STRIKE

The All India Railwaymen's Federation, Defence and Postal Federations and other Central Government Organisations formed a joint council of action and resolved to go on strike from 12th July 1960 midnight if their

demands of need-based minimum wage, appointment of permanent Wage Board, cent percent neutralisation of DA, etc. were not settled. I was elected Convenor of the Joint Council of Action in Bombay area and was detained under Defence of India Act on 11th July 1960. There was no settlement and as decided the railwaymen and the Central Govt. employees went on strike. Government took it as a challenge and used the entire machinery at their disposal to suppress the strike. The police resorted to firing and 5 persons at Dohad on Western Railway were killed in the police firing. The strike was withdrawn unconditionally on 16th July. Recognition of AIRF and all unions affiliated to it was withdrawn. Hundreds of railway employees were arrested and removed from service.

GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING AT COIMBATORE

The General Council Meeting of AIRF held at Coimbatore from May 20 to 22, 1963 by majority debarred R.C. Chakravarty, Treasurer of AIRF & General Secretary of Eastern Railwaymen's Union from representing AIRF in any matter and in any capacity for a period of 6 months for his alleged action of arbitrarily replacing duly elected office bearers of his union (Eastern Railwaymen's Union) and also trying to replace them from AIRF.

The irony of fate was that R.C. Chakravarty was mainly responsible in dislodging S. Guruswami from the post of General Secretary of AIRF and bringing Peter Alvares, a socialist leader of Bombay & former Asstt. General Secretary of AIRF (1947-1953) in Guruswami's place.

HISTORIC CONVENTION AT GAYA

Com. S. Guruswami, President of AIRF expired on September 2nd, 1963. The

convention of the AIRF was held at Gaya on 9.10.1963. At that time R.C. Chakravarty in connivance with local authority took out a procession and managed to get an order issued under Section 144 IPC banning meetings. However, in defiance of the ban the convention of AIRF under the presidency of Maniben Kara was held in the Town Hall.

Presidential address, resolution condoling the death of S. Guruswami, General Secretary's Report and election of office bearers of AIRF were all completed in record time before the Police authorities could disperse the gathering and arrest the leaders.

As a precautionary measure serving railway employees were advised not to sit on the dias and get involved in legal complications.

Subsequently Maniben Kara, Peter Alvares and Jagdish Ajmera were served with warrant summoning them to attend the Court in Gaya for defying section 144, but nothing came out of this. Thus attempts of few disgruntled elements to disrupt the proceedings of A.I.R.F. failed miserably.

However, it seems, he being a energetic and ambitious person, became very impatient and tried to manipulate and get persons of his choice elected as leaders of A.I.R.F. with a view to get hold of its control and secure top position for himself. Thus he fell out with Peter Alvares and other socialists in AIRF at that time. It was on this account, that a resolution making him ineffective as Treasurer of AIRF was passed in the General Council Meeting at Coimbatore in May 1963. What followed at Gaya in Oct. 1963 was a logical corollary to the earlier action, leading to isolation of a man who otherwise would have been at the top in Railway Trade Union Movement — AIRF.

SECUNDERABAD CONVENTION

The Secunderabad Convention of AIRF held from 15 to 19th Nov. 1973 took a decision to go on strike from 27.2.1974 to secure the demands for bonus, parity of wages, job evaluation and re-classification and regradation with need-based minimum wage for the lowest paid worker, treating all railwaymen as Industrial Workers with Eight Hours Duty and end of all victimisation. It was at this convention that George Fernandes defeated Peter Alvares, a veteran leader of the Socialist Party by a majority in voting by secret ballot. I as a Returning officer had conducted this election.

8TH MAY, 1974 STRIKE

In order to involve all railwaymen including those belonging to rival organisations and category-wise unions, a National Convention of Delegates belonging to all unions on Indian Railways plus all Central Trade Union Organisations viz. AITUC, HMS & CITU was convened at New Delhi in March 1974. A National Co-ordinating Committee of Railwaymen's Struggle with 2 representatives of each Federation, with George Fernandes as the convenor, was formed. It was resolved that 14 days' strike notice to go on strike on and from 8th May, 1974 should be served on Railway Administration at appropriate level, if no settlement was reached on the demands of railwaymen.

Negotiations, with the Railway Board commenced after the strike notice was served and some progress was made. The meeting was however, adjourned on 30th April, 1974 in the evening, as the Government wanted some time and labour leaders wanted to participate in the celebration of May Day. However, negotiations were not resumed on

and George Fernandes, J.P. Chaubey and hundreds of other leaders and activists of railway unions, except INTUC controlled NFIR workers, were arrested throughout the country after the mid-night of 1st May, 1974. Malgi, General Secretary of NRMU died of heart attack in C.I.D. office. There was a total Bombay Bundh to mourn the death of Malgi.

There were spontaneous strikes at Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Lucknow, Delhi, Jhansi and at almost all other important centres. Attempts made by AIRF and other leaders for settlement of the strike failed, as Government was adamant and bent upon suppressing the militant Trade Union Movement amongst railway employees. Government dubbed this strike as politically motivated and anti-national. More than 10 lakhs railway employees participated in this strike, over 15000 workers were dismissed and 14,000 railway employees were summarily removed from service under rule 14(B) of DAR without charge-sheet or enquiry, services of all casual labour and temporary staff were terminated without any notice.

In short, an atmosphere of terror was created. There was one day's strike on 15th May, 1974 throughout the country by all industrial workers in support of the strike of railway employees. The members of the Action Committee who were in New Delhi decided to withdraw the strike of more than million employees unconditionally and it was withdrawn on 17th May, 1974. Railway employees resumed work on 28th May 1974, but the bitterness of the strike continued to be felt for a long time.

EMERGENCY

Allahabad High Court had annulled election of Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of

India, to Lok Sabha. There was a mass mobilisation against Congress mis-rule. There was a possibility of revolt within the Congress Party. Indira Gandhi to safe-guard her position and to suppress the mass mobilisation, declared National Emergency in June 1975, and arrested important leaders of all opposition parties, including Loknayak Jaya Prakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani and many others. George Fernandes had gone under-ground and there was an arrest warrant against him. Police raided WREU's office in Bombay and searched residences of Union leaders.

GAUHATI CONVENTION

At the 51st Annual Convention of AIRF held at Gauhati from 4th to 6th July, 1976, Priya Gupta, the Working President of AIRF, was elected President of AIRF. The AIRF was the only trade union organisation which had by a resolution condemned imposition of emergency and demanded release of all arrested persons and removal of gag on the Press.

JANATA GOVERNMENT

Emergency was lifted in February, 1977. In the General Election that followed, Congress had to bite the dust. Janata Party, with Morarji Desai as Prime Minister, formed Government in March 1977. M.R. Dandavate became the Railway Minister. Dandavate ordered reinstatement of remaining dismissed and removed railway employees and cancelled orders of victimisation of railwaymen and thus reestablished cordial relation with the AIRF and the railwaymen. It was during his term of office that cadre restructuring took place. It was also during his period that the benefit of upgrading artisan staff on percentage basis was introduced with

retrospective effect. Unfortunately, however, due to internal bickerings there was a split in the Janata Party, resulting in the downfall of Janata Government and formation of a Government by splinter Janata Party with Charan Singh as the Prime Minister, in Sept. 1979.

The Federation had already decided to go on an indefinite General Strike, if the demand for Bonus was not considered. Fortunately negotiations took place and Charan Singh agreed to give productivity-linked Bonus to Railway employees, on 30.11.1979. Based on this formula railwaymen are getting Bonus, at present equivalent to 46 days wages. The Government of Charan Singh could not secure vote of confidence resulting in a General Election in which Indira Gandhi won and formed Government in January, 1980.

GREAT LOSS TO RAILWAYMEN

Com. Priya Gupta, President of AIRF, died on 12.8.1979. Loknayak Jaya Prakash Narayan died on 8.10.1979. Maniben Kato, a veteran leader and former President of AIRF and President of WREU died on 28.10.1979. The railwaymen in 1979 lost 3 valiant fighters for their rights.

BIKANER CONVENTION

Attempts of George Fernandes to stage a come back as President of AIRF failed at the Annual Convention of AIRF held at Bikaner from 26th to 31st Aug. 1980. Com. Ummomal Purofhi, a serving railwayman, was elected the President of AIRF.

Since then the AIRF through skillful negotiations, have secured substantial monetary benefits and improvement in service conditions of railwaymen by way of restructuring of cadre under which promotional prospects of various categories amongst railway employees have

considerably improved by way of increase in percentage of higher grade posts and grant of stagnation increments, increase in higher grade posts for skilled artisan staff, 50% of pay as pension with cent percent neutralisation of increase in prices by grant of DA, minimum pension of Rs. 375/- to widows of retired railway employees, encashment of leave upto 240 days, decasualisation of about 1 lakh casual labour and grant of temporary status with all benefits to casual labour on completion of 120 days' service.

However, the most important basic demands of parity of wages for railwaymen equal to the salary and wages of their counterparts in Public Enterprises and eight hours duty for all railwaymen remain unrealised.

The Annual convention of AIRF held in Gauhati in 1987 and in Bombay in 1988 had decided to launch decisive struggles for realisation of these demands. The convention in Calcutta in 1989 had almost resolved to take a strike ballot, but the decision had to be deferred because of announcement of the General Election.

In the General Election Congress (I) was

routed but no party got a majority. A national Front Government consisting of Janata Dal, Dravida Munnetra Kazakam, Telegu Desam Party, Assam Ganatantra Parishad and Congress (S) was formed. This Government, though sympathetic to organised labour, could not do anything and it fell due to internal bickerings and split. A minority freak Government headed by Chandrashekhar was formed with the support of Congress (I). This Government also fell after about 3 months of its formation. This resulted in General election and formation of another minority government headed P.V. Narasimha Rao of Congress (I) in 1991.

It is in this background, with steep rise in prices, increase in poverty and unemployment, deterioration in law and order situation in the country, increase in the incidence of violence and inflationary pressures increasing due to devaluation of Indian Rupee, that the All India Railwaymen's Federation is mobilising public opinion in support of the legitimate demands of railwaymen and attempting to unite all railwaymen for a united struggle to achieve their pending demands.

Change we must but hold on to Unchanging Principles

T.V. Anandam

Mr. T.V. Anandam born in 1904 is one of the pioneers of the Trade Union Movement on the Railways. He joined in the service of former M & SM Rly in 1925 and retired finally as foreman of a workshop of Indian Railways. During a span of over 40 years he had a glorious role in the Trade Union movement on the Railways. He was the General Secretary of the M & SM Railway Employees' Union, Perambur, Madras (now known as Southern Railway) for 26 years (1948-1957 and 1959-1976). He was President of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen for 3 years from 1980 and again reelected in April '92. He became President of Southern Railway Employees Sangh from 1976 on ward. He is Vice President of INTUC. He was the Chairman, Staff side of the Joint Consultative Machinery, Adviser, Justice Sankar Saron Tribunal, (1946-57). He became a member of Rajya Sabha in 1964 and again in 1970. As an MP (Rajya Sabha) he had opportunities of being a member in a number of Parliamentary Committee - to mention a few he was a member of the Consultative Committee - Ministry of Labour, Committee on Subordinate Legislation on petition, Rly Convention Committee, Committee on Labour Welfare - study group of both houses of Parliament. He was on the Parliamentary Delegation to Malaysia in 1966. He went to U.K. at the invitation of U.K. Govt. and also visited USSR as a Trade Union Leader. He attended 43rd ILO, Convention, Geneva as an adviser - Labour delegation Government of India.

He served as Editor of Labour Times (English) and Tozhilalar Murasu (Tamil) in the past.

He has written Books in Tamil—

- (1) "God I have Seen" - on Sri Sathya Sai Baba. (1984)
- (2) Role of Railwaymen in the freedom struggle (1985)
- (3) My days with Railwaymen
- (4) Sai Technical Training Centre (1992)

Men of Wisdom used to remind us not to 'Look Back'. This maxim serves as a caution against disappointment for pitfalls or failures in the past, and stands out as encouragement for forgiving the harm done to us, and march forward with a resolute will unmindful of the past, for doing the duty according to the dictates of the conscience.

The request of my esteemed friend R.C. Chakravarty to place on record is a well thought out attempt to enable the young trade unionists to ponder, remember those who had sacrificed their all and have even laid down their lives in the service of the poor.

The history of trade union movement in India is comparatively young and has a chequered career. The organised labour movement in our country started sometime in the end of 19th century.

During the days of British rule championing the cause of have-nots was considered anti-government and the sufferings undergone by those organisers were really great. These patriotic men, the pioneers of the trade union movement in India were motivated with a spirit of service and sacrifice. For them service to the poor was service to God.

The escalation of freedom struggle had its impact on the workers and the railwaymen were no exception. I joined the former M & S M Rly. in the year 1925 as a Class 'B' apprentice in the carriage work-shop, Perambur, Madras, and it was my privilege to be drawn nearer to the M & S Rly. Employees' Union in the same year. This union of railwaymen was established on 7.2.1919 by a handful of patriots, - notable among them being Dr. Anne Besant, G. Selvapathiar, T. V. Kalyanasundaranar, V.O. Chidambaranar, N. Govindarajulu, M.C. Gnanmuthu, C. Panchaksharam, (the latter two were railwaymen).

On 19.12.1913 workers of Perambur Workshop wanted to meet the Works Manager to make representations on their poor working conditions. They gathered in large numbers and were waiting to meet the Works Manager Mr. P.G. Portchese who mistaking it as an unruly mob likely to be violent fired at them. Two workers viz CR shop Carpenter Natesan and Erection shop fitter Sheeyalan lost their lives.

One morning a worker in the shop - floor was found sporting a Gandhi cap. A European Officer who noticed this took that worker outside and asked him to remove the cap. That worker refused. As a result he was suspended from duty. Next morning all workers were found on duty with Gandhi cap on.

Indian National Congress launched a Non-cooperation campaign and in that, Mahatma Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel were arrested on 4th January 1932. On hearing the news, Perambur workshop workers sought permission to go out after 2.30 P.M. as a protest against the arrest of the Congress leaders. They knew it well that management would not concede this demand. They,

thereafter, staged 'stay in satyagraha'. On the following day a protest meeting was held in the premises of 'Unity House', Perambur. V.V. Giri, union President presided. The meeting in a resolution urged the Government to immediately release the arrested Congress leaders.

The Workshop management, as a vindictive measure, ordered retrenchment of some workers. The workers were already agitated. The retrenchment order emboldened their patriotic zeal. They organised processions and public meetings and presented a charter of demands. The Management refused to yield. The workers went on strike on 24th Oct. 1932, under the Presidentship of V.V. Giri which continued till the 9th January 1933. In this strike workers of the Engineering Workshop of Arrah and Hubli participated. During this period of distress the striking workers had gained public support and sympathy and were helped by free supply of provisions. One Mr. N. Srinivasalu undertook a vow for 'fast unto death'. That was just a demonstration of the sense of patriotism among our people.

The foundation stone of the building 'UNITY HOUSE', Perambur, for the Southern Railway Employees' Union was laid by no less a person than the Father of the Nation MAHATMA GANDHI himself on 3.9.1927. He was accompanied by Kasthuribai Gandhi and C.F. Andrews, a missionary from UK and a friend of Mahatma. He later addressed a public meeting.

Ever since it was established, it has never strayed from its avowed principles of Gandhian principle - TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE, the bed rock of Gandhian movement.

A galaxy of leaders had guided the

M.S.M. Rly., Emp. Union (SRES from sept 1957) over these years. As an Assistant General Secretary (1932) it was my good fortune to be associated with leaders like V.V. Giri who was the President of the MSM Rly. Emp. Union between 1929 and 1934. He became President of India later. I used to accompany him in all his tours, visiting villages, hamlets and workers' colonies and translate his speech into Tamil.

Day by day the activities of the MSM Rly. Employees' Union had spread throughout the South India. MSM Rly. Emp. Union was a true representative of the workers and a force to reckon with. The management had to consult the Union on all matters.

In the year 1946, Communist party of India was banned by the Government. As the result K.L. Narasimhan, the then General Secretary of the Union was arrested.

On attainment of Independence the Indian Railwaymen had to face the formidable task to set right the wrong done to the workers. Justice - Rajaadhyakshya Tribunal had just then commenced its work. As the secretary of the workshop Branch, I tendered evidence before this Tribunal. C. Masilamani, the then Secretary, of the Madras open line branch assisted me in this work.

The union celebrated its 21st Annual Conference from 21.5.1948 to 23.5.48. This conference was a landmark for some achievements viz.

i) The then TNCC Pessident K. Kamaraj, M.L.A. inaugurated the Conference.

ii) O.P. Ramaswamy, the then Premier (as he was then called) of the composite Madras state declared open the life-size statue of Mahatma Gandhi installed in our premises, 'Unity-House', Perambur.

iii) Removal of the emblem 'hammer' and 'chisel' from the red background of the union flag.

iv) Recommended to the AIRF to sever their connections from the AITUC.

Thus it could be seen that a solid foundation was laid for a free and democratic union of railwaymen so that men moulded on Gandhian thoughts could be at the helm of affairs.

In this conference I was elected General Secretary of the Union and I had continued in that position till 1976, except for a brief period to facilitate merger of unions functioning in the former Ex S.I. and M.S. Railways and merger of SREU & SREA.

In the course of my trade union activity over several decades, I have come across a large cross section of Railwaymen. It would not be possible for me to recollect and mention all of them here and now. But I shall be ungrateful if I do not make a reference about a few of them.

One suce great man is Bhanata, Bhanu K. Kamraj, who headed TNCC, and AICC besides ruling his home-state-Tamil Nadu for over nine and half years with distinction. It was he who extended all help to the Union and was mainly respoinsible in sending me to that 'house of elders' Rajya Sabha in the year 1964. My entry to the Rajya Sabha for the second term in the year 1970 has a greater political significance. It is for the countrymen to understand the events in ~~sequence~~ and accurately record in a clear perspective the swing that K. Kamaraj had with the ~~stage~~.

In would not be out of place to mention that I utilised this forum to the best possible way to voice the grievances of the Railwaymen of our country.

I could not forget G. Krishnaswami,

General Secretary of the union and Member of the Madras Legislative Assembly. His contribution to the union was really great. He took the reins of the union at a time when it was drifting away from the path of progress.

It was also my privilege to be associated for two decades with S. Guruswami who headed the MSM Rly. Employees' union from 1937 to 1957.

Yet one more name I must record here - that is that of S.R. Vasavada. He was convinced that after independence the working class in India required a new culture which would be free from sloganish concept and toiled hard to spread the message of NFIR/INTUC. My association with him had a great impact on me.

I was chosen President of the NFIR in the year 1975. I took charge of the office from A.P. Sharma consequent on his induction in the union cabinet. It was the conspiracy of Circumstances that I had to hand over the keys of NFIR in May '85 at Howrah to the same person from whom I had taken over.

The concept of "economic freedom" in free India had assumed greater importance. The 'Nehru Plan' - 1928 AICC resolution was a first step in this direction. So convinced I was about what was stated in the 'Nehru Plan' that I held the view that all material resources of the country, principal means of production

and distribution must be under 'state control' and should not be damaged or destroyed. The railways being nation's 'life line', its wheels should always be on the move. I therefore, took upon myself this task and voluntarily disarmed the SRES by not enforcing the right of 'withdrawal of labour' even at the point of dire necessity or provocation. I am not however, opposed to any form of peaceful movement of railwaymen for securing to them the opportunities of a richer life.

The SRES now has 152 branches spread over, in all four southern states commanding a membership of 76,400. Its movable and immovable properties constitute financial resources to the tune of Rs. 3 crore and are secured under a trust known as "Trust for Gandhian Trade Union movement among Railwaymen".

The economic disparities and social disabilities among the various sections of the workmen must be removed. There is something beyond the bread. One is recognised by his character. Every worker's Workman's life should be the purpose of the union. He should be made a goal of improving his quality of life.

I sincerely appeal to all the workers to strive towards this end. The only desire I have in my life.

Towards a better and brighter future of AIRF

J.P. Chaubey

(Mr. J.P. Chaubey born in 1924 joined in the Railways in 1946 as a clerk. The bureaucratic environs in the work place shocked him and he joined the Trade Union to fight against all forms of injustice. From the modest position of the Asst. Secretary in 1950 he gradually rose to important positions. He is currently the General Secretary of All India Railwaymen's Federation. During the strike of 1960 he was arrested and removed from railway service. He had to suffer for a long time and was reinstated in service in 1972. It was through his effort that a permanent office of the A.I.R.F. at New Delhi was established. He visited U.K., Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, Moscow, Japan and German Democratic Republic. He also visited U.S.A. to participate in the International Transport Federation Conference. He exchanged views with the leaders of AFL and C.I.O. In London he had discussions with the members of International Transport Workers Federation. Later he participated in Asian Regional Meeting of I.L.O. at Manila.)

The decade of forties was one of great turmoil and turbulence. The country had gone through the historic Quit India Movement and the world had witnessed the most grim holocaust of 2nd World War. After undergoing the final phase, the country got independence. It was during this revolutionary phase that I joined in the East Indian Railway in 1946 as a clerk leaving my father's business. My father realised my temperamental incompatibility and did not object to my choosing my own way. The political trend and the happenings all over the country for a grim struggle for Independence had drawn me close to a number of prominent men. I joined in the mainstream of patriotic endeavour of our long cherished ideal. In my workplace the bureaucratic environs and most offensive attempts to degrade our countrymen by arrogant bureaucrats had led me to think of rising against their shockingly incivil attitude. I decided to join in the Trade Union movement. By 1950 I was elected Asstt. Secretary of the local Branch and since then there has been no going back and I have

all along been with the union. My sincerity and devotion was recognised by a large number of workers and I was elected to various key posts in the union in the course of my career.

In course of time after independence the Indian National Trade Union Congress came into being as the labour wing of the Indian National Congress, the ruling party of the country. The Indian National Railway Workers' Federation was organised by them and thus there were two Federations of Indian Railwaymen - viz. AIRF and INRWF. It was a matter of great joy that some ~~right thinking~~ men thought it wise to have one Federation of the Railwaymen.

Due to efforts of Lok Nayak Jayprakash Narain and Harihar Nath Sastri, the two organisations were unified to a single Federation of railwaymen under the name and style of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen in 1949. Harihar Nath Shastri, was the President and S. Guruswami the General Secretary. I was elected to the Working Committee of this Federation.

In the changed context, unions on the Zonal railways were getting merged into one union but unfortunately the aspiration of the new United Federation was shortlived. The style of functioning of S.R. Vasavada who succeeded Harihar Nath Shastri as NFIR President following the tragic death of Shastri in an Air crash was the bane of success of the new organisation. He had displayed unconcealed animus towards the erstwhile AIRF members and this resulted in the revival of the AIRF in Poona in 1957. I had decided to be with the AIRF. I remained in the arena of struggle of AIRF and during the historic first All India struggle of railwaymen in July 1960, I was the Secretary of the Joint Council of Action at Lucknow. We had mobilised all Central Govt. employees of different departments and plunged in the movement with a direction and purpose to make the strike a success. While addressing a meeting in the midnight of 10th-11th July at Charbag Railway Station I was taken into custody by the police and I was placed under suspension from service by the administration from 11.7.1960. I was removed from service from 1.8.61. My application for bail even after the cessation of the strike was rejected. It was granted after a month of my arrest.

In the prevailing wave of unbridled repression and penal measures - almost familiar on such occasions in the history of struggle of the working class, several thousands of Railwaymen were jailed, while some of my friends viz. Mssrs. T.N. Bajpai, S.D. Bajpai, Gian Singh, Kishanlal, Budhai Ram, Om Prakash, Chunnilal, Montoli Misra, Satgur Saran, S.P. Srivastava and 25 Trade Apprentices were removed from service. Several hundred were placed under suspension from service. We had organised a

squad of well intended colleagues offering defence help in enquiries and court cases. Eventually all of us were acquitted after Govt's withdrawal of the cases. We had to suffer for a long time. At the end of the prolonged litigation I was reinstated in service in 1972. It was through tremendous strain and sheer perseverance that we succeeded in bringing back to Lucknow all our fellow Railwaymen who were transferred to remote destinations as a punitive measure and also getting those removed from service reinstated.

The sufferings helped us to strengthen our determination to intensify our activities. I was elected one of the Vice Presidents of the AIRF in the Annual Convention held in Udaipur in July 1962. The office of the AIRF at Delhi needed some one to manage it and I decided to look after it. Com. Peter Alvares, the General Secretary of the AIRF was working single-handed in spite of financial constraints. I alongwith Peter Alvares planned the setting up of a small office in New Delhi for AIRF at this time. In 1963 I was elected Treasurer of the AIRF in the Gaya Conference of AIRF. I was also one of the Vice Presidents of the Northern Railwaymen's Union. I managed to start working in full swing in the office of AIRF with the help of Sansar Chandel, a serving railwayman who demonstrated a sense of purpose for making the AIRF a strong organisation suitable to the needs of railwaymen. The pursuit of a venture to house AIRF in Delhi met with success later and premise No. E-125, Babar Road, New Delhi was allotted to AIRF. The build-up of the AIRF office continued with full vigour and additional accommodation was also secured. The setting up, of the office in Delhi gave a fillip to functioning and I had been running the

office and Peter Alvares used to visit Delhi from Bombay as and when required.

The impact of 1960 strike, led to the Govt. of India announcing the scheme of Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM) on the model of Whitely council in U.K. for the benefit of all Central Govt. Employees. The General Council meeting of the AIRF at Nagpur considered the proposal and rejected it inspite of Peter Alvares and myself advocating for its acceptance.

Not discouraged by the outcome of the meeting we continued to discuss the issue informally with many of my colleagues and our reasoned advocacy of the JCM Scheme as a weapon in the hands of Govt. servants, for dealing with a Govt. that must yeild to legitimate demands, won the support of the members in the General Council Meeting at Ajmer. The scheme was accepted by AIRF. It was inaugurated in 1966 by Gulzari Lal Nanda, the then Union Home Minister. The JCM had not got off to a good start in the beginning when the meeting ended inconclusively inspite of lively discussions on many subjects and it so happended that at one stage on the refusal of the administration to refer the case to arbitration, the entire Staff Side staged a walk out from the meeting of National Council, JCM. The indifference and insensivity to legitimate demands ultimately led to one-day all India token strike in 1968 by the Central Govt. Employees. After the strike 32 thousand temporary staff of all departments including the railways were served with notice of termination of service. Myself along with O.P. Gupta of NFPT, Madhusudan of Civil Aviation, K.G. Srivastava of Defence went on an indefinite hunger strike on October 11, 1968. Our determination to continue the fast in the face

of all provocations surprised everybody. However on the intervention of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi the hunger strike was terminated on October 18, 1968 on the assurance of withdrawal of notice of termination of service. The biggest strike of 1974 also chained me and I was kept in Tihar Jail for about a month.

I had also good fortune to appear before the Second, Third and 4th Pay Commissions for presenting the case of the Railwaymen along with Peter Alvares, Priya Gupta and Umraomal Purohit on the demand of improvement in the scales of pay, dearness allowance formula and service conditions of the railwaymen.

I was a member of the Govt. Delegation which visited Great Britain, Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland in 1972 to study the scheme of negotiation and Joint consultation in those countries.

During the Emergency my passport was impounded and I was not allowed to participate in Preparatory committee deliberation of Asian Seminar at Tokyo.

In 1977 I visited Moscow at the invitation of Trade Union International and I also visited German Democratic Republic at the invitation of Central Committee of Transport and Communication Industrial Union. Later I visited Dresden and flew to Sydney to participate in the preparatory Committee meeting of II Seminar of Transport Workers of Asia. As a member of the Asia and Pacific Regional Committee of the Transport Workers' union I was entrusted with the job of organising seminars to discuss problems of railwaymen and other transport workers for eventual preparation and discussion in the I.L.O. I also participated in the Preparatory Committee Meeting for II Asian Seminar in Tokyo.

In 1980 I visited Miami In U.S.A. to participate in the ITF Conference of International Transport Workers' Federation, London (ITF). While in America I had occasion to exchange views with leaders of AFL and CIO. I also visited Canada to see the working of Trade Union movement in that country.

I visited London and had discussion with the office bearers of International Transport Workers' Federation.

In December 1980 I participated in the Asian Regional Meeting of I.L.O. at Manila and also participated in the International conference of Transport Workers in Damascus.

During my long association with the Northern Railwaymen's Union we organised some 120 branches of the Union. In recognition of my service the Northern Railwaymen's Union elected me as President of the Union in 1970 unanimously.

It could also be possible for me to implement the advice of Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan to make the workers manage their unions themselves.

I had paid great attention to accommodation problems of Union and virtually through our joint efforts the Union's building at Lucknow was constructed. Several other Branch offices had followed the principle to construct their own office with all modern working facilities.

Ever since the partition of the country I had toiled hard to convince the railwaymen that the AIRF should be organised as an organisation of potential force and it was by this concept we had moved ahead to meet challenges of great problems in the years to come. The problems in the later years were related to wage parity with that on the public undertakings, Bonus and other issues.

There being no prospects of the Govt. meeting the demands, the railwaymen took the decision to go on strike in May 1974 which practically shook the country. The repression of the Govt. had caused serious doubts in the minds of the countrymen. As a result in 1977 General Election the ruling party, Congress was thrown out of power giving opportunity to Janata Party to form the Govt. The success of this change was a direct product of the efforts of Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan's heroic struggle and the acts of chivalry by railwaymen during the 1974 strike.

I was elected General Secretary, AIRF on 30.5.1975 and since then I worked on the unfinished tasks of my learned and distinguished predecessors, S. Guruswami, Peter Alvares and Priya Gupta. It was Guruswami who, in the Parliament, demanded bonus equivalent to three months pay to the railwaymen. His successors Peter Alvares and Priya Gupta pursued the demand with vigour. Three major strikes were conducted for this demand in 1968, 1972 and 1974.

In 1979 also, the AIRF demanded to organise another indefinite strike on the demand of bonus. Timely intervention by the then Prime Minister, Charan Singh, averted the strike and resulted in the settlement of this demand. As General Secretary of AIRF, I had the privilege to sign the first agreement with the Government on 12.11.1979 and since then the quantum of bonus went on increasing, and for the productivity for the financial year 1991-92, the railwaymen have been paid bonus equivalent to 49 days wages. As a result of sustained efforts, promotional prospects and advancement of the railway employees were improved. Wages settlement on improvement

of service conditions and retirement benefits for railway and other Central Government employees were also made. I had also the privilege of being the first Secretary (Staff Side) of the Joint Consultative Machinery at the national level, and in that capacity I also did my best to improve the service conditions of the employees.

It had been my desire although to have a contact with ten lakh members of unions affiliated to AIRF through a house journal. So I started a Hindi version of Indian Railwaymen founded by Peter Alvares, by name and style of Bhartiya Railwaymen so that the vital news and views would reach even the lowest category of railwaymen, at the grassroots.

The most notable achievement to which I had worked very earnestly is the publication of the History of AIRF. There being no factual records in absence of office of AIRF in the past, I had arranged for collection of whatever records were available with the family of S. Guruswami at Madras. It was due to the help extended to us by his son Dr. Krishnamurti that it was possible to collect some records, some old E. B. Rly. Journals. V.B. Kamik's book on "Indian Trade Unions and strikes on Railways" was also available with the AIRF. These formed the nucleus of a history which was compiled and finally

published in 1982 and the second volume was published in 1986.

This is a venture which will continue to illuminate the ideals and the struggle of railwaymen of the country for long time to come.

The new generation of railwaymen must have a forward look and this is what I have always worked for. The events today are moving fast. The working classes of India are again in the cauldron facing one of the grimmest challenges when their very survival is at stake. The Govt's new economic policies of being slaves to World Bank and IMF and violent anti worker moves like privatisation, retrenchments, denigration of public sector, making assaults on worker's rights and privileges have come to us like lightning and an earthquake and the working classes have again to prepare for long sufferings and tears before they achieve their long cherished goal. We in the AIRF in our 65th Madras Annual Conference have been forced to direct our affiliated Unions to go for strike ballot in December 1992 and go for an indefinite strike if our old, just and vital demands are not agreed upon. And thus, for us of the working classes and children of Inqilab, the struggle is still on and we cannot sit in peace till the working classes are fully liberated and get complete justice and dream of the great Loknayak is fulfilled.

Growth of Trade Union Movement over the Indian Railways and the role of N.F.I.R. Seshibhushanarao

(Mr. Seshibhushanarao, General Secretary of the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen has an eventful career. He has his personal style of functioning and even his critics admired his purposeful way to give a thrust to the movement of Railwaymen in the right direction.

Recalling the political situation before Independence and the beginning of trade-union movement in the country, he has drawn up a picture of the past and the shape of things after independence. From a modest position he worked up his career. He rose to the position of strength and command over railwaymen. He is a great admirer of the South Eastern Railway in particular. He has given a complete picture of the achievements of railwaymen during the last 44 years after Independence. He has exposed the role of the communist party of India before and after Independence in unmistakable terms).

Trade Union Movement gained a momentum after the first World War. Between 1918 and 1925 founding fathers of the Movement in India tried to establish and propagate on the necessity of developing Trade Union Movement in various industries in India. Lokhande could be considered as the first Trade unionist in India. He inspired workers in Bombay Textile Mills to struggle for better wages and service conditions and above all for dignity of labour. N.M. Joshi, M.N. Roy, and others joined in the field of activity within a few years after Lokhande's struggle.

Due to acute inflation, shortage of consumer goods, low wages and bad working conditions, there was unrest in almost all industries in India and lead was taken by Tea Plantation Labour of Assam, Jute Labour of Bengal, Textile Labour of Bombay and Ahmedabad, Cement Workers of M.P., Sugar industry Workers of Uttar Pradesh, Coal Mine Workers of Bihar, etc. Workers came to understand advantages of Trade Union Movement and began to rally round their leaders for organising Unions in various

industries including Mining Industry.

Advent of Mahatma Gandhi

M. K. Gandhi returned from South Africa some time in 1918. He saw appalling conditions of Textile Labour at Ahmedabad and Saurashtra. He had to organise a Trade Union for Textile Labour at Ahmedabad which was named as Textile Labour Association (TLA). He had able assistance in Shankar Lala Banker, Gulzarilal Khandubhai K. Desai and others. The movement gained tremendous boost and shaped their destiny on a sound footing.

Permutations and Combinations

When the Trade Union Movement was gaining a good response from workers, great leaders of the country thought about organising a Central Trade Union under the name and style of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), of which Lala Lajpat Rai became the first President. When it was struggling to pass through a period of teething troubles, various political influences came to fore and began to disturb the struggle culminating into growth of some groups and formation of different Central Trade Unions

Schools of thought. Some leaders went out of AITUC and formed Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS). Although there was not much difference amongst them in respect of basic conception, there were some differences in the approach to workers' problems and redemption of their personal, social and political difficulties. Again, in between, certain groups had parted ways with both these Organisations. Another Central Trade Union Organisation by the name - United Trade Union Congress had grown up.

Birth of National Movement.

During this period, India was passing through a great democratic struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Pattabhi Sitaramaiah, Lala Lajpat Rai, C.R. Das and others. There was political opposition to freedom struggle by the leadership of All India Trade Union Congress which was by then dominated by Communist Party of India deriving inspiration from U.S.S.R. Their bone of contention was that the Indian National Congress should stop pursuing Freedom struggle which was likely to hamper the production and productivity of war requirements which in turn might jeopardise the interests of U.S.S.R. which had launched Joint struggle with its allies, namely, Britain, France, America and others against Nazism of Hitler and Facism of Mussolini when the original alliance between U.S.S.R. and Germany broke down for political reasons. Undaunted the Indian National Congress proceeded with its crusade for attaining Independence of India. Second World War was over in 1945 with the defeat of Germany's Hitler and his allies, Mussolini of Italy etc.

The ravages of War affected economic conditions of almost all the countries and unrest amongst the people for better living conditions had begun. There was scarcity of essential goods. Low income resulting in loss of purchasing power of the people on the one hand and inflation on the other had made things from bad to worse. The British Government made so many attempts to contain unrest in India which was an important sub-continent of their Empire with invaluable resources in the fields of agriculture, mineral and other goods. They did not quit India without launching upon a counter offensive from time to time, and in the process repression was let loose causing untold sufferings to both the leaders and the people.

The AITUC took a stand to extend help and co-operation to USSR, Britain and their allies in view of their involvement in Second World War against Nazi Germany. The Nationalist forces in AITUC did not accept this proposition and they developed a counter organisation pleading that it was the appropriate time for strengthening freedom struggle. On account of these differences Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders who were supporting AITUC, had to secede. In this process AITUC became weak and could not enforce their design to scuttle the freedom movement.

The Indian National Congress continued the freedom struggle and the nationalist forces amongst the Working classes of various industries in the country supported the freedom movement physically and financially. That struggle led to the launching of a final and decisive Fight popularly known as "Quit India Movement" under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, on August 9, 1942, by a

Resolution adopted in the AICC Session at Bombay. A clarion call was given to the Nation that men and women of the country should participate in the struggle to see that Britishers Quit India and handed over power to Indians for self-rule (Swarajya). The National Congress succeeded in forcing the British Government to decide finally to hand over power to Indians. In between negotiations started through the "Cripps India Mission" and the "Cabinet Committee Mission" headed by Sir Pathice Lawrence visited India to follow up the negotiations after the Crips India Mission failed. Ultimately the Labour Party leader Mr. Clement Attlee, the then Prime Minister of Britain, got a resolution adopted in the British Parliament granting Independence to India. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed as the last Viceroy of India with instruction to process details for handing over power to Indians.

Meanwhile Muslim League under the leadership of Mohd. Ali Jinnah affirmed its right to secede from Bharat and form a separate state to be named as "Pakistan" by dividing the sub-continent of India. Thus North West region and part of Bengal, now called Bangladesh, came to be known as Pakistan because their demand for a separate State was based on Religion. Mahatma Gandhi opposed tooth and nail the proposal for partition of India but political circumstances forced Indian National Congress to accept the proposal of the Viceroy and accept self rule for rest of the country as a secular state. Thus India and Pakistan came into existence.

The period between 1942 and 1947 was replete with tension, political upheavals, communal frenzy, police action, etc., and

formed the most important part of the history of freedom struggle. Millions of people on either side of both the countries, were uprooted from their original habitation, forced to leave their property behind and migrate to either side. Lakhs of people died by Police action and also while trekking thousands of miles on foot to various destinations of their choice. A great calamity had befallen on the people in general and on the Governments of India and Pakistan in particular. Refugee Rehabilitation Programme alone was a formidable task and there were Refugees in certain parts of the country who had not been fully rehabilitated. The National Government had taken over charge of the country on August 15, 1947.

Mr. & Mrs. Mountbatten played an important role in the process of transfer of power to India and Pakistan. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India and the last Viceroy was Lord Governor General. Mohd Ali Jinnah became the Governor General of Pakistan and Liaquat Ali Khan took over as the first Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Formation of Indian National Trade Union Congress

After the dawn of Independence the National Government was confronted with tremendous problems in respect of rehabilitation of millions of refugees, improvement of distribution system by introducing rationing, development of food production and also industrial expansion, production and productivity, problem of unemployment and under-employment, etc. When the Congress Government was so very concerned with these problems, Unions affiliated to AITUC in both the Agricultural and Industrial Sectors did not co-operate and

started fostering labour trouble by encouraging sporadic, lightning strikes and 'Go Slow' methods so as to thwart the efforts of the Government in building up national economy in the interests of the country. In the name of supporting USSR and its allies, the AITUC Affiliates committed heinous crimes against the nationalist forces of the country. The National Government boldly faced the situation and laid down Industrial policy norms to guide the various Managements and Workers' Unions so as to serve the best interests of the country. At that juncture Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, the Dy. Prime Minister, in conclusion with Labour leaders in the Congress Party, such as Gulzarilal Nanda, Khandu Bhai K. Desai, thought of organising a Trade Union with the nationalist sentiment and ideology. In a conference in New Delhi on 3rd May, 1948 it was decided to organise the Central Trade Union under the name and style of "Indian National Trade Union Congress" with Suresh Chandra Banerjee from West Bengal as the first President.

The post-war years

The mounting wave of industrial unrest during the post-war years was a matter of grave concern to the government. It was realised that unless industrial peace was secured, the stupendous task of rebuilding the economy of the country could not be completed. In December, 1947, therefore an Industrial Conference was held where the following Industrial Truce Resolution was adopted :

"This Conference considers that the increase in industrial production which is so vital to the economy of the country cannot be achieved without the fullest cooperation between labour and management, and stable

and friendly relations them. The employer must recognise the proper role of labour in industry and the need to secure for labour fair wages and working conditions ; labour for its part must give equal recognition to its duty in contributing to the increase of the national income without which a permanent rise in the general standard of living cannot be achieved. Mutual discussion of all problems common to both and a determination to settle all disputes without recourse to interruption in or slowing down of production should be the common aim of employers and labour. The system of remuneration to capital as well as labour must be so devised that, while in the interests of the consumers the producers' excessive profits should be prevented by suitable measures of taxation and otherwise, both will share the product of their common effort after making provision for payment of fair wages to labour, a fair return on capital employed in the industry and reasonable reserves for the maintenance and expansion of the undertakings.

"For attaining these objectives, this Conference recommends :

- (a) that the fullest use should be made of statutory and other machinery for the resolution of industrial disputes in a just and peaceful manner ; where it does not exist, it should be created without delay. Such machinery should as far as possible be uniform throughout India ;
- (b) the establishment of machinery, central, regional and functional, for the study and determination of fair wages and conditions of labour, and fair remuneration for capital, and methods for the association of labour in all matters concerning industrial production, such as the formation of central, regional and unit production committees

- (c) the constitution in each industrial undertaking of Works Committees, representing management and duly elected representatives of labour for the settlement of any dispute which may arise from day to day ; and
- (d) that, as a first step towards improving the standard of living of workers, immediate attention should be devoted to the problem of housing of industrial labour ; the cost of such housing should be shared in suitable proportions between the Government, employers and labour, the share of labour being given in the shape of a reasonable rent”.

“The principles enunciated above having been accepted, this Conference calls upon labour and management to agree to maintain industrial peace and to avert lock-outs, strikes or slowing down of production during the next three years”.

“This conference invites labour and management to assist Government to secure, promote and guarantee such agreements between the parties as will usher in a period of contented and orderly advancement towards a cooperative Commonwealth”.

At this juncture there was terrible unrest amongst workers for improvement of their socio-economic conditions which was encouraged by the Communists. There was clamour amongst workers for getting quick results. Due to political affiliations, rivalry amongst the Trade Union leaders had increased leading to formation of a number of Trade Unions. Combinations and permutations have finally led to formation of four All India Trade Union Organisations viz

- 1) The Indian National Trade Union Congress founded on 3rd May 1948 aimed at establishing an order of society which was

free from hindrances to an all round development of its individual members, fostering growth of human personality in all its aspects which ultimately resulted in the elimination of social, political and economic exploitation. For achieving these objectives, the INTUC did not wish to adopt radical methods causing dislocation of planned production and productivity ;

- 2) Hind Mazdoor Sabha founded in 1948, stood for the establishment of a democratic and socialist society. To achieve these objectives, the HMS was prepared to adopt all legitimate, peaceful and democratic method akin to the Indian National Trade Union Congress. Jaya Prakash Narayan, a staunch socialist headed this organisation.

- 3) The All India Trade Union Congress founded in 1920 and now dominated by the communists, strived to establish a socialist State in India as against the democratic socialist society envisaged by INTUC and the HMS. Its thesis was that Trade Unions were organs of class struggle and therefore labour and capital could not reconcile in a Socialist System for a peaceful co-existence serving their individual interests. Its approach was more militant not caring for the end result.

- 4) The United Trade Union Congress came away in December 1948 from the All India Trade Union Congress. Its aim was to create a Central Trade Union and build up a platform for labour to be free from domination by political parties.

To a large extent the leadership of these All India Organisations was in the hands of politicians and not in the hands of working class. At the international level also, Trade Union Movement was divided on account of their affiliations to various political ideologies. The Indian National Trade Union

Congress and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha were affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions which was mainly supported by Anglo-American block, while the All India Trade Union Congress was affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions supported by Communist block.

Although the four National Organisations dominated the Indian Trade Union Movement, yet at all unit-level Trade Unions did not belong to them or follow their leadership, resulting in the existence of a large number of small Unions remaining aloof from seeking affiliation from any of these four All India Trade Union Organisations.

The activities of the Four All India Trade Union Bodies can be classified as those

- i) relating to the methods designed to secure efficient working of the Organisation as such, and
- ii) relating to field activities designed to attain the objects of the organisation.

The more important of the activities falling under the second category, are collaboration with the Central Government and solving labour problems, establishment of contacts with foreign countries and development of research and publicity.

Administration

In spite of increase in the number of Trade Unions and their total membership over the years, especially after World War II, there has been not a very significant improvement in their working—the major defects being :

- (a) Predominance of small sized unions having membership of less than 600 ;
 - (b) poor finance due to small size of Unions as also the low subscription rates ; and
 - (c) absence of whole-time paid officers.
- There was a wide divergence of opinion

among the Trade Union leaders. While professing that there should be a strong Trade Union Movement in the country to serve the interests of working class aiming at better results, there were pulls and counter-pulls on account of political affiliations which caused hindrance in the fulfilment of the object of building up a strong Trade Union Movement. This position continues till today.

Trade Union Movement over the Indian Railways

The Railway Sector in India was in the hands of privately managed Companies such as E.I. Railway, G.I.P. Rly., B.N. Rly., O.T. Rly. & M & S.M. Rly. etc. etc. On 1st October, 1946 these Company— managed Railways were taken over by the State when there was Interim Govt. for the whole sub-continent. A separate organisation was created by regrouping these Railways into Zones. The Interim Govt. organised Railway Board to administer the management of these Zonal Railways.

Now I shall continue the history of erstwhile B.N. Rly. (now S.E. Railway) Zone. The jurisdiction of Bengal Nagpur Railway was between Garden Reach/Howrah, Nagpur Bilaspur-Katni via Anuppur-Sahel and Anuppur-Manendragarh, Chirimiri on the Branch Line, Howrah Waltair East Coast Line, Howrah-Nagpur Main line and Howrah-Adra-Bhojidihi-Gomoh, Adra-Banspur-Asansol, Waltair-Raipur (popularly known as R.V. Section) including Naupada/Gungur Light Railway, Rupsa-Mayurbhanj Light Railway, Narrow Gauge Section (known as Satpura District) Subsequently, some new sections were constructed, namely ;

1. Panskura - Haldia Port
2. Bondamunda - Karampada Kiriburu

3. Kottavalasa - Kirandaul
4. Jharsuguda - Sambalpur - Bolangiri - Titlagarh.
5. Sambalpur - Cuttack (under construction)
6. Koraput - Rayagada (under construction)

The South Eastern Railway Zone contained original sections of Bengal-Nagpur Railway plus new sections which were constructed after the Independence. This Zonal Railway was classified as freight-oriented railway and was earning over 48% of the total revenue of the Ministry of Railways, which means 52% of revenue is shared by 8 Zonal Railways. The importance of South-Eastern Railway zone has grown unimaginably on account of the location of all the Public & Private Sector Steel Factories excepting one at Durgapur and even to this Plant most of the raw Materials move through South Eastern Railway Zone; a large number of Cement Factories, Mining Industries viz Iron ore, Dolomite, manganese, Aluminium, Coal, Coal Washeries, Fertilizer Factory at Sindri, Zinc etc. Oil Refineries, Ship building Yards, Textiles, Jute, coir, etc. are catered for by this Railway.

Besides a number of long distance trains, including Mail and Express trains, local electric trains have been introduced between Howrah-Kharagpur. Its Headquarter is at Garden Reach, Calcutta.

This Zonal Railway touches important cities and towns in six States of India, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. It is a cosmopolitan zone in whose ranks people drawn from all the States of India can be seen; all religions and cultures are represented amongst the staff. It is a novelty by itself and

singular in nature because this phenomenon is not to be found elsewhere in other Zonal Railways.

The Trade Union Movement was founded over Bengal-Nagpur Railway by V.V. Giri, with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das and others who were all the shining stars of the Movement of Independence in the country, with its headquarters at Kharagpur, where a major Workshop for Steam Engines, repairs of Coaches and Wagons etc. exists.

In the past nearly 8,000 workers were employed in this Workshop. This workshop had a hoary past with several stoppages of work to its credit. Perhaps, the Union in those days had to support freedom Movement, and most of the strikes were political in nature rather than economic. Such disputes took place over the other Company managed Railways too in the country. 1947 was considered as the year which served as a spring board for the growth of the movement over the BNR and other Company managed Railways.

V.V. Giri was held in high esteem by Railwaymen of Bengal-Nagpur Railway & S.M. Railway in particular and all Railways in general. He was closely associated with these two Railway Zones obtaining degree of Bar-at-Law. After he returned to India. For a short period at the Bar and then the call of the Movement dragged him to the Railway Trade Union Movement. Because he belonged to Berhampur-Ganjam (Orissa), he stayed at Kharagpur for the Headquarters of the Union. Some of the heroes of BNR were B.N. Das, Prof. Ramalingam, S.N. Moitra, S.N. Moitra, Sanyal, Rajamannar, Godbole,

W.V.V.R, Naidu, Raghavan etc.

This union was organised under the name & style of BNR Indian Labour Union.

After this Union gained tremendous response from the workers, might be due to internal differences or by external pressure, Nil Krishna Sarkar Organised a Union - under the name and style of B.N. Railway Employees' Union with headquarters at Garden Reach, Calcutta. There was keen competition and rivalry between the two Unions. Between the two, the BNR Indian Labour Union was considered to be very strong and was held in high esteem by the workers and the public .

The period between 1950 to 1960 was crucial in the history of Trade Union Movement over the Indian Railways, and other sectors. With the formation of Zones, the Government desired that various Unions functioning over the Zonal Railways should also be amalgamated and an ideal situation could be developed if only one Union in each Zone could be carved out so that negotiations with the Railway Board and the Administrations at various tiers could be healthy, fruitful and would serve the best interests of the railwaymen. With this end in view the Railway Board issued instructions that the then existing Unions should hold joint Conferences to carve out one union per zone. In this background permutations and combinations commenced.

When the Zones were carved out, the Bengal Nagpur Railway was integrated with Eastern Railway Zone and with this a major Eastern Railway Zone was carved out. Eastern Railway Employees' Union and the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress on the Eastern Railway portion and Bengal-Nagpur Railway Indian Labour Union and Bengal-

Nagpur Railway Employees' Union were functioning in the erstwhile Bengal-Nagpur Railway portion.

The Eastern Railway Employees' Union had P.C. Das Gupta as General Secretary. Among others at the helm of affairs were Murlidhar Dubey, Ram Chakravarty and others. The Eastern Railwaymen's Congress was headed by A.P. Sharma, S.G. Lal, K.K. Dutta, Mahendra Pratap, Shiv Mangal Prasad, Bhattacharjee etc. The B.N. Rly Indian Labour Union was headed by Prof. W.V.V. Ramalingam, B.N. Das, Sanyal, Rajamannar, T. Raghavan, S.N. Singh and others. The leadership of the B.N. Rly Employee's Union consisted of Nilkrishna Sircar, Samil Bhattacharjee and others. There was also B.N. Rly. Employees' Congress headed by Devan Sen as President and B.K. Mukherjee as General Secretary.

The talks for amalgamation were ~~not~~ in motion. All these four major Unions ~~were to~~ be amalgamated into one. But the talks with Eastern Railwaymen's Congress failed and the rest of the Unions decided to hold a Convention in March 1953 at Waltair (A.P.) and responsibility to play host was shouldered by S.N. Singh, A. Appa Rao and Seshibhushana Rao. The latter two headed the Waltair Branch as President and Branch Secy. respectively. It was the most successful convention and was attended by nearly 4,000 delegates and visitors from all over the integrated Eastern Railway Zone. After amalgamation, the amalgamated Union was named as "Eastern Railwaymen's Union" and began to function as such with S.N. Singh as President and P.C. Das Gupta as General Secretary. Recognition was granted and there was a great jubilation amongst the activists of all the amalgamated Unions since the object

of forging one Union could be achieved to avoid inter-Union rivalry so as to achieve better results for railwaymen over the zone.

Since the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress was functioning as the second union, efforts were made to get that Union amalgamated with the newly formed Eastern Railwaymen's Union but the efforts did not fruitful for various reasons, the main reason being the Communist domination of E.R. Men's Union. The object of carving out one Union could not be achieved ; Similarly over the erstwhile Bengal Nagpur Railway area the B.N. Rly. Employees' Congress also decided to stay away with its own name and constitution. Thus there were two Unions on the erstwhile portions of Eastern and B.N. Railways once again. The much thought of amalgamation and integration of the Unions did not make any headway.

In the meanwhile, the Railway Ministry took a decision for administrative reasons in August 1958 that the integrated Eastern Railway Zone should be bifurcated as Eastern Railway Zone and South Eastern Railway Zone with the erstwhile jurisdictions fully protected. Both these Zones retained their original jurisdictions and for the Bengal Nagpur Railway, the name was changed as South Eastern Railway Zone. At such a juncture difference in the leadership of Eastern Railwaymen's Union surfaced and as a natural corollary the leadership was divided into groups on the basis of erstwhile Eastern Railway and B.N. Railway portions. Over the South Eastern Railway, the Eastern Railwaymen's Union had changed its name as South Eastern Railwaymen's Union, the B.N. Rly. Employees Congress as S.E. Railwaymen's Congress and thus there were two Unions again viz. South Eastern

Railwaymen's Union and South Eastern Railway Employees' Congress. Amongst the S.E. Railwaymen's Union differences developed on the basis of political affinities and it was divided - one group remained as original South Eastern Railwaymen's Union with Dr. Lanka Sundram as President and Roy Choudhury as General Secretary and the other Group (erstwhile B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union) amalgamated with the South Eastern Railway Employees' Congress and it became S.E. Railwaymen's Congress. A.P. Sharma remained as the common President both for Eastern Railwaymen's Congress and S.E. Railwaymen's Congress. B.K. Mukherjee was the General Secretary of South Eastern Railwaymen's Congress. S.K. Bhattacharjee was the General Secretary of Eastern Railwaymen's Congress.

Thus integration of E.Rly Zone and integration of Zonal Unions did not work as planned originally, both by the Railway Ministry and the Trade Union Leaders. Things ended in a fiasco, and the only outcome was change of old names of the Zones and the Zonal unions ; thus it was like "Old wine" in a new bottle.

A new chapter began in Trade Union field over both the Zonal Railways.

The situation prevailing over the other zonal Railways and their unions was no different.

After the formation of the National Government on 15th August 1947, the Government of the Country expected the Communists would be changing their attitude and extend full cooperation in support of the economy of the country. But the intention of the Government was belied because the Communists did not change their ways of working and they continued to propagate that

the Independence was not real Independence and therefore, the Socialist forces should struggle to develop their hegemony in and outside the Government. With a view to pressurising the Government they went on conducting Gheraos, wild-cat and lightning strikes in the Industrial Undertakings including the State Sector in the Eastern region of the country because they considered that the Eastern Regional Zonal Railways were the main prop for carrying the freight to other parts of the country. They thought if these Zonal Railways, viz. the North-east Frontier, North Eastern, Eastern and South Eastern Railway Zones should be strangled so that the Government could be defeated. It was really a very challenging problem both for the Government and the constructive forces to face them and thwart their machination and keep the wheels moving.

The constructive forces working in the state Sector and other Sectors of industries could understand the nefarious role played by the Communists and, therefore, accepted the ideology of INTUC. They joined the Unions formed under the banner of INTUC in great numbers and thus INTUC became a considerable force in the Trade Union field within a short time.

As the INTUC was progressing, leaders who were wedded to Gandhian Trade Union philosophy began to leave the then existing Railway Zonal Unions affiliated to the All India Railway Men's Federation and formed a Federation for the Constructive forces of railwaymen under the name and style of "Indian National Railway Workers' Federation" (INRWF) on May 16, 1948 under the presidentship of Harihar Nath Shastri, Goverdhan Mapara and G.

Ramanujam became the General Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Five major Unions from different Zonal Railways joined the INRWF and the membership went beyond 1.51 lakhs. This Federation could secure recognition from the Railway Ministry.

As a result of serious efforts for unity between the two Railway, Federations, - INRWF & AIRF made by Jaya Prakash Narayan, Khandu Bhai K. Desai, Hariharath Shastri, S. Guruswami and others, amalgamation took place with the name and style of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) with Hariharath Shastri as President and S. Guruswami as General Secretary on April 9, 1953. Hariharath Shastri died in a plane crash in December 1953. Working President, S.R. Vasavada was elected as the President. This unity was shortlived. Forces which were against the amalgamation had become active to wreck the unity.

In the All India Convention held at Pune in August 1956 S. Guruswami annulled the unity agreement and separated the Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) with old name and Constitution.

The first convention of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen was held at Vijayawada in Nov. 1955 and S.R. Vasavada was elected President and P. Subramanian was elected the General Secretary.

Thus again two Federations began to function-NFIR & AIRF. The unity failed on ideological reasons because NFIR believed in negotiated settlement, failing which in arbitration and that the strike would only be the last resort. AIRF did not contribute to this stand of NFIR wholly and there were some other political reasons too.

Some of the Major Achievements
In 1949, the Railway Ministry announced

Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) headed by Jee Jee Bhoj and INRWF was represented through its President, Hariharanath Shastri. In December 1951, as a result of an agreement arrived at between the Railway Ministry and the two Railway Federations, viz: INRWF & AIRF, a Permanent Negotiating Machinery (PNM) for dealing with the disputes of railwaymen was carved out with a mechanism to function at the Divisional, Zonal and National level of the Railway Ministry with the proviso that the unsettled demands at the National level could be referred to an Ad-hoc Tribunal. In July 1953 an Ad-hoc Tribunal with Justice Shankar Saran, a retired Judge of Allahabad High Court was set up to look into the outstanding disputes of Railwaymen and his Award which was most beneficial to the staff was implemented on the Railways. In July 1962 the Railway Ministry accepted the Justice Shankar Saran Award in respect of office clerks, Accounts Clerks, Signallers, ASM, SMs and later on Workshop staff. In April 1957 the NFIR through a Resolution of its Working Committee raised the issue of Pension Scheme for railwaymen for the first time under the presidentship of S.R. Vasavada. The Government of India finalised the scheme in April 1957 and went on liberalising the same at frequent intervals. Now-a-days dearness allowance relief is also provided to the pensioners including widows drawing Family Pension. The widows of State Railway Provident Fund beneficiaries also have been granted ex-gratia Pension. In May 1957 on the demand of NFIR the Railway Ministry appointed a Class IV promotion Enquiry Committee to examine their channels of promotion to Class III Category and suggest improvements thereon. A.P. Sharma, General Secretary of NFIR was

one of the Members of the Committee. In August 1958 as a result of persistent persuasion by the NFIR, Group D employees were granted one set of post-retirement pass once in two years. In July 1960 the Government accepted the recommendation of NFIR that arbitration should be made compulsory when negotiations failed so as to avoid strikes on the Railways and Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, accepted the suggestion in principle in July 1960. In January 1961, the Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, graced the convention of NFIR at Bhavnagar, explained the new responsibility of labour under the democratic and socialist set-up and exhorted the workers to accept constructive Trade Union methods for resolving the disputes. In July 1961 the NFIR conducted a seminar at Sabarnati Ashram on the basic principles of Gandhian Trade Union Movement and their practical application to the day-to-day problems of Trade Unions. In June 1963 the NFIR deemed necessary to organise its publicity campaign, thus the INDIAN RAIL WORKERS' UNION was founded and it commenced its publication. In 1966 the Government of India deputed the Scheme of Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM) on the pattern of Whitley Council of England, and the Home Minister, Gopalind Nanda had very aptly introduced the JCM for the Government employees as a device with two tier mechanism, viz. Departmental tier and the National tier. After the introduction of the JCM Scheme, it can be stated without fear of contradiction that the stoppage of work in the Departmental level has become redundant. This does not mean that all the disputes had been resolved, but the approach was considered to be sound and encouraging in view of the fact that Cabinet

Secretary is the Chairman of the Committee and he could brief the Cabinet on various important demands and the necessity of resolving them in order to boost the morale of the Central Government employees whose number is nearly 3.5 million. This also helps maintain cordial relations for achieving optimum production and productivity in the best interests of the country.

In this context it may be relevant to mention that Railway Ministry could alone develop Permanent Negotiating Machinery avoiding the cumbersome process of conciliation etc. as per Industrial Disputes Act. Other Ministries in the Government have not so far been able to develop a similar mechanism to resolve day-to-day disputes between the various Ministries and their employees.

Corporate Enterprise Group : ✓

Thus for the redressal of day-to-day disputes, the Railway Ministry and the two recognised Federations NFIR and AIRF developed Negotiating Machineries such as PNM, JCM, CEG, besides informal and formal meetings on a variegated problems confronting individuals, different categories and the workers of the Ministry as a whole. National Council Forum is common for all the 3.5 million workers of the Central Government represented by various Unions/Federations.

Corporate Enterprise Group of Management and Labour (CEG) as carved out and introduced by Railway Minister, T.A. Pai is not exactly a negotiating machinery, but a forum embodying the spirit of "Labour Participation in Management" with three tier mechanism, viz : Divisional, Zonal and Ministry tiers - with four meetings in a year, where matters relating to train operation,

loading and unloading; accidents, travel without tickets, housing, education, medical facilities to railwaymen etc. are discussed and decisions taken. Follow-up action is monitored by important officers. No other Ministry could introduce this or a similar machinery for its workers so far.

Aug 1964 — The Das Body was appointed to examine the Pay Commission's D.A. Formula. Excepting NFIR all other Organisations boycotted. Its report was widely welcomed.

Sept. 1967 — NFIR called for a day's fast against the Unilateral terms referred to Gajendragadkar D.A. Commission. The P.M. assured S.R. Vasavada President of NFIR that justice would be done to the workers.

June 1968 — NFIR's suggested a Scheme before Ashraf Committee for identifying Pay element and out of pocket expenses in the Running Allowance of Running Staff which became the basis for future negotiation.

Jan. 1969 — Rly. Labour Tribunal 1969 - Miabhoy Tribunal, Justice M.N. Miabhoy, Retd. Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court was appointed to arbitrate upon the outstanding demands.

April 1969 — In Waltair Convention A.P. Sharma was the first Railwayman to become President of NFIR with S.R. Vasavada retired.

- July 1971 — NFIR called upon Railway Board to end discrimination against Railwaymen in the matter of Bonus.
- July 1972 — Railway Labour Tribunal submitted its report to Railway Board on (i) Payment of Night Duty Allowance to all those performing Night Duty (2) Payment of 1/30 of Monthly Wages of permanent Class IV Workers to Casual Labour (3) Revision of Scales of Pay of Foreman (B) ; (4) Grant of Superintending Allowance to Foreman (A) : (5) Revision of Classification of Trains & Pay scales to Running Staff, & (6) a radical revision of Hours of Employment Regulations on Railways.
- 1972-76 — Epoch making Awards were obtained from the Board by Arbitration, viz. Grant of semi-skilled grade to Gangman, Grant of Special Pay to Foremen, Merger of Scales of Sr. & Jr. Accountants.
- April '74 — Appointment of Anomaly Committee to remove anomalies arising out of implementation of 3rd Pay Commission, Cadre Review & Classification of Posts on the basis of evaluation. Acceptance of the Miabhoj's Tribunal Award in toto.
- Appointment of Bipartite Committee to review various Cadres. Gang Mates, Shunting Jamadars, Cabinmen and Keymen were benefited by this measure. The Restructuring of the cadre done in eight instalments in different periods between 1974 and 1984 proved to be a highly fruitful exercise ushering in a sense of contentment amongst railwaymen.
- April 1976 — Anomaly committee submitted its report and scales of 14 major categories were revised.
- Aug. 1976 — Tripartite Railway Workers Classification Tribunal was appointed for reclassification of Artisans in Tech. Branches of Workshops & Depots.
- April 1978 — 1st Interim Report of Railway Workers Classification Tribunal provided 45% upgradation to 55 : 10 : 35 in the Ratio of 55 : 10 : 35. The 2nd Interim Report followed for C & M staff granting posts in the ratio of 55 : 10 : 35 which was later modified as 50 : 10 : 40.
- Nov. 1979 — Agreement for introduction of Productivity-Linked Bonus for Railwaymen.
- Oct. 1981 — Decsualisation Scheme was introduced by Railways.

- Tripathi, Minister for Railways.
- Mar. 1984 — The R.W.C.T. was wound up. A Joint Committee with the representatives of NFIR, AIRF & Railway Board was set up to take up the remaining work. This report was accepted by the Railway Board.
- i) 70% of Khalsais were given Semi-skilled grade of Rs. 200-250 in Workshops & Open Line.
 - ii) Ratio of Skilled Artisans posts was revised to the ratio of 30 Skilled, 35 Skilled grade II & 35 Skilled Grade I w.c.f. 1.1.1984 ;
 - iii) Electrical Signal Maintainers in Grade I, II and III were made in the ratio of 50 ; 30 ; 20 and that of Mechanical Signal Maintainers in the ratio of 30 : 35 : 35. The same ratio applies to Telecommunication Maintainers & Wireless maintainers.
 - iv) 20% posts of HSKG I in Workshops & Production Units and 15% of such posts in Engg. Workshops, Sheds and Depots, and 10% of such posts in other establishments as Master Craftsmen in Gr. 425-640.
- Feb. 1985 — The entire amount of D.A. at average price Index of 568 points was merged with pay for the purpose of retirement benefits.
- June 1986 — Report of the Fourth Pay Commission was submitted to Government and implementation of recommendations were given effect to from 1.1.1986.
- Sept. 1987 — Productivity-Linked Bonus Agreement for a further period of 3 years from 1986-87 to 1988-89 was evolved. P.L.B. was payable upto ceiling limit of Rs. 3500/- p.m. in the Railway Sector.
- Auj. 1988 — Departmental Tier Anomaly Committee was appointed to rectify the anomalies arising out of the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission.
- Oct. 1988 — National tier Anomaly Committee was appointed on 21.10.88.
- Sept. 1989 — Further Agreement for PLB was signed. Payment of PLB in October 1991 was made for 46 days.
- Feb. 1991 — Cadre Restructuring Committee was formed.
- Nov. 1991 — Demonstrations and mass rallies were conducted on 15.11.91 to attract the attention of the Government of India for finalisation of major demands pending in the National Council (JCM).

With the Live wire in the Trade Union field of Railwaymen Umraomal Purohit

(Mr. Purohit was born in 1928 at Jodhpur. He has illustrious career in the Trade Union field. Mr. Umraomal Purohit is at present the President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. As a representative of the AIRF which is affiliated to the International Transport Workers' Federation he travelled almost all over the continent. He is also the Chairman of Inland Transport Committee and member of the Executive Board of International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). He is connected with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. He holds the office of the Vice President of Asia and Pacific Region and is also Chairman of the Project, Planning and Education Committee.

The forties were legendary and historic. The freedom struggle was in the final phase and the lamps of freedom was to be ignited after one thousand years of subjugation. It was during this period in 1946 that a young boy of about 17 whose face beamed with inspiration, patriotism and socialism appeared on the scene and came in contact with the Socialist Leader Harish Joshi. The boy had the making of a born leader who would lead the railwaymen and other workers through many a battle to heights of fulfilment and glory. He was Umraomal Purohit, the ideal of millions of railwaymen and other workers).

It all started with my joining the service of Jodhpur Railway in 1946 as a Traffic Signaller. Even before my joining the Railways I came in contact with the veteran Socialist Com. Harish Joshi. This relation with Com. Joshi had a great impact on my realm of thinking and prompted me to throw myself wholeheartedly in the field of public service. I used to go to the Union office with Com. Joshi before I joined the Railways. Soon after joining the railways I actively associated myself with the Railwaymen and planned a strike of railwaymen on their problems after I had noted the hardened attitude of the Railway Administration thereon. I was dismissed just 15 days after joining service, but at the intervention of S. Guruswami, the then general Secretary of AIRF, I was reinstated. Far from being frightened by repressive measures I continued with renewed vigour to focus the problems of Railwaymen and organised a strike in 1947,

as a result of which I was again dismissed from service. However, I was again reinstated in service in 1949.

I was rendered surplus in 1950 on the transfer of the Sind Section of the Railway to Pakistan. In January 1951 I was absorbed on the then B. B. & C. L. Railway, now Western Railway. In 1951 I organised the Railwaymen under the banner of the Railway Employees' Union. I was elected Secretary of the Mehsana Branch of the Union and thereafter, Chairman of the Abu Road Branch thereof.

During 1952-53 two Federations of railwaymen, viz, AIRF and INRWF, were merged into a single Federation of Railwaymen to be known as the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen through the efforts of Jayaprakash Narayan, Harish Joshi, Shastri, Khandubhai Desai and V. V. Chatterjee, for whom trade union activity was an article of faith.

In the context of the merger of the two Federations above-mentioned, the two unions on the Western Railway affiliated to them were also merged into one union under the guidance of Maniben Kara. I was elected Vice President of the merged union in the year 1958.

As a result of the subsequent breaking up of the merged Federation, the Western Railway Employees' Union was also revived in the 1955 and I was again elected its Vice President. During 1955-57 this union remained as an unrecognised organisation. I took leave from my railway job and continued to organise the movement. It was indeed a unique experience in organising the sections on the metre gauge of the Western Railway, which were untouched or were controlled by a union which was not affiliated to the All India Railwaymen's Federation. In fact some of the sections were absolutely new.

I was elected as the General Secretary of the Western Railway Employees' Union in 1958.

At the time I took over as General Secretary of the Western Railway Employees' Union in 1958, the membership of the union was about 35,000 and the bank balance was about Rs. 700/- only. With persistent efforts, in two years' time the membership figure recorded significant improvement and the bank balance rose to Rs. 7,000/-. Unfortunately the bank went into liquidation and the union became a pauper. By dint of constant hard work and devotion on my part and my colleagues, who worked shoulder to shoulder with me all these years, it has been possible to raise the membership as high as 1,60,000. The bank balance in the form of fixed deposits has now reached the figure of 1.5 crore rupees.

On the demise of Maniben Kara, a trust was established in her name - The Maniben Kara Foundation - to serve as an institution for the workers' education and for carrying on other non-bargaining activities.

During the strike of 1960 on the Western Railway I was convicted for 9 months' rigorous imprisonment. However I was released on bail after 18 months and ultimately acquitted on appeal. I had been on full time deputation to the Union since 1957 till my retirement in 1986.

I was elected as Assistant General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation in 1962. I took active part in all matters of representations and negotiations at the All India level.

In the same year, viz. 1962, I was elected as member of the Railway Section Committee of International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), London.

In the year 1964 I was nominated by Hind Mazdoor Sabha as member of the five member team to study the role of Industrial Engineering and Productivity in India, and later on in U.S.A. and Japan. On successful completion of this assignment in Japan I went back to U.S.A. at the invitation of the Railway unions in that country. This visit provided me the opportunity of studying the functioning of the railway systems in U.S.A., U.K. and some other European countries.

I have been associated with the scheme of Joint Consultative Machinery for Central Government employees, at National as well as at Departmental (Railways) levels since the inception of the Scheme in 1966. I argued a large number of cases before the Board of Arbitration under that machinery which was headed by Justice Wanchoo, retired Chief Justice of India and won many of them in favour of workers.

In the year 1974 more than 1,200 railwaymen from the Western Railway were removed from service under rule(ii) of the Railway Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules. Unlike many other railwaymen all these workers were brought back to their jobs through the Court in almost all cases with full payment for the entire period they were out of job. These cases were fought up to the Supreme Court and won.

I was elected Secretary of the Staff side on the National Council of the Joint Consultative Committee in the year 1977. In 1979, I along with J.P. Chaubey, General Secretary, All India Railwaymen's Federation, arranged for a strike ballot of the entire railwaymen on the Indian railways on the demand of Productivity Linked Bonus. The Government's acceptance of this long pending demand of Railwaymen will remain a land-mark in the struggle of this organisation, which paved the way for the grant of bonus to the workers of other Central and state Government employees.

In the year 1980, I was elected President of All India Railwaymen's Federation in the Bikaner Session. My association in the struggle of the workers of all industries in the country brought on me further responsibilities at the National level and I was elected General Secretary of Hind Mazdoor Sabha in 1985, which post I still continue to hold.

In the recent past I was appointed a member of the Industrial Relations bill formulating Committee by the Central Government.

It will be no exaggeration to state that my dedication to the cause of industrial workers

in general and the railwaymen in particular during the long span of over half a century has endeared me to the working class not only of this country but of a large number of foreign lands which I am off and on visiting on their invitation and on account of the various positions I have been holding in the movement at the international level. I presided over the World Congress of Railway Section of International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) held in Italy in the year 1990. I am member of the Executive Board of ITF and Chairman of Asia-Pacific Regional Committee of ITF. In the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), I am member of the Executive Board at World level and the Vice President at the Asia-Pacific Regional Organisation.

I have been taking keen interest in all levels in the activities of Trade Union Education.

For me there is no peace. The working classes are facing the most grim challenges since independence in the form of new economic and industrial policies. There will be massive privatisations, rampant and poisonous golden hand shakes in the wake of our total sell-out to the foreign interests. The Central Government and railway workers are facing serious challenges in the face of sky-rocketting prices, wage injustice, distortions and exploitation, the arbitrary and unilateral actions of the irresponsible government like utter disregard of constitutional forums like PWC, JCT, Arbitration are spelling doom for workers, and indefinite strike is being forced upon them. The workers are again looking to me to lead them to victory.

I LOOK BACK WITH SATISFACTION

Keshav H. Kulkarni

Patron

National Federation of Indian Railwaymen

(Freedom Fighter and veteran Trade Union leader Mr. Keshav H. Kulkarni, has been a whole-time Trade Union worker since February 1944 when he started his Trade Union career in Bombay. Mr. Kulkarni entered the Railway Trade Union Movement in June 1955. He was Office Secretary of N.F.I.R. from 1955 to 1958, Joint General Secretary from 1958 to 1969, General Secretary from 1969 to 1987 when he was elected as the President of NFIR. Due to crippling illness, Mr. Kulkarni relinquished the post of President in June 1991 when he was made life-long Patron of the Federation).

All my way from Hubli to Trichur, I kept wondering what must be the important business for which I was telegraphically called. The telegram from G.D. Ambekar, then President of INTUC gave no clue. Having been a Member of the Working Committee of the INTUC, I knew the Committee was meeting at Trichur and all I could surmise was that in view of the Working Committee meeting, the business for which I was being called must be pretty important. Little did I realise then that I was going to step into the labour movement on the Railways where I spent 40 eventful and rewarding years. I reached Trichur in the forenoon on May 29, 1955. Kerala INTUC friends who had come to receive me at the station took me straight to the venue of the Working Committee meeting. The meeting was almost over but Ambekar, Vasavada and a couple of other senior leaders were waiting for me. No sooner had I entered the room, than Ambekar told me : "Appa" (this was how he always called me fondly), "You have been called to take up an important assignment in Delhi. After careful thinking, we have decided that as a senior and experienced person, you should be requested to go over to Delhi and

take on the work of Railway Federation, under the leadership of Vasavadaji. Vasavadaji told me : "You are aware that the INRWF and the AIRF have merged to form the NFIR but the unity had begun to crack. We cannot afford the unity that has been achieved to be blown off nor leave the railway labour movement in the lurch. After full deliberation, we have decided to request you to go to Delhi immediately and take up the Federation's work". "Any joining time", I asked. "No", Vasavadaji was firm. "The Working Committee of the Federation is meeting in Delhi from June 14 onwards to transact important business and I want you to reach there well before the Committee meets".

Grave Situation :

Matters now became clear to me. I had been closely following the unity efforts on the Railways. On the suggestion of Harihar Nath Shastri and courtesy - Peter Alvares, the then Assistant General Secretary of AIRF, I attended the General Council Meeting of AIRF which was held in Mysore City to ratify the unity agreement. The firebrand speeches, wild slogans, shoutings and counter-shoutings in the meeting were enough to show

that a substantial section of the AIRF did not take kindly to unity. The General Secretary, Guruswami left the meeting in a huff. Vice President, Raghavan, was presiding. However, the unity agreement was ratified. The INRWF had already ratified the same. The process of merger at the railway level had already begun. On the Northern and Western Railways, merger had been completely achieved. Serious efforts for merger were being made on the Southern and Eastern Railways too. On the Central Railway, the merger was achieved but faltered at the very first step.

In the very first meeting of the Working Committee of the merged NFIR, chaired by Harihar Nath Shastri, important policy decisions were taken and necessary guidelines were given for the Unions and the Federation with a view to further consolidate the unity. Shastriji died in an unfortunate plane accident. The then Vice President, S.R. Vasavada took over the presidentship. Trained in the Gandhian School of thoughts, Vasavadaji was sincere to the core and always stuck to principles. He set himself to the task of completing the task of unity. He wanted the Federation and the Unions to follow the policy guidelines already laid down in the first Working Committee meeting. All the same, on account of disgruntled elements and the efforts of vested interests against the unity, signs of discord began to appear. The Working Committee met in Simla in a clouded atmosphere. While Vasavadaji with the help of some common friends was making hectic efforts to sort out the differences with Guruswami, the latter on his part had unauthorisedly called the General Council of the NFIR to meet at Madras on May 27 and 28, 1955 when V.V. Giri was elected as the

President and Guruswami himself as the General Secretary. Giri, however, declined the offer.

Vile Propaganda :

A virulent propaganda, at the same time, had been launched against the President S.R. Vasavada. He was accused of thwarting the unity efforts. He was accused of sabotaging the Sankar Ssaran Tribunal. Guruswami even wrote to the Railway Board not to negotiate with Vasavadaji of the Working Committee saying that such negotiations would not be binding on the railwaymen. Guruswami as the General Secretary also did not hold the PNM meetings with the Railway Board. The working of the Sankar Saran Tribunal was held up because the filling of the statement of claims by the Federation was inordinately delayed. Matters had been further complicated by Guruswami's open invitation to railwaymen to make representations to the Tribunal. More than 1000 representations were sent by individuals, groups of employees or categorywise organisations. The NFIR Working Committee had been convened for a week from June onwards to consider all these developments.

I Shift to Delhi :

Frankly, I was overawed by the situation. But without giving a second thought I gave my word to Vasavadaji that I would willingly take up the responsibility entrusted to me. The time at my disposal was very short. I had been very active in the labour field in the State of Mysore & Coorg and had a large circle of friends and good number of Unions, with whom I was associated. It was not even possible for me to bid farewell to them. I could not also apply my mind to what would happen to the work I was leaving behind. I reached New Delhi on June 9, 1955, and informed Vasavadaji of my arrival.

Important Meeting of the Working Committee :

The Working Committee, as scheduled, met from June 14 to 18. Vasavadaji presided. The main item on the Agenda was the situation arising out of the meeting unauthorisedly convened by Guruswami at Madras on May 27 and 28 in the name of the NFIR. Members condemned the unconstitutional and irregular method adopted by Guruswami. There was also a clamour from members to take disciplinary action against Guruswami for his various unconstitutional and anti-federation activities. When the matter was pressed, Vasavadaji firmly brushed aside the idea of disciplinary action against Guruswami. He did not want the Working Committee to waste time in such futile activities. Vasavadaji further stressed that the Federation owed to the railwaymen in the country solution of their grievances which were pending before the Tribunal and outside. He wanted negotiations to start on these issues with the Railway Ministry. He desired the regular PNM meetings to be started without delay. He wanted serious dialogue with the Railway Board on matters before the Tribunal so that only those matters on which agreement was not possible could be referred to the Tribunal for its decisions. He declared that the NFIR had firmly come into being and the Railway Ministry had accepted the validity of the Working Committee. Above all, to give a solid and concrete shape to the Federation, National Convention would have to be called soon to adopt a Constitution and elect Office Bearers. He immediately set up Sub-Committees of the Working Committee for this purpose. In spite of my long and intimate association with Vasavadaji, for the first time

I was struck by the great quality of his leadership.

Since long there was no meeting with the Railway Board and a large number of issues had accumulated without having been settled. Members of the Working Committee were asked to stay back and prepare a list of such outstanding issues from their respective Railway for discussion with the Railway Board.

The Working Committee decided to appoint me as the Office Secretary and also authorised me to carry correspondence with the Railway Board. The Railway Board was informed accordingly.

A Heavy Agenda

Through this meeting of the Working Committee, I was given an Agenda to work upon. I had to look after the Central Office of the Federation. I was given the responsibility of corresponding with Railway Board. I had to help immediately the various Zonal Railway representatives in preparing their case for discussion with the Railway Board in the meeting to be held from July 18, 1955. I had to prepare myself in dealing with the subjects before the Sankar Saran Tribunal. I was to begin preparation for the holding of the first National Convention, three months away, and above all to help the Constitution Drafting Committee to prepare the draft Constitution for being placed before the National Convention.

Drawing up the list of outstanding issues for submission to the Railway Board engaged our first attention. There were stalwarts from the Zonal Railways who stayed back in Delhi to complete this work - A.P. Sinha and R.E.P. Sinha from Eastern Railway, Chandra and Fakir Chand from Northern Railway, Gunwant Rai Purohit and Dev

Shankar Padhya from Western Railway, S.M. Shukla and R.P. Jain from Central Railway, K.P. Das and Ramanand Singh from the N.E. Railway, Chalpati Rao and P.K. Nambair from Southern Railway. A Memorandum on 99 subjects was drawn and submitted to the Railway Board on June 28, 1955. This Memorandum was discussed with the Railway Board in a series of meetings over a period of a year and a half commencing from July 18, 1955.

Negotiation with the Railway Board on Matters Pending Before Tribunal

Then followed the protracted negotiations between the NFIR and the Railway Board on the matters pending before the Tribunal. On the demand of percentage distribution of posts and certain other issues no agreement was possible and it was decided to refer them to the Tribunal. There was another set of 50 issues concerning the date of effect of the recommendations of the JAC (Joint Advisory Committee). In the course of the negotiations, it was decided that 21 of such decisions which amounted to rectifying the recommendations of the First Pay Commission should be given effect to from January 1, 1947 or August 16, 1947 as the case may be; 29 other decisions were agreed to be given effect to from the date of orders accepting the JAC recommendation or April 1, 1951 whichever was earlier. Besides, hundreds of issues had been framed arising from thousands of memoranda or representations directly sent by individuals or categories of staff to the Tribunal. The Railway Board had objected to many of them being out of the terms of reference. The Tribunal also had difficulty in accepting them because the Tribunal was appointed to settle the disputes between the NFIR and the

Railway Board. However, the President Vasavadaji was able to persuade the Railway Board to discuss these matters as well without standing on technicalities and the Railway Board agreed. During the prolonged negotiations, there was agreement on 111 issues. 118 were either dropped, withdrawn or not pressed. 20 items were left to be dealt with by the Railway Administration concerned. 12 issues were left to be decided by the Railway Board. On 41 items, the Tribunal was finally requested to adjudicate.

New Deal Upgrading and other Matters :

The Railway Minister, Jagjivan Ram, announced on Feb 10, 1957 details of a scheme of large scale distribution of posts in 16 major categories of Non-Gazetted Cadre in the shape of an immediate increase in emoluments or increase in chances of promotion. This was in fulfilment of a promise made a year earlier by the former Railway Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri.

The Railway Ministry appointed Class IV Staff Promotion Committee to examine the channels of promotion of Class IV staff and suggesting improvements thereon. Ben Kara of the AIRF and A.P. Sharma of NFIR were the Members of the Committee.

In the meanwhile, quarters reserved under the PNM Rules were also constructed.

A Hectic Period :

Personally for me, it was a very hectic period. It was also a very difficult period with too many problems on hand, all requiring immediate attention. It demanded concentrated attention and hard work. Nevertheless, I was immensely benefited from the discussion in these meetings and committees. I acquired a fair knowledge and developed an insight into the problems of railwaymen and the role that the NFIR had to

play in their solution. Throughout this period, I kept my eyes and ears open. Every time I met a railwaymen - either a Khalasi, a Gangman, a Driver or a Supervisor - I learnt something new. This gave me immense confidence. I never ceased to learn during all the four decades of my work in the Federation.

Key Role of the Central Office :

It did not take me long to realise that the Central Office played a key role in the Organisation. It is rather a misnomer to call the NFIR a Federation. Though, technically a Federation because it is a combination of registered Zonal Unions, really it functions as a Union. That is why, more than once, there appeared a thinking in both the NFIR and the AIRF to convert the Federation into a National Union : but for various reasons, the idea had to be dropped. The Railway Administration is centralised. The Railway Ministry/Railway Board alone has the power to take policy decisions in respect of staff and all other matters. The Zonal Railways implement the Board's decisions and the Divisional Organisation is the lowest Administrative set up of the Railways. According to this hierarchy, Federation deals with the Railway Board, Zonal Unions with the General Managers and the Divisional Branches with the Divisional Railway Managers. Therefore, all policy matters in respect of wages, working conditions etc. have to be taken up primarily by the Federation with the Railway Board. That being so, the initiative or direction in any policy matter has to come from the Federation. With the realisation, I set up myself to organise the Central Office and evolved systems conducive to this objective - information to be collected from the Railways, appropriate representations to be

made to the Railway Board, discussions to be arranged with the Railway Board on the subjects represented, holding of formal and informal meetings and above all maintaining and developing relations at every level of the Administration and keeping the Affiliates well informed of the actions and developments taken. Most important of the responsibilities, I realised, was to initiate action on policy matters. This required understanding, experience and hard work. I made conscious efforts so that the Central Office discharges the responsibilities to the best advantage of the Organisation.

AIRF Revived :

In an all India meeting, convened by Guruswami in August 1956 in Pune, decision was taken to revive the All India Railwaymen's Federation. It was not insignificant that the Communist leader S.A. Dange personally attended the meeting at Pune and blessed the same. The communists had been greatly upset over the unity efforts. During the last decade and a half, they had infiltrated into the AIRF and held sway over vital areas and occupied key positions. The merger with the INRWF, they feared, would expose them. Their fears had come true. During the period of unity efforts, they had been badly exposed and they were virtually on the run. Now they found in Guruswami a malleable alley.

Consolidation of Labour Movement :

Repeated efforts made in 1956 and 1957 to bring about unity failed. The 1953 Agreement tried to bring organisational unity without realising that it would not last without ideological identity. Moreover, the very process of unity started from the wrong end, i.e. from above. Without an irrepressible urge from within, how could the superficial unity

hold ? But sincere efforts honestly made would never remain without yielding results. The veteran leader T.V. Anandam who was a pillar of strength to the AIRF and who was one of the key persons in the unity efforts, did not take time to realise the genuineness and transparent sincerity of the NFIR and in a rare act of courage and statemanship, he went wholehog for merger of the Southern Railway Employees' Union (AIRF) with the Southern Railway Employees' Association (NFIR) to form the Southern Railway Employees' Sangh. The Southern Railway Employees' Union was not only a strong bastion of the AIRF but Guruswami himself was its President.

Though repeated unity efforts failed, a realisation began to grow amongst the thinking railwaymen that a unified movement alone could solve the problems of railwaymen.

In the 12th National Convention of NFIR held at Waltair in 1969, A.P. Sharma was elected as the President and I was elected as the General secretary. It was indeed an achievement that Sharmaji who started as a Branch Secretary on the E.I. Railway, through hard work and leadership, rose in rank to be the General Secretary of the INRWF. With the formation of the NFIR, he became its Assistant General Secretary and during the first Annual Convention he was elected as Vice President. Thus, Sharmaji became the first ever railwayman to occupy the elective post of the President of the Federation which he richly deserved. While assuming the General Secretaryship I had mentioned before the National Convention various problems confronting the railwaymen and recollecting Vasavadaji's clarion call at the first National Convention that in unity lies our

strength, I declared in his presence that it would be my endeavour as the General Secretary to work for the consolidation of the Railway Trade Union movement. I must mention here with gratitude that Sharmaji not only appreciated my sentiments but also assured publicly that he would willingly contribute his mite to the consolidation of the movement.

Joint Consultative Machinery was ushered in 1969. The Machinery provided a forum for the NFIR and the AIRF to jointly work in the cause of the railwaymen. They were equally represented on the National Council and the Departmental Council. They worked together on the staff side on the various Sub-Committees. Their working together with amity and understanding for common cause of the betterment of railwaymen opened a new vista.

Joint Meetings with the Railway Federations on Important Policy Matters

As the General Secretary, I participated in the National Convention in Secunderabad in 1972 that the working together of the Federations on the JCM also brought the Federations nearer. This was natural because both worked in the same direction in the matter of settlement of industrial disputes, viz., the settlement by negotiations instead of which by arbitration.

The working together of the two Organisations helped to consolidate the movement, and both the federations began to feel the inner strength of such consolidation.

No opportunity to sit together and to think together was lost as a conscious initiative taken by me in the NFIR, of course with the blessings of elders and the willing consent of my colleagues here first. Umraomal Purohit in the AIRF, I must

acknowledge also worked with zeal in the same direction. These efforts enormously paid.

The Study Group in Railway Transport of the National Labour Commission on which I represented the NFIR and Purohit the AIRF, made agreed suggestions on the consolidation of the Trade Union movement on the Railways. While decrying multiplicity of Unions and discouraging the tendency of categorywise unionisation, the Study Group unanimously concluded :

"In order to encourage the consolidation of Trade Union movement on the Railways, constant efforts should be made to bring about unity in organised labour by developing mutual relationship, common objectives, methods and procedure, with a view to have finally only one recognised representative body of railwaymen."

With the willing efforts of both the sides, Joint working of the NFIR and the AIRF brought unprecedented achievements for the railwaymen. Both the Federations jointly negotiated the Productivity Linked Bonus Agreement. The mutual understanding reached new height when both the NFIR and the AIRF submitted, for the first time ever, a joint memorandum to the Fourth Pay Commission.

Permanent Negotiating Machinery :

Since 1930 biannual meetings were being held between the AIRF and the Railway Board to enable the Federation to put forth the staff grievances. Whatever their achievements, these meetings kept the channel of communication open between the Federation and the Railway Board. During those days, it was an achievement in itself.

In 1947, the Industrial Disputes Act came into being replacing the Trade Disputes Act

1929. The Act was applicable to the Railways. Though mainly an enabling legislation, the Industrial Disputes Act did provide a machinery for the settlement of industrial disputes through negotiations and arbitration. The Industrial Disputes Act did create a great impact on the industrial relations in the country. There was already a demand for making the system of biannual meetings more effective and the demand was inevitable. The INTUC as a strong national union had popularised the new method of settlement of disputes and effectively demonstrated that peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiations, failing which by arbitration was in the best interest of the workers, the industry and the country at large. The Bombay Industrial Disputes Act had come into force nearly a decade before. With the advent of independence, certain other State Governments also adopted this legislation.

It became necessary for the Government to apply its mind as to what improvement could be made in the standing machinery in the light of the new legislation. The result was the framing of the three tier Permanent Negotiating Machinery Rules. Of course, there was one big difference between the I.D. Act and the PNM Rules. In the scheme of the Industrial Disputes Act, the Labour Ministry is empowered to refer the matter to arbitration. But PNM Rules give this right to the Railway Ministry itself. The three tier Standing Permanent Negotiating Machinery working at the National, Zonal and Divisional levels breathed a new atmosphere of mutual confidence amongst the railwaymen. Settlement of industrial disputes through negotiation failing which by arbitration was not simply a matter of policy for the Government was an article of faith. This was the

quintessence of Gandhian method and a civilised way of settlement of dispute. That way alone strikes and lock-outs could be made redundant, industrial peace maintained and production continued uninterrupted.

An Empirical Approach :

Though the PNM Rules helped to stabilise the industrial relations on the Railways, these rules have not been above criticism. Time and again, the NFIR has stated that the rules were inadequate to fulfill the objectives of the Machinery. The NFIR had pointed out that the PNM machinery can at best be described as a channel for placement of grievances of staff before the Administration. Collective bargaining means this and much more. The Railway Board never used the Machinery to bargain with the labour to introduce the changes they wanted.

A few months ago, I joined the NFIR, R. Srinivasan, the then Deputy Director (Labour) once sent for me and pointing out to the bundle of reminders on his table that I had sent to the Railway Board on the representations already made, said : "Mr. Kulkarni, you seem to be new to the governmental procedure. You must know that the Government of India does not accept reminders. The Government takes decision according to its will and pleasure. You may please withdraw these reminders". I told him mildly that having been given the privilege of writing, the Federation could not be denied the privilege of reminding. The reminders having been issued cannot be taken back.

Even now, the Ministry of Railways, clings to this age-old empirical approach. Though the times have rounded many a corner, the basic approach of the Government still remains the same. I remember there have been cases since 1954 on major policies when

the Railway Ministry did hold prior consultations with the organised labour with a view to come to agreed conclusions before taking any decision. In respect of classification of posts as selection and non-selection, Introduction of Incentive Bonus Schemes in Workshops, Computerisation of Accounts work and Computerisation of the work of wagon inter-change in the IRCA, Channel of promotion of staff, Minimum educational qualifications and in a host of important policy matters, decisions were taken only after full fledged discussion with the recognised Federations. However, the Ministry is still reluctant to accept the position that prior consultations are necessary before taking a decision. It was precisely for this reason that the Code of Discipline was never introduced on the Indian Railways. The Code required the employer i.e. the Railway Board to give prior intimation to the labour of any change that they would like to make in the working conditions. The Railway Board did not take kindly to this proposal. The NFIR insisted unless this obligation was accepted by the Railway Ministry, the Code would serve no purpose. The matter continues to be so even under the Joint Consultative Machinery.

Tribunals under the PNM Rules

The PNM came into being in 1951. The machinery provides that important matters in which there is disagreement between the Railway Board and the Federation are referred to an Ad-hoc Tribunal for arbitration headed by a neutral Chairman. It was, however, open to the Government to accept, reject or modify the decision of the Tribunal. But under the I.D. Act, Government cannot accept, reject or modify an Award. But when they rejected or modified the Award, the

decision had to be placed before the Parliament with reasons therefor. So far, four Tribunals were appointed under the PNM Rules :

1. The Ad-hoc Tribunal, 1953 headed by Justice (ret'd) Sankar Saran of Allahabd High Court to settle the disputes between the NFIR and the Railway Board ;
2. The Railway Labour Tribunal, 1969 headed by Justice N.M. Miabhoy, former Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court, to settle the disputes between the NFIR and the Railway Board ;
3. Railway Labour Tribunal, 1972 again headed by Justice N.M. Miabhoy to settle certain disputes between the AIRF and the Railway Board ; and
4. The Tripartite Railway Workers' Classification Tribunal, 1974 headed by Shri N.N. Tandon, retired member, Mechanical, Railway Board, to settle the disputes regarding classification of Artisan staff between the NFIR and the AIRF on the one side and the Railway Board on the other.

The Sankar Saran Tribunal was assisted by T.V. Anandam on behalf of the NFIR and Y.P. Kulkarni/P.T. Venugopal on behalf of the Railway Board. The Sankar Saran Tribunal heard the dispute in seven sessions from January 23, 1958 to July 22, 1958. T.V. Anandam as the NFIR representative did a meritorious job in putting forth the Federation's case before the Tribunal.

At the time of Miabhoy Tribunal 1969, it was agreed that Justice Miabhoy would preside as a neutral Chairman and the representatives of the NFIR and the Railway

Board would plead their respective cases before the Tribunal. On the NFIR side, I had the privilege of representing the Federation.

In the case of the Railway Workers' Classification Tribunal, myself as the General Secretary of the NFIR and Priya Gupta, then General Secretary and later the President of the AIRF, represented the staff.

The Sankar Saran Tribunal gave its Award on October 15, 1959 in respect of the issues which the NFIR and the Railway Board had agreed to refer to the Tribunal for a decision. The Tribunal recommended further upward revision of the percentage distribution of posts in respect of clerical staff in Accounts and Non-Accounts Department, Train Clerks, Signallers, S.Ms, A.S.Ms. etc. The Railway Board took the stand that the recommendations of the Tribunal will have to be considered in the light of the Second Pay Commission's Report which had just then been published. The Ray Commission had recommended that there need not be any upgradation of the posts merely to provide for promotion. The Railway Board was not in a mood to accept the Tribunal's recommendations. Again, as a result of negotiations with the NFIR, the Railway Board relented and agreed instead of a fixed percentage a variable percentage would suit the Railway Services better. So, the Government modified the Tribunal's Award with slight modification of variable percentage distribution. Regarding the date of implementation, the Government was very adamant and finally it was decided that the revised distribution be allowed to take effect from December 1, 1961.

RLT 1969 (Miabhoy Tribunal) :

The Railway Labour Tribunal, 1969 was by far the most important Tribunal since the

time of the Rajadhyaksha Adjudication. The Tribunal headed by Justice N.M. Miabhoy, retired Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court, commenced the work in 1969 and completed the hearing in February, 1972, passing the Award on July 31, 1972. The Tribunal had been appointed on the demands raised by the NFIR for Grant of Night Duty Allowance to railwaymen performing Night Duty ; Improving the prospects of promotion of Artisan staff in the Workshop ; Upgrading the posts of Mistries to Chargemen ; Revising and raising the percentage distribution of chargemen in the Mechanical Department and applying the same percentage to other Departments ; Grant of Superintending Allowance to Foreman A and Foreman B in the Workshops ; Daily rate of pay for Casual Labour ; Scales of pay of Gangmen, Keymen and Gang Mates ; Reclassification of trains for the upgradation of Traffic and Loco Running staff and Revision of Hours of Employment Regulations.

The work before the Tribunal, popularly known as Miabhoy Tribunal, was gruelling but it was equally rewarding. The Chairman adopted judicial procedure for deciding the matters before him ; Statements of claims and counter-statements, examination and cross-examination of witnesses, filing up of documents etc. Each procedure was followed very meticulously. Though the procedure at first was felt to be too heavy, it must be said that the procedure adopted by the Chairman and the discipline with which he conducted the proceedings helped us to go about every issue very thoroughly and in depth.

The following facts show the magnitude of the work before the Miabhoy Tribunal 1969. The issues before the Tribunal covered almost the entire class of railwaymen. The

issues were such that they were of permanent importance. On behalf of the NFIR, 44 witnesses were examined by me and 11 on behalf of the Railway Board. Evidence was recorded for 71 days over a period of time and the record of evidence ran into 879 foolscap pages. Apart from the documents filed through the witnesses, I filed 140 documents on behalf of the NFIR and the Railway Board 74. More than a hundred books and publications were referred to or relied upon by the NFIR. Arguments on the various issues lasted for 71 days. The Tribunal held its sittings actually for 142 days.

The Tribunal through its Award granted Night Duty Allowance to all staff irrespective of classification and pay limit, channels of promotion of Artisan staff were improved, Mistries holding independent charge were upgraded to Chargemen ; Percentage distribution of posts of Chargemen in Mechanical Department was made applicable to Electrical, and Signal & Telecommunication Workshop, senior Foremen in Workshops were granted Superintending Allowance of Rs. 150/- per month and the Junior Foreman granted the higher scale of pay Rs. 450-575 (AS). Procedure was laid down to determine the rates of wages of casual labour, Gang Mates were given the scale of Rs. 105-135 (AS) instead of Rs. 85-115 (AS) ; Keymen were given the scale of Rs. 125-155 (AS) instead of 75-95 (AS). The Award contained a most formidable judgement on the Hours of Employment.

By and large, the Tribunal endorsed the NFIR's approach in the matter of Hours of Employment. The significance of the Award does not lie merely in the fact that it reduced the hours of work or established the rate of overtime but it changed the very concept of

the hours of employment on the Railways to the advantage of the employees.

Broadly speaking, the following are the gains of permanent importance arising from the Miabhoy Tribunal, 1969 Award :

- 1) The hours of employment were defined as those during which an employee was at the disposal of the employer at the employer's instance.
- 2) Standard hours of work were laid down as 8 hours a day and 48 hours a week confirming to the national law and practice as was demanded by NFIR.
- 3) The conception of Essentially Intermittent was radically changed in that the idea of 12 hours uniform work for Essentially Intermittent workers was abandoned and it could now be anywhere between 8 to 12 hours depending upon the intensity of work of the individual concerned and the distance at which he was provided residential quarter.
- 4) More than 50,000 workers, namely Class 'C' Gatemen, Bungalow Peons, etc. were taken out of the Excluded list and classified as Essentially Intermittent Workers.
- 5) Preparatory and complementary work is only an additive to the daily hours and such work should be paid for if the pay of the staff who are required to do such work does not reflect this type of work.
- 6) The rules for payment of overtime and the rates of overtime were radically changed making overtime payable at $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the normal rate beyond rostered limit, and at twice the rate beyond the statutory limit.

7) Weekly averaging was not necessary in all cases for the purpose of computation of overtime. Instead, daily averaging should be adopted in respect of categories not connected with train operation.

8) Last but not the least among the significant gains was the abolition of the demand of the Federation that travelling spare be considered fully as duty.

By mutual agreement, the recommendations regarding Night Duty Allowance were fully accepted by the Government and given effect to from 1.1.1970. The The recommendations regarding percentage distribution of the posts of Chargemen, upgrading the posts of Foreman, grant of Superintending Allowance, etc. pertaining to Workshops were given effect from August 1, 1972. The posts of Foreman A and Gang Men, etc. Keymen, proforma fixation was given effect from August 1, 1970 and the posts of Foreman B and Gang Men, etc. were upgraded to Grade A from August 1, 1972. Upgradation of the posts of Foreman C and Gang Men, etc. to Grade B was given effect from February 1, 1973. Though the Federation did not agree for the immediate abolition of Essentially Intermittent category, it accepted the premises and stated : "We are in favour of adopting suitable methods, which would be abolishing altogether the EI Category."

It may sound strange but it is true that even in Government working, it is not the rules and regulations that govern the person who wields the authority, but the person appearing for the NFIR, P.S. M. S. ... then Joint Director, Railway Board, ... for the Railway Board. ... knowledge of railway ... into all establishment matters.

generous attitude towards the staff. Soon after the Tribunal's proceedings were over, he took me into confidence and both of us together drew the blue-print for implementation of the various recommendations in all their details including recruitment, training, Refresher Course etc. He prepared the ground for issuing instructions. But in the meanwhile, he was transferred and another Pandit of establishment matter took charge. But he did not have the heart of his predecessor. He interfered with many of the orders issued by the Railway Board in the matter of hours of employment and twisted and turned them to workers' disadvantage. So far as Trade Unions are concerned, I have always felt that Railway Trade Unions have not given enough attention to the Hours of Employment Regulations and that is how injustice in many matters has been allowed to be perpetuated.

Railway Workers Classification Tribunal, 1974

The Railway Workers Classification Tribunal headed by retired Member Mechanical, Railway Board, N.N. Tandon, as Chairman was the first ever experiment of a Tripartite Tribunal under the PNM Rules. The Tribunal gave an interim Report on upgradation of the posts of Artisan staff. There was difference of opinion between the Labour Members and the Tribunal on the one side and the Labour Members and the Official Side Members on the other. But the government finally decided to accept the percentage as recommended by Labour Members providing 45% uniform upgrading to Skilled staff i.e. 25% in Highly Skilled Grade II and 20% in Highly Skilled Grade I. In the second interim Report, the RWCT recommended distribution of posts of Skilled, Semi-skilled and Unskilled in the Carriage &

Wagon Department in the ratio of 55 : 10 : 35 respectively which was amended by the Railway Ministry as 50:10:40 to facilitate easy implementation.

But soon serious differences arose between the Official Side and the Labour Side on the one hand and between the Chairman and the Labour Side on the other. It was unfortunate that the first ever experiment of a Tripartite Tribunal failed. I think the failure was due to the inadequacy on the part of the Chairman and the faulty procedure that he adopted in conducting the Tribunal. Above all, he failed to give a sense of direction to the Tribunal. Ultimately, deadlock was created and the Tribunal was abandoned.

The matter of upgradation of Artisan staff was further pursued with the Railway Board through bipartite talks. It was here that where the Tribunal failed, the direct talks succeeded. In addition to the 45 skilled Semi-Skilled trades which had already been classified as Skilled, further 25 unskilled Semi-Skilled Trades were also upgraded. Further, the 8 cognate Trades were also upgraded to Skilled. Thus, in a historic move the Semi-Skilled Trades were almost abolished. Only the Semi-Skilled Trades remained. The Semi-Skilled Trades were allowed to Khalasi Helpers, and the ratio between Khalasis and Khalasi Helpers was decided as 30:70. Important decisions were arrived at between the Labour and the Railway Board as a result of these negotiations were redistribution of staff as HSK I and HSK II and Skilled staff in the ratio of 30 : 35 : 35 ; redistribution of staff in Grade I, II & III - 50 : 30 : 20 ; HSK I : 35 ; TCMs and Wireless Mechanics : 35 ; Above all, it was decided to create posts of Master Craftsmen in Grade I and II.

(Rs.) to the extent of 20% of the posts of highly Skilled Grade I in the Workshops, Production Units, Electrical and Diesel Sheds ; 15% in the case of Engineering Workshops, Steam sheds & Train Lighting Depots and 10% in the case of other establishments.

Joint Consultative Machinery :

Various small and big strikes still took place inspite of the Permanent negotiating Machinery. The NFIR was opposed to strikes as a means of settlement of disputes but at the same time it firmly held the view and told the Government in unequivocal terms that if strike was to be avoided, it must be made redundant or superfluous by providing compulsory adjudication/arbitration. In fact, the NFIR incessantly worked in that direction from the very day of its inception. Posterity alone knows if Vasavadaji would be remembered as a Railway Labour leader but the single minded crusade that he carried to bring compulsory arbitration for the settlement of industrial disputes on the Railways was something phenomenal. He had taken it as a mission of his life and no sooner than it was realised by the introduction of a Joint Consultative Machinery than he relinquished the Presidentship of the NFIR saying that his mission stood fulfilled.

As a result of protracted negotiations with the Government and the leading Organisations of the Central Government Employees including railwaymen, the Whitley type Joint Consultative Machinery was introduced in 1969. Gulzarilal Nanda, the then Home Minister, inaugurated the Scheme. The two tier Joint Consultative Scheme provided for negotiations at the national level and at the departmental level. The main feature of the machinery was that *compulsory arbitration in matters of pay and*

allowances, leave and hours of work, was made available in return for employees' abjuring their right to strike, While on the Departmental Council, matters pertaining to the particular department could be raised for discussion, at the National Council matters generally applicable to all government servants and also matters which could not be settled at the Departmental Council could be raised for discussion. The machinery provides compulsory arbitration by a Board of Arbitration consisting of the Chairman and a Member each representing the Staff Side and the Official Side, from among the people submitted by the Parties. Though the Award of the Board of Arbitration is binding on both the Parties, the Government may accept or reject or may modify the Award but in that case they will have to place before the Parliament the changes made and the reasons therefor.

Between the period 1972 to 1976, significant Awards were secured from the Board of Arbitration, e.g. grant of Semi-Skilled grade to gangmen, grant of bonus allowance to all Class III and IV employees, grant of special pay of Rs. 150/- per month to Foreman, revision of the grade of Book Verifiers, uniform scales of pay to Firemen and shunters, merging of junior and senior Accountants in a single scale, grant of 12 days casual leave to Workshop staff etc.

Three Futile Strikes:

In the recent years there were three strikes on the Indian Railways, namely, July 1960 Strike, 1968 One Day Token strike and General Strike, May 1974.

July 1960 Strike : The approach of the Second Pay Commission in respect of wages and salaries was negative and the Commission failed to implement the grant

policy as adopted by the Planning Commission and the Government to build a wage structure with progressive rise in real wages. The Pay Scales had no scientific basis. However, there were some plus points in the Report. A reasonable rationalisation of the Pay Scales had been attempted. An attempt had also been made to remove the sting of overlapping Pay Scales, retirement benefits had been liberalised, age of superannuation had been raised to 58, above all Public Holidays were given to Open Line Staff and the Commission had accepted the principle of arbitration for the settlement of industrial disputes. The Government on its part accepted some recommendations and rejected some others ; some unilateral changes were made in certain recommendations, like Saturday Holidays, enhancement of the age of superannuation etc.

The NFIR initially took the stand that the Report of the Pay Commission be treated as an Award and implemented in all respects. Further, a bipartite Committee should be appointed to rectify the anomalies and discrepancies arising from the Report and matters not agreed upon be referred to Special Tribunal.

The AIRF, on the other hand, condemned the Pay Commission's Report and raised a new set of demands. Subsequently, a Joint Council of Action was formed with the AIRF, NFTE, AIDEF and the Confederation of Central Government Employees, on the basis of a set of new demands including payment of Dearness Allowance on the basis of the 1st Pay Commission Report, grant of national minimum wage on the basis of Fifteenth Labour Conference, appointment of a Permanent Wage Board. recognition of the Union in one industry through referendum

etc. Unless the demands were met by the end of May 1960, the Council announced it would organise a strike from the mid-night of June 12, 1960 which was put off later to July 11. The AIRF decided to take a strike ballot. Tall claims were made. One Union claimed 99% or more members voted for the strike. On the N.F. Railway, 36,000 votes were reported to have been cast in favour of the strike ; but the Union itself claimed its membership as 12,000. The AIRF Affiliates on the Eastern Railway stated that 37,000 non-members voted for the Strike. Similarly, the Southern Railway also announced that members and non-members had voted overwhelmingly in favour of the strike. The whole movement lacked seriousness of purpose. The AIRF General Council at its meeting held in February 1960 had formulated its 5 demands and decided to go in for strike ballot unless the Government conceded the same. However, the General Council's programme was opposed by the strike move.

In view of the government's acceptance of some recommendations, modification of others and rejecting some, the AIRF demanded implementation of the improvements in wages as recommended by the Pay Commission ; no curbing of the privileges and facilities existing in the appointment of the Pay Commission ; sorting of anomalies and discrepancies arising from the Report in consultation with the recognised Federations. These demands were immediately taken up by the National Vasavadaji, with the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The Prime Minister in a Press Conference of June 24, 1960, accepted the recommendations of the Pay Commission and categorically stated that the Pay Commission should have been treated as an

Award and implemented. He admitted that it was a mistake on the part of the Government not to have treated it so. The Government of India, however, announced their decision accepting fully many of the recommendations on which decisions were awaited.

The President promulgated on July 8, 1960 the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance for the maintenance of essential services, like the Railways. Strike was prohibited. But soon, there appeared to be a rethinking on the part of a section of AIRF Unions. Several Branches of the striking Unions of the affiliated Unions and many officials dissociated themselves with the strike. There was a large scale violence. Attempts at sabotage also were reported. With the response getting weaker and weaker violence increased. To give life to the dying strike, the AITUC and the HMS called for a total General Strike on July 14. The call went totally unheeded. By July 15, whatever had been left of the strike, completely collapsed, fizzling out totally by July 15, the strike was officially called off on July 16. The NFIR, however, continued its struggle and set about quietly removing the ills of the Second Pay Commission and taking further constructive measures to strengthen and promote the interests of the staff.

One day Token Strike 1968

The one day token strike by Central Government employees including the railwaymen on 19th September was a dismal failure. It was one of those ill-conceived strikes engineered by politically motivated elements. The NFIR tried to prevail upon the sponsors of the strike to abandon the move. A substantial section of the AIRF, unconvinced by the stand of the Federation unitedly withdrew their strike notices particularly on

the Western and Central Railways. Three out of the four Divisions on the South Central Railway and a large number of branches of the South Eastern Railway announced their opposition to the strike. Still certain extremist elements held out in a few pockets and tried to create disturbance. But it lacked response from the workers.

General Strike 1974 : The much publicised 1974 Strike was more a political adventure than an industrial strike. The ill-conceived strike launched by the National Coordination Committee headed by George Fernandes President, AIRF which at best was only partial and confined to a few places, was called off on May 28 when it had already fizzled out.

The Report of the Third Pay Commission had brought about many an anomaly and discrepancy. The wage structure evolved by the Pay Commission was not conducive to industrial harmony or social justice. The Government had not accepted the recommendations of the Miabhoj Tribunal 1969 in respect of hours of employment and other important matters. In the changed scheme of Pay Scales, a cadre review became necessary with a view to provide adequate compensation against the nature of job and to provide promotion to higher categories without stagnation. The question of classification of Artisan staff was also pending since long.

The leaders of both the Federations, viz., the NFIR and the AIRF held joint consultations in the matter. After repeated meetings, stage was reached when the leaders formalised the demands from the labour side, e.g. full and proper implementation of the Report of the Railway Labour Tribunal and appointment of an Anomaly Committee to

sort out the anomalies and discrepancies arising from the implementation of the Third Pay Commission's Report, Classification of Artisan staff, appointment of a Cadre Review Committee to determine the percentage of posts in various cadres in different grades, grant of bonus to railwaymen and the need of a proper wage policy. As a result of parleys with the Government at various levels, not only the Government but even the Congress Working Committee also accepted the need for evolving a rational wage and income policy in consonance with the socialist objectives. In respect of bonus, the Government informed that the matter was seized by the Bonus Review Committee and a decision in that behalf would be taken no sooner than the report was available. With these two assurances and the certainty of appointing the Anomaly Committee and the Cadre Restructuring Committee and a Committee for Classification of Artisan staff, a time came when no industrial action was really called for. In the meanwhile George Fernandes captured the AIRF at its Secunderabad meeting and from that day onwards the trend of the movement changed. A sudden and radical departure was made from the decisions taken unanimously by the Staff Side in the Joint Consultative Machinery. New demands were made and they were pitched high. The demands also went on changing from time to time. The political forces on the right and left arrayed themselves behind the strike move. It was more a prelude to a political design of wider implications. In short, it took the shape of a political confrontation and ceased to be an industrial strike. The strike was declared on May 8 but right from April 23, large scale violence of unprecedented magnitude was let

loose and continued throughout. Organised attempts were made to instil fear in the hearts of employees and their families. Large number of sabotage cases were reported, especially from Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Kerala and West Bengal involving interference with the permanent way, overhead traction, running of locomotives, signalling gears etc. The most discouraging feature of the orgy of violence was the role played by a large number of political activists who were outsiders. Violence culminated in a crescendo when in Kharagpur, Stores Workers including a large number of women who had refused to join the strike were stripped naked and paraded. The rank and file of the NFIR held their ground firm facing all threats including risk to their lives and limbs. Overwhelming majority of railwaymen ignored the strike call and stuck to their duties. The maximum overall absenteeism even on the peak day of the strike period was less than the normal daily absenteeism on the Railways.

The strike was over but a large number of post-strike problems arose. Many employees had fallen victim to the circumstances. Thousands of workers had been forcibly kept away from work through intimidation, coercion and brutal violence. All of them had to be saved from break in service and the consequential ill-effects. The NFIR urged upon the Government a lenient view and asked them to overlook the cases of break in service, suspension, removal, discharge etc. In the meantime the major demands put forth by the NFIR had already been accepted during the negotiations held in the last week of April and to be got implemented. The Railway Minister had announced in the Lok Sabha that the

Miabhoy Tribunal recommendations would be implemented in toto. Fair price shops were agreed to be opened in railway colonies. Bipartite Committees were agreed to be set up for rectification of anomalies and discrepancies arising from the Third Pay Commission's Report. Similarly, a Bipartite Cadre Restructuring Committee was also agreed to be appointed and above all it was agreed to set up a Classification Tribunal for the classification of Artisan staff.

Golden Period

The 10 year period between 1975 to 1985 is marked by major achievements. Productivity-Linked Bonus and the cadre Restructuring were the most outstanding of such achievements. Substantial gains secured through collective bargaining built immense confidence amongst the railwaymen and earned respect to the labour movement. The result was an all round development of the labour movement including substantial growth in membership of the Unions. The Unions grew financially strong. The movement gained maturity and inbuilt strength to solve the toughest of problems. In short, the railway labour movement came of age.

Productivity-Linked Bonus :

The sustained struggle carried on by the NFIR and the AIRF jointly and severally demanding payment of bonus to railwaymen like other industrial workers in the country at last succeeded when Productivity-Linked Bonus agreement (PLB) was signed on November 12, 1979 between the Railway Board on the one side and the NFIR on the other. The agreement which was a pace setter was again renewed in August 1984.

The NFIR demanded in May 1985 the abolition of the eligibility ceiling limit of Rs.

1600/- per month or arrange to bring within the limit of eligibility all Group C staff. The Bonus Act was latter amended raising the ceiling limit of monthly salary for the purpose of eligibility to Rs. 2500 and this was made applicable to the bonus for 1984-85 also.

The PLB Agreement on the Railways attracted severe criticism from many a quarter, the most common objection being that it was a production oriented bonus and not productivity oriented. When the Agreement was to be renewed, there was again discussions between the Federation and the Railway Board and keeping in view the objections raised, it was decided to introduce a new element of productivity index in the PLB formula and revise the norms to that extent. Productivity index expressed in terms of productivity per employee met the criticism and a new agreement was signed in September 1987. The 1987 PLB Agreement was also a landmark in the history of bonus. Seeing that a large number of staff were involved in productivity were drawn to the bonus, it was agreed that bonus be payable to employees drawing salary not exceeding Rs. 3500/- per month (though ceiling limit in the Bonus Act continued to be Rs. 2500/- per month) thus creating another landmark.

Cadre Restructuring

At the first National Conference held at Vijayawada in 1955, the NFIR drew the attention of the Government to the heavy workload and responsibility borne by railwaymen on account of the First Five Year plans. The Second Five Year Plan particularly, had aimed at building the necessary transport infrastructure for planned development on the Railways and the country's transport needs could not be effectively met. The NFIR also demanded to secure all time cooperation from employees, they must be allowed to share the

prosperity of planned development. As the country's main mode of transport, Railways had to bear an immense responsibility. This had brought about increase in responsibility of each category of railwaymen and demanded of each of them higher productivity. The NFIR demanded a general wage increase to meet the aspirations of the Railwaymen and ensure their willing and all time cooperation. Realising the situation, the then Railway Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, while presenting the Railway Budget in 1956, promised a higher distribution of posts in various cadres with a view to improve their emoluments and also improve their channels of promotion. In fulfilment of this promise, the then Railway Minister, Jagjivan Ram, announced in February 1957, a New Deal Upgradation Scheme benefitting 16 major categories of railway employees. Since then, the Railway Board and the Federations brought about through bipartite negotiations further improvements in the exercise of Cadre Restructuring. A number of important decisions were taken from time to time since April 1975, but the decisions taken in January 1982 created a history. The Cadre Restructuring was used as an instrument effectively to meet the situation brought about by increase in individual responsibilities, to avoid stagnation and provide for further avenue of promotion to the staff and above all to remove the imbalances created by anomalies and discrepancies brought about by the successive Pay Commissions. Thus, the exercise of Cadre Restructuring brought gains to all class of workers employed in various categories right from Unskilled staff to Senior Subordinates in each and every Department. Thus, at a relatively lesser financial implications, the Cadre Restructuring brought about immense satisfaction to all groups of staff because it fulfilled the basic aspirations of every

category for increase in their emoluments and improvement in their chances of promotion. This unique exercise in cadre restructuring suited the complex railway system and has proved one of the most rewarding exercises of bilateral negotiations on the Railways.

Commissions & Committees :

No opportunity of advocating the railwaymen's cause or promoting their interests was ever lost. During the last four decades many High Power Commissions and Committees were appointed regarding Railways and their working, e.g. three Pay Commissions appointed at an interval of 10 to 12 years, Class IV Promotion Committee, S.K. Das Independent Body on Dearness Allowance, D.A. Commission, Ashraf Committee in respect of running allowances, three successive Accident Liability Committees at an interval of about 10 years, Bonus Review Committee, Administrative Reforms Commission, National Labour Commission, Railway Reforms Committee, Running Allowances Committee. I have successfully put forth the case of railwaymen before these and other high bodies through replies to questions, memoranda and oral evidence. I have shortwhile developed an expertise in these matters. While preparing for these bodies, many a time I came up with ideas on the principles of decision running allowance for Running Staff (Pay Committee), raising the superannuation to 58 on 55 (Pay Commission) and full neutralisation of rise in prices in the case of allowances (Pay Commission) and full neutralisation of rise in prices in the case of allowances (Pay Commission). Achievements have been my rewards and have brought immense satisfaction.

Towards a better and Bright Life of Railwaymen

P.N. Sengupta

(Mr. P.N. Sengupta is 92 years old. He joined in the Railways in 1919 and had a long linkings in the E.I.R. Employees' Association as a member and finally as Jt. General secy. from 1937 to 1946. He was admired by all railwaymen and even his opponents respected him. He was one of those who had formed the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association in 1933 in Calcutta. His scintillating discussion was admired by the Union and administration. He retired from Rly. service in 1958 but he continues to keep himself abreast of the goings-on in the Trade Union of Railwaymen)

I do not know if I shall be able to present this memoir at this old age in the proper perspective. But the request to help people have a glimpse of the past as I saw it, could not be dismissed. I am trying to indicate in a journalistic snapshot the position of Trade Union movement in the past on the East Indian Railway. This may serve as an useful material for those who may be interested to write a History of Trade Union Movement on the Railways in the Eastern Region.

I was a boy of 17 years only when father while working under Distt. Engineer, E.I. Rly. Howrah died on 24th October 1919. I was appointed as a clerk on 30th October 1919 under then Distt. Engineer, Luious Green on compassionate grounds.

My appointment in the Railways at this early age had caused a serious set-back to my higher studies but I did not lose interest in everything in the academic field. I was inspired by the National Movement and particularly by the movement for establishing Library in different parts of the country which had caught the imagination of the people even with little education they had got. I was associated with Jiban Milan Library at Balamram Dey Street, Calcutta and later became the Asstt. Librarian of the said Library. I have a recollection that I represented Hooghly District in the first

Library Conference held in 1936 at the Indian Museum under the presidentship of ~~Mr. Deb Roy~~ Deb Roy Mahasaya of Bansberia. I had undertaken the job of literary survey at Pandooah about this time. My association with social and cultural organisations in course of my work had an impact on my future course. I was prompted by a sense of service to the people and virtually by this thought I was drawn to the field of Trade Union Movement.

While residing at 9, Khelat Ghose Lane, Calcuta I had the good fortune to come in contact with Bibhuti Chatterjee of 9/3 Khelat Ghose Lane and Probodh Chandra Mukherjee of 17/3 Lal Madhab Mukherjee Lane. My friendship with them was a turning point in my life. I started reading books on various subjects. History was my favourite subject. Deprived of scope of higher education I had made it a point to read the history of British Rule in India in particular to understand how the people of the country lived in social, economic and other spheres during the British period.

The idea of forming a Trade Union on the East India Railway had dawned on me from the inspiration of National leaders. I remember that my friend Robin Ghose of Chandernagore had joined me in my work. The staff of E.B. Rly had already established

their union at 133 Lower Circular Road. I had discussions with J.N. Gupta, General Secretary, R.N. Banchi, Joint General Secretary and Narendra Nath Chatterjee, Vice President of the E.B. Rly. Employees' Association. On their advice I obtained signature from seven employees from different offices, as a prerequisite to formation of the union on the East Indian Railway. The Registration of E.I. Rly. Employees' Association having been completed, the office of the Association was established at 133, Lower Circular Road, in 1932. V.V. Giri was the Founder President and J.N. Gupta the first General Secretary. This was just after six years the Trade Union Act enacted in 1926. It was, indeed, a glorious day and we all pride ourselves on the heroic deeds of our comrades whose efforts have been a milestone in the history of growth of Trade Union on the East Indian Railway. The first committee consisted of :

- 1) S.P. Varma - Instructor, Training School, Asansol.
- 2) A.K. Dutta - Guard, Asansol.
- 3) J.N. Gupta - Org. secy. of E.I. Rly. Emp. Assn.
- 4) D.K. Biswas- Clerk, Commercial Office, Calcutta.
- 5) J.J. Chakravarty - Hd. Clerk, Goods Supdt's Office, Howrah.
- 6) P.N. Sengupta - Clerk, D.E.'s Office, Calcutta
- 7) S.N. Bose - Clerk, C.O.'s Office, Calcutta.
- 8) N.P. Banerjee - Clerk, C.O.'s Office, Calcutta.
- 9) S.N. Ghosh - Clerk, Printing Deptt. Calcutta.

Later Sachin Bose of Stores Deptt./Fairlie Place was co-opted as Treasurer along with

three collectors viz : Charu Ghosh, Kali Chakravorty and Chandi Charan Biswas for collecting subscription. It is just appropriate that I record my gratitude to V.V. Giri and Jamna Das Mehta for their help and guidance to keep the flag of the union flying amidst the trouble of the early days.

H.N. Chatterjee, Jt. General Secy. was not happy with the arrangement of our registered office at 133 Lower Circular Road and due to his absence on this score, I was virtually the defacto Jt. General Secy. On the advice of J.N. Gupta, General Secretary. Several other friends having desired we shifted our union office to 12, Chandani Road, Howrah. The office remained there till 1936 when the Association's office was finally shifted to 23 & 24 Strand Road, Calcutta. An attempt made for grant of recognition in 1933 had not been successful due to hostile attitude of the then Agent Haney. In the first Annual conference held in August 1934 at Calcutta, Jannadas was elected President. With Jannadas the Association's activities were carried beyond expectation. But we had to leave Ghose who retired as Head Clerk of the office, Howrah, Janaki Jiban Chatterjee died after conditional resignation was calculated injustice and Palit's office at L.P.O. Office had suffered because of repressive measures by the reactionaries of the East Indian Railway administration. The Association got itself affiliated to A.I.R.F. in December, 1934. It was in 1935 that the Association was granted recognition after discussion with Jannadas and S.P. Varma.

Prior to the shifting of the office to 23 & 24 Strand Road, in 1936 Jt. General Secretary H.N. Chatterjee unfortunately died. I was

elected Jt. General Secretary in the Annual Conference in Sahibganj in 1936 and continued in the same position till 1946 when I was elevated to the rank of Asstt. Comml Supdt. (Grains).

After the death of J.N. Gupta, the founder General Secy., A.M. Williams, N.B. Sen and P.C. Dasgupta became General Secretary of the Association. It was during P.C. Dasgupt's term that the Association got amalgamated with E.I. Rly. Men's Union and the Ex. B.A. Rly. Employees' Union to be renamed as Eastern Railwaymen's Union in course of time.

I had maintained, however, my close relation with the union till my retirement from railway service in January 1958. I had also taken charge of the E.I.R. E.C.C.S. later as Secretary during the last phase of my service at the earnest request of R.C. Chakravarty, the then organising secretary of the E. Rly. men's Union.

1. Access of Trade Union workers to employees in general.

In the past there was hardly any scope for Trade Union workers to approach staff during office hours. I had after a discussion with then Dy. General Manager of E.I. Rly. Murray Robertson arranged for such facility, of course with prior permission of the Section-in-charge.

2. Special counter for receiving letters of various matters from the union and grievances of staff in general.

Non-receipt of union representations and misdelivery of letters used to be hindrance to early settlement of grievances. Due to our pressure and in the interest of good relations, the provision of a special counter for receiving our letters was made by the Administration.

3. Appointment of a permanent commission for Recruitment and selection of staff.

In the past there was no system of Recruitment and selection of staff till the mid forties and the local authorities were empowered to hold examinations or Tests for forming a panel for appointment in clerical categories. The matter was raised with the A.I.R.F. by us and it was through our sustained efforts that the Railway Service Commission was set up after Independence at Zonal Head quarters.

4. Removal of wagon body Rly. Qtrs. for menial staff.

In the early twenties the Rly. administration used to provide for Wagon Body Rly. Qrs. to menial staff in their place of duty, so that they could go for duty punctually. As these Wagon Body Quarters were totally unfit for human habitation, it was recommended by us that these should be abandoned and permanent quarters provided for each staff. At our instance the Administration could not dismiss the objection and for the first time permanent quarters for menial staff were built in Tindal Bagan area of Howrah.

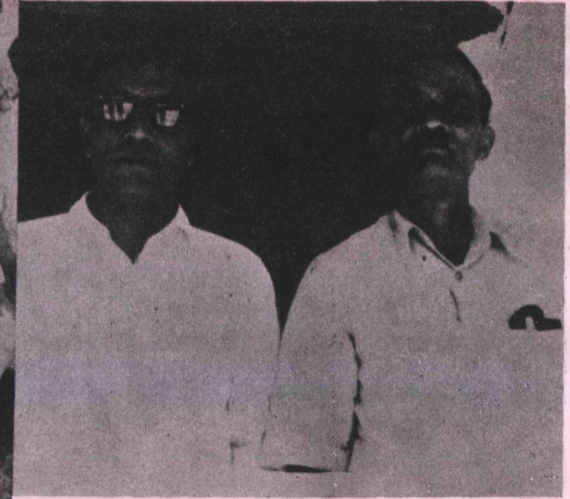
In a flash flood of necessary representations in the Trade Union many letters came back to me and I only mention a few of them.

5. Regulation of Hours of Employment for Running Staff.

I had written the rejoinder to the points advanced by the union in revising the Hours of Employment in different categories of staff. I had represented the union to the Administration for giving a



Subodh Chowdhury, Sisir Dey, Ram Chakravarty, P. C. Dasgupta, Kalidas Chakraborty,
P. N. Sengupta, Sudhir Mukherjee.



D. P. Joshi, P. N. Dutta.

Sitting from left - Nilkrishna Sarkar, Sunil Bhattacharya,
Ram Chakravarty, P. C. Dasgupta,
Bimal De, Dhiren Ganguly.

before the Committee headed by Justice Rajadhyakshya. The then General Manager K.B. Mathur admired me for submissions made to the Committee on the basis of facts that could be relied on, for effective measures in replacement of unsatisfactory and difficult situation arising out of an entirely unkind system prevalent on the Railways. I remember that one Oklay, Driver of Mail and Express Trains narrated the inhuman sufferings of the drivers and guards with 12 hours continuous duty or more in case of unusual detention, with no scope of rest of any kind for want of rest house facility.

In this context I remember also that I had the opportunity to meet A.R. Khalali, Conciliation officer at 4 Chowringhee Square, Calcutta on several occasions for discussions on Regulations for Hours of Employment.

It was through our earnest efforts that the committee was convinced of the need for change and the Regulation of Hours of Employment for Running staff was amended and Rest House for Running staff was provided for at Mughalsarai for the first time.

6. Participation of operating staff in War Service during the Second World War 1939-45

In spite of constant pressure from the administration to secure participation of operating staff of the Railways in war service, the Association had opposed the policy and no co-operation was made. But later our President, in spite of his Nationalist outlook had agreed to co-operate with Government on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi who considered it appropriate to help the British Govt. as they were determined to fight facism.

7. Contact with M.N. Roy

I remember I was introduced to M.N. Roy, the Radical Humanist leader and a thinker, far ahead of his times. I used to meet him quite often in Maharastra Nivas of Beltaala, Calcutta and had the privilege to act as his local secretary during the year 1944-46. A.M. Williams, the General Secretary of the Association was a great believer in M.N. Roy's radical humanism philosophy and he used to take me to the meeting of Radical Humanist Society.

8. Proposed Strike of 1949

After the Second World War was over we had started a movement for a living wage. Independence of India was attained in 1947. The Govt. having advised us of the need for co-operation in the task of building a new India we had thought it fit to do so. As a gesture of good-will the minimum emoluments were fixed at Rs. 60/- with effect from 1.7.46. The Grainshop facilities were withdrawn and although the Govt. agreed to raise the Dearness allowance in lieu of Grain shop facilities, many anomalies had remained unsettled. The then President of AIRF J.P. Narayan started negotiations with Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. John Mathai, Railway Minister on the issue. We had demanded a pay scale of minimum pay of Rs. 100/- to start with and impressed upon J.P. Narayan that in the event of the Govt. turning down our proposal, we would be left with no other alternative but to launch a strike. Although J.P. Narayan tried his best to convince Jawaharlal Nehru he had asked us to give up the idea trusting on the Govt.'s magnanimity. J.P. Narayan lost his popularity for that for the time being. This

had caused a serious set-back to Railwaymen's struggle. J.P. Narayan practically left the A.I.R.F. and later on joined in the Sarvoday movement. Another important event during the period is the growth of N.F.I.R. and A.P. Sharma joining the NFIR leaving our union. I shall be failing in my duty if I don't mention here the contribution of Prof. A.N. Mallik, M.A. (Oxon) who was a covenanted officer of the Indian Railways and resigned from railway service. At the request of the Railwaymen, he had agreed to be the working president of E.I. Rly. Employees' Association at the Annual Conference held in the Year 1936 at Sahibganj. His entry in our Association had brought about a marked change in the discipline, regularity and cohesive outlook in the organisation which caught the attention of the administration. His ways of working had practically pushed us from the edge of the net in the trade union field and we will continue to remember with pride and gratitude the excellence in the pattern of thought that

he had ushered in with aggressiveness of purpose, sense of responsibility and above all the devotion. With his exit we lost his guidance for ever.

In the end I must confess that our achievement, if any, were entirely due to his training. It was, perhaps, our good fortune that I along with A.M. Williams, N.B. Sen, P.C. Dasgupta were immensely influenced by him. I have a recollection that I had remained at my post as Jt. General Secretary in Calcutta when the General Secy. A.M. Williams was transferred to Allahabad and S.K. Mukherjee as treasurer was transferred to Lucknow during the war years. When the Japanese Bombs landed in Calcutta I had kept the Association's office at 23-24 Strand Road, Calcutta open for all the days. I thought that the Bomb may kill me but not the union which we have built with our toil and tears. I shall be glad to know that the journey on the road to prosperity is still on the horizon changes the resolution of purpose will continue to guide the Railwaymen from day to day.

From the Pages of Past

S. R. Mitra

Sri Satya Ranjan Mitra popularly known in the Rly Circle as S. R. Mitra was born in a remote village Lakshampur in the Noakhali District in the maternal uncle's house. He had his schooling in Lakshampur H. E. School where his maternal uncle was the Headmaster. From the date of his joining the E. I. Rly he had been a member of the E. I. R. Employees' Association and held many executive posts including member working committee, Joint General Secretary etc. Due to his long sickness he had to leave active Trade Union in early 1948. He is a bachelor and now aged 77 years, perhaps only second in age of the then active Trade Unionist - first being P. N. Sengupta who is aged 92. Both of them are maintaining good health.

I was the 2nd son of my father and mother. My father Late Dakshina Ranjan Mitra was the postmaster in various Post Offices in the Noakhali District. He died in harness at the age of 45. After his death news came that he had been promoted as Superintendent of Post Offices and posted at Comilla. Our home was at Chakbrahamandi in the Faridpur District in Sabar sub-district near Bhanga. On our father's side there was none to look after us on the demise of my father and we came to Lakshampur, in the maternal uncle's house. From that date we become a part and parcel of their family and still considered their house as our own house. My mother was the head of family of the maternal uncle's house. Nothing had moved without her consent. This continued till her death in 1975 at the age of 94. My elder brother was a Congress worker and courted arrest in all the Congress movements since 1924. He was attached to khadi group and was a member of the Khadi Pratishthan of Satish Dasgupta at Sodepur 24-Parganas (North). He left the Congress after independence in 1947. My schooling was in Lakshampur H. K. School. I was not a bad student - not also a very brilliant one. Though in the Matriculation and Intermediate Examination of the Calcutta University I

obtained letters in Mathematics and Sanskrit. I had high marks in these examinations and was placed in the first division. In the B.A. Examination I could not fare well and passed as a non collegiate student as I was laid down in bed for 9 months due to dislocation of the knee. I was a good football player and during my game, the Principal of the Feni College (Noakhali District) offered me a studentship. My maternal uncle turned down the offer as his financial position was not good having to maintain a large joint family consisting of 23 members. Though I was a student who should have been in the first stream had to be satisfied with Calcutta University in Feni where there was only one stream. I represented the college in all the football matches, local and outside and won many trophies for the college. After completing college education in 1937, I came to Calcutta. From an advertisement in the paper I applied for a clerical post on Rs. 30/- (fixed) in the E. I. Rly and appeared before the selection board and was selected.

On 23.03.38 I came to Feni to join the office of E.I. Rly for joining on Rs. 30/- (fixed). As I stepped to go down the staircase near the lift a watchman who was sitting near by pointed out to me

finger, two Sign boards by the side of the staircase, one depicting 'Dogs prohibited' below this 'clerks not allowed'. Derogatory indeed and I had to go to the first floor by the side staircase. That day I promised to do my best so that the two boards are removed. At that time clerks were appointed against permanent clerk going on leave. Leave of clerks were adjusted according to availability of the relief. When a relief was released on joining of the clerk after leave, another man used to get leave. Leave was not granted according to the need of the staff but according to the date of release or availability of the relief. Subsequently this system was brought to the notice of the adjudicator Justice Rajadhyaksha and was abolished by his verdict and Leave Reserve was created.

Initially clerks at that time used to be posted on fixed rate Rs. 30/- and only on passing the confirmation test both written and oral they used to be posted in grade Rs. 30-3-45-5/2-60. At the instance of the E.I. Rly Employees' Association, this was later withdrawn, confirmation examination stopped and clerks were put in the grade from the date of posting.

After working as a relief in various Departments I came to the CME office. There one day a young man of my age a probationary TXR, came to me and introduced himself as N.N. Sinha and informed that he was an Executive committee member of the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association. He made me a member and told me to accompany him to 23/24 Strand Road after office hours. Here I was introduced to Prof. A.N. Mallik, working President of the Association, a lean and thin gentlemen, be-spectacled, sitting in an ordinary chair and looking into the grievances of the staff. Individual grievances were not

entertained then by the Administration and Prof. Mallik struck out an ingenuity. He used to write to the Administration pointing out the particular Rule of Establishment Code that was not being followed and as an example he cited the case of the staff concerned. The Administration had to reply. By this way he made a fool of the Administration and gradually all individual grievances put forward by the Association were replied and rectified.

I still remember that evening with Prof Mallik. He told me that as I am now admitted as a member, I must work hard in office so that I might put an imprint on other fellow workers that members of the Association are not squander their time unnecessarily so that they also might emulate the example. Trade Union leaders of today will laugh as the dictum of leaders now a days is that draw the salary but do not do your assigned duty. To another man whom I later on came to know to be a British secretary, his advice was 'Don't show a red rag to a bull' - "We are not that strong as yet to go for a show down - rather proceed through negotiation. When we will gain strength, I will be 100% with you for a show down but now keep the powder dry." To Williams, General Secretary of the Association who had put up a draft letter to the Administration, he told - 'Hard words break no bones.' "I will cool it down and the your point and arguments will remain." Such was Prof. Mallik. Who is this Prof. Mallik? He was son of Rangler D. N. Mallik, Principal Rangpur Govt. College. A Brahmin who gave Prof. Mallick his son in marriage to the Tagore family. Prof Mallik was sent to England for education and from there he returned to India as a covenantor in 1930 on the E.I. Rly and posted as an Assistant

Transportation Officer. When he was posted in Danapur, he was sent to Gaya to supervise the pilgrims. At that time, throughout India during the festive occasions, it was customary to load the pilgrims as cattles in goods wagons for their journey to the place of festival. Prof. Mallik was horrified seeing this plight of the pilgrims and on return to D.S. Office he made known his dissatisfaction on the plight of the pilgrims to D.S. This the D.S. did not like. Then he was transferred to Howrah as Asst. Transportation Officer. Here, for some negligence of duty of the Station Supdt. Burdwan, an European, he put him under suspension. This enraged the D.S. and G.M. for his audacity to punish an European, which could not be tolerated. General Manager asked him to withdraw the suspension order on the European Station Master to which he declined. He was then asked to voluntarily resign or be prepared for dismissal. He preferred resignation. Martin Light Railway's Sir Biren Mukherjee took him as the Chief Administrative Officer. He also joined the Calcutta University as a Lecturer. In the evening, he regularly used to come to the office of the E.I. Railway Employees' Association at 23/24 Strand Road, Calcutta to discharge his responsibility as its Working President.

One day I asked Prof. Mallik about removal of the two sign boards in the main stair-case of the building. He called Charu Babu and asked him to show me the file what the Association has done in this regard. I found that everything possible was done through representations, discussions and bringing this item to the notice of GM in the meeting with him. Though the E.I. Rly came under the State in 1924, the power rested with the Britishers. In fact barring a few stray

cases, all posts above the head clerk were manned by Europeans and Anglo Indians. The bureaucracy thought that granting of any demand of the Association will bring forth more demands and show weakness of the Administration. It was only after Independence, when N.C. Ghosh was the General Manager these Boards were removed. In a meeting with him the existence of the derogatory notice Boards was brought to his notice. He at once ordered for their removal and allowed the main staircase to be used by all.

At this time another brilliant and meritorious Scholar of about our age joined in the Association. He is Prof. Chandra Dasgupta, commonly known as P.C. Dasgupta, bright prodigy of the Calcutta University. After doing his M.A. in Economics, he joined the Burdwan College as Lecturer of Economics. When an advertisement for direct recruit Graduate was issued he applied for it and was selected. He joined as a probationary Graduate at Howrah and simultaneously joined the Employees' Association. At the Conference in March 1945 he was elected as a Jt. General Secretary with P.C. Dasgupta as General Secretary, thus ousting the old members of his group of Radical Democrats led by M.N. Roy. P.C. Dasgupta later became Secretary in the Conference in 1946 and on 9.8.1947 on the sudden death of P.C. Dasgupta to which post he continued till 1956 when he was appointed Chief Controller in 1956 when he would not be able to do justice to the Hard Job of Chief Controller. He was simultaneously carry on as General Secretary.

P.C. Dasgupta admitted to various posts in the E. I. Rly Employees' Association and later in E.I. Rly. Men's Union.

A.I.R.F. He was Jt. General Secretary, General Secretary and Vice President of the Union. He was Asst. General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. from 1946 to 1956 and President of the Rly. Press Workers Union from 1947 to 1957.

Soft spoken and sobre as he was, he was very successful as General Secretary. Slowly and softly he used to argue cases with the Administration. This gave good result. The officials used to rely upon him as he never went back on his words and understanding. The Trade Union's main function is to achieve result through negotiations. He achieved success as an able negotiator. He had a good penmanship and used to write Conference resolutions, publish literatures, write out memorandam, articles for journal, "E. I. Railwayman" etc. In a sense he was a literary giant.

With him was Ram Chakravarty as Jt. General Secretary. Ram Chakravarty was a good organiser. He used to visit the Branches very often and attend to their grievances. The Branches liked him for his dash and push and militancy and his uncompromising attitude with the Administration and the officials. The Officials used to fear him for his bold and outspoken nature. If anybody asks me, of the two whom would you like as an effective Trade Union leader, I would say both the types are necessary in an Organisation. One for Organising the workers and the other for negotiation. One is complementary to the other.

After retirement he joined the Calcutta High Court as an Advocate. Hard work all throughout the life, he became a victim of high blood pressure and had a stroke. He was paralysed, could not speak, move his hands and legs. No treatment could bring him back

to health. A few days before his death I went to see him. He was able to recognise me, tried to catch my hands but could not. Tears rolled out of his eyes.

While A.M. Williams was the General Secretary, Prof. Mallik had gone on military assignment just after the outbreak of 2nd World War. After Office hours I as usual was going to Union Office and was attending to any job given to me. With the bombing of Calcutta City by the Japanese, my office was transferred to Clark's Hotel Banaras and other H. Q. offices to Dhanbad, Moghalsarai, Lucknow and Allahabad. Ram Chakravarty's office Statistical Branch of CAO was shifted to Lucknow. Ram Chakravarty formed a Branch of the Union at Banaras and dragged me into it. Similarly with the dispersed staff, Branches were opened at Allahabad and Lucknow. E.I. Rly. Employees' Association had no Branch at Lucknow. Ram Chakravarty opened Branch at Lucknow on 7.2.43 for the workshop, and other Staff. We secretly decided to open Branches at as many places as possible which would gradually work for the ouster of Williams and his group from office. Indomitable as Ram Chakravarty was, he with the help of Bireswar Chakravarty, Grade - I Clerk of the Accounts Department and Citeswar Chatterjee another Grade - I Clerk of the Accounts Department opened Branches on 8.12.43 at Banaras, on 5.9.42 at Lucknow on 11.3.45 at Rosa on 11.3.45 at Banaras, on 17.8.45 at Moradabad, On 12.6.43 at Nazibabad, on 16.7.46 at Allahabad, on 16.7.46 at Kanpur. With all these Branches on our side, we became a real force in the Association and threat to the then existing group headed by A.M. Williams. We were forming Branches in Dinapore, on 16.7.46, Moghalsarai on 8.12.43, Dinapore on

20.12.44 Jhajha on 28.4.43, Gaya on 31.7.45 must go to Bireswar Kanjilal, a Parcel Delivery clerk of Patna who unfortunately had a premature death.

In the meantime Williams joined the band wagon of Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy with Rajani Mukherjee of Port Trust Union. The main object was to help the British Govt. and the Allied forces in the War efforts. At the Central Council Meeting at Asansol in April 1944, our Association was affiliated with the Indian Federation of Labour though this was not an Agenda of the meeting. We were not invited to attend the meeting. As we were not present it was easy for Williams group and like minded men who wanted to help the British Govt. and allied forces in War efforts to have the resolution passed as most of the Central Council members were ignorant of its implication. We then visited from Branch to Branch and told them its implication. It was in November 1944 at the Moghalsarai Conference this affiliation was annulled due to Ram Chakravarty, P.K. Dasgupta, and other young workers for their untiring efforts.

Prof. A.N. Mallik was released from the Army on Nov. 1945 and joined the Association as the Working President, the post which he held prior to his joining the Army. I was elected as Joint General Secretary on 9.8.47 in the Annual General Meeting held at Allahabad. At the call of the AIRF, resolution was taken in the Moradabad Conference in March 1947 to take Strike ballot. At this time Prof. Mallik was adamant that, true to the spirit of our Constitution and according to the terms of recognition, strike ballot should be restricted to the members of the Association only. On our persuasion he agreed that newly enrolled members before

the ballot would be allowed to participate in the voting. This relaxation gave an impetus for enrolling new members and each and every Branch pulsated with life and dedicated themselves for the task. The ballot showed that 99.5% of the workers wanted a strike for betterment of their pay and allowances, working hours etc. In June 1946 Pandit Nehru came to Calcutta and expressed his desire to meet 2 of our representatives. Myself and S.K. Chaudhury met him when he told that "Congress is going to take over the Administration of the Country soon - don't embarrass the newly formed Govt. Go to Delhi and meet the Congress President Moulana Abul Kalam Azad." What about our demands?" the reply came "Azad will tell you all about it - you will get Pay Commission and Adjudication." We met Azad in Delhi and he told us to withdraw the strike notice. This was done by a resolution of the A.I.R.F. which was ratified by our Union. The Communist Party vehemently opposed it and subsequently the Communists coined a Slogan "A. Azad ki jai - Bhulo mat Bhulo mat". This was to harass the newly formed Government and was unsuccessful.

It was not mean achievement that in the British regime we failed to even get a hearing to our cause what to speak of Adjudication which we wanted but was turned down. The Pay Commission award made improvement in the pay and allowance and the Adjudication in working hours of employment regulations. We should to the Communist friends dispassionately ponder if they were opposing the newly formed Government in respect it was wrong for us to withdraw strike notice by accepting the Pay Commission & Adjudication with an

assurance that there will be no retrenchment. The posterity had shown that ours was the right course.

At this time an intellectual and talented youngman of our age whose office was transferred to Allahabad came back to Calcutta and became the Secretary of the Calcutta Branch. He is Subodh Kumar Chaudhury, commonly known to his friends as S.K. Chaudhury. He enriched the Calcutta Branch with his good penmanship and persuasive arguments with the Administration. He was at the helm when the strike ballot was taken in Calcutta Branch. The space between the Treasury Office and the Grocery Shop was vacant and with the permission of the Administration this vacant space was taken for ballot. Subodh Chaudhury with the help of professional artist made out posters depicting miserable conditions in which the railwaymen were subjected to and why & how this strike was imperative for the railwaymen. These posters were so beautiful that workers of the neighbouring offices in Dalhousie Square used to come to see these. At that time the Trade Unions in Dalhousie Square offices were not so organised as now and different Unions praised the endeavour. On the date of the voting workers silently formed queue and voted. All these affairs were brought to the notice of the then General Manager, G.M. Faruque by his officers and vigilance Dept. Mr. Faruque was impressed and made known his feelings to Prof. Mallik.

A few days after came the Independence day - 15.8.47. An unique honour was shown to the Association by asking the Association to hoist the flag at the Ceremony held in the Fairlie Place on 15.8.47. S.K. Chaudhury then Secretary Calcutta Branch was selected to

represent the Association for the purpose. In a short and neat speech he unfurled the flag amongst jubilation from the railway employees and officers present. The Calcutta Branch was opened on 5.9.46 and S.K. Chaudhury was its first Secretary which post he held till he became an APO. He died in harness from Coronary Thrombosis in the B.R. Singh Hospital. He was a great philosopher and guide to the union and Prof. Chakravarty.

I was pioneer in establishing the first office Reading Room and Library along with Sachin Bose of the COS Office and S.N. Ghosh of the Printing Supdt. Office. They were amongst the 9 men who applied to the Registrar of Trade Union for the registration of the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association. I remember one incident. We changed the name of the Institute as N.C. Ghosh Reading Room and Library to commemorate N.C. Ghosh Indian General Manager of the East Indian Railway.

A small function was arranged where N.C. Ghosh spoke to Mr. G.M. Faruque who was then the COPS and tipped to be the General Manager that "these people are very clever; as I am now the G.M. they are asking the Institute in my name and as soon as I will retire from the post, they will change the G.M. Faruque Institute to please the General Manager of the day." Nothing like that happened. It is still N.C. Ghosh Reading Room and Library situated in the Fairlie Place from its inception at the crossing of Fairlie Road and Fairlie Place.

Another silent and soft spoken person was Sudhir Kumar Mukherjee popularly known as Sudhir Mukherjee. Hardly would he speak of his lips- he would hide his face. He was the Son of a rich father of a well known

Mukherjee family, he was a man of bohemian type, left the home without informing any body and roamed over most places of U.P. At Allahabad he got a job of T.C. and after woking some days, left the job and came back to Calcutta. Later he joined the E.I. Railway as a puncher which was under the Adminstrative control of the CAO in the notorious Co-ordinate Scales of Pay viz, Rs 28-2-52. This scale of pay was in vogue only in the E.I. Rly. He was drawing Pay of Ra. 52 which was revised not earlier than 1.1.47 as a result of first Pay Commission. His case was cited by us in our memorandum to the Pay Commission.

After recruitment Ram Chakravarty was also posted in Fuel Section of the CAO/Statistical. Sudhir Mukherjee encouraged Ram Chakravarty to join the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association. He was inclined to join the fighting Union of B.K. Mukherjee viz. E.I. Rly. men's Union. Sudhir Mukherjee argued and told him that 'there will be nobody to oppose you but many will help you if you want to transform the Association into a fighting organisation'. Thus legendary Ram Chakravarty became a member of the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association and transformed it to a fighting Union in later days.

Sudhir Mukherjee was elder than us in age but in spirit and mental make up he could surpass any youngman of our age. One evening Williams asked me not to come to the Association office as he alleged that I was leaking information of the Central office to Ram Chakravarty and others. I was thinking of leaving the Union. Next day at 10 hrs. Sudhir Mukherjee came to my seat in the CME office and told me not to take it lying down. Next two days were holidays in office

and he told me that we would leave for Lucknow and meet Ram Chakravarty and others and fix our next move to oust Williams from the General Secretaryship. Our next course of action was settled in consultation with them.

Another good organiser of our time was Balai Chatterjee, Branch Secretary Asanool. He was of our age and should have been in our Camp but his loyalty was with Williams whom he did not forsake till the date of removal of Williams from power. After that also their relationship did not wane. He also became a member of the Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy.

Balai Chatterjee is the introducer of Gherao in the Rlys. The concept of Gherao which was at that time preached by Subodh Banerjee of the SUCI was in its embryo. Balai, one morning with a good number of followers Gheraced (enclosed) the Divisional Supdt. near the Divisional office when he was coming to office and made him withdraw Suspension/removal order issued on some Railwayman. A few days later he was charge sheeted and removed from Service. He joined D.V.C. then formed Union and fought for the workers and ultimately he was removed from there. Father of 3 sons and 3 daughters. Finding it difficult to maintain the family P.C. Dasgupta's endeavour his wife in the Railway Board when G. P. Dasgupta, Chairman, Railway Board, was Divisional Superintendent Asanool. Balai. In the meantime Balai passed LLB and started practice in Calcutta High Courts and West Bengal Compensation Court. He is an established person. Asanool

Workers. He single handed fought in the election twice as an Independent candidate and lost to the Congress. Balai also organised the Municipal workers of West Bengal and was its President for many years.

We had a very efficient Branch Secretary in J.P. Asthana TXR at Moghalsarai. At that time A.P. Sharma was working as a T.C. in Asansol. He was a good organiser of the E.I. Railway Employees' Association and was looking for his posting at Moghalsarai which was nearer to his home. Williams arranged his transfer to Moghalsarai. Both Asthana and Sharma were staunch supporters of Williams though they did not like each others.

Gradually A.P. Sharma was elected as the Branch Secretary pushing Asthana to background. During Sharma's Branch Secretaryship a good many meetings of the Association and A.I.R.F. were organised by him. He was opposed to the amalgamation of the Association with the E. I. Railwaymen's and was against Jayprakashji becoming President of the amalgamated Union. He was suspended by Jaya Prakash Narayan for his indisciplined act in 1949 Strike Ballot at Moghalsarai where overwhelming majority voted against the Strike. A good organiser as he was, it was quick for the E.I. Railwaymen's Congress which was formed by then with Dr. Prafulla Ghosh as President and J.N. Bose as General Secretary, to pick him up as working President. A. P. Sharma's meteoric rise thereafter is known to everyone.

Seniority Rules Changed :

While I was working as a Welfare Inspector in the Seniority Section set up for fixing the Seniority of the Ex B. A. Rly. Staff who after partition opted for Indian Union Visa Vis the E.I. Rly Staff. It was seen that most of the Ex B.A. Rly. Staff have been

confirmed only a few days before the partition thought the E.I. Rly staff were continuing as temporary. According to the Seniority Rules in vogue at that time all the B.A. Rly. staff would rank Senior to E.I. Rly. This created a terrible discontent and agitation amongst the E.I. Rly. Staff. The matter came to the knowledge of P.C. Dasgupta and Ram Chakravarty. In the meantime a Commission was set up by the Railway Board to look after how equitably the Seniority of the partitioned Staff and the existing staff of the Rlys. can be fixed. P.C. Dasgupta as the General Secretary nominated me to represent this association and give evidence before the Commission. Pratul Chatterjee and Kiron Chawdhury were looking to the interests of the Ex. B.A. Rly staff. They argued that the existing criterion for determining seniority on the basis of confirmation should apply in the case of the partitioned staff and the existing staff. I put forward about 100 examples of the Ex. B. A. Rly. Staff who were confirmed on the same date. Again on the E.I. Rly even though there were scope for confirmation, due to clerical lapses, staff were not confirmed for years together. So I prayed before the Commission on behalf of the Association that the Seniority should be on the basis of length of Service in the respective grade. My views were accepted by the Railway Board and the criterion of fixing Seniority came from the date of joining a cadre.

No history of the Association can be passed without mentioning about P.K. Munshi and P.B. Mitra. They built up a good branch with Santi Sen as Secretary and Chandrika Prasad Choudhury, a graduate as Organising Secretary. P. B. Mitra, former President was a Chargeman and P. K. Munshi, Stock verifier, was also a Vice President of the

Association and used to represent the cases very efficiency. P. B. Mitra narrated a story of 1920. This will give an idea as to how our European officers considered their staff. Mr. N. K. Bose a Mechanical Engineer of Glasgow joined E. I. Rly. as an Asstt. Mechanical Officer in Jamalpur. The first day when he came to the play ground with Tennis racket all the European Officers went away leaving the field. This naturally shocked Mr. N. K. Bose. When he was Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer he introduced the special grade mechanical apprenticeship for the Subordinates in Jamalpur for the Indian boys who after training would straightway join the supervisory post as Chargemen. Hitherto this was the domain of the European and Anglo Indians. P. B. Mitra was in the first batch of this new apprenticeship. He retired in 1970. He died some 5 years back.

How the circle of wheel moves, one evening we heard that General Manager G. M. Faruque had been removed from Service without assigning any reason. We went to see him.. He told that even a Class IV employee was Charge-sheeted and given 'Show Cause' Notice but a G. M. had been retired without assigning any reason.

In the Central office we had a set of very capable and hard working personnel. They maintained the file in proper order. As a matter of fact it would not have been possible for me to produce so many booklets if I would not have found all papers properly arranged. They are Kalidas Chakrabarty Subscription Collector, Chandi Charan Biswas, also a Subscription Collector and Charu Ghosh clerk. The other man and most important was Pulin Behari Sen who worked in the Lost Property office and used to come to 23/24, Strand Road everyday after office hours to work for the Union.

The E. I. Rly. Employees' Association used to publish booklets which were generally written by me and corrected by P. C. Dasgupta. Thus we brought out 'A Phase of Railwaymen's Struggle in India, in May 1946 giving out why it was necessary for a Strike and the issues involved. This was priced at 2 annas and published by N. B. Sen General Secretary. There was another publication captioned 'This Adjudication' on the hours of work and leave etc. which was published by N. B. Sen, General Secretary in June 1946 excerpts from which find a place in this memoir. This was priced at 2 annas. There was yet another publication also written by me captioned 'Our stand before the pay Commission', which was published by P. C. Dasgupta, Jt. General Secretary, of the Association in 1946. This was priced 4 annas.

With the independence and partition of the Country It was felt that the different Unions working in the E. I. Railway and P. A. Railway were likely to be amalgamated and the history of E. I. Railway Employees' Association should be prepared. This was done by me from the records maintained by the Association and was corrected by P. C. Dasgupta and P. N. Sengupta. The booklet 'Rise & Growth of E.I.R. Employees' Association' was Published by P. C. Dasgupta as Jt. General Secretary of the Association in August 1946 and priced 4 annas.

There were great demands for these Publications from our Railway workers as also from other Railways. These booklets had to be reprinted over and over again to meet the demand.

All these publications were bound together and a copy given to all the Central Office bearers and Branch Secretaries of the

Associations, but it could not be found from any body while we were searching for their publication in the Memoirs. It was at last found in 'Archives' of Ram Chakravarty who even to-day maintains a good library in Railway and Trade Union matters.

These publications are being reprinted at the end of this write up for knowledge of Trade Union workers of yesterday, to-day and tomorrow just to give them a glimpse of East Indian Railwaymen's movements at the fag end of British Raj.

I always considered that the Trade Union movement was linked with the Independence movement of India. India in bondage was to be emancipated through the Trade Union movements, so far as the workers are concerned. Now that it has been achieved. I thought to relinquish the post of Jt. General Secretary of the Association to which post I was elected in the Allahabad Conference on 9.8.47. My health was also failing and I had to be hospitalised. I therefore tendered my resignation and the mantle was taken over by Ram Chakravarty, a capable, active and hard working worker.

JAI HIND.

A PHASE OF RLYMEN'S STRUGGLE IN INDIA.

It was at Moghalsarai, In Nov. 1944 the General Council of the All India Railwaymen's Federation which met at Moghalsarai on the invitation of the E. I. Rly. Employees' Association resolved in its historic session for the first time in its annals to take ballot for an all India Rly. Strike unless the demands—the demand for a revision of the pay structure and the enhancement of dearness allowance strictly in conformity with the recommendations of the Rau Court of

Enquiry are referred to an adjudicator. It was the expression of that feeling of frustration and desperate state to which the Railwaymen in India had been pushed by a long process of starvation wages. They asked for an adjudicator to give his award on their just and legitimate demands, but the callous attitude of the bureaucratic Railway Board was not changed.

In April, 1945 the Federation met again at Secunderabad and reiterated the stand taken at Moghalsarai. But this did not remove the placid, cold, heartless attitude of the Board. The cry of the soul of the million Railwaymen was lost in the wilderness. The second world war ended in Sept., 1945. With the cessation of hostilities the service security of 2,52,800 Railwaymen was threatened. The Federation met again in October, 1945 at Madras and made it clear in unmistakable terms that the pay structure must be revised, dearness allowance must be enhanced and retrenchment must be stopped, if the Board did not intend to precipitate action. But unfortunately Federation's, spirit of moderation and conciliation was misunderstood by the Board as weakness. The Board adopted dilatory tactics. Finally on 12. 2. 46, the Federation at its Delhi meeting refused to have any further negotiations with the Board and called upon the constituent unions to complete balloting by 25.4.46. With the greatest enthusiasm workers came to the polling booth and recorded their votes. Workers from Peshawar to Changanassery, Talaimanner to Ledo responded to the call of the Federation and gave their verdict in favour of strike with an almost unanimous vote. In the E. I. Railway 98% of the workers voted for strike. This unity and determination of the workers caused the Big Guns of the Railway

Board much headache and they diplomatically as a mere eye wash appointed an adjudicator to go into only the minor items of the demand i.e. working hours and leave rules, thus by-passing the main issues. This naturally could not satisfy the already discontented workers who therefore decided in Bombay to go on a strike. Accordingly all the affiliated Unions including the E. I. R. Employees' Association served the strike notice on the Administration on 1.6.46 stating that the workers of the railways in India will go on strike from the midnight of June 27th unless their demands are conceded. The demands are—

1. No retrenchment
2. Revision of scales of pay (a) for unskilled staff Rs. 36-3-45 (b) for semi-skilled staff Rs. 40-4-80 and (c) for skilled, subordinate and ministerial staff Rs. 60-5-100-10-200 (d) commensurate increases in other higher subordinate scales,
- (3) adequate dearness allowance as recommended by the Rau Court of Enquiry
- (4) 3 months' pay as Bonus to members of staff drawing upto Rs. 250/-

No Retrenchment.

With the termination of hostilities in 1945, a grave and serious issue threatening the service security of 2.62,000 Railway workers arose. The issue is the Railway Board's contemplation to replace the temporary Railway workers to the extent of 70% by ex-service personnel. This is an atrocious move and a gross betrayal to the workers whose contribution to the allied victory has been the most. The re-action to this has been serious and meetings held to celebrate the 'Service security week' and 'Anti-retrenchment day' gave vent to the feeling of utter frustration and sense of bleakness of Railwaymen.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation,

at its Madras Resolution in October 1945 placed before the Railway Board a 16 point programme by exploring which the threatened discharge of temporary workers could be averted. These 16 points are :-

1. Reduction of hours of work to 42 hours per week as the first step and further to 40 hours per week for all the staff including running staff without fall in wages.

2. Introduction of weekly calendar day's off for all the Railwaymen.

3. Leave reserve to be increased to 25 per cent.

4. Reduction of rail length for engineering gangmen.

5. Extension of leave facilities to daily rated and inferior service staff on a par with subordinates.

6. All the works now done through contract labour should be taken over departmentally.

7. Reduction of mileage for over-haul of locomotives, wagons and carriages.

8. Expansion of workshop facilities namely construction of boilers, etc. etc.

9. Manufacture of locomotives, carriages and wagons in the Indian railway workshops.

10. Rebuilding of third class coaches as to provide better facilities such as bath rooms, fans and accommodation for long distance travel.

11. Re-opening of all lines closed and the restoration of services stopped during the period of war and expansion of services to meet the needs of the public.

12. A programme of house building a view to provide decent housing for railwaymen.

13. Construction of new lines to suit the needs of the country.

14. Laying down of double tracks wherever necessary.

18. Introduction of rail motor transport to the distant towns and village wher railways cannot reach.

16. R. A. F. workshop now controlled by railways to be maintained and extended to serve the needs of aviation.

These 16 points have been framed not only keeping in view the problem of absorption of the temporary workers but also for a better India with a better transport system. Attempts have been made by the Railway Board to camouflage the real issue and mislead the public. It has never been the demand of A. I. R. F. as stated in the Railway Board's communique—"On no account should one Railway man temporary or otherwie be discharged." What the Federaion did assert and rightly too, was, that no Railway staff who have been temporarily working in temporary created post or have been recruited for furthering the war effort must not be discharged or block retrenchment of such staff carried out until all the ways and means suggested by the Federation in the above 16 point programme are explored and implemented by the Railway Board. it ws the most reasonable stand that the Federation took and freedom loving people of India endorse the same views.

Then again why should the ex-service men be appointed to displace the temporary Railway workers who are already in service. If the reasons be to provide such men for what they have done for wining the war — the part played by the Railway workers are no less. If the military people fought in the front-the Railway workers fought equally in the rear

and worked to keep a steady flow of arms, amunitions and reserves to reach the front. If the ex-service men are to be employed why not do that by opening new industries and enrich India rather than discharge the men already in service and set one ctegrory of workers against another and create unemployment in the country without making attempt to mitigate it. It is the responsibility of a good Government to find out works for all unemployed persons-why that responsibility should not be borne by the Government of Inida. Of all men Mahatma Gandhi has stated that "If the workes are to be retrenched in order to make rooms for ex-soldier it is in my opinion doubly wrong, wormg for the ex-soldiers in that they will be favoured and a soldier who accepts favoured treatment is no soldier. The second wrong will be to the men to be retrenched who for no fault of their own will-be thrown out of employment. It will not do to say they were temporary hands."

In India during normal times seven and a half lacs of workers are employed to maintain 40 thousand miles of Railway track. Compare this with the country of our rulers in England where six and a half lacs of workers maintain only 20 thousand miles of Railway track.

Indian railway masters nay the British interest in India, overwork the Indian railway workes to the extent of almost double that of England. What is applicable in England should not be made applicable to India is the policy. If only the same working hours are introduced in Indian Railways not only the threatened retrenchment of 2,62,00 workers will be stopped but also the problem of unemployment will be solved to a great extent.

Scales of Pay.

The Railway workers throughout India are writhing under the shackles of wage

slavery since the inception of the new scales of pay in 1934. Their conditions of living have been miserable and bleak. The East Indian Railway Administration is responsible for the introduction of another most pitiable and deplorable grade system—known as 1928 co-ordinated scales of pay. Even though 1934 scales of pay was introduced—the 1928 scales of pay which was worse than 1934 scales was not abolished and thousands of workers are still groaning under its heavy weights. This is the gift of the General Manager of the E. I. Railway (remember not the Railway Board) and he has shown, as it appears, the greatest regard for the welfare of his employees by not abolishing this shameful grade which only exists in his Railway ! The most funny thing lies in the fact that three employees doing the same work side by side get three different scales of pay, one according to the old scales of pay (Rs. 30—80), the other co-ordinate scales of pay (1928) (Rs. 28—52), and yet another the new scales of pay (1934) (Rs. 30—60). A huge band of Railway officers are employed in the Establishment Branch with a total yearly expenditure of nearly Rs. 250000/- but if they cannot make out one single grade for all staff for same work, where is the justification of retaining so many of them thus squandering the public finance. Perhaps they fear that if a single grade is introduced—there will not be the necessity of so many of them. To justify their existence, they justify 3 different scales of pay.

The pay of the Railwaymen is only scandalous, the monthly pay of a messenger boy in office is Rs. 10/- The pay of a fireman who feeds the furnace in the engine or a pointsman who sets the points correctly and is responsible for safety of the public life is Rs.

15/-. The gangman who maintains the permanent way draws a salary of Rs. 12/-. The maximum pay of a commercial clerk or a ticket collector who is required to be a matriculate is Rs. 45/-. Chief Commissioner of Railways Mr. Emerson has admitted that about 350,000 men in the Railways get a pay less than Rs. 16/- P. M. (his broadcast dated 30.5.46). Yet the General Manager contends that "the lot of the large body of railway workmen is to day better than their compatriots in similar avocations in other industries or other services in this sub-continent." The misconception of the General Manager can be proved from the May '46 issue of the Indian Labour Gazette, a publication of the Government of India where the average earning of the workers in different trades have been given.

According to this Gazette the average monthly earning including dearness allowance of a worker drawing below Rs. 200/- is

Mint	Textiles	Engineering	Minerals & Metals
Rs. 58/-	Rs. 53/-	Rs. 49/-	Rs. 45/-
Ordnance Factories	Skin & Hides	Railways	
Rs. 46/-	Rs. 44/-	Rs. 36/-	

Sir Edward Benthall goes one step further and stats "Railwaymen are Government servants. What is given to them *passu* be given to other Government servants and whatever is given to the Central Government servants will naturally reflect upon what provincial Government servants their servants." We agree—why is there the disparity in the wages of clerks in the Central Government, Quasi Government and provincial Government services as compared to those in the Railways ? The figures will convince you.

Clerical Grade (Lowest grade).

Central Govt.	Bengal Govt.	P. & T.	Port Trust
80-120	60-130	45-90	60-150
Income tax.	Accountant General.	Railways.	
50-140	50-160	30-60 (1934)	
		28-52 (1928)	
	Railways	Port Trust	
Un-skilled staff	12-17	26-30	
Semi-skilled staff	16-28	30-40	
Skilled staff	20-28	40-60	

The General Manager has stated that the Railway workers generally ignore the facilities and privileges given to them in the shape of passes, concessional sale of food grains and maternity and child welfare activities. Let us see how far he is correct. It is only the Railway Officers who are benefitted by these facilities and not the ordinary workers.

Free Passes.

The money value of this has been evaluated at Rs. 5/- per employee per month, 66% of the workers get one set of passes for their home station only and with a leave reserve of 10% only 10% of them can utilise that. Another 25% are Subordinates and are 3rd class Pass holders, who are not allowed to travel more than 300 miles over foreign lines. During the Pujahs & X'mass holidays, when they have a mind to travel, they cannot do so due to the restrictions imposed in the issue of passes at that time. It is only the Officers and upper Subordinates travelling in 1st and 2nd Classes who are immensely profited and the rich man's burden is being borne by the ordinary workers who are very little benefitted by the free passes.

Concessional sale of food-grains.

The Railway Administration contend that the workers get a relief of Rs. 14/8/- per card per month from the cheap ration supplied to

them. This figure is much higher and according to our calculation relief amount to in the neighbourhood of Rs. 8/- only.

The average sale of weighted commodities per ration card (i.e. per employee and his family) in Imperial Maunds as supplied in Railway Grain Shops for all Indian Railways is given below :-

Month	Average all-India figure	
October '44	—	1.50
November '44	—	1.42
December '44	—	1.50
January '45	—	1.60
February '45	—	1.60

Average for 5 months — 1.52

It is sure that in no commodity the concession is given to the extent of Rs. 10/- per md. — then how can the relief amount to Rs. 14/8/-?

Besides this the employce has to undergo much difficulty and suffering in purchasing ration from the Grain shops. Weighting is a common practice and of bad quality of commodities is a long standing grievance, non-availability of certain commodities is always there and standing for long hours in the queue is every day occurrence. The death and agony about by the epidemic dropsy in the Division is still vivid in the memory of the Railwaymen which broke out due to adulteration of mustard oil with water supplied by the Railway Grain Shops.

You will be interested to know that in the Calcutta Tramways the concessional sale of food grains works out to Rs. 8/2/-.

Maternity & Child Welfare Activities.

The General Manager is pleased to state that he has spent 4 lacs of rupees during the last 12 months in welfare activities. If this figure is taken as a basis, there is a

the Administration to gloat over the fact that it spent 4½ annas per head per month for giving maternity benefits and feeding the young Railwaymen to be. The E. I. Railway Administration perhaps do not know that they spend the least in comparison with other Railways in hospital, maternity and child welfare activities. Amount spent in annas per train mile in 1943-44 in different Railways is,

B. A. Railway	— 0-95
M. & SM. Railway	— 0-17
N. W. Railway	— 0-70
B. N. Railway	— 0-69
E. I. Railway	— 0-46

Dearness Allowance.

Since the out-break of the war, prices of essential commodities shot up and the Railway workers, already underpaid, were faced with a very difficult situation. The Rau Court of Enquiry was held but its recommendations were shelved. Tax payers' money to the extent of Rs. 55000/- was spent to meet the expenses of this Court but the poor workers did not derive any result out of it. According to the recommendations of the Rau Court of Enquiry, the Railway workers are entitled for a Dearness allowance of Rs. 45/- now, but they are paid much less. It does not end here, another committee, known as the Gregory Committee, was appointed to recommend regarding the principles of dearness allowance but none of the principles recommended by the said committee have been fully followed by the Railway Board.

The most regrettable feature in the scheme of dearness allowance introduced by the Railway Board has been the creation of 4 different zones and 2 different systems of payment in the same zone. The discrimination of staff on the basis of pay, and grant of lower

allowance to those drawing below Rs. 40/-, is unique in the Railway and is a negation of the principle of recommendations of Rau Committee Report. During the 1914-18 war, no zonal system of payment of Dearness Allowance was introduced and it is only in this war, the Railway Board have introduced the zonal system of payment by which the staff in 'C' zones are paid 30 per cent less than those in 'X' zones, thus depriving a vast mass of Railway workers of their due share to pay the already highly paid officers earning Rs. 1950/- a month, a dearness allowance of 17½% of their pay.

Sir Edward Benthall preaches about the uniformity of pay and allowances to all category of Government employees. Now is that the employees working in the Income Tax, Post & Telegraph, Central Govt. and Bengal Govt. get a Dearness allowance of Rs. 22/- in Calcutta whereas the Railway employees draw only Rs. 20/-?

The public have a right to know whether the recommendations of the Rau Court of Enquiry and the Gregory Committee have been accepted and the Railway workers get the support of the general public who are asking for adequate dearness allowance.

Bonus.

During the war almost all the Companies and concerns have paid bonus to their employees. But the Railways have paid none. It is loudly proclaimed to be a Government concern by the Govt. of India and the gross income of Rs. 478 crores was earned during these years by blood and sweat and tears of the Railway workers. No assurance was given to the workers. General Manager, E. I. Railway, issued an Important Notice dated 14-3-42, saying he was doing his "utmost to obtain satisfactory

bonus for staff who stick by the E. I. Railway whatever arises." Even though the workers stayed to the post in the midst of Japanese bombing at the risk of their lives and properties they are now being denied the bonus that was promised before. In 1931 & 32 when the Indian Railways had a deficit budget, a 10% cut in the pay of the employees was resorted to but now when there is a good profit in the Railways no bonus is being paid and neither have those cuts been re-paid.

3rd. Class Fares Should Be Reduced.

Sir Edward states that the demands of the Railwaymen cannot be met without increasing the rates and fares. The Railway workers demand that no increase in the fares for 3rd. class passengers should be made, on the contrary, reduction in fares and better travelling facilities should be provided for them. This can be done. The present structure of rates is built more to help foreign capital interests than either the indigenous industries or the general public. Different rates for export and import goods and discriminatory rates in respect of coal must go and an impartial competent authority should revise the rates keeping in view the needs of this country and not of England

Role of Labour Department.

When the Railway Board neither accepted its demands nor agreed to the appointment of a Court of enquiry or adjudicator, the Federation appealed to the Labour Department, but beyond arranging for a further meeting between the Board and the Federation in December last the Labour Department did nothing to settle the dispute. On May 26th, the Committee of Action of the All India Railwaymen's Federation met Mr. S. C. Joshi, Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) who had been appointed by the

Central Government to arrive at an interim settlement in the Railway dispute and placed the following demands as the basis of interim settlement.

(1) Wages of inferior service staff to be increased immediately so as not to fall below Rs. 25/- per month.

(2) The basic pay to be raised by Rs. 10/- per month for all staff drawing upto Rs. 250/-.

(3) A compensatory relief of Rs. 100/- per head to the aforesaid staff.

(4) Zonal distinctions in dearness allowance to be abolished.

(5) Duty hours of staff to be reduced to 8 hours.

(6) Leave reserve be increased by 25 per cent.

(7) Subordinate leave privileges to be extended to inferior service staff.

(8) The daily rated wage system be substituted by monthly rate on a thirty day basis.

(9) All staff with one year's continuous service to be made permanent.

(10) Contract labour system be abolished.

(11) Staff retrenchment be suspended during the interim periods.

In the estimation of the Railway Board the expenditure involved is Rs. 10 crores non-recurring and about 20 crores recurring. Since in the opinion of the Board, there is no money with the Railway Board, the maximum that they proposed to grant as an interim relief was about Rs. 3 crores only in the following way if the threatened strike was averted.

(1) A revision in the scales of pay of the lowest grades of inferior staff which would introduce a minimum wage of Rs. 17/- per month.

(2) The amalgamation of the lowest grades of subordinate staff upto those with a

maximum in the neighbourhood of Rs. 80/- per month.

(3) An ad-interim increase in the basic pay of the lower paid employees equal to the cash dearness allowance now drawn but not exceeding 50% of the basic pay, any dearness allowance drawn in excess of this increase to continue.

Adjudication on all points of dispute was not agreed to and interim relief fell far short of the demand. Though the Federation was always eager to call off the strike only on

reasonable terms and save India from a major catastrophe at the moment, it did not find any ground for doing so on the miserly terms given by the Board. The Federation cannot agree that the Railway Board have no money to meet the demands of the Railwaymen. Money is already there - it is only a desire to spend that amount for the betterment of the lots of the Railway workers. It is the vested interests and the clique of Benthall-Emerson & Co. to keep the Indian Railwaymen in distress, poverty and squalor.

Where To Get Money.

The present financial position of the Railways can be seen from the following table

Year	Capital at charge	Net revenue receipts. (In thousand of Rs.)	% of net reve. receipts to Capital at charge	Net gain to Govt*	% of gain to capital at charge
1940-41	7,60,92,87	46,23,00	6.08	17,05,58	2.24
1941-42	7,54,72,60	55,57,72	7.36	26,20,50	3.47
1942-43	7,72,51,96	71,16,35	9.21	42,28,66	5.47
1943-44	7,80,73,34	76,56,92	9.81	47,16,19	6.04

The Inchcape Retrenchment Committee recommended for an average return of 5½% on the capital at charge and therefore the net revenue receipts of 9.21% and 9.81%, now accruing to Railways is excessive. A portion of the net receipt may conveniently be transferred to the Wage Bill.

* The depreciation fund stands to-day at about 100 crores as against 50 crores suggested by the Wedgewood Committee. 50 crores of rupees should at once be raised from the depreciation fund and spent for the rehabilitation of human material. On an average 15 crores had been contributed to this fund during the last five years against the normal annual depreciation of 9.19 crores recommended by the Inchcape Retrenchment

Committee. Nearly 6 crores of rupees were yearly oversubscribed and this over subscription at an arbitrary fixation of one-sixtieth of capital at charge should stop. Thus we get 50 crores at a time and 6 crores every year.

* Another fund known as the Betterment Fund has been running concurrently with depreciation fund and a sum of 12 crores is lying idle there. This Fund should be closed and used for the welfare of the Railway Workers. Yearly contribution to this fund is 3 crores. Here we get 12 crores at a time and 3 crores every year.

* About 30 crores of rupees are being sent to the Bond holders in England at the rate of 3.53%. Loans should be repaid in England from sterling balance.

and until that is done rate of interest to be reduced to $2\frac{1}{2}\%$. Here you get 4 crores of rupees.

- * During the last 5 years approximately 200 crores of rupees have been made a free gift to the Military in the shape of concessions in rates and fares. This concession to military should stop and thereby even as per Sir Edward Benthall's estimate, a crore of rupees every year will be available in normal times.
- * To curb the enthusiasm of the freedom loving people of N. W. Frontier, the Govt. is maintaining strategic Railway at an annual loss, of 2 crores of rupees. Either this expenditure is to be borne by the Govt. of India in its Military Budget or the lines are to be closed. Here you will get another 2 crores of rupees.
- * On an average, a Railway officer draws Rs. 1484/- per month and an ordinary worker Rs. 16/-. The difference is too wide and should be made narrower by reducing the pay of the officers to an average of Rs. 500/- P.M. and increasing that of a worker to Rs. 60/- P.M. Since reduction in pay cannot be made without legislation, for the present all allowances drawn by the officers should be stopped. Here you will get 3 crores of rupees annually.

Thus on a total you will get Rs. 81 crores (62 crores at a time and 19 Crores annually). If the Board have a mind to improve the conditions of the Railway workers they can very well do so from this amount and set an example to other trades.

The expenses of the railways excepting the wages of the staff have gone up to a high degree. It is high time that some check should be made. The standing Finance Committee has rightly recorded their dissatisfaction "that

during the war there should have been an increase in working expenses out of all proportions to the increase in the quantity of work done by Indian Railways". And have suggested that a high power committee should at once be set up to suggest ways and means of effecting economy in all branches of the Railway Administration.

Strike Called Off.

In the meantime the Standing Finance Committee was called to find out ways and means to settle the dispute. But it went beyond its jurisdiction and made some unnecessary comments on the demands of the Federation. Its main recommendations are :—

1. That a high power committee be appointed to see how far the non-retrenchment demand of the Federation is acceptable.
2. That the Pay Commission be requested to give priority to the Pay structure of the Railway workers and to complete their recommendation by 6 months. In any case the recommendations to have effect from 1-1-47.
3. That 9 Crores of rupees be paid as an interim relief.

The Railway Board also gave no effect to these recommendations because they knew that they were going to get more than what they did on 27-3-46. The General Council of the Federation met at Delhi on June 18th to consider the above recommendations. The Standing Finance Committee are accordingly to decide whether to strike or not to strike. They felt that unless and until an assurance is given by the Railway Board that there will be no retrenchment in the near future, they will discuss the pay structure before placing it before the Finance Committee. There is no question of withdrawal of the strike if any does arise. Accordingly the Federation gave the Railway Board an assurance.

Let us therefore see how far the demands of the Federation has been accepted by the Railway Board.

Firstly, the Federation wanted adjudication on 'no retrenchment' and they have got (a) adjudication on leave rules and hours of employment etc. (It was always contended that if leave rules and hours of employment are changed there will remain no scope for any retrenchment) - (b) Suspension of retrenchment of those in service upto September 15- 1945 until the report of the Adjudicator is considered and (c) the consideration of the 16 point programme of the Federation as mentioned in page 4 will be included in the terms of reference to High power Committee.

Secondly, the Federation wanted adjudication on Revision of scales of pay and they have got, an adjudication on the subject by the Pay Commission and an assurance that the Govt. will request the Pay Commission to expedite its recommendations on the question of wages and allowances by giving priority over other subjects and produce an advance report within six months if possible and that the recommendation will have effect from January 1, 1947. The Board have also agreed to discuss with the Federation the data and evidence on which the Board's memorandum to the Pay Commission will be based.

Thirdly, the Federation wanted adjudication on adequate dearness allowance and Bonus and they have got 9 crores of rupees as an interim relief to be disbursed in consultation with them. It may be recalled that when the arrears of D.A. of $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores of rupees was distributed by the Board it was the 2013 officers who alone shared 1.1 crores leaving the balance of 2.4 crores for the 9 lacs of railway workers. This 'Carrying coal to

New Castle' policy of the Railway Board can never be tolerated by the Federation and they are this time determined to give the maximum benefit to the have-nots of the Railway.

Though it cannot be said that all the demands of the Railwaymen have been fully met but it can dispassionately be said that a fair approach to settle up the dispute has been made. They Railway Workers always consider themselves as a part of the nation and therefore what concerns the nation, concerns them equally. The food situation in the country is already bad and the Railwaymen cannot therefore knowingly be a party to anything that may tend to make it worse still. When some of the demands have been reasonably met, the Railway workers cannot be so selfish as to plunge the whole country into chaos to gain the rest of their demands particularly at this juncture. The political and economic situation of the country was also in the minds of the Railway workers when they called off the strike. Rly. workers do not want a strike for strike's sake alone. It is to the nation's demand, the railway workers had to surrender their own personal interests.

The strike has been called off but the railway workers' struggle will be pursued unabated. It has only a temporary truce and during the coming months the workers will have to continue.

Proposals for Interim Relief made by the Railway Board at their meeting with the All India Railwaymen's Federation held in New Delhi on Thursday the 11th July, 1946.

INFERIOR SERVANTS

Proposal : Irrespective of whether they are on old or new scales of pay, they should have their pay fixed on 1,745 with the addition of two increments, the addition being

subject to a maximum of Rs. 4/- and a minimum of Rs. 2/-. Such increases will apply also to men at or near the top of their scales of pay even if such additions raise their pay to more than the maximum. Those on fixed rates of pay will get a uniform increase of Rs. 3/-.

Provided that in no case will the pay as enhanced plus Dearness Allowance be less than Rs. 25 per month.

II. Monthly rated semi skilled and skilled staff.

They will have their pay fixed on 1-7-46 with the addition of two increments, the addition being subject to a maximum of Rs. 4 and a minimum of Rs. 2 in the case of those on old scales and Rs. 3/- in the case of those on revised scales. Such increases will also apply to men at or near the top of their scales of pay even if such additions raise their pay to more than the maximum. Those on fixed rates of pay will get a uniform increase of Rs. 3.

III. Daily rated staff.

All daily rated staff will have their pay fixed on 1-7-46 with the addition of two increments, such addition being subject to a maximum increase of Rs. -/2/6 for those upto Rs. 1/8/- per diem and -/4/- for those above Rs. 1/8/- per diem and a minimum increase of -/1/- per diem. Those at or near the maximum will also get such increases even if such additions take their pay beyond the maximum of the scales.

Provided that in no case will the monthly equivalent pay as enhanced plus dearness allowance be less than Rs. 25 p.m.

Note I. No allowance has been made for overtime which may be drawn. Such overtime will also be based upon the increased pay and thus give additional benefits.

IV. Subordinates on scales of pay, the maximum of which is not more than Rs. 95/- per month.

(i) Certain amalgamated scales as indicated below are proposed for the Railway to combine all the present scales of pay of which the maximum does not exceed Rs. 95/-. The men who are in these scales of pay will be fixed in the amalgamated scales in the manner indicated below :-

The amalgamated scales are :

B.A., E.I., N.W., B.N., Rs. 30-3-45-5-65-5/2-95.

B.B. & C.I., G.I.P., Rs. 36-4-50-5-95.

M. & S.M., S.I., O.T., Rs. 30-3-45-5-65-5/2-90.

(ii) For those on old scales of pay, their pay on 1.7.46 will be fixed in the amalgamated scales as their existing pay in the old scales on 1.7.46 plus Rs. 3/-. If this total does not coincide with a stage in the amalgamated scale, their pay will be fixed at the stage in the amalgamated scale next higher to such total.

(iii) For those on the revised scales of pay, their pay on 1.7.46 will be fixed in the amalgamated scale as their existing pay on the revised scale on 1.7.46 plus Rs. 5/-. If the total does not coincide with a stage in the amalgamated scale their pay will be fixed at the stage in the amalgamated scale next higher to such total.

V. Subordinates whose pay is not fixed in the amalgamated scales.

(i.e. those on scales beginning below or above Rs. 95/- and ending above Rs. 95/- (those on fixed rates of pay).

(a) Subordinates drawing not more than Rs. 95/-

Such staff will get with effect from 1-7-46 a personal pay of Rs. 5/- P.M. if the pay in the

old scales of pay and Rs. 8/- P.M. on the revised scales of pay.

(b) Subordinates drawing above Rs. 95/- but not more than Rs. 250/- P.M.

Such staff will get with effect from 1.7.46 a personal pay of R. 7/- P.M. if on the old scales of pay and Rs. 10/- P.M. if on the revised scales of pay.

Note 1. In the case of running staff, the Interim relief will extend only to such staff whose pay plus 75% of pay do not exceed Rs. 250/- P.M. They will get, in addition to the enhanced pay as fixed under the above rules, personal pay on the following scales :—

(i) Those on enhanced pay not more than Rs. 50/- P.M. ... Rs. 3/- P.M.

(ii) Those on enhanced pay above Rs. 50/- per month ... Rs. 5/- P.M.

Extracts from 'THIS ADJUDICATION'

One million Railwaymen of India have been writhing under the pressure of long hours of duty, want of periodical rest and proper leave facilities. They are dragging and cragging almost mechanical and bestial existence. Leisure which makes a man of man, they have none. They live in a world, isolated and cut off from the rest of the society as it. This intolarable state of affairs had been going on since years and years. But the organised Railway labour was not deaf to the cry of the soul of million Railwaymen. The A.I.R.F. in the general council meeting at Bombay on 5th of May, 1946 passed the historic resolution. It was a call for an all India Railway strike, a grim determination for direct action unless its demands were met. The resolution inter alia demanded a thorough change in the hours of duty, betterment of the condition of work and rational leave facilities. The tempo was high and the preparations were thorough. Every day that passed brought

us nearer to the grim struggle that was to come. Meanwhile an adjudicator was appointed by the Government of India to adjudicate on the dispute that had arisen between the Railway Board on one side and the Railway employees on the other side. Justice Rajadhyakha' L.C.S. has been appointed the Adjudicator who would be helped by 2 assessors one Mr. P.B. Chowdhuri Dy. GM (Staff) N.W. Rly. and Prof Humayun Kabir, President B.A. Rly. Employee's Association. His terms of reference are as below :—

(1) Whether the existing hours of work of railway servants, other than those to whom the Factories Act 1934, applies should be reduced and if so, to what classes of railway servants; if reduced the date or dates by which any such reduction could be effected, taking into consideration the administrative difficulties, if any.

(2) Whether the grant of a compulsory periodic rest of a calendar day should be allowed to all railway servants referred to in (1) above, including those designated as essentially intermittent workers; and whether periodic rests in any other form be recommended.

(3) Whether the existing provisions regarding leave reserve are satisfactory, if not the modifications required to provide reasonable facilities to railway servants to enjoy leave due to them.

(4) Whether the existing leave rules and other holiday concessions applicable to railway servants who are daily rated and or in full-time service need liberalising and, if so, to what extent.

This Adjudication is important for two reasons, firstly it will lay down the hours of work, rest & leave and secondly, it indirectly will stop reattachment.

**Opening speech before Hon'ble
Adjudicator**

**by N. B. Sen, General Secretary
on 25.11. 1946**

My Lord,

On behalf of the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association and myself I have this proud privilege to welcome your Lordship to this city of Calcutta. Unfortunately the normal life in Calcutta has been torn by terrific events of arson, carnage and orgy of loot. Your Lordship's visit at this moment is more welcome since it would cement the cleavage, bridge the gulf. The set back to our trade union activities have been tremendous still the solidarity and unity evinced by our workers has been a rude shock to those elements in our social life who are out to create a rift in our rank and file. We do hope and believe that through Trade Union we will be able to sterilise the virus of communal strife and build up a united front in the onward way of a new India and free India.

Your Lordship has been entrusted with an issue on the solution of which hinges the fate of 10 lakhs Railwaymen of India. Those prisoners of 'Slave hour' look up to your Lordship with high hopes. With a setting discontent in their heart, with a surging feeling against the iron system in which they are denied the scope of living a social life, cultural life, they await your Lordship's award. My lord, your award will write labour charter - a magna charta for the railway labour of India. It will create a new code for the conditions of work. Your Lordship's verdict will be a verdict of history against the outworn system which is fast fading. Times are fast changing and a new order of things is coming into being. Railway labour of India to-day, do expect that their problems will be viewed in

this changed perspective in the context of Free India. They want to play their part as responsible citizens in the making of the new order. I bag to open the case with a hope that your Lordship's award on the points of dispute would create a frame work - a statute which will regulate the norms of behaviour of the Railway employees and Administration and afford them scope to be true citizens of India to-morrow.

The Following members of our Association gave evidence on 22.11.46 to 2.12.46 before the adjudicator at Calcutta.

1. Mr. S. S. Srivastava, Guard, Tundla
2. Mr. J. P. Sharma, Signaller, Allahabad
3. Mr. O. P. Sharma, Signaller, Lucknow
4. Mr. W. H. Oaklay, Driver Loco Gomoh
5. Mr. Lal Mohammed, Shunting Tindal. Howrah.
6. Mr. Robertson, Dy. Controller, Howrah.
7. Mr. Mohammed Habib, Call Book, Howrah.
8. Mr. M. D. Dubey TXR, Howrah.
9. Mr. A. H. Hamdani, Fitter-in-charge, Loco Shed, Moradabad.
10. Mr. G. C. Som, Guard, Howrah.
11. Mr. N. G. Fernandez, Asst. Yard Master, Burdwan.
12. Mr. D. B. Majumder, T.T.E., Howrah.
13. Mr. Chandrika Prosad, Mag. P.W.I., Jamalpur.
14. Mr. A. N. Gupta, APC Howrah.
15. Mr. S. K. Chowdhury, Storey Inspector, Grainshop, Calcutta.
16. Mr. Paritosh Banerjee, Charge Clerk Accounts and Booking office, Howrah.

17. Mr. Bhunswari Prasad, Guard, Dehri-on-Sone
18. Mr. B. S. Sharma, Guard, Moradabad.
19. Mr. C. N. Chowdhury, Driver Loco, Lucknow.
20. Mr. N. R. Roy, Relieving clerk, Coal Area Superintendent's Office, Dhanbad
21. Mr. S. D. Mukherjee, TTE, Lucknow.
22. Mr. Kedernath, Leading fireman Loco, Howrah.
23. K. M. Lal Misra, Cabin ASM, Juhi (Central).

After the deposition summing up started. I prepared from the evidences of the railway side a note dwelling on the various points raised by them bringing out that our demand for Hours of work and leave was not possible for implementation without administrative peril. The summing up was done by P. C. Dasgupta so far as HOER is concerned and Subodh Chowdhury on the matter of leave. Both of them by their speeches made fool of the Rly. Officers whom they pointed out that they were ignorant and did not know what was being followed in actual practice.

The evidence on all the railways were finished and now time for summing up based on the evidence would start in Bombay. 2 months before this I was summoned one day by DGM (P) Mr. Caromody who told me that Guruswami rang him up and told that Sri S.R. Mitra, Gt. Genl. Secy. of the Association should be spared on organisational special leave for preparation of notes for summing up. We get his letter later where he made same request. At that time there was no money of the Association to bear my expence for 2 months in Bombay. I had to bear all the

expences for staying in a Bengalee hotel. I prepared notes for Guruswami from the evidence of all the railways, which were of great help to him in his arguments before the Adjudicator. Before delivering the judgement, Justice Rajadhyaksha called all the Rly. unions which gave evidence in the adjudication proceeding and officials of all Railways and Railway Board in a Marina Beach posh hotel and gave idea of his tentative verdict. Guruswami of course knew this before hand and told us all not to raise any objection but to accept. This we did when justice Rajadhyaksha met individually each and every body presents.

The salient features of the award given by the Adjudicator in 1947 are the following :—

- (i) Classification - All railway servants coming under the Hours of Employment Regulations are to be classified as either "Intensive", "continuous", 'essentially intermittent' or 'casual'.
- (ii) The hours of work are to be restricted to 45 a week for 'intensive' workers, 40 a week for 'continuous' workers and 35 a week for 'essentially intermittent' workers.
- (iii) Periodic rest is to be given at the rate of 30 consecutive hours every week for 'intensive' and 'continuous' workers and at the rate of 24 consecutive hours every week for 'essentially intermittent' workers. Even for excluded workers one period of 48 to consecutive hours in a month or one period of 24 consecutive hours in a fortnight shall be given.
- (iv) Running staff are to be treated outside the scope of the Hours of Employment Regulations.
- (v) The rate of leave that can be granted

Class IV staff has been enhanced to an average 22 days leave on full pay, 17 days leave on half pay and 15 days casual leave per annum and skilled workmen have been admitted to the same benefits as Class III staff.

(vi) Detailed recommendations have been made for the provision of leave reserve. Leave of the Gazetted and non-Gazetted men on the one hand and Asisticks and Non-Asisticks on the other has been standardised. Leave on average pay can be earned to the extent of one month every year while half pay leave can be earned at the rate of 20 days every year.

For the first time, skilled workmen have been placed on a par with Class III staff and allowed the same rate of leave as applicable to Class I, II and III staff. This constitutes a considerable advance over the previous position.

Class IV staff had very poor leave benefits, but these have now been very greatly improved and brought almost in line with those of Class III staff.

Temporary Railway servants with more than one year's service have also been admitted to the same rights and privileges in the matter of leave as permanent servants.

The Adjudicator laid down the time table and different stages for implementation of the award but the Rly. Board did not adhere to this. By their delay dalling process, as is customary with them, started implementing by tits & bits and according to their own interpretation. This the railwaymen did not like. They pressed for another Commission for the improvement of the Rajadhyaksha award and the wrongful interpretation in its im-plementation. Thus another committee known as Meyabhoy Committee came into being for the redressal of the misdeeds of the

Railway Board. The Meyabhoy Committee made substantial improvements in the hours of work of the railway workers.

OUR STAND BEFORE THE PAY COMMISSION INTRODUCTION

The Indian Railways had been percpetrating a 'wage slavery' under the garb of revised scales of pay since 1934. Since then the E.I. Rly. workers at the instance of the E.I. Rly. Employees' Association were ceaselessly demanding for the complete overhauling of the retrograde pay structure. In June 1946, it went so far as to challenge the Administration to face an all out strike if the scales of pay were not revised forthwith. Before the solidarity of the 10 lakhs of Railway workers, the Railway Board had to yield and refer the whole issue to the 'Pay Commission' which had been appointed to revise the scales of pay of all Central Govt. servants. It was stipulated that the case of the Rly. workers should take the first priority and categorical assurance was given that the recommendations of the Commission would be given retrospective effect from 1.1.47.

The Chairman of the Pay Commission is Justice Baradachari of the Federal Court and members are Mr. N.M. Joshi, Sardar Mangal Singh, Mr. Frank Anthony and Mr. Mohammad Yamin Khan. Mr. N. M. Joshi is one of the outstanding labour leaders and is the General Secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress. He was connected with the All India Railwaymen's Federation for a considerable number of years. All workers including Mr. Joshi are the members of the Central Legislative Assembly. Thus the Commission formed under the presidency of a Federal Court Judge and with an important labour leader and representative

of the Central Assembly as its members, is expected to frame the new pay structure in a manner which will correctly reflect the real cost of living.

The present plethora of scales is not only highly inconvenient from the Administrative point of view but is one of the principal sources of discontent among the staff. These disgraceful scales of pay have set in vicious circles, inefficiency and fall in turn round. How the Railway Administration justifies the existence of three different scales of pay for the same category of staff doing the same sort of work is amazing. There are the old scales of pay, then there are coordinated scales of pay (1928), still again revised scales of pay, (1931). The co-ordinated scales of pay (1928) are only in vogue in the E.I. Rly. and the E.I. Rly. Administration, in spite of several representations, have thought it right not to abolish this shameful grade though they could not produce any convincing argument for its retention. The three scales of pay must be merged into one uniform scale of pay for the benefit of both the Administration and the workers. The scales of pay for Railway employees in England are contained in a small brochure of few pages but in India, the Administration are maintaining thick and voluminous pamphlets for that purpose. We are not prepared to agree that a unification and rationalisation of the scales of pay would present any considerable difficulty.

The pay of the Railway workers is scandalously low in comparison with other industries and Government offices. About 3,50,000 workers in Railways get a pay of less than Rs. 16/- P.M. It should be the duty of the 'Pay Commission' to see that all Central Government employees doing the same sort of work, irrespective of where they are

employed, should get same amount of remuneration, whereby the existing discontentment amongst the employees of Central Secretariat, Income tax, Customs, Railways, and Post and Telegraphs etc. can be overcome. This broad but necessary principle should at the outset be accepted by the Commission with a view to maintain efficiency of labour which is best secured by eliminating all feelings of injured justice among the workers and also to execute properly the duties and responsibilities of the Government as employers, who, in determining the remuneration of its employees, should take into consideration not the market value of labour but the existing cost of living and other such amenities which are necessary to keep the employees fit physically as well as mentally.

It appears that the Railway Administration are secretly trying to sabotage the efforts of the Pay Commission. It is understood, the Railway Board have made out a post war scales of pay, perhaps with the intention to prejudice the Pay Commission. When there is the Pay Commission, let them to frame scales of pay like other Railway Board. Railway Board's contemplated scales of pay are manifestly biased and one sided as it is not framed in consultation with organised labour and has no bearing with the new pay structure of other Central Government offices. If the Railway Board are allowed to frame the new scales of pay why then is all the fuss about the Pay Commission. It is just and necessary that this unwarranted and unscientific proposal of the Rly. Board should not be placed before the Commission at all, and if placed, should be thoroughly disregarded.

The Railway Board's contemplated scales are :—

Inferior servants :

- | | | |
|------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. 27—1/2— | 35 Monthly rated artisan— | 4. 45—1—60 |
| 2. 30—1—40 | | 5. 60—2—74 |
| 3. 36—1—50 | | 6. 75—3—105 |

Subordinates :

- | | |
|---------------------|---------|
| 7. 60—3—78=4—130 | 12. 325 |
| 8. 70—3—82=4—150 | 13. 350 |
| 9. 100—4—120=5—160 | 14. 400 |
| 10. 150—5—170=8—210 | 15. 450 |
| 11. 210—10—300 | 16. 500 |

= Indicates efficiency bar.

The most disgraceful aspect of the above scales is the introduction of overlapping scales which hardly makes any sense. Nowhere these overlapping scales exist and we are sure that in the Post war pay structure of all other government offices, these overlapping scales will not find their existence. Railway Employees cannot therefore accept these even though they are forcibly introduced. In these scales a subordinate employee with 30 years of service will have to retire with the highest pay of Rs. 186 if he is not held up even for a single year in any efficiency bar and upper grade vacancy bar. Very few employees will be benefitted by scales 11 to 16 as none will reach them by years of service if not by favouritism. Favouritism is a vicious factor leading to unhealthiness and inefficiency of labour, therefore it must be exterminated and no loophole maintained for its continuance.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation in its Moghalsarai Session in November 1940 which was convened on the invitation of the E.I.R. Employees' Association demanded the following scales of pay.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| Un-skilled staff | 36-3-45 |
| Semi-skilled staff | 50-5-60 |
| Skilled staff | 60-5-100-10-200 |
| Ministerial and other subordinate staff | Do |

Commensurate increase in other Scales of Pay.

This minimum salary was demanded taking into consideration the 1939 price level and along with this was demanded dearness allowance on a scale for each point of the above the 1939 price level as recommended by the Rau Court of enquiry. According to this, dearness allowance now admissible to an employee is Rs. 15/-.

Thus our demand as the minimum pay at the present price level for the unskilled employee is Rs. 45/-.

Thus our demand as the minimum pay at the present price level for the skilled employee is Rs. 36+45 = Rs. 81/- and for a subordinate staff is Rs. 60+45 = Rs. 105/-, therefore, must not be lost sight of the demands of the Federation in regard to the revised minimum scales of pay. This demand is linked up with the recognition of the effect to the recommendations of the Rau Committee regarding dearness allowance. If the latter is not acted upon, as it has become up-to-date, the minimum revised pay must be more than our original demand. It may accord with the existing pay at any other price level that the Government may consider as reasonable. The difference between such level and

one, if any, being adjusted by granting of temporary dearness allowance.

The work of the Pay Commission should not end only by mere framing the pay structure of the employees. It also must recommend the fixation of the existing staff in the new pay structure. If it fails to do this it will throw the existing staff in the hands of Administrative wolves who will fix them up according to their whims and caprices. This is not a mere surmise, this we have seen when in 1934 new scales of pay were introduced. Though a somewhat uniform grade was introduced at that time in all state Railways, while fixing up staff, different Railways took different lines of action and deprived the staff in all ways and means. The E. I. Rly went so far as to combine the lowest two grades by one grade viz 30-3-45-5-60. The result being that some employees were fixed in the scale Rs. 30-3-45. The responsibility of the Pay Commission is tremendous. It will have to fix up the percentage of the higher grades. At present the scope of promotion to higher grades is limited due mainly to the disparity in the number of incumbents in the lowest and the higher grades. Promotion to higher grades which do not involve any considerably material change in the nature of duties and responsibilities, such as junior and senior clerical grades, should be automatic and without any bar.

As regards those higher grades which call for higher responsibilities or more strenuous works, the number of vacancies in such grades must be at least 50% of those in the lower so that every employee gets a fair and uniform chance of promotion. The Typists have no higher grade and no further scope of promotion beyond Rs. 60/-. They must have higher grades. 'B' grade Guards have a long

standing grievance that they perform the same work as 'A' grade Guards, but they are paid two different grades of pay. These must be amalgamated into one and pay must be to the standard of 'A' grade. ASM's rightly claim to have a specialised knowledge and they must be compensated for that. ATXR's and grade IV TXR's do identical work and they must therefore have same grade. The Cabin ASM's in some cabins draw a special allowance but their compatriots doing the same work in another cabin are denied this allowance. No allowance but a better scale must be fixed for them. There are other such categories of staff whose cases should likewise be dealt with.

The Association has represented the case of all grades and shades of Railway employees before the Pay Commission. It has presented their case by a Memorandum in reply to the questionnaire sent to the Association by the Pay Commission. The Commission invited this Association to produce oral evidence before them on 21.11.53 accordingly our Working President, A.N. Mallik, B.A. (Cambridge) (London) tendered his evidence before the E.I. Rly workers and brought to their notice the black spots in the present pay structure. We visualise a Rly with a staff with good pay and facilities. Indian Rlys may be ideals in the world. We hope that the Pay Commission will make recommendations which will not result in such a state of affairs.

MEMORANDUM TO THE PAY COMMISSION

Classification of Services

The present classification of gazetted staff on Railways and subordinate, daily rated workmen

servants was introduced in 1932. The distinction between subordinates and inferior servants is according to the State Railway Code on a pay basis. The term inferior servants is awkward and unhappy. An effort should be made to standardise the nomenclature on all Railways. Besides organised labour has persistently demanded that daily rated staff should be converted to monthly rated staff. The classification of posts into,

Administrative services (Higher and Lower)
Executive services (Higher and Lower)
Ministerial services (Higher and Lower)
Scientific and Technical services (Higher and Lower)

can not be applied on Railways, since the broad lines of differentiation can hardly be found. It is extremely difficult to distinguish in many cases between the clerical staff and out door staff. For instance a Number Taker has much clerical work to do although half his duties are out-side the office in the station or in the yard. There is hardly any Railway work which does not require technical knowledge and qualification. The term "scientific" applies only to a very few employees such as Chemists, Metallurgists, Malariologists, Bacteriologists, etc. It must be borne in mind that the position described on the Railways is in relation to posts rather than to services. Though a reclassification would present peculiar difficulties, we feel certain modifications are imperative. It is high time that the distinction (Inferior servants) should be abolished. We would suggest its entire elimination by other civil departments too. In this connection, we would stress that there are variances in the designations of the same work obtaining in different Railways. The diversity of designations has created a queer

position in which a man doing the same work gets different scale of pay simply because he is designated otherwise.

Standards of Remuneration.

Though fixing the salary or the remuneration of the various grades of employee is a problem which is intertwined with the whole economic framework of the country and the technocratic phase of the country yet, there are certain basic tests and standards which must shape the above fixation. We as organised labour feel that a labourer must be given a living wage. By living wage, we mean, a wage which will keep a labourer with his family of five in reasonable standard of health, efficiency, and comfort. The main factor of sustaining a bestial existence, the old exploded theory of keeping flow of supply of labour must be given a good bye. Much confusion has been caused by treating labour as a commodity. The problem has to be viewed through a new angle of vision, with a new perspective of social economics.

We conducted an enquiry into the family budgets of Railway employees of different grades and cadres. The net result of this enquiry has been the inadequacy of the pay structures. Though any rigid test and a standardised standard cannot be laid down in this connection, still we think that living wage and reasonable standard of comfort can be resolved in the pay structure as given below. In calculating these scales, we have in view, the August 1939 price level as the equilibrium point. We have given up the 1932 level in computing a tolerably stable level of food stuff, clothing and other essential commodities since we do not expect that the price level will ever drop down to 1932 level in view of the future economic trends in this country.

- A. Unskilled staff 36-3-45
- B. Semi-skilled staff 40-4-80
- C. Skilled, Subordinate and ministerial staff 60-5-100-10-200
- D. Commensurate increase in other higher subordinate grades.

And dearness allowance as per Rau Committee recommendations.

We would add that special allowances must be made in fixing up the remuneration of Railway staff who in the natural course of duty have to do shift duties and as well encounter the element of risk and continued alertness which they have to keep up in the interests of public and personal safety. So far as 'D' is concerned we have refrained from laying down any scale but we would stress that in these cases, the remuneration must be commensurate with the responsibilities they are entrusted with.

Stable level of prices.

We do not think that there will be any difficulty in recommending any long term arrangement in respect of the pay of public servants at the present moment. We agree that in fixing the scale, the Commission will have to take in view a tolerably stable level of prices of food stuffs, clothing and other essential commodities' We do not place any value on the apprehension that there will be a sudden break down in the price level. We do not attach any importance whatsoever, on the cry for stable price level. Taking in view the fluctuation (in the upward and downward direction) in the price level, in the last ten years, it will not be difficult to find out the equilibrium level of prices. We have to shade off orthodox economic prejudices. We must realize that we live in a dynamic state not in a static one. The society is moving from one

point of equilibrium to another point of equilibrium. It is an upward trend. It is a far cry to look back to 1932 level.

Recruitment of non-Indians.

It was so long the practice with the Government of India to solve the problem of unemployment in England by providing employment of Englishmen in Indian Railways, without paying any heed to the question of unemployment of qualified Indians. This policy must now be given a good bye and under no circumstances non-Indians should be recruited to serve in Indian Railways. However, there is no harm for some special experts being brought down for particular construction or for some other training purposes on a temporary basis.

Disparity in pay.

The dissatisfaction on the score of disparity of earnings for similar kinds of work as between different Depts and sections of the same department, is wide. There is a plethora of scales on Railways. In E.I. Rly. there are three different scales of pay. The old scales of pay, then there are Co-ordinated scales of pay and again New Scales of pay. The co-ordinated scales of pay are peculiar only with the E.I. Rly. Additional scales have been introduced from time to time to meet special problems or as an alternative to local allowance and there has been a continual urge to introduce adhoc scales. The disparity in the present scales of pay will be evident from the following table :—

(Lowest scales of pay are every where shown)

Office staff	Railways	P.&T.	Income Tax
Clerk	30—60	45—90	45—120
Stenographer	100—120	80—180	100—200
Typists	30—60	45—90	45—120
Peon	12—17	16—18	15—19
Duftry	15—20	20—28	17—20

Railways employ various other types of workers which are not employed by any other Govt. Depts. excepting a few public utility concerns. A comparison of their pay as it is at present is given below :—

Unskilled labour	Rlys.	Port Trust (Cal.)	Tram Co. (Cal.)
Cooly, Khalasi cleaner etc.	12—17	26—80	29—24
Gangman	13—18	26—30	20—24
Flagman	12—17	26—30	22—26
Semi-skilled labour			
Fitter, Riveter, Moulder, Tindal	16—28	30—40	25—35
Shunting Porter	18—25	26—30	
Skilled labour			
Fitter, Moulder, Turner, Carpenter, Blacksmith	20—28	40—60	36—68
Crane Driver	20—40	40—45	
Motor Lorry			
Driver	41—50	60—65	40—60
Running staff			
Fireman	13—19	32—38	25—40
Shunter	25—35	60—65	
Driver	30—60	60—65	60—80
Traffic			
Tally Clerk	20—28	60—100	25—40
Guard	30—60		60—80
Gunner	30—60	40—60	
Signaller	30—60	36—81	

Then there are Asst. Station Masters whose minimum qualification is matriculation with knowledge of telegraphy and whose duties can only be compared with Sub-Post masters of Post and Telegraph Dept. Sub-Post Masters get Rs. 45—90 while Asst. Station Masters get Rs. 30—60. Post masters get 100—120 while Station Masters get Rs. 65—85.

There are other categories of staff in Railways viz. Ticket Collectors, Ticket Examiners, etc. comparison of whose pay could not be cited as no other industry employ such categories of staff. But it can be unhesitatingly said that their pay are not commensurate with the type of work they do and the responsibilities they undertake and the qualification they require.

The present pay scales of services is neither adequate nor satisfactory. We have already stressed regarding utter inadequacy of this present structure of the present scale. Organised labour is persistent in its demand to scrap the present pay structure. We feel that these pay scales are arbitrary and have been fixed by Administrative fiat rather than by any principle or policy. They do not secure any proper differentiation between grades of responsibility.

We are in favour of the abolition of the distinction between the old, co-ordinated and the new scales of pay and the introduction of a uniform scale for each category of staff. The revised scales of pay which were introduced during 1934, with back effect to all staff who joined the services after 15th July 1931, were mainly based on the following principles: (a) staff to be subdivided into upper and lower subordinates (a rather nebulous distinction). The upper subordinates pay to be fixed at least as much as 20% with an average rate of 15% over the lower subordinates between 10—15% (b) - maximum to be followed instead of - The discontent and dissatisfaction prevailing among staff doing the same kind of work sitting side by side but drawing different pay, the disparity between which can easily be appreciated.

Zonal allowance

The proper method of allowing for variation in local conditions will be to grant a zonal allowance to all staff to neutralise the variations in the costs of living. Organised labour should be allowed to have a say in the fixing of these zonal allowance. Fixation of zonal allowance on percentage basis does not benefit the low paid staff and therefore a fixed sum of money should be paid as zonal allowance to all staff irrespective of pay.

Time scales in Indian services.

Whether the fixed pay deadens interests and does not provide stimulus to greater effort for promotion, or whether increment places a premium on inefficiency are after all academical and unrelated to the realities of life. The bare and cold fact remains that when the revised scales for Railway servants were brought into force after the depression, incremental scales were very much restricted to those in the lower ranges. We suggest incremental scales without any efficiency bar, and resent the blocking at a fixed pay for many years. The utility of the incremental system is that the staff knows how far he can advance in the normal course of events. It must also be noted that as years roll on, commitments and obligations in life are added and as such we suggest incremental scales. In particular, the working of the progressive time scale secures adequate reward for merit and afford incentive for efficiency. The position of 'merit' and 'seniority' on Railways is in a hopeless mixup. Neither the avenues of promotions which only the principle of seniority should determine are earmarked, nor are the selection posts where the principle of merit is the criterion for selection are declared beforehand, to create a sense of confidence and faith and to remove any

misgiving amongst the staff. In Railways, the hoax of seniority-cum suitability has been the guiding principle in determining promotions. It is neither merit nor seniority. The formulae cuts both ways. The injustice perpetrated upon the Railway staff by the Railway officers in ignoring the claims of the senior staff by this hoax of seniority-cum-suitability is a painful story. We would suggest that there should not be any fusion of the principle of merit and seniority. In cases where, extraordinary or any out of way calibre is only called for, the principle of merit should be the sole criterion. But these selection posts should be declared. In this connection we would stress that the selection Boards which make the selections, have evinced a hopeless failure in discharging their duties and forfeited all confidence of the staff. We have at our disposal instance which would prove nepotism and jabbery, which is perpetrated in the name of selection. In certain cases, we would welcome the principle of merit, but that must be adjudged by a service commission (as envisaged in Frank Desouza Report) not by a so-called selection Board.

The present system of promotions between the basic scales and selection grade of a service is not satisfactory for the reasons already explained above. We cite here a few of the many instances which will throw a flood of light on the system that obtains in R.I. Railway.

- (1) Mr. S. K. Sen, first Class Apprentice (Electrical) began his career on Rs. 90/- 25 years ago. Even to day he is drawing Rs. 90/-. We shall not comment on it.
- (2) Mr. S. K. Mukherjee was appointed on Rs. 50/- and then re-fixed on Rs. 52/- in the notorious scale 28-3-52 and

he was drawing Rs. 52/- for the last 17 years.

The promotion from lower to the higher grades in Railways is few and far between. There are men, and a good many of them, in the lowest grade for 20 years but cannot obtain promotion due not to their inefficiency but to the dearth of vacancy in the higher grades. The whole system requires scrapping up by suitably adjusting the number of posts in the higher and lower grades so that no employec is required to be held up in the maximum for more than a year.

Dearness allowance and variation in price

The present practice of granting dearness allowance to meet the temporary steep increases in the cost of living due to conditions created by the war has proved unsatisfactory with the Railway employees as the recommendations of the Rau Court of Enquiry have totally been disregarded by the Administration. According to the recommendations of the Rau Committee, Railway workers are entitled to a dearness allowance of Rs. 45/- but they are being paid on an average Rs. 17/- Dearness allowance should have nothing to do with the scale of pay. It is a specific measure to counteract a specific cause.

The variation in prices in the cost of living can be provided for, in fixing a pay structure, if the margin of likely fluctuation in the upward direction, in the price curve, and cost of living index are taken note of, and also if due appreciations are made of the dynamicity of society.

Apart from the endeavour to neutralise the effect of the rise in prices by a corresponding increase in pay, we consider it necessary and proper that in the case of

Railway employees (non-officers), the existing scales of pay should be increased on the ground that at the time the Co-ordinatd new scales of pay were fixed they were inadequate to enable the Railway employees to maintain themselves and their families. This inadequacy in the scales of pay were all the time brought to the notice of the Administration by the organised labour.

Classification of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour.

The Railway workers should be classed as unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour. By granting a living wage, a wage which will enable the labourer and his family at a reasonable level of health, comfort and efficiency should be the principle in fixing basic rates of pay of unskilled labour. By semi-skilled we mean staff who require some initial training in picking up his work. By skilled we mean possession of a thorough and detailed training in particular craft work or duty. There must not be any daily rest of labour since we have experienced that due to the inefficiency of the Railway Administration to provide work for them, they are some times subject to financial loss.

Running staff.

We feel that the question of Running staff should be examined *denovo*. They must be protected by H.E.R. They must be given double mileage when perforce they have to work more than scheduled hours (the demand is for a 42 hrs a week). A minimum day's rest must be provided in each week in roster. The rate of running allowance should be unified and the diverse overtime rates should be rationalised. The running staff as well as other staff should be given dearness allowance. They must also be given dearness when they are to work during Public and gazetted holidays.

Leave.

The present practice under which widely different sets of rules govern the grant of leave to different classes of Government employees is not working satisfactorily.

The existence of different sets of leave rules for different class of Railway employees has given rise to serious discontent since it is the date of appointment which determines the condition of leave that an employee would be entitled to. So far as this Railway is concerned the following leave rules are in vogue.

(a) Old leave rules, based under the civil service regulation applying to a Railway servant prior to first January 1922.

(b) Fundamental leave rules introduced on 1st January 1922 and applicable to Railway servants who are employed on State managed Railways. The salient features of these are as follows :—

(1) Separate rules for Asiatic and non-Asiatic domicile. These two sets of rules are known as ordinary and special leave rules.

(2) Under special leave rule, a Railway servant is entitled to leave on average pay equal to one eleventh of duty plus one year.

(3) Under ordinary leave rules, a Railway servant is entitled to leave on average pay equal to one eleventh of duty plus an additional one year (which is granted only if the leave is on medical certificate or outside of India).

(4) An inferior servant is granted leave only on condition of "no extra cost" that is his leave salary must not exceed what remains from his pay after providing for the efficient discharge of the duties of this post during his absence.

(5) No leave except hospital or leave on medical certificate is granted to daily rated staff. Workshop staff however enjoy a limited number of workshop holidays on full pay.

(c) Excompany leave rules :—

The excompany old leave rules do not allow any furlough to Indian Subordinates and on certain Railways they do not allow even sick leave on half pay to such staff unless they have completed 20 years service. Inferior and daily rated staff enjoy leave on full pay under these rules, the grant of leave varying on different railways from 10 to 30 days inclusive of casual leave.

(d) New state railway leave rule came into force on 1st April 1930—the main features are as below :—

A distinction has been made between officers and subordinates more particularly in respect of leave on half pay. A further distinction has been made between Asiatic and non-Asiatic domicile. For inferior and daily rated staff are allowed smaller period of leave compared with other classes of employees.

So far as our information goes, staff are not spared to go on leave in many cases even if leave is granted and also the provision for reverting to substantive pay is a serious defect which prevents many staff from going on leave.

Under the present circumstances the leave salary is based on average pay which means the pay drawn in the post in which held substantively. There is much discontent in service in Railways and the consequent loss of emoluments while on so-called full pay leave is a source of constant grievance. We find that the definition of average pay does not tally with the definition in the revised leave rules of 1933, according to which leave salary

in the case of permanent employee is equal to his average pay for the 36 complete months preceding the month in which he proceeds on leave or average substantive pay for the preceding 12 months whichever is greater.

A definite change is necessary so that improvement of leave terms applicable to inferior and daily rated is concerned. The leave on half average pay granted to inferior and daily rated staff is absolutely inadequate. Since the matter is awaiting the award of Adjudicator we refrain from making further comments.

The most vital defect in leave rules is that leave is not treated as a matter of right. We have cases at our disposal that staff though granted leave are not spared on leave in many cases. Once the leave is viewed as a matter of right than a privilege the whole issue will be simplified. A machinery should be created under which a staff will be spared on leave as and when he requires it. There must be the improvement in leave salary on the lines as suggested above. Leave must be adequate to make up for the lost vigour and pick up the social link which a civilised man must have. We therefore suggest that :—

The different sets of leave rules should be abolished and a unified leave rules framed, keeping in view the following demands.

- (1) 20 days Casual leave in a year.
- (2) Privilege leave to the extent of 30 days a year.
- (3) Sick leave or accident pay should not be less than 2/3 of the earnings of the worker.
- (4) Temporary staff should be given the same leave as the permanent staff.
- (5) Leave preparatory to retirement should be granted to all staff.

Retirement Benefits.

In our opinion the best method to secure adequate provision for a Government servant and his family against the two eventualities of retirement and death is to have old age pension, Provident Fund, Gratuity and family annuity. So far as compulsory retirement is concerned we have nothing to comment. But so far as voluntary retirement is concerned the minimum must be scaled down. The minimum service qualifying for retirement should be as per terms of contract.

The discretionary powers given to the General Manager for with-holding special contribution and gratuity must be curtailed. In course of Railway duties, it is quite possible for a man who has worked for a number of years to commit a mistake. To deny him the privilege of special contribution and gratuity on the plea of not 'good, efficient and faithful service' is a denial of justice. It should be paid as a matter of right. The minimum of 15 years service limit should be removed.

We would advocate the introduction of compulsory state insurance and a family annuity scheme for Railway employees in addition to the present Provident Fund and Gratuity Rules.

Unless a scheme of total social insurance is there, these schemes of Pension, Provident Fund and Gratuity are mere palliatives. A system must be brought into existence under which an employee and his family must be protected against the eventualities of unemployment, retirement, disease, injury and death.

Even the Whitley Commission's recommendations have not been accepted by the Administration. The Provident Fund membership is not open to the low paid workers with less than 3 years service.

voluntary for a large number of workers so that in practice only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the eligible employees join the Fund on a voluntary basis. The Whitley Commission recommendations which were made 15 years before is now inadequate and better and more liberal schemes must now be framed to meet the growing needs of the workers in this respect.

Conciliation Machinery.

Under the present frame work of disciplinary and appeal rules service security is not guaranteed. It is perpetually threatened.

(1) Our experience as a recognised Association is painful. We have seen of many instances in which even in clear cases of injustices done to the staff, the authority concerned has refused to reverse the order only to keep up the Administrative prestige. We have been helpless against the arrogance and beaurocratic method of the Administration.

(2) Appeals and representations from the staff are never acknowledged, nor do they receive the serious attention and are dealt with in a perfunctary manner. Replies to the appeals are, not generally received without several reminders. There are instances when inspite of several reminders appeals remained unreplyed to.

(3) Right of appeal is there but the reply that the staff receives is in almost all cases "I do not see any reason to rescind the orders already passed". The why is never explained. Unless there is a service tribunal to go into the serious cases which merit removal, dismissal or discharge, there will not be service security.

Present system is a vitiated system. A staff is always the vicim of an adverse opinion formed. He does not get imparitail justice since the Divisionl Superintendent or

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer backs up his branch officers, and the officers side with their underlings, an unholy conspiracy is the prevailing order. Moreover the manner in which the Associations are treated by the Administrative officers will be evident if we reproduce certain extracts from the correspondence which we had with the Administration. Unless the false notion of prestige held by the Administration is broken down, we do not feel that much appreciable work can be done in resolving staff grievances and protecting the service security of the staff. There is another factor that is operating. It is the security of the officer's services that is mostly responsible for the insecurity of the services of employees under them. Miscarriage of justice by the officers which detected should not only be rectified by the higher officers but the officer who is responsible for such an offence should be penalised so that it becomes an offence against him as well as for other officers.

The present conciliation machinery is totally unsuited. It requires complete overhauling. The Regional Commissioner of Labour works as a dignified post and forwards the cases of the Association to the General Manager and the General Manager writes a letter to the Association. Since he has no binding force on General Manager, he is looked upon as an intruder if he writes in his opinion prevail. Our experience is that far as resolving staff grievances and protecting service security are concerned, the institution of Regional Labour Commissioner has been a total failure. This is a curious position which the Regional Commissioner holds. He does not get the backing from the labour department if his honest opinion prevail. Instances are there

disposal to show the dismal failure of this machinery. As such we would advocate establishment of

Standing Industrial Court, and Service Tribunal in Railways

Removal of,

False sense of prestige and vanity held by the Administrative officers while dealing with Association.

And change in,

Disciplinary and appeal rules.

RISE & GROWTH OF

/E. I. R. EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

Such was the time. The East Indian Railway workers were groaning under the pressure of the Administrative whims and injustices. The administration with the help of the Government repression was able to crush the E. I. Rly. strike, and the E. I. Railway Indian Labour Union. The workers were at lurch — they were disunited — they lost all hopes — they were drudging their existence with all sorts of injustices perpetrated on them. They were afraid of raising any voice of protest — rather they considered they were ordained for all the miseries brought upon them. Taking the fullest advantage of the situation, the administration was exploiting the workers by all ways and means.

At such a time the E. I. Rly. Employees' Association came into existence—it came into existence since there was historic necessity for it. Any organisation or Institution or Society does not spring into existence by the mere fiat of somebody's will unless and until it is historically essential. An organisation does not come into being simply because somebody wants it. The trying need for an organisation to unite and co-ordinate

the efforts of the E. I. Rly. workers was there and the E. I. Rly. Employees' Association came into being.

Small events herald the bigger ones. E. B. Rly. workers had an Association of their own which was a militant organisation and was fighting for the well being of the employees. "Why not have a similar organisation on the East Indian Railway as well," enquired Mr. P. N. Gupta a Guard of E. B. Rly. to a Guard of Asansol. The Guard came back with the idea burning in his heart.

In pursuance of this resolve a meeting of the E. I. Rly. employees was held at the Indian Institute Asansol on 29.1.34. The Railway workers present at the meeting unanimously agreed with great enthusiasm, to form the Association. This was a milestone in the history of the struggle of E. I. Railway workers for self protection. The Association was formed with the following objects :-

- (1) To promote and protect the interests of E. I. Rly. employees by legitimate constitutional means.
- (2) To secure for Railway employees a fair wage, a fair return of their labour and equal opportunities to rise in the service, irrespective of caste, religion and colour.
- (3) To suggest and secure execution of plans and projects beneficial to the welfare of the employees and the employers.
- (4) To regulate and foster good relations to establish understanding and harmony between the employees and employers.
- (5) To obtain settlement in a peaceful manner, all disputes between employees and the employers. If the cessation of work may not be

avoidable cases, and to introduce joint standing committee and Arbitration Boards.

(6) To safeguard and resist all movement initiated, promoted or forced upon a section of all Railway employees by unauthorised person or persons, which may be to the prejudice of the Railway workers.

(7) To eschew party politics.

In order to achieve these objects the Association further resolved that it would :-

(a) Urge upon the Railway authorities not to discourage the employees joining the Association, and to make their attitude in this regard clear in their official Railway gazette.

(b) Ask the authorities to allow the Association to give publicity to its official organ and the Press, and

(c) Request the Railway Administration to allow the Association to hold meetings at Railway Institutes and other Railway premises. The Association undertook to see that the Railway work was not hindered.

All this was historically necessary and therefore this Association was born to meet the needs of the time and as a registered institution it commenced its activities within the frame-work of the provisions of Trade Union Act and to that extent to act constitutionally.

The rational and logical aims and objects of the Association as accepted at its inception were in keeping with the spirit of the modern times, and with which alone, a trade union could fulfil its purpose, The Association was registered on 17. 8. 1933 under the Trade Union Act of 1926 (Registration No. being 43). The day of its registration was a glorious

day for the worker of the E. I. Ry. Today we look with pride at those nine of our brave comrades who applied to the Registrar Trade Union and thereby laid down the milestones in the progress of the Association. These Comrades are :

1. S. P. Verma ... Instructor, Training School, Asansol.
2. A. K. Dutta ... Guard, Asansol
3. J. N. Gupta ... Org. Secy. E. I. R. Emp. Assn.
4. D. K. Biswas ... C. I. Gupta, Comm. Cell
5. J. J. Chakrabarti ... Hd. Clerk, Supn's Office, Howrah
6. P. N. Sengupta ... Clerk, Office, ...
7. S. N. Bose ... Clerk, Office, ...
8. N. P. Banerjee ... Clerk, Office, ...
9. S. N. Ghose ... Clerk, Office, ...

This was not the end of our journey, we had yet another hurdle to cross, to obtain the recognition of the Association by the Administration.

In the meantime some changes in the leadership of the Association took place. The first General Secretary of the Association, Joglekar relinquished his office. At the President Mr. S. P. Verma was elected. At the Annual General Meeting held on 18.12.32, A. K. Dutt was elected as General Secretary, who was succeeded by J. N. Gupta in the election of the following year. The Central Office of the Association was long at Asansol and in November 1933, the office was moved to

to 133, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta as it was thought expedient to have the Central Office located at a place where the Head Office of the Administration lies. Later on 15th October, 1935, the Office was removed from 133, Lower Circular Road to 12, Chandmari Road, Howrah and subsequently on 25th July 1936, it was shifted to 23 & 24, Strand Road, Calcutta. A final attempt to secure recognition from the Administration was made on the 3rd of November, 1933 but the then Agent Mr. H. A. Haney refused to grant the recognition. This refusal disappointed the Executives of the Association but did not discourage them and prompted them to make a determined effort to secure the recognition. But the official attitude of the Railway was hostile and they were not prepared to readily accede recognition.

The Executive continued to demand from the Administration to make a commitment in unequivocal terms that there should be no objection in joining the Association which is registered under the Trade Union Act of 1926. The Association reiterated the policy of the Railway Board wherein it is contemplated that "the union conducted on a sound trade union principle ought to be encouraged and the registration of union under the Trade Union Act should predispose a Railway Administration to recognise it though the degree of such recognition must necessarily depend on the extent to which such union is really representative" and demanded recognition as such. Though recognition was kept back, the Administration had to accede to the fact of the staff joining this Association. The fight for getting out recognition and full status from the unwilling hands of the Administration continued unabated. The Association was passing through a process of

formation and development and the message of the Association was being spread to the farthest end of the E. I. Rly. system. In the first Annual Conference that was held in August 1934 at Calcutta Mr. Jamnadas Mehta was elected the President. His election to the presidential chair of the Association added speed to the momentum. Tempo of the Association's activity accelerated beyond expectations. There were many who rallied round the banner of this Association in its formation stage. Silently they contributed to the cause of this Association. Their sacrifices have been tremendous; they were men behind the plough. Association has stepped through the paths of progress and will march on to days unborn 'through paths strewn with the hecatombs of these silent workers. History will forget them, posterity will know nothing about them but the Association stands and will stand as a living monument to the sacrifices of those unknown soldiers who fought and bled. We will be failing in our duty if we do not mention at least the names of Mr. Robin Ghosh who retired as the head clerk of A. S. W's office, Howrah, Late Mr. Jibani Jiban Chakraborti who died after conditional resignation against the calculated injustice perpetrated on him and Mr. Pulinchand Sen of the Lost Property office. Their contributions to the building up of this Association can hardly be assessed. They gave their best—their blood and tears.

The Association had to fight the bitter fight to get the recognition — obstacles and objections were many. The Administration tried to thwart the growth of this powerful living force. The delay on the part of recognition was scandalous and unjustified. It betrayed a reactionary mentality. In the meantime on 13th December 1936

Association got itself affiliated to the All India Railwaymen's Federation. The General Secretary A. I. R. F. was threatening to place the whole issue before the Railway Board for a final decision. Meanwhile our President, Mr. Mehta returned from abroad and urged for recognition without further delay. It was on the 14th May 1935.

The Second Annual Conference was held at Dhanbad on the 24th and 25th August, 1935. It was a unique success and it evinced the strength and the representative character of the Association in its true light. It was a force-behind it lay the mass feelings and aspirations.

On the 27th August '35 Mr. Mehta and Mr. S. P. Varma met the Agent and as a result of this interview and the discussion that took place formal recognition was granted to the Association on the following terms :

- (1) That this Association is a Registered Trade Union.
- (2) That this Association will be governed in all matters by the provision of the Trade Union Act.
- (3) That this Association shall be based by such regulation as the Railway Board will from time to time make for the conduct of employees on State Railways. The Association pressed for certain vital facilities which were inherent in the term 'Recognition'.

It was the united force of the Railway labour that squeezed out the recognition from an unwilling hand.

Magna Charta of the Association

Official Recognition was granted by the Agent vide letter No. AC 43/1 of 24th September, 1935 on the terms as stated above.

The rights and privileges of this Association were detailed in Agent's letter

No. AC 43/1 of 24th September, 35 as quoted below.

- (1) That the President shall have access to the Agent, Deputy Agent, Heads of Departments, Divisional Superintendents, D. C. M. Es. and Workshop Managers, In-charge of shops. That the Vice-President and General Secretary shall have access to the Deputy Agent, Heads of Departments, Divisional Superintendents, D. C. M. Es.
- (2) That the Branch Secretaries may have access to Railway Officers in their branch areas.
- (3) That the Administration was not prepared to discuss individual cases of any form but this was subsequently modified by Mr. J. A. Bell, the then Agent in his letter No. AC 43/1 of 24th October '35 "to the extent that the Administration could not agree to discuss."

The right for the Association Representative to enter the office remains for the purpose of collecting subscriptions. It was squeezed out after a great deal of trouble. The Railway Board sent out a memorandum detailing the model constitution which was practically the same as stipulated by the Association and it was adopted in the next conference held at Ondal on 27th and 28th January 1936. The model constitution stands today based on the model constitution. The Association pressed its grave anxiety to protect and to maintain the legitimate right of the Railway labour. It pressed the General Manager and requested him to accede to the following conditions:

- (1) Prior consultation before any order was made in the service of the Railway.
- (2) To be given copies of all orders and orders.

- (3) Employees who are members of the Association to be given the right to ask for an Association Official to help them in any enquiry.
- (4) Special casual leave for members of the Central Council who might be stationed at outstations to attend the Central Council meetings.
- (5) For the issue of periodical passes for one or two officials of the Association to educate the workers regarding their duties to the Administration and Association.
- (6) It was further stipulated that the Association would be advised at monthly meetings of any important changes the Administration had under consideration provided he was not bound to secrecy as might occasionally be the case.

On the 29th May 36 the General Manager made it clear that no branch of this Association would be recognised unless advice is received from the Central office of the Association.

This Association had a stiff fight to establish its right of representing individual cases. The issue was brought to a definite shape by General Manager in his letter No. AC 177/4 of 12th February 1942. The letter ran as below :

"It has been decided to permit recognised Unions to represent a reasonable number of individual cases under the conditions noted below :-

- (a) Cases of dismissal, removal from service or reduction may be discussed.
- (b) Cases of selection, promotion or supersession may not be discussed.
- (c) Cases may be discussed with Divisional Superintendents, Deputy

Chief Mechanical Engineers and Works Managers Incharge of Shops at their headquarters. Pass facilities, have been granted (vide G. M's letter No. AP. 448 dated 2. 2. 41) to facilitate this.

- (d) Only the President or such other official nominated by the President with the approval of the General Manager will exercise these rights.
- (e) Only cases which have been finally through the specified course of representation and appeal may be discussed.
- (f) Cases in which appeal has gone beyond the officer noted in (c) must be reserved for discussion at the regular meeting with the General Manager or Deputy General Manager, Personnel.
- (g) Lists of cases proposed to be discussed must be sent to the officer concerned clear fourteen days before the meeting.

These arrangements are tentative and subject to revision in the light of experience.

It is hoped that these measures will be of assistance to the Union and to the Administration by establishing better understanding.

Care should of course be taken to examine cases so that only those in which there are sound grounds for representation may be put forward."

The reaction to these substantial and categorical changes in the procedure of representation without prior consultation with this Association before the final discussion was made was bitter. Association is moving step by step to have this fundamental right established.

Then it was brought to a finality by Railway Board's letter No. E 41 UT 113 of 11th March '42.

"In Railway Board's E 41 UT 113 of 29-II-41 the principle was accepted that individual cases might be represented by recognised unions to Administration subject to such restrictions as individual Railways might deem it necessary to impose.

2. The Railway Board are now in receipt of the views of the Administration with regard to these restrictions and the procedure to be adopted-procedure which in some cases had already been brought into force. The Railway Board do not consider that at this stage it is either necessary or desirable to suggest uniformity in this respect. They approve of the present proposals and assume that Administrations will inform their recognised unions of the position if this has not been already done."

This attitude of the Railway Board was resented very much by this Association since it became an instrument in the hands of Divisional Superintendents to refuse to reply to the representations of the Association. The constitutional approach is there - and the Association has moved further up in its endeavour to win its constitutional rights.

The rights, privileges and facilities are but incident of constitutional importance in the history of the Association but the real and true history of it is unwritten and will ever remain unrecorded. Its history is rooted in the hearts in the undying soul of those unknown soldiers in the fight against poverty, service insecurity. The strength of the Association, it must be remembered does not remain in the official favours and courtesy but on the willing allegiance of the Railway workers, whose voice it is.

It has thrived and will thrive on the will of the thousands of workers who felt and found it the only vehicle to give expression to their

cry, to voice their demands to fight against the black system of starvation - wage and service insecurity which has and had paralysed and crippled the Railway workers throughout the entire system. The history of the Association is a history of relentless fight, a fight to establish the inalienable right of every worker to work and the right of an adequate wage.

In the year 1936, Annual Conference of the Association was held at Sahibganj. At this Conference a University Professor, by the name of A. N. Mallik was present on invitation and he was elected as the Working President of the Association.

From the day he took up the work of the Association the entire look was diametrically changed. Standard of our representation went up 100 per cent., discipline, regularity and punctuality became marked and above all the entire executive functioned like a team around a pivot which this little man represented.

Latter, under the guidance of Prof. A. N. Mallik at our Jamalpur Conference in May 1941 was taken the greatest decision of life. It was a bid for the establishment of the leadership of workers. It was decided then that the aims and objects of the Association, besides those already mentioned, should be "To advocate, cause and help to establish leadership of the workers independent of outside interference and that the General Secretary, the Joint General Secretary, the Treasurer and the members of the General Council should all be Railway employees."

No organisation can thrive without an organ of it. To educate its members, the Association published in 1937 a monthly magazine, "The E. I. Rlyman." It was not an easy affair to publish such a magazine, the question of money was there. The matter

desire to have a magazine was pulsating in many workers and these ill salaried workers contributed their mite and created a fund for publishing the journal. Mr. K. C. Banerjee, contributed a whole month's salary at a time and paid a good amount every month till his death. Though the problem of money was solved to some extent there remained the problem of selling the magazine. Hats off to those workers who used to hawk the journal and preach the message of the Association from office to office, and station to station. Even with all these sacrifices and labour, the journal had to be stopped due to scarcity of paper in 1941. When the position eased in 1944, the paper reappeared but was forced by the Government of Bengal to stop publication on the authority of the paper control order. Though the Govt. of Bengal and the Govt. of India were approached times without number, necessary permission could not be obtained for the revival of the journal. It is only very recently, through the intervention of our President Diwan Chamanlal that permission has been received to publish the journal in newsprint and the Central Council at Moradabad has decided to publish it in English and Hindi.

Sometimes after the war was declared Professor Mallik was called upon to join the Army. During his absence on active service the entire work of the Association fell upon the shoulders of the Railway workers.

After 1941 there came a lull in the tempo of the Association's organisational growth. It was being stultified. The revolutionary urge was lost. It became moribund. With the dispersal of the Head Quarter officer to Lucknow and Moghulsarai; Central office lost much of its vigour. Mr. Williams, the then General Secretary was transferred to

Allahabad. Mr. Mukherjee the Treasurer was transferred to Lucknow. The solitary office that remained at Calcutta was Mr. P. N. Sengupta, the then Jt. General Secretary. When the Japanese bombers were whirling over the Calcutta sky, he kept the Association doors open. Institution does not die—cannot die. Those were the most black days in the annals of the Association. Branches were shedding off like leaves. It was a crisis. Much of the fighting urge was gone. Mr. Williams came back to Calcutta after some time.

With August 1942, this Association along with all other Railway unions drifted away from the ideal—the link with the struggle for the country's freedom was cut off. The Railwaymen failed to realise that in a country in bondage the labour struggle has no significance unless it is linked up with the struggle for freedom. The country's political cause was lost sight of. Then the Association executive started the well-known campaign—"Stay to the Post" and a branch in D of I Railway Units. The growing discontent of the Railwaymen—their unrest were relegated to the back ground and switched off to an all out help to the Allied war efforts. They stood isolated from the upheaval. Slowly there grew up a chasm of ideals amongst the two sections of the workers of the Association. The young workers of C. A. O's Statistical Section were transferred to Lucknow and formed themselves into a branch of the Association there. They felt that a change in the aims and policy of the Association was necessary. In the meanwhile Government approached other outside political parties were to get the Association affiliated to them and utilise it for the benefit of all its workers and their adjuncts. In April 1947 at Allahabad

Association was affiliated to Indian Federation of Labour. It was thought to be a retrograde step by the new section of workers along with few others and here from started the first clash of ideals. Due to the untiring efforts of these young workers the Association disaffiliated itself with this organisation in November 1944 at Moghulsarai Conference. Today this Association stands on its own and sticks to the principle that it shall never be utilized as an adjunct of any political party.

The Growth

After this clash of ideal in 1944, the Association got a new impetus. A look at the rise in the membership will show the tremendous growth that marked itself after this period. These youngmen, marooned at Lucknow set themselves to the organisation of this Association in the Upper Divisions. They carried the message of Workers' leadership to the furthest coner of the system and were successful in establishing branches of the upper divisions prior to their return to Calcutta in January 1946. Their sacrifice to the ideal's cause is unparallel.

One young Parcel Delivery clerk of Moghulsarai Bireswar Kanjilal became a member of this Association sometimes in 1943. In course of six months he organised the whole Dinapore Division. Today Moghulsarai, Dinapore, Gaya and Jhajha branches stand on a firm footing but the silent contribution of this boy stands at the background.

(Membership)

1932-33	.....	556	1937-38	.....	7789
1933-34	.....	2000	1938-39	.....	8751
1934-35	.....	5844	1939-40	.....	9347
1935-36	.....	7000	1940-41	.....	7263
1936-37	.....	7447	1941-42	.....	7551

1942-43	.....	7154	1945-46	.....	11371
1943-44	.....	7438	1946-47	.....	55300
1944-45	.....	10009			

The 9th Annual Conference was held at Jamalpur in August '43 along with the Convention of the A.I.R.F. Here a decision was taken that no rival union should be given the recognition by the A.I.R.F. Unfortunately this resolution was rescinded at Secunderabad Convention. Still today the opinion is gathering momentum to the effect that there should be one union in one Railway. We paved the path for unity—we stand for unity.

The 10th Annual Conference was held at Moghulsarai in November 44. It was at Moghulsarai that a new phase of Railwaymen's struggle started. The Convention of the All India Railwaymen's Federation which was held at Moghulsarai at the invitation of this Association took the most momentous decision. It demanded for in the basic pay structure—the resolution stands today even as the charter of workers demand. The Annual Conference marked the first triumph of the progressive policy which visualised that the Association has to be a fighting organisation. Prof. A. N. Sinha came back in November, 1945 and took over the charge as Working President. In 1945 there was a strong growth. The elements were asserting themselves and slowly the policy of the Association was being reoriented. A band of new workers rallied round the Branches and the office and this Association became the organisation of the workers—by the workers and by the workers.

The Strides

The year 1946 shall never be forgotten in the history of Railwaymen's struggle.

the year which brought every railway Union face to face with a grim struggle. It was a sudden drift. Revolutionary phase burst upon as if. The Central executive of this Association in its meeting at Moradabad in March 47 reiterated the resolution of the A.I.R.F. to take a strike ballot. The track was new—the phase was unprecedented. But it was a thrill to remember those hectic days when every branch of this Association stretching from Howrah to Shaharanpur was vibrating with life. The workers rallied round with a new zeal. The ballot result showed 99.5% votes cast in favour of the Strike. At this most critical phase of our struggle we had Late Mr. N. B. Sen, our General Secretary at our helm. The A. I. R. F. at its Bombay meeting in May 1946 took the extreme decision of an All India Railway strike from the midnight of 27th June, 1946. We had to organise for this all out struggle. This Association prepared itself for the grim struggle in a manner that evinced the solidarity and discipline of the workers of the highest pitch. It was a new pulsation—a tremendous thrill. Then on the June 20th the A.I.R.F. took the decision to call off the strike since certain new developments had taken place and certain vital points were conceded to. It was an acid test of organisational strength—thanks to our General Secretary's grit, there was no sporadic action anywhere within the whole system.

Then came the Adjudication and Pay Commission. The brilliant part played by this Association in putting the Railwaymen's case before the Hon'ble Adjudicator has evoked admiration from many quarters and the dignified stand taken by this Association in placing its memorandum before the Pay Commission was much eulogised by many. Justice Baradachari the President of the

Commission told that the memorandum submitted by this Association has been of much help in arriving at certain basic decision. This reflects the brilliance of our General Secretary, late Mr. N. B. Sen and the superb guidance of the Working President Prof. Mallik and the pitch to which they have raised this Association.

The history of an Association is a history of the hopes and aspiration of its members. Still it is something more. In the formations and building up the contributions and sacrifices of individuals are there.

Mr. D. K. Biswas one of the first ones to get this organisation registered, stood by this organisation through all its vicissitudes.

Mr. M. D. Dubey one of the old Guards has silently worked and fought for this organisation.

Mr. A. M. Williams who had been the General Secretary of this organisation from January 1940 to March 1946 has piloted this institution through its difficult phases. He has given his best to develop this organisation.

Mr. P. N. Sengupta, one of the first ones and the Jt. General Secretary from February 1937 to March 1946 has kept up the Secretariat in running, condition. Representations made by him and decisions led by him won many a case.

Mr. H. N. Banerjee who had been the Jt. General Secretary from 26th August 1936 to 2nd February 1937 did much for this Association.

Mr. S. N. Bose who is one of the oldest members of the Association has been responsible for the steady growth of the Association and did his best to develop this organisation.

Mr. P. K. Munshi who joined this Association in 1941 has been a keyman, he

has developed the standard of representation to high pitch.

Mr. P. B. Mitra who was the founder Secretary of the Jamalpur Branch has been the trainer of a band of good workers on true Trade Union lines. Those workers imbued with his ideal and spirit of sacrifice, are now serving the Association in different branches throughout the system.

Mr. P. Dayal another old associate has stood by this organisation throughout its ups and downs.

Mr. J. J. Chakraborti one of the founders of this Association, had to retire from the Railway job due to victimisation and worked for the Association without any remuneration till his death. Such was his love for the Association.

To-day the Association pulsates with life from the remotest corner of the system—workers have come and rallied round the banner of the Association. The Association has got its branches at Calcutta, Howrah, Lillooah, Bandel, Burdwan, Rampur Hat, Asansol, Ondal, Dhanbad, Gaya, Jhajha, Dinapore, Moghulsarai, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Benares, Lucknow, Rosa, Bareilly, Moradabad, Nazibabad etc. and Station Committees at most of the important Railway stations. It has linked every Division, every headquarters under its organisation. Today we stand on a thresh-hold of a new life—we stand facing the most critical moment in the annals of Railway life. The Association had passed through many vicissitudes—mainly run on constitutional line. Evolution has forced it to the new pahse of the all out fight against starvation wages and service insecurity. This is teeming with life—behind it stands the workers of all grades and categories irrespective of caste and creed with their

willing allegiance pledged to the Association's cause and a band of unknown soldiers (workers) who staked their all in this fight under the flag and command of the Federation to eradicate their intolerable state of affair. It is a force—a progressive force with an upward thrust—a dream of future shape of things to come.

What it stands for.

The Association stands even today as it has stood, for the same aims and objects from its first inception as outlined on its day of glorious birth. But the changing circumstances, time and space have necessitated a change in the emphasis—a change in the technique of move. A change in strategy, it is a living body, a growing body. The needs of yesterday fade into insignificance in the vast complex of today. The problem of today dies down in the unknown futures of tomorrow.

The study of today can only be real in the context of yesterday and the study of today has its real significance in so far as it is linked up with tomorrow. We live in tomorrow and it is in the light of shape of things to come that the aims and objects are re-stated.

- (1) It stands for each and every Railway worker irrespective of caste and creed and colour, throughout the entire system.
- (2) It stands for establishing the inalienable right to work of every worker as such to create an atmosphere of good will and security, so that onslaughts on his service security may not come.
- (3) It stands to protect him in his everyday Railway life and safeguard his rights and privileges.

- (4) It stands to assure him an adequate wage, to enable him to live like a human being and as such it will continue to wage a steady and relentless fight to terminate the perpetuation of service-insecurity.
- (5) It stands to smash the "obsolete" illusion that a worker is a commodity in the exchange market. The naked fact, the cold fact is there that every worker is a living being, a feeling being.
- (6) It will strive to lift up the workers from the level of degradation to which they have been pushed by years of perpetuation of black system of starvation wages and service insecurity and infuse in them a new life. They must be made to feel that they are not automatous but living men, honourable men.
- (7) It stands to guarantee their right to better living, better housing, better sanitation. The 'Black holes', the holes, the dingy cells must give way to better ventilated better-lighted and hygienic quarters.
- (8) It stands to assure them the most up-to-date medical facilities. In Railway the medical organisation is a shadow organisation; ill equipped ill fitted and ill furnished hospitals. This apology of a medical arrangement must end.
- (9) It stands to create an atmosphere in which every Railway Worker will feel a spirit of partnership in the management of the vast concern. The feudal and archaic idea of 'slave and master' must give way to the spirit of comradeship.
- (10) It stands to inculcate in every Railway worker a spirit of discipline and unity, a spirit of sacrifice and service without which nothing great in life can be achieved. Let them not cry in wilderness.
- (11) It stands to shape their future to make it worthy of themselves. It stands to help them in taking major decisions in their Railway life and canalise their hopes and aspirations in the right channel.
- (12) It does not stand for an utopia—but for the achievement of rational, logical, legitimate and inherent right of the Railway workers. It is not prepared to accept any attack or encroachment on their right.

But how, the reply to that "How" lies with the Association. The means to attain these objectives will be shaped by the needs of the moment.

The New Perspective.

There has been a tremendous change in the political context of the country. The shackles of foreign domination are being broken down. We stand on the threshold of a new India-free India. We are in an altered context, we have to be imbued with a new spirit of sacrifice and discipline. We have to make an all out effort to accelerate the production or we have to build up the structure of a strong India.

But we must remember, that the shackles of hunger, disease and illiteracy have not been broken. We must strive for a society wherein the opportunities of life are equal for all and incidence of birth is not nothing to do in shaping the future.

The day is not far off when the Association shall guide and direct the work of the Administration. Days will come when

this institution will represent the voice of all the Railwaymen throughout the entire system and see that their will is translated into action.

This Association stands today in this context. World forces are moving with rapid stride : events are moving fast. Onslaughts will come, attacks will come. Forces of disruption will come, reactionary forces will be at play. But the revolutionary elements

shall have the final triumph. The Association is on the onward move-it is thriving and growing. Victory banner of the Association will always flutter over the ruins of those forces who will try to thwart the progress of the Association.

**LONG LIVE THE ASSOCIATION :
LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION.**

**CONFERENCES WITH OFFICE BEARERS
BIRTH OF THE E. I. RLY. EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION**

Provisional Executive Body formed at a mas meeting of E.I. Railway workers held at Indian Institute, Asansol on 29th August, 1932.

President	...	Mr. S.P. VERMA, Instructor, E.I.R. Training School, Asansol.
Vice-President	...	Mr. RAM SINGH, Train Controller, Asansol.
General Secretary	...	Mr. P.G. Joglekar, Guard, Asansol,
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. B.R. SINGH, Guard, Asansol.
Organising Secy.	...	Mr. J.N. GUPTA, Ex Guard E.B. Rly & General Secretary, E.B. Rly. Indian Employees' Association.
Treasurer	...	Mr. AHSANUDDIN, Labour Advisor, Asansol.

ELECTION.

Office-bearers elected at the Annual General Meeting held on 18th December, 1932 at Asansol, dissolving the Provisional Executive body :—

President	...	Mr. S. P. VERMA
Vice-President	...	Mr. RAM SINGH
General Secretary	...	Mr. A. K. DUTTA
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. B. R. SINGH
Organising Secy.	...	Mr. J. N. GUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. C. SEN

1st CONFERENCE

(Held at Albert Hall, Calcutta on 25th & 26th August, 1934)

Presided over by	...	Mr. V. V. GIRI
<i>Office-Bearers Elected :—</i>		
President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA, M.A., LL.B. (Bar-at-law)
Vice-President	...	Mr. S.P. VERMA
Vice-President	...	Mr. JANAKI JIBAN CHAKRAVARTY
Vice-President	...	Mr. NIRAPADA BANERJEE
General Secretary	...	Mr. J. N. GUPTA
Jt. Genl. secretary	...	Mr. H. N. BANERJEE
Treasurer	...	Mr. BIRESWAR SEN

2ND CONFERENCE

(Held at Dhanbad on 24th & 25th August, 1935)

Presided over by	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
<i>Office-Bearers Elected :—</i>		
President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
Vice-President	...	Mr. S. P. VERMA
Vice-President	...	Mr. M. D. DUBEY
Vice-President & Treasurer	...	Mr. A. HADI
General Secretary	...	Mr. J. N. GUPTA
Jt. Ccnl. Secretary	...	Mr. H.N. BANERJEE
Organising Secy.	...	Mr. K. GUPTA

3rd CONFERENCE

(Held at Sahibgunj on 2nd & 3rd February, 1937)

Presided over by	...	Mr. B. B. VERMA M.L.A.
<i>Office-Bearers Elected :—</i>		
President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS. M. MEHTA
Working President	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK, B.A. (Cantab) F.R.E.S. (London)
Vice-President	...	Mr. N. N. GHOSH
Vicc-President	...	Mr. GANESH CH. BANERJEE
Vice-President	...	Mr. A. M. WILLIAMS
General Secretary	...	Mr. J. N. GUPTA, M.L.A. (Bengal)

Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P.N. SENGUPTA
Organising Secy.	...	Mr. P. BOWEN
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. N. BOSE

4th CONFERENCE

(Held at Rampurhau on 20th & 21st December, 1937)

Presided over by	...	Mr. JAMNADAS MEHTA by the proxy of Mr. S. GURUSWAMI
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Office Bearers Elected :—

President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
Working President	...	Prof. A.N. MALLIK
Vice-President	...	Mr. JANAKI CHAKRABORTY
Vice-President	...	Mr. S. N. ROY
Vice-President (Organisation)	...	Mr. A. M. WILLIAMS
General Secretary	...	Mr. J. N. GUPTA
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P. N. SENTUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr.S. N. BOSE

5th CONFERENCE

(Held at Ondal on 27th & 28th January, 1940)

Presided over by	...	Mr. JAMNADAS MEHTA
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Office Bearers Elected :—

President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
Working President	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK
Vice-President	...	Mr. JANAKI CHAKRABORTY
Vice-President	...	Mr.S. N. ROY
General Secretary	...	Mr. A.M. WILLIAMS
Jt. General Secretary	...	Mr. P. N. SENGUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. K. MUKHERJEE

6TH CONFERENCE

(Held at Jamalpur on 24th & 25th May, 1941)

Presided over by	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK
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Office Bearers Elected :—

President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
Working President	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK
Vice-President	...	Mr. M. D. DUBEY

Vice-President	...	Mr. P.K. MUNSHI
General Secretary	...	Mr. A. M. WILLIAMS
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P.N. SENGUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. K. MUKHERJEE

7th & 8th CONFERENCE

(NOT HELD)

9th CONFERENCE

(Held at Jamalpur on 15th & 16th August, 1943)

Presided over by	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
<i>Office Bearers Elected :—</i>	...	
President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
Working President	...	Dr. B. M. BARUA
Vice-President	...	Mr. P. K. MUNSHI
Vice-President	...	Mr. N. B. SEN
General Secretary	...	Mr. A.M. WILLIAMS
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P. N. SENGUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. K. MUKHERJEE

10th CONFERENCE

(Held at Moghulsarai on 15th, 16th & 17th November, 1944)

Presided over by	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
<i>Office Bearers Elected :—</i>	...	
President	...	Mr. JAMNADAS M. MEHTA
Working President	...	Dr. D. N. SEN
Vice-President	...	Mr. P. K. MUNSHI
Vice-President	...	Mr. N. B. SEN
General Secretary	...	Mr. A. M. WILLIAMS
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P. N. SENGUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. K. MUKHERJEE

11th CONFERENCE

(Held at Moradabad on 26th, 27th & 28th March, 1946)

Presided over by	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK
<i>Office Bearers Elected :—</i>	...	
President	...	Mr. DEWAN CHAMANLAL, M.L.A. (Central)
Working President	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK



E. I. R. Employees' Assn. – 1938

Sitting on the ground - P. N. Sengupta, A. M. Williams

Sitting on chair from left - i) Sachin Bose, iii) Kamarujjaman, iv) Jamnadas Mehta,
v) A. N. Mallik, vii) J. S. Gillard, viii) J. R. Banerjee

Standing extreme left - J. J. Chakraborty, Standing extreme right - Kalidas Chakraborty
6th from left - S. K. Mukherjee



AIRF in Early '30.

Standing from left - B. K. Mukherjee, N. C. Chatterjee, R. N. Bagchi, H. N. Chatterjee
Sitting from left - ii) J. N. Gupta, iv) Jamnadas Mehta, v) S. Guruswami.

Vice-President	...	Mr. P. K. MUNSHI
Vice-President	...	Mr. M. D. DUBEY
General Secretary	...	Mr. N. B. SBN
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P. C. DASGUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. K. MUKHERJEE

WORKING COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR 1946-47

Working President	...	Prof. A. N. MALLIK
Jt. Genl. Secretary	...	Mr. P. C. DASGUPTA
Treasurer	...	Mr. S. K. MUKHERJEE
Member	...	Mr. R. C. CHAKRAVARTY
Member	...	Mr. S.R. MITTRA
Member	...	Mr. P.N. SENGUPTA
Member	...	Mr. J.S. GILLARD
Member	...	Mr. D. K. BISWAS
Member	...	Mr. S. N. BOSE
Member	...	Mr. S. K. CHOWDHURY

There were the following 23 Branches of the Association at that time i.e. in 1946.

CALCUTTA Estd. 5.9.46

Jurisdiction - 105, Clive St. & Fairlie Place Buildings.

HOWRAH Estd. 22.3.45

Jurisdiction - Howrah to Sheoraphuli & Chandanpur, Tarakeswar & Dankuni District Branch lines, Calcutta City booking & Parcel Offices & Dock Loop.

LILLOOAH Estd. 7.11.46

Jurisdiction - Workshops, Electrical, Medical, I.O.W. & P.W.I. Depts.

BANDEL Estd. 12.5.46

Jurisdiction - Baidyabati to Boinchec, Naihati Branch & Bandel to Azimgunj (exclusive).

BURDWAN Estd. May 1934 Defunct July 1935 Revived 15.11.45

Jurisdiction - Debipur to Oyaria, Burdwan to Porabazar & Bhedia.

RAMPURHAUT Estd. April 1935

Jurisdiction - Ahmedpur to Tinpahar, Nalhati Azimgunj section, Azimgunj to ...

SAHIBGANJ Estd. April 1935 Morbid in June 1940 Revived 2.8.46

Jurisdiction - Taljhari to Pripainti & Manihari Ghat branch

JAMALPUR Estd. November 1939

Jurisdiction - Workshops, Mathurapur to Jamalpur, Monghyr branch & Monghyr to Monghyr Ghat.

ONDAL Estd. April 1938 Defunct 1943 Revived 20.7.46

Jurisdiction - Ondal Gaurangdi branch, Ondal to Sainthia (exclusive) & Ondal, Barabani Sitarampur Loop. (Sitarampur exclusive)

ASANSOL Estd. 4th July 1934 Defunct August 1940 Revived 23.5.43

Jurisdiction - Raniganj to Simultala, Asansol to Mugma, Madhupur - Giridih & Jharkhand - Baidyanathdham branch lines.

DHANBAD Estd. June 1943 Morbid April 1942 Revived Sept. 1944

Jurisdiction - Kaloobathan to Bandhua, Pathardhi & Chandrapura Jn. branch and Gomoh to Barwadih (exclusive).

GAYA Estd. 31st July 1945

Jurisdiction - Manpur to Sasaram, Gaya to Nawadah & Jahanabad and Barabani to Sone-East-Bank

JHAJHA Estd. 28.4.1943

Jurisdiction - Jhajha to Dumra, Kiul to Nawadha (exclusive) & Kiul to Jhajha (exclusive)

DINAPORE Estd. 26.12.44

Jurisdiction - Mokamch Ghat & Jn. to Buxar and Patna to Naul

MOGHULSARAI Estd. 8.12.43

Jurisdiction - Chausa to Moghulsarai, upto Kumhau on G.C. and Dildarnagar Branch.

BENARES Estd. 7.2.1943

Jurisdiction - Moghulsarai (exclusive) to Janghai & Benares Cantt to Jafarganj & Benares to Phaphamau (exclusive).

LUCKNOW Estd. 9.5.1942

Jurisdiction - Lucknow to Nibhapur & Akbarpur, Rai-Bareilly to Prayag and Allahabad Sultanpur Fyzabad branch, Lucknow to Cawnpore Unao to Unchahar.

ROSA Estd. 11.3.1945
(under supervision of Moradabad)

Jurisdiction - Alamnagar to Miranpurkatra, Balamau-Sitapur & Shahjahanpur - Neri-Sitapur Cantt branches.

BAREILLY Estd. 11.3.1945

Jurisdiction - Bilpur to Milak & Barcilly to Asafpur.

MORADABAD Estd. 17.8.1945

Jurisdiction - Duganpur to Dhampur & Balwali to Shahranpur, Lhaksar to Bahawalpur, Moradabad to Ghaziabad (exclusive), Moradabad Chandausi & Bahawalpur - Chandpur Siau branch lines.

NAZIABAD Estd. 12.6.1946

Jurisdiction - Puraini to Chandak, Bijnor & Kotdwara branch lines.

ALLAHABAD Estd. 16.7.1946

Jurisdiction - Jeonathpur to Sung.

CAWNPORE Estd. 19.7.1946

Jurisdiction - Karbigwan to Ghaziabad, Shikohabad to Farukhabad; Tundla to Farukhabad Bridge and Hathras Jn. to Hathras Killa.

*** PROVISIONAL ***

Pay Commission was a new Subject while we were pondering as to how the subject is to be prepared. We received a questionnaire from the Pay Commission Secretariat to restrict our observation to this questionnaire. This we did and our memorandum was found to be one of the best and the Pay commission acknowledged that it was helpful for them to a decision.

HUNDRED YEARS STRUGGLE OF RAILWAYMEN

R.N. Ghosh

(Mr. R.N. Ghosh born in 1924 joined in Railway Service in 1942. He retired finally from Railway service as Station Master in 1982. From the very beginning of his service in the Railways, he was connected with the Trade Union Movement on the Railways. He was Vice President (Central) of the Ex. B.A. Rly. Employees' Association and later became a member of the General Council of A.I.R.F. He was a very trustworthy leader among the traffic staff on Indian Railways. He had organised categorical and departmental unions among the Loco, TXR and Station Masters of Indian Railways. Although he had pioneered the formation of All India Railway Employees' Confederation and became its President, he had the closest connection with the A.I.R.F. His attempts for formation of categorical associations were born out of inaptitude of the leaders of AIRF and the unions affiliated to it to give the railwaymen a lead to come out from the background of backwardness not only economically but also on social and cultural needs of railwaymen as members of the community. He thought every railwayman to be a citizen first and last and his improvement was not confined only to the world of employees and employer.)

In course of his long association with the Trade Union field he came in contact with Atal Behari Vajpayee, Ramabtar Sastry, Parbati Krishnan, Tridib Chowdhury, L.N. Singh, Chhina Basu, Sashi Bushan, P.K. Kumar Mangalam, Jadhver Singh and others.)

Indian Railway constitute the largest industry of the Country for the last one century. Lord Dalhousie was the Governor General of India from 1845 - 1856. Calcutta was the capital of India at the material time. It was at his initiative that Railway Companies were set up in India with the undeclared object to exploit the country more and more, fetching raw materials to feed the industries in U.K. Railway Companies were formed in England. It was in 1849 that the first contract was given to East Indian Railway Company for construction of a railway line (B.G.) from Calcutta towards Mirzapur (i.e. Mainline). In the same year another contract was made with the Great India Peninsula Company for construction of another Railway line from Bombay to Kalyan. Pursuant to the contract the first section from Bombay to Thane consisting of 21 miles was opened on 10th April, 1853 and the other section from

Howrah to Hooghly consisting of 23 miles was opened on 15th August, 1854. By 1858 the construction of railway lines stretched over to 5000 miles. Contract was also given to private agencies and State Govts. to accelerate the construction work with guaranteed dividend of 5%. Subsequently, the Govt. of India took over the construction of Railways from 1869 on Broad Gauge (5'-6") and also Meter Gauge (3'-6"). By the end of 1879, rail road of about 8300 miles had been constructed, out of which 2775 miles were by the Govt. This is the early history of the construction of railways in India.

Formation and Growth of Trade Unions on Indian Railways :

Now let me avail myself of the opportunity to enter into the relevant topic regarding formation and gradual growth of trade unions on Indian Railways.

This process of formation may be divided into two periods :—

- i) Pre-Independence period
- ii) Post-Independence period

The former period may again be classified as under :—

a) Before formation of the All India Railway Men's Federation in 1924 the provisional Committee consisting of the following well known trade union leaders was formed :—

1. N.M. Joshi — Chairman
2. V.R. Kalappa — Secretary
3. N.C. Sen — Vice Chairman
4. M.N. Mukherjee — Asstt. secretary
5. F.J. Binwala, Bombay
6. Ram Chandra Rane, Bombay
7. Shamsuddin Hossain, N.W. Rly. Union Lahore
8. Sadanand Waman, Bombay Port Trust Rly Employees' union
9. Biswanath Mukherjee, B.N.W. Railwaymen's Association, Gorakhpur, U.P.
10. P. Krishna Swami Mudaliar, G.I.P. Railway workers' Union, Bombay.
11. Jamshedji Framji Zavala, B.B. & C.I. Railway Employees' union, Bombay
12. S.K. Dey, E.B. Railway Indian Employees' Association, Lalmonir Hat, Bengal.
13. P. Ram Chandra Rao, B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union, Kharagpur.

They were authorised to communicate with different railwaymen's union in India and take steps to ensure unity of workers of different railways so that a Federation of Indian Railwaymen could be established. In the same year the Railway Budget was separated from General Budget through separate Convention.

b) The period after formation of the All India Railwaymen's Federation.

The Post Independence period may similarly be divided as below :

i) Merger/Separation of Unions etc. caused due to Partition of the country as India & Pakistan in 1947.

ii) Subsequent period mainly for regrouping of 28 Railways into 8 zonal Railways and then to 9 Zonal Railways as at present. Besides, the Organisational set-up of Trade Unions on the Railways had undergone changes due to internal differences and disunity amongst the top leadership of the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) leading to further split and birth of new Federation viz. Indian National Railway-Workers Federation subsequently of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen.

Besides categorical/departmental unions/Associations came into being which again combined into a Confederation, viz. All India Railway Employees' Confederation in 1968.

Initially The AIRF pursued the policy to recognise more than one union in existence in any Railway. So long this practice was in vogue there was a sharp difference among the unions for resolving any material issue, the leadership of union being Maruti on one side and the rest on the other. When Jayprakash Narayan was elected President of AIRF, he was opposed to it. He changed the policy to recognise only one union in any Railway by the AIRF. It may be noted that the AIRF was the sole bargaining agent of Railwaymen from 1924 till early 1950s for a period of over 25 years. The stoppage of formation of another federation led to the Indian National Railway Workers Federation under the leadership of Jayprakash Narayan.

Nath Sastry and amalgamation of this federation with the AIRF with the new name as National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) in 1953, on mutual agreement amongst the leaders of the aforesaid two federations is a chapter of a lost cause for a lofty ideal.

The Zonal and the leaders below, however, were reluctant to implement the decision in the Zones and the Divisions. In the process of such amalgamation, Jayaprakash Narayan stepped down from the Presidentship of AIRF in favour of Harihar Nath Sastry who was the President of Indian National Railway Workers' Federation. S. Guruwsami who was the General Secretary of the AIRF continued to hold his office as before in the combined set-up of the NFIR.

Railwaymen towards struggle during pre-independence days :

An elaborate review would reveal that the Railwaymen were united through struggle and such unity led to the formation of their unions. The workers in Railway-Workshops, ferry-ghats and a number of categories raised their voice against injustice, reduction in working hours, removal of disparity of pay between the Indian Workers (who were called as natives) by the Imperialists, against high-handedness of European/Anglo-Indian supervisors & Officers, and against insecurity of service and for better wages.

It is not the AIRF which formed the Unions. The history of Railwaymen's struggle shows it was for the unions the AIRF came into being in 1924. Later it was recognised by the Railway Board in 1933.

In May 1862 the erstwhile East India Railway Employees earned the credit to start Railway Workers' struggle when about 1200 workers of Chandpal Ghat and Loco and

Traffic Staff of Howrah Section stopped work demanding 8 hours' work a day.

It is on record that it was in the same year (i.e. 1862) when an officer abused the Bengali Clerks in general in the audit Department of East Indian Railway, the workers did not join the work on the next day. They started an agitation in front of the office. The agitation ended with the apology tendered by the said officer and the workers went back to duty.

During the period from 1896 to 1899, there was spurt in trade union activity. The Signallers' Association including Station Masters, Asst. Station Masters and Signalling Staff was formed in 1896. This was for the first time some categories joined to form their union on Indian Railways. This union, however, did extend their membership to all categories of Railway workers. This union launched a strike later from 6th May, 1899 demanding reduction in their duty hours, wage increase, removal of wage disparity between European/Anglo-Indian & Indian employees performing the same job. It may be noted here that contrary to the recommendations regarding of Islington Commission (1913-1915). Rly Board did not accept the recommendation equal pay for equal work. Montagu Chemsford Commission & Lee Commission felt that higher pay for European/ Anglo Indian staff were reasonable and justified in the public interest, compared to the Indian Natives performing same job. They also recommended for reservation in favour of the European/Anglo Indian employees in higher grade posts.

A general union of Railwaymen was formed in 1897 in the name of amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India & Burma. It is mentionable that at the material time the management of the Burma Railway

was under the Railway Board in India. Burma was separated from India in 1937. With the separation of Burma from India, the Railways between the two countries were also separated. On 1st May 1877, 167 Km Railways spreading from Rangoon to Prom came into operation; further a new Rly. company was established in 1896 in the name of Burma Railway Company from Mandalay to Kanlong.

A glorious strike was launched in the Bengal portion of East Indian Railway in July 1906 demanding wage increase, removal of disparity of wage between the Indian and European/Anglo-Indian employees. In this connection it may not be out of place to give an illustration that while a first class Indian Station Master's maximum salary was Rs. 45/-, the minimum salary of an ordinary European station Master started from Rs. 50/- and raised up to Rs. 200/- although the Indian Station Masters had to shoulder about double the responsibilities shared by their counterparts viz. European/Anglo-Indian Station Masters.

The year 1906 is noted for formation of a Trade Union, in the name of Railwaymen's Union in a meeting held at Calcutta on 27th July, 1906. Our great national leader Bipin Chandra Pal attended the meeting.

About 150 or more Engine Drivers, all known as natives of E.I. Railway launched a 10 days strike from 18th Nov. to 28th Nov. 1907 in support of their demands. The Engine Drivers of E.B. Railway struck work soon after this strike commencing from 21st December 1907 which continued up to January 1908. All Indians of the Locomotive staff of E.B. Rly. joined the strike. The strike, however fizzled out and about 600 workers were summarily dismissed from service.

A successful strike was, however, launched in the Railway Workshop at Samastipur lasting for one week. This strike ended when the authorities agreed to sanction "Famine allowance".

In 1918 the country witnessed two strikes, one at Lucknow Workshop and another at Kharagpur Railway Workshop. Records indicate that Desbandhu Chitranjan Das was actively associated with Kharagpur Railway Strike.

A Railway Strike was launched in 1919 by the workers of Lilloah workshop and another strike by the Guards & Drivers of Gorokhpur N.W. Railway. Further about 16,000 workers of Jamalpur Workshop launched a strike from 7th December 1919 till 9th January, 1920.

In 1921 there were several railway strikes all over the country, out of which I like to confine myself to describe the events that had taken place in the Eastern Region of the country and its near surroundings. About 5800 workers of Kanchrapara Workshop in the E.B. Railway struck work from 3rd March. The workers of Sayadpur Workshop joined the strike sympathetically and displayed their solidarity, from April, 1921. The strike had to be called off due to severe repressive measures. The sentiment of the working class was highly sympathetic towards any repressed class of workers even on other industries. As an example it may be stated that a very formidable strike of the workers of the Assam-Bangal Railway and the workers of Boat Ferry Services in 1921 took place as a mark of protest against inhuman action ruthlessly resorted to against the Tea Garden Workers by the Planters.

The dispute arose on the demand of the coolies to raise their wage to 8 annas a day. This demand was rejected. As a result the

coolies decided to get out of slavery and return home. No substitute coolies were there to run the tea industry. The European Railway officers ordered ban on issue of tickets to coolies who then decided to start on foot. J.M. Sengupta, Mayor of Calcutta intervened and then tickets were issued. But when the coolies boarded the train on 17th May 1921 the District Magistrate of Faridpore detained them at Gualando Railway Station. The coolies were informed at this point of time that their wage shall be raised to 6 annas a day, but it was not accepted by the latter. It was on the midnight of 20th May when the coolies comprising men, women and children were deeply asleep, armed Gorkha soldiers commanded by British officers mercilessly bayoneted them.

Many were thrown into the river and killed. And the entire railway was paralysed. Public support was also very strong with the unfortunate coolies. Mrs. Nelly Sengupta actively took part in it. The strike lasted for 2 weeks.

In this context it is worth remembering that the workers of Dibru-Sodia Railways struck work in July 1920 demanding 40% increase in their wages. The strike lasted for 10 days and when the company agreed to 30 to 35% increase in wages, it was called off. This success of railwaymen encouraged the labour engaged in Tea gardens and inspired them to vacate tea garden in 1921, leading to the calamity described above.

A big strike was conducted in this year in Lucknow Workshop on the East Indian Railway which lasted for 2 months & 20 days.

In the same year when an European Foreman assaulted an Indian Worker "A one day strike" was observed in Gorakhpur Boiler & Machine Shop of B.N.W. Railway.

The workers of railway Workshops, the Station Masters, Signallers and the Locomotor men were in the forefront of such a struggle. It will be seen from the memorandum submitted by the Railway Board to the Royal Commission on Labour that the year-wise break-up of such strikes between 1920 to 1927 was as under:

13 in 1920, 14 in 1921, 11 in 1922, 15 between 1922 - 1927, (Total 53)

But there were in fact as many as 22 strikes in 1922. Twenty thousand railway workers participated in strike in E.I.R. which originated from Tundla on 22nd February and spread upto Howrah in the east and upto Ambala in the north, as a mark of protest against the misbehaviour of the European Supervisors against Indian workers whom they called Natives. Taking note of the militant trend of railway workers, the British Govt. started the process of nationalisation of Railway Companies from this year i.e. 1922. They felt that the Companies were unable to run the railways to serve the interests of British Govt. The B.A. Railway Employees' Association was formed in this year. This B.A. Railway Employees' Association is older in age than the All India Railwaymen's Federation which was formed later in 1924. In fact, B.A. Railway Employees' Association is the first organised Railway Trade Union in India and Burma.

In 1923 there was a 3 days strike conducted by about 3000 workers of Gorakhpur Workshop (B.N.W.R.) in protest against mis-behaviour of European supervisors. This was mentioned in the memorandum submitted by the Railway Board to the Royal Commission on Labour.

Steps towards the formation of All India Railwaymen's Federation was taken by forming an adhoc body at Deam. The

conference held on 16th February, 1925 actually gave a permanent shape to the Federation electing the following office bearers :—

1. President : Rai Saheb Chandrika Prosad
2. Vice-Presidents : 1. N. M. Joshi
2. V. V. Giri
3. E. L. Iyer
4. B.N. Mukherjee
3. Gen. Secy. : Mukundlal Sircar
4. Treasurer : V. R. Kalappa.

The Federation remained within the framework of AITUC as a Unit but conducted their routine work independently.

After foundation of AIRF in 1924 there was a new wave of enthusiasm among railwaymen. There were several strikes in the B.N.W., N.W. Railway, B.N. Railway, E.I. Railway, S.I. Railway & G.I.P. Railway. The B.N.W. Railway Strike in Gorokhpur Railway Workshop lasted for 17 days and was virtually victory for railwaymen. In the N.W. Railway strike the key role was played by some ex-Railway Guards J.B. Miller, M.A. Khan and H.T. Hall. The Workshop people of Rowalpindi Workshop went on strike from 15th March, 1925. Immediately it spread throughout N.W. Railway, against indiscriminate disciplinary action against union officials for demand for wage rise and eight hours working a day, stoppage of retrenchment and reinstatement of all workers who were retrenched since 1920. 22,000 workers participated in this strike. The strike, however, collapsed early in July 1925. Eight thousand workers were discharged on the occasion. Only 14 thousand workers out of 22 thousand, were taken back to duty. Such a large scale victimisation had fuelled the urge for participation of the concerned Union in the

1st Non-cooperation movement launched by Indian National Congress from 11, April, 1921.

Being afraid of the severe impact of such strikes the Railway Board in 1926 appointed the "State Railway Workshop Committee" under the Chairmanship of "Vincent Ravan". This Committee recommended en-mass retrenchment of 75,000 workers. At that time it was not the Railway workers alone who were threatened with retrenchment. The Textile workers of Bombay, Jute workers of Bengal and Steel workers of Jamshedpur were faced with similar retrenchment, lowering down of wages and longer working hours etc.

Two important Railway Strikes took place in 1927 as a protest against retrenchment of Railway workers on the basis of the recommendation of Vincent Ravan Committee. Pharagpur Railway staff went on strike from 9th February protesting against retrenchment, difference wages of Indian and European employees performing the same job and demand for higher wages. About 20,000 workers took part in this strike. The then Branch Secretary of B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union W.V.R. Naidu was the Principal figure to conduct the strike. V.V. Giri was the President of the Union. Krishna Sarker, the then Branch Secretary of Headquarters Gardenreach Branch also supported the strike. He floated a committee in the name of B.N. Railway employees in course of this strike. There was severe repression including deployment of Auxiliary force to break the strike. A statement of such repressive action is given in the defence statement of Sibnath and K.N. Joglekar who were accused in the

Conspiracy case. The Railway authorities took help of the District Magistrate to prohibit meetings and demonstration at Kharagpur and adjoining areas promulgating the ban under Section 144 Cr.P.C. V.V. Gogghia father of V.V. Giri raised this issue in the Central legislature. Dr. B.C. Roy also raised this issues in the Bengal Legislative Council on 23rd February 1927. The Govt. indicated that 15 workers received injury in consequence of the firing and charging of bayonet, although the correct number of injured was 45, Mukundlal Sircar, General Secretary, AIRF, V.V. Giri President, Aktab Ali, W.V.R. Naidu and others nevertheless held a meeting defying the orders. A citizens meeting was held at Albert Hall in support of the Railway workers under presidentship of J.M. Sengupta to express solidarity with the strikers. Mukundlal Sircar sent telegrams to the general Council, Trade Union Congress, London and to the International Transport Workers' Federation, Amsterdam, with an appeal for help. The determination and unity of workes and extensive public support compelled the mangement to discuss the issue with the Union. The Union representatives negotiated the issues with the agent of B.N. Railways, and the strike was withdrawn on the 10th March, 1927 on the Solemn assurance received from the agent that there shall be no victimisation and other demands of the workers would be considered. Again on the 7th September of the same year there was another agitation at Kharagpur Workshop. The railway authorities declared a lock out on the 12th September. The strike was, however, withdrawn on 8th December. when the management decided to take back the retrenched workers and pay the wages for the lock out period.

The year 1928 witnessed yet another strike in Liluah (E.I.R.) from 5th March protesting against retrenchment of two Union leaders. The Railway authorities declared lock out on 8th March. On the 24th March, 1928 a big list of retrenchment (1700) was displayed at workshop gate. The inevitable result of the course of action was the spontaneous support to the cause of strike on other sections of the Railway. The police fired on a demonstration of about ten thousand workers on the 28th March, 1928. The strike ended on 10th July, 1928. About 16,500 workers participated in the strike which lasted for 4 months 5 days. K.C. Mitra, popularly known as "Jatadhari Baba" led the strike. He himself was a discharged Station Master of Oudh & Rohilkhand Railway. The workers of Howrah and Amta Rly. consisting of about 85 miles also joined the strike. This Railway was closed with effect from 1.1.1928 by the management. As a result, 1500 staff employed in the said railway were rendered jobless. The Golden rock Railway workshop witnessed a strike from 29th June 1928 as a mark of protest. The authorities declared lock out on the following day.

It was on 20th July, 1928—a big strike was launched on the S.I. Railway for fair working conditions, no retrenchment and shorter working hours and increase in wages.

Reign of terror was let loose on the strikers and the strike was withdrawn on the 29th July, 1928. On this occasion, the Railwaymen were very furious. They uprooted several miles on railway track & signalling system.

The period from 1929-30 was equally challenging as retrenchment notice was almost a daily routine on the part of the administration. When the turn for such

retrenchment came for the B.B. & C.I. Railway staff in 1929, the employees took recourse to a determined struggle and there was a wild-cat strike over all sections over B.B. & C.I. Railway. The administration was determined to crush it but failed. Ultimately the union and the management agreed to refer the question of retrenchment to a Board of Conciliation under Trade Dispute Act. This was the first time when such a conciliation proposal was acceded to. In course of the movement, two leading leaders of the Union D.B. Kulkarni and V.B. Purandare were summarily dismissed. The matter was discussed with the then Member, Railway Board, Sir Jorge Raney. The Railway Board agreed to take back D.B. Kulkarni to job. But they did not agree to take Purandare. It was also decided that an announcement will be made about change of pay scale and leave facility as early as possible and no punitive action would be taken against any employee for participation in the strike. The Govt. of India announced the setting up of the Royal Commission on labour headed by J.B. Whitely. Two trade union leaders viz. N.M. Joshi and Dewan Chamanlal were appointed members of the Commission.

The G.I.P. Railway workers started a strike from 7 hours on 4th February 1930 on the demand of increased wage @ Rs. 30/- per month, withdrawal of victimisation, reduction of working hours, abolition of preferential treatment on question of nationality. Militant leaders of the union were dismissed. It was decided to hold a one-day strike but the president of the union R.S. Ruiker declared just one day before the strike i.e. on 3rd February 1930 that it would be a continuous strike. 73,000 workers of G.I.P. Railway, out of the total of 1,17,000 used to

get a monthly wage of Rs. 8/- to Rs. 9/- per month. The strike was however, called off on the 15th March after a settlement through negotiation with the Railway Board, conceding the demand in principle and assuring that an announcement regarding wage increase and leave would be made later. It was for the first time when the role of AIRF in the negotiation with the Government was recognised.

Notwithstanding such a settlement, a large number of leading cadre were not allowed to join duty. Retrenchment notices were served on nearly 2000 workets in Parel and Matunga Workshops. Similar notices were also issued at Jhanshi and other workshops. The Railwaymen became more and more agitated. Consequently the strike continued. About 22,700 workers including 13,000 workshopmen joined the strike. They launched a massive demonstration at Bombay V.T. Station on 10th April. Police opened fire on the demonstrators killing two and injuring fifty. Many were arrested. Ultimately the strike was withdrawn on 15th April 1930.

The workers of Nizam Govt. State Rly. (N.G.S.R.) struck work in September, 1930 on the demand of recognition of their Union. After a good deal of struggle and the firmness exhibited by the workers, the management accepted the demand and the strike was called off.

In view of repeated attack on the Railway employees by the Govt. and the administration the working Committee of the A.I.T.U.C. at Nagpur under the presidency of Subhas Ch. Bose decided on an All India General Strike in support of Railwaymen. It, however, did not materialise in Bombay due to opposition from Jamna Das Mehta, President B.B. & C.I. Employees' Union.

A.I.R.F. took up this issue in their convention held in Ajmer in 1931 and decided to organise a general strike against retrenchment. About 40,000 Railwaymen were retrenched by this time following the recommendation of Vincent Ravan Commission, 1926. The proposal for a general strike was not accepted ultimately. The A.I.R.F. appealed to the Govt. to send the dispute on retrenchment to a Court of Enquiry or a Board of Conciliation. The Railway Authorities referred the issue to a Court of Enquiry headed by Mr Justice Murphy of Bombay High Court. By this time more than 51,000 Railway Workers had already been retrenched and several thousand demoted.

It was observed that the process of retrenchment was somewhat slowed down on the G.I.P. and Nizam Govt. Railways. Since there was no tangible result to stop retrenchment and demotion, 700 workers of Perambur, Arconum and Hubil Workshop (MSM Railway) participated in a strike on 24th October 1932. The strike continued as both sides were firm. Lastly it was withdrawn on 7th January 1933 at the intervention of the Sheriff of Madras. On this occasion about 370 workers including the General Secretary of the union were retrenched. The meeting of the General Council of A.I.R.F. held on 6th to 8th March, 1932 directed the affiliated unions to take a strike ballot before 15th June, 1932.

The General Council again met at Calcutta on May 6th and formed a Council of Action. The meeting once again called upon the unions to complete strike ballot. This Council of Action subsequently met at Madras on 14th to 16th July to discuss the outcome of the strike ballot and to decide on the future course of action. It was a pity that despite the result of strike ballot being almost cent

percent in favour of the strike, leaders could not determine the date of launching the strike.

On the E.I. Railway a new Union known as E.I. Rly Employees' Association came into existence in this year. This was formed on 29.8.1932 in a meeting held in Indian Institute at Asansol. On 17.4.1933 under Trade Union Act 1926. S.P. Verma was elected as President. With the election of Jamna Das Mehta as President, there was an awakening amongst the members. It gained momentum with the election of Prof. A.N. Mukherjee as working President in the year 1934 at Sahabganj. The office of the union was shifted to 22 & 23 Strand Road, Calcutta on 25.7.1936.

Before the birth of E.I. Railway Employees' Association another union existed viz, E.I. Railwaymen's Union. Eminent leaders like M.A. Kazmi, Advocate Allahabad, B. K. Mukherjee, Niranjan Mukherjee, Sibnath Banerjee & A.M. Q. Fatmi etc. were associated with this union. Subsequently the two unions merged together in name of E. I. Rly Employees' Union.

In 1934 one worker died in Hubil Workshop. Workers were agitated due to negligence of the Administration during the strike. Nandurbarkar, Office Secretary of the union along with 8 workers were arrested. The strike spread to Parel and Madhavpet. The strike, however, fizzled out after some days. As the strike was not any real advancement, the workers could not be persuaded to prolong the strike. The administration had withdrawn the recognition of the union on the ground that the strike was illegal and frivolous. It was after some time the union regained its recognition.

When the A.I.R.F. leaders could not stop retrenchment by agitational methods

they suggested for reduction of wages in cyclic or rotational order and compulsory leave to be taken by the employees. The Govt. directed the Murphy Committee of Enquiry to consider the suggestion. The plea of the Railway Authorities was that they were incurring losses due to excessive cost on staff account for which retrenchment and reduction in wages became essential. This was, however, far from truth according to the analysis of A.I.R.F. The relevant portion of the report of Murphy Committee on this issue is reproduced "..... of all the Company managed Class-I railways in the country, B. & N. W and Rohilkhand- Kumaon Railways employing 33,500 workers have been exempted from wage cut. The B. & N. W. Railways shareholders recently received a dividend of 10% and Rohilkhand-Kumaon Railways share-holders received 16% on February 1st.

Mysore State Govt. Railway was also earning profit."

The Railway authorities made another unjust attempt to divide the Railway employees on the basis of their pay and in that they decided that such of the employees who were drawing less than Rs. 40/- P.M. should be exempted from wage cut, while those who were drawing pay between Rs. 41/- to Rs. 100/- must face wage-cut of 5% and further those who were drawing pay between Rs. 101/- to Rs. 350/- should suffer from a wage-cut of 10%.

The Indiscriminate repressive action frightened the employees at large to raise their voice against the Administration. Naturally there was a period of lull which continued for years. The employees were, however, getting impatient and they were organising themselves to face the situation. B.N.R.

Indian Labour Union and B.A. Railway Employees' Association had organised the workers.

In August 1936 the B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union organised a one day strike in Kharagpur workshop as a mark of protest against the refusal of the Agent and General Manager to accept a memorandum from the union leadership. More than 7000 workers came to meet the Agent.

This union again gave a strike call on 12th December 1936 against demotion of a large number of workers on the plea of staff being rendered surplus. The strike of over 26,000 men lasted for a considerable period as both the sides were firm. The Railway Administration on the one hand started repressive action against the strikers and on the other spent a huge amount of money as bonus, diet and T.A. to the loyal workers who were utilised to break the strike. Finally the strike was withdrawn on 20th December 1937.

The second World War broke out in 1939. The war effort of the Government had an adverse effect on country's economy. The price of all essential commodities started to increase and went beyond the earning capacity of common man. In view of this economic distress the railway workers and textile workers became very restless and demanded higher wages. The Government appointed Rao Committee to consider the question of dearness allowance for G.I.P. Railway only. On the basis of the Rao Committee report the dearness allowance was sanctioned as follows:

- Pay Rs. 30/- and below p.m. - 10%
- Pay Rs. 50/- and below p.m. - 15%
- Pay Rs. 60/- and below p.m. - 20%

The employees rejected the offer. Textile workers went on strike, 6000 workers

of Parel workshop in G.I.P. railway followed them and started a tool down strike from 6th November 41. Matunga workshop employees also followed suit. Apprehending that the strike may spread over more and more sections the Government revised the D.A. rate as under :- Rs. 10/- for all those who are drawing pay of Rs. 70/- p.m. and below, but employees refused to come back to duty and continued their agitation. By order on 17th November the Government condoned the break-in-service which was previously imposed. Besides Government announced cheap Grainshop facility. In view of this the strike was withdrawn on 18th November 41. Supply of about 24 items or more was arranged at cheap rates.

After this announcement, there was practically no movement in Railway excepting that on the Jodhpur State Railway Workshop in 1943 where workers went on a strike as the Maharaja of the state imposed ban on formation of union. The employees, besides demanding Trade Union rights demanded wage increase. The Maharaja accepted both the demands and strike was called off.

The period from 1942-46 was a period of lull. Before dealing with the events of that period under review it is felt expedient to discuss the political and economic conditions of the country. The Indian National Congress took "Quit India" resolution in its working committee meeting held on August 8, 1942 and the movement started immediately from the following day. Railwaymen were agitated for grant of D.A. at a lower rate than recommended by the committee. Railwaymen were fully prepared for a show down but the leaders were not. It appeared that towards the end of British rule in India the

ideological differences amongst political parties dominating over AIRF widened so much so, that sometimes workers felt embarrassed and helpless due to conflicting interests. A section of railwaymen wanted to get rid of these political leaders but their desire did not gain ground. Such leaders, inspite of their differences political and ideological, were very much keen to maintain their existence in AIRF for which they were found to compromise their differences when required. All attempts for formation of union for one industry, was not a possibility due to divergent political interests. A meagre number of outside workers and employees in the industrial establishments generally controlled the affairs of the unions and the AIRF.

The general overall attitude of the union activity was secondary to the political school of thought in that time. A large section of railwaymen were more interested in activities of political parties than in the direct cause of workers' struggle for a better life.

It may not be out of place to mention that the socialist and the Marxist groups in the AIRF were main rival forces. Their activities be determined to uproot their political base from the AIRF exploiting the grievances of Railwaymen. In the history of the AIRF, existence of other political party leaders was not a very prominent feature although some parties were active in one region or the other.

As stated earlier, the AIRF became more and more disorganised in the later years of the Second World War. Demands/representations and other activities of several sections of service employees and groups of employees threatened the

strike. The hardships and grievances of the employees of Post & Telegraph Deptt. were sought to be ventilated in Assembly. On 7th February 46 the Secretary, Posts & AIR announced in the Central legislature that Govt. intended to appoint a Commission to go into the whole question of scales of pay, pensions and other conditions of service for all Central Govt. employees and also on the question of setting up some machinery for negotiation between Govt. and its employees, somewhat on the lines of "Whitley Councils" in the United Kingdom. Certain disputes raised by the employees of postal Deptt. were dealt with by a committee which was presided over by the Post Master General, Bombay and later those issues formed the subject of an award by Mr. Justice Rajadhyaksha. Before this award was made in July, 1946, a section of P & T employees went on the three weeks strike. Their claims were settled by negotiation. The Government apprehended that grant of such stray benefits to the Postal and Railway departments from time to time might create discontent among the low salaried employees in other departments. In view of this the Govt. granted some interim relief to employees of these departments later pending the revision of payscales in the light of Pay Commission's recommendation. The Govt. appointed First Central Pay Commission vide their resolution No.F-II (II)-S. 11/46 dated 10th May '46.

The Govt. of India Labour Dept. in their notification No. LR-2 (22) dated 23rd April '1946 issued under Rule 81A of the Defence of India rules. referred for adjudication some points in dispute between 9 Indian Govt. Railways viz. The North Western, East Indian, Bengal Nagpur, Bengal Assam, Great Indian Peninsula, Bombay Baroda & Central

India, Oudh - Trihut, M.S.M, and South Indian Railways and their respective workmen. At the request of the Adjudicator Government of India created two posts of assessors which were filled early in July '46 by the appointment of Prof. Humayun Kabir, President, B. A. Railway employees' Association & P.B. Chandwani, Deputy Genl. Manager (Staff) N. W. Railway in consultation with the Railway Board and AIRF.

The AIRF leadership took stock of the situation in its General Council meeting held at Bombay on May 4th & 5th, 1946 and decided to launch an indefinite Railway strike from the midnight of 27th June 1946. The Govt. was very critical over the situation and agreed to pay Rupees Nine crores to Railwaymen as Ad-hoc grant. The final decision was kept in abeyance.

Before the pay commission was completed its task, the Inter-Departmental Committee formed at the centre. Mr. Asaf Ali was assigned with the charge of Railways. He won the long overdue pay scales. The Commissions' recommendations were not unanimous. Members like Iman, Mohan Singh, Frank Anthony and Joshi put up their note of dissent on certain basic matters viz. minimum wage, job evaluation, consumption units which should be for working class family for determining minimum wages. The commission did not recommend for the workshop staff. This led to discontent amongst the workshop workers.

In 1947 Indian National Workers' Federation was formed with Harihar Mah...

In 1948 there were some strikes. Employees of Shalimar and Santragachi demanded City Compensatory Allowance and organised a strike to achieve the demand. The workers of Parel Workshop, G.I.P. Railway took recourse to a tool down strike for a day. Workers of Kharagpur workshop resorted to a strike on July 12th 1948.

2nd Strike Notice by A.I.R.F.

Despite implementation of pay commission's recommendations, Central Govt. employees became agitated due to refusal by the Govt. to grant D.A. to their employees on the basis of D.A. formula recommended by the First Pay Commission. The AIRF leadership thought of reviving their long pending strike decision. The General Council of AIRF met at Danapur on 15th February 1949. Jaya Prakash Narayan presided and the house was unanimous for taking recourse to indefinite Railway strike. D. S. Vaidya, General Secretary, G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union proposed that strike should be launched from the odd hours of 9th March 1949. It was seconded by Julmiram Chowdhury, Genl. Sec., B.B. & C.I. Railway Workers' Union. Jyoti Basu, President B. A. Rail Road workers' Union and Vice-President of AIRF strongly pleaded in support of the proposal while another Vice President R. A. Khedgikar vigorously opposed it, taking into consideration the appeal made by the Government to defer the strike on the ground that the Govt. had by this time decided to grant an interim D. A. (Rs. 10/-) p.m. to the employees. He was in favour of giving further time to the Government as the nascent State was having problems of serious magnitude. The Indian and Pakistan Forces were standing face to face on the Kashmir Front and the possibility of a war could not be ruled out.

The AIRF accordingly took a decision for not resorting to strike at this juncture and deferred it further. It also decided that in the event of any association launching the strike, the same would be considered a violation of discipline and firmly dealt with. In spite of all such threats, the Marxist group of the AIRF and the Unions under their control resorted to a Strike from odd hours of 9th March 1949. N. Gopalswami Ayengar, the then Railway Minister had a series of dialogue with the AIRF. Railway employees were bonafided. The strike was declared illegal. The disident leaders of AIRF were expelled for breach of discipline. The strike failed. The railway administration availed of the opportunity and withdrew recognition of the unions. Govt. took further advantage of the situation and declared the Unions illegal. The aspiration of Railwaymen to improve their service conditions was nipped in the bud. The failure of strike brought in its train severe repression on the strikers. A large number of Railwaymen were sent to Jail, suspended from service, charge sheets and others were removed from service. Ban notices served by certain unions were not formally withdrawn. Ban imposed on several unions was also not withdrawn by the Government. The AIRF leadership did not grant affiliation to these Unions again. The AITUC leaders took a resolution in the session held at Bombay and the entire portion may be reproduced as under:

"No longer can Railwaymen depend on socialist leaders and the AIRF to lead the battle. The AIRF has been turning its socialist leaders into an instrument of surrender to the Congress Government. Traitors & disruptors

The house resolved to call a conference of Railway Unions to form a Central fighting organisation of Indian Railwaymen. Committee of the AITUC is directed to fix a date and place for the conference

Pursuant to the decision the AITUC leaders did their best to form a parallel federation but their attempt was not successful.

It was towards the middle of 1949 that a Committee of Fair Wage submitted its report. Moreover early in 1948 Central Govt. enacted a law to provide statutory fixation of minimum wages in employments where scale of remuneration was exceptionally low, or where the workers were not organised and were not in a position to secure fair treatment by their own strength. The resolution on industrial policy was framed about this time.

In April 1950, the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made a statement in Parliament announcing that the Government was committed to the principle of Fair Wages as recommended by Fair Wage Committee. A few months later a bill embodying those recommendations "Fair Wage Bill" was introduced in the Parliament. It lapsed on account of dissolution of parliament and was not reintroduced. But the fact remained that the Govt. was Committed to the fair wages as recommended by Fair Wage Committee.

As years passed by the situation changed and the Government's adherence to Fair Wage principle decreased progressively and a stage was reached when the Government was not even prepared to pay the need-based minimum wage satisfying the norms laid down by 15th Indian Labour Conference held in 1957.

Due to constant increase in the prices of essential commodities and failure on the part

of Government to adjust dearness relief automatically keeping pace with the rise in the cost of living as recommended by First Pay Commission, discontent prevailed amongst Railwaymen.

The joint advisory Board was appointed to solve the anomalies which had arisen out of the recommendations of First Pay Commission. In view of the strike threat in 1951 Govt. decided to grant an adhoc increase of D. A. @ Rs. 5/- per month. At this point of time the Prime Minister Pandit Nehru sent one of his Cabinet Colleagues N. V. Gadgil to explain the position of the Government before the AIRF leadership in course of its general council meeting. Thus the strike was withdrawn.

The AIRF led by Jayaprakash Narayan and the Indian National Railway Workers Federation led by Harihar Sastry, the amalgamation of two Federations to increase bargaining power of Railwaymen. As such they were keen to form a unitary talk succeeded and eventually the Federations merged into one with a name as "National Federation of Indian Railwaymen" (NFIW). The AIRF made a proposal in their General Council held at Mysore in 1953. Its council took a similar decision. The amalgamation started functioning under the leadership of Harihar Nath Sastry, S. Gopal Rao as General Secretary.

The political strategy followed by the Federations for their amalgamation needs some clarification. The NFIW or less led by the P.S.P. and the INRW Federation was led by the leadership. There was a strike. We believe that after eliminating the elements from AIRF their common

fulfilled. The view of the socialist and the congress being politically and ideologically nearer to each other and opposed of that of the Marxist group, the merger was not unusual. But in course of time when the question of sharing of power came up, their difference started to widen and it reached a point of no return. One group of leaders alleged against the other group for indulging in indiscipline & disruption of unity. Both the rival groups were determined for a showdown. Under such circumstances the NFIR group led by Harihar Nath Sastry met at Vijaywada in 1956 but the other group led by Genl. Secy. S. Guruswami boycotted this session and directed their followers accordingly. By this time Harihar Nath Sastry died in an aircrash and INTUC had nominated S.R. Vasavada as the President of NFIR. One N. K. Banerjee, Secy., NRMU Pune Branch, affiliated to AIRF unfortunately went to Vijaywada. He was killed by some men. The house was full of chaos. The episode is a dark chapter in the history of railwaymen.

The two Federations were again bifurcated. The group led by Vasavada was known as Vijayawada Group and the group led by S. Guruswami known as Madras group. The Railway Board took advantage of the situation and recognised the NFIR led by S.R. Vasavada. The group led by S. Guruswami lost recognition. This happened in 1956. The former AIRF group assembled at Madras in 1956 and started functioning in the name of NFIR (Madras). The NFIR group (Vijayawada) at this stage compromised with the Railway Board on several issues which were pending before the Joint Advisory Committee and voluntarily agreed to refer some petty disputes leaving aside the important ones, to One Man Tribunal known

as Justice Sankar Saran Tribunal. They had withdrawn all other pending issues.

In August 1955 the E. Railway and S. E. Railway employees started an agitation demanding Festival Allowance. The General Manager, South Eastern Railway, N. C. Kapoor complicated the matter when at his instance the police lathicharged on a peaceful demonstration causing grave injury to quite a few in the Garden Reach Head Office. On the E. Rly there was a big demonstration before the General Manager's Office. As the issue had acquired a new dimension the Administration decided to grant Festival Advance which is continuing.

The Railway Administration actively helped the INTUC-led trade union leaders to open new branches. The Railway administration openly patronised local leaders and gave them all kinds of concessions, legal or otherwise. A large number of employees who had lost their jobs in connection with 1949 strike and could not get back their job, were taken back to duty on joining the INTUC controlled union. Thus the ever unknown so-called leaders succeeded in securing jobs to plant their banners and put up sign boards of their union by the grace of the Railway Administration.

After losing their recognition the AIRF leadership took a strike ballot in 1957 on the demand for restoration of their recognition alongwith other demands. At the end of 1957 the "New Deal" award partially met the certain demands of principal employees. Recognition of the AIRF was also restored. The parallel Federation is the product of political fight fought by two political parties. They were not concerned in the railway industry or its employees.

Prelude to the formation of categorical organisation

A section of railwaymen thought of some alternatives to get rid of such political manoeuvre. They considered that reorientation of AIRF through reasonable constitutional changes may go a long way to minimise dimension of the problem. They suggested that the constitution should provide for restriction on holding of office in the AIRF by political elements to ensure establishment of railwaymen's leadership. There was another group that encouraged formation of categorywise associations within the framework of AIRF. They demanded maximum possible autonomy for such units. Jaya Prakash Narayan in his Presidential address in the General Council meeting of AIRF held at Danapur in Feb'1949, observed that some policy must be evolved to accommodate the principal categories in the AIRF, examine their grievances and service conditions with more care and attention which according to him was not being done. He further observed that in the event of negotiation with the administration at different levels, representatives of such categories, elected by them should be associated.

But the conservative section of AIRF leadership failed to realise the importance of the suggestion and paved the way for division among railwaymen.

Subsequently the AIRF adopted its new constitution in the General council meeting held at Pune on 13.8.1957. In this Convention the leaders of certain categories who had by this time been able to register substantial progress to build up unity amongst themselves within the framework of AIRF, moved an un-official constitutional

amendment in this session for incorporating their views in the new constitution but there was nothing more tangible than a verbal assurance for future consideration. Attempts to get something concrete on the issue resulted in expulsion of one of such leader. Priya Gupta, General Secy., N. F. Rly Majdoor Union was annoyed with the decision of such expulsion and gave command to the N. F. Rly delegates to stage a walk-out on protest against such high handedness. The N. F. Rly. delegates had stayed away from the House for a while and then they returned.

The Second Central Pay Commission (1957-1959) was appointed on 21.8.1957 to go into the service conditions of Central Govt. Employees. At this juncture further negotiation between the AIRF and NFIR was started on the old topic to form one Federation on the Railways. In this connection a joint meeting of AIRF and NFIR was held with the Railway Minister on 19.11.57 & 20.11.57 for the proposed merger of the two Federations into one but the said negotiation failed to yield any tangible result. Later, Hon'ble Justice Mr. Majumder was appointed to resolve the issue through the efforts of the then Railway Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram who had the foresight to understand the reasons behind the power struggle.

It will be an injustice if a few more important movements, which had taken place on the Railways are not mentioned. The B. A. Railway Employees' Association was a very strong organisation. It was severely affected by partition of India when a portion of the B. A. Rly went to the share of Pakistan. The remaining portion was further affected due to transfer of its headquarters from Calcutta (3, Koilaghata Street) to Pandu, and

opening of N.E. Railway (a new railway) with its Head Quarter at Gorakhpur. From Sealdah to Bongaon was transferred from B. A. Railway and merged with E. I. Railway.

Major portion of Katihar District was transferred to O.T. Railway. Such changes necessarily involved mass transfer from Calcutta Office to Pandu and Gauhati as it was decided to wind up Calcutta Office. The Railway employees rose to the occasion and organised themselves under the banner of B. A. Railway employees' Association to resist such an irrational move. At this stage Dr. B. C. Roy, the then Chief Minister, West Bengal intervened and interim arrangement was thus made to retain a portion of H. O. at Calcutta. It gave rise to further complication when those who were already transferred, were brought back and it created difficulty in their conditions of service.

The running staff of B. N. Railway launched a movement against the Adjudicator's award for increasing their working hours. Before the award the duty of running staff used to be counted for the entire period from signing-on to signing-off, - maximum limit being 12 hours. Under the changed system this working hours, 12 hours was to be counted from the time of moving the train to the time of signing off. The guards did not accept such an arbitrary change. They started stabling of trains at the end of 12 hours duty counting from the time of signing on. They asked relief on completion of 10 hours duty after signing-on and in the event no relief was given within next 2 hours, they started to stable trains. Some section of loco running staff also joined the agitation but the authorities could crush it quickly, as there was no mass support behind the movement. The Station Masters of Adra Division launched

another struggle in 1956. They resorted to Hunger Strike in support of their demands. The agitation soon took the shape of stoppage of work. S. Ms. and A. S. Ms of other Division joined this movement. The Railway authorities settled the strike conceding the demands of the Station Masters. In March 1956 the workers of Kalka, Northern Railway went to present a memorandum to the Chairman, Railway Board. He refused to accept the memorandum and deployed Police Force to disperse the workers. Police opened fire and one worker was killed. There was a spate of strikes during the year 1956. The last one was at Kharagpur Workshop in support of the demands of two categories of staff viz. Wagon Riveter and Brush Hand for being fixed in skilled grade. The movement was a victory for them.

The permanent negotiating machinery which was set up on the Railways in 1952 proved its futility by this time. The Railway unions and the Federations had the right to take part in this negotiating machinery at different levels depending upon the nature of the issue involved. But the non-organised unions which, although were not organised, were kept outside the scope of the machinery. As a result this section of employees who possessed potential working force were annoyed and resorted to different forms of agitation.

The P & T employees and the Factory workers joined hands with the Railwaymen and resolved to launch a strike from 10th June '1960. A joint meeting of representatives of All India Railway Federation, All India Delegation, Confederation of Central Govt. employees and workers including the National P & T employees was held at

9.3.1960, again on 2.4.60 and finally on 3.4.60. A joint council of action (JCA) was formed to conduct the strike. V. G. Dalvi and Peter Alvares were elected as President and Secretary of the JCA. The date of the proposed strike was deferred from 10.6.60 to 11.7.60. The strike notice was served on the respective administration all over India. The Govt. promulgated Essential Maintenance Act, 1960 on 8.7.1960.

Negotiation for settlement of disputes between the JCA leaders and the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru went on from 9.6.60 to 11.7.60 through the efforts of Mr. Nathpai and Feroze Gandhi, M. P. But it was a fruitless exercise.

The All India general strike of Central Government Employees was launched from the midnight of 11.7.60 as scheduled. N. F. Railway was exempted from the strike. The strike was continuing in full swing. On 16th July, 1960 the JCA met at Delhi and resolved to withdraw the strike immediately. It is worthwhile to mention that earlier on 14.7.1960 a sympathetic general strike of the working class people was observed throughout the country at the call of the Central Trade Unions to express solidarity with the Central Government employees. Despite such support the strike notice was withdrawn on 17.6.60. It is alleged that the party relation of Ashok Mehta with the top leaders of AIRF was known to the Government and the same was duly availed of by Pandit Nehru. Railwaymen were disappointed. The Central Govt. withdrew recognition of all the unions which participated in the said strike. Eastern Rly Men's Union, S. E. Railwaymen's Union and N. E. Rly. Mazdoor Union obtained injunction from the High Court against

derecognition of the unions. There was a verbal assurance that there will be no victimisation for joining the strike but after formal withdrawal of the strike notice, this was not honoured and there was severe repression. The N.F.I.R. and the unions recognised by it opposed the strike. 66,000 Rly. men were arrested and about 2,20,000 were suspended on the occasion.

The failure of 1960 strike was a rude shock to the AIRF leadership. The unions became weak and not capable of convincing their members to justify the withdrawal of strike. Political game of rival parties in the arena of AIRF vexed the Railwaymen. During the strike and after its withdrawal, the socialists and the Marxists appeared to have waged war against each other. Unions affiliated to AIRF were engaged in internal conflict. But the leaders of principal categories seemed to be aloof from the controversy. They started organising the categories and forming independent associations which were also registered under Trade Union Act, 1976. They registered substantial progress functioning under the sole leadership of the serving employees, although these organisations had some eminent MPs as President as a matter of strategy for pressing their grievances on the Government. Amongst the MPs associated with the categorical organisations were Anil Behari Vajpayee, Ramabtar Sastry, Pandit Krishnan, Tridib Chowdhury, L. N. Sengupta, Chitta Basu, U. M. Trivedi, Rabi Ray, Sankar Bhushan, P. K. Kumaron, Subinod Ghosh, Mahavir Das, Bubhaneswar Kalita, P. K. Kumar Mangalam and Jadhver Singh. They did not display any political motive and helped the categories of staff in a commandable way. The categorical

associations launched strikes, work to rule, non-cooperation, pay strike and resorted to other forms of agitation and thus succeeded to solve some of their local as well as general problems. Their success tempted other principal categories to be similarly organised under the banner of the concerned categories outside the AIRF & NFIR. They gradually had some co-ordination with one another. There was rapid awakening among the categories and ultimately they were united on a common centre forming a Confederation in the name of "All India Railway Employees' Confederation" in 1968. They decided to run it under the sole leadership of railwaymen but permitted the categories to include a limited number of MPs as office bearers of the categorical Association. But there was no place for the MPs in the Confederation. The constitution of Confederation provided that only serving employees would be eligible to hold office of the Confederation. In view of this MPs were gradually eliminated from categorical associations also. This, according to their belief, was a reasonable safeguard.

The activity of All India Station Master's Association was at its peak at the material time. They launched "work to rule movement" and it gained momentum on all the Railways at a time. The impact of this movement was so very pronounced that the Railway Minister S. K. Patil not only appealed to the Station Masters' Association in a broadcast through the All India Radio but also sent message by name to the Zonal and Central leaders of the Association through the respective General Managers for meeting him in the Rail Bhavan. This led to the first official meeting between the All India Station Masters' Association and the Minister in which the Chairman Railway Board and

Member staff were also present. A. B. Vajpayee, M. P. and President of the Association and R. N. Ghosh, Secretary General, led the delegation. Some of the material demands which had been agitating the minds of the category, along with varied local demands of the Divisions were conceded. It was also agreed to maintain a channel of informal negotiation between the administration and the Association. In view of the above the movement was withdrawn. It paved the way for holding regular periodical meetings between the Rly. Board and the Association. The entire attitude of the Govt. on the non-recognised unions changed as will be seen from the Railway Board's letter No. RBS No. B(L)68 UT-1-141 dated 28.12.68 given below :-

"There are many unions functioning amongst Railwaymen, most of which though registered under Trade Union Act, have not been given recognition by the Government.

While formal correspondence with unrecognised unions should be established, grievances of staff coming from any source including recognised unions should receive proper attention of the appropriate authorities".

But in many vital cases formal contact had also been established by the Rly. Board with the Association. In fact, some of the unrecognised unions enjoyed the privilege of defacto recognition.

Regarding internal differences prevailing in the unions affiliated to the AIRF, the position of E.R.M.U. may be cited. The Central Council meeting of the union was held at Ranaghat in 1962. K. C. Chatterjee was the General Secretary. He was not getting on well with other associates in the union. This led to a clear division in the union.

forming two groups. Both the groups were adamant to eliminate the other group. Under such circumstance the general council meeting of the ERMU was held at Gaya in 1966. A colourful procession of largely attending members was organised. It was alleged that R. C. Chakravarty, General Secretary, succeeded in bringing out a prohibiting order on the following day with the help of his followers at Gaya, u/s. 144 IPC banning any gathering by his rivals. There was a showdown and the ERMU was split up into two unions and George Fernandes MP and Rajendra Singh, MP were elected President of the rival groups. The Rly. did not recognise the group led by R. C. Chakravarty, as his relation with the Chief Personnel Officer, Mr. M. A. Ashraf was bitter. The other group was recognised. Chakravarty was transferred from Howrah to Danapur Division. Subsequent developments were more unpleasant. It was an internal quarrel in which no major policy matter was involved. His rivals rejoiced over it.

The General Council Meeting of A.I.R.F. was held at Udaypur from 29-31st July, 1962. Swaran Singh, Hon'ble Minister for Railways inaugurated the session.

R. C. Chakravarty Genl. Secy. E.R.M.U. reportedly planned to oust Peter Alvaras from the office of General Secretary. He was having some discussion in his room. It was an open-door discussion. Priya Gupta, M.P. & General Secretary N. F. Rly Majdoor Union entered the room all on a sudden in a jubilant mood. The two leaders had some courteous talks. Priya Gupta asked R. C. Chakravarty if his discussion with the delegates was a part of the plan of election so as to drop Peter from the AIRF and added further "For Heaven's sake do'n't drop this poor man meaning himself."

R. C. Chakravarty sharply reacted that he was too small a fry to oust a party candidate supported by a powerful M. P. Such remarks infuriated Priya Gupta and he started accusing R. C. Chakravarty of personal aggrandizement with no shred of principle. There was a scuffle in the end between the two and the delegates had helped both of them to get to a different place. They calmed down but the incident had left a scar that could not be erased in the years to come.

Govt. set up the Joint Consultative Committee in 1966. This provides for a forum for consultation in certain matters for arbitration between the Government and the employees. The Administrative Reforms Commission made some recommendations for functioning of Joint Consultative Machinery and also for laying down rules for recognition of service and associations etc. The rights of Government Servants to strike and to engage in union activities were examined by National Commission on Labour which presented their report in 1969.

Economic conditions of the working class was distressing due to rise in prices of essential commodities. The AIRF at this juncture took a decision for "one day token strike" on 9th Sept. 1968 in their Council Meeting held at Jamalpur from 27-31 August, 1968 along with central Government organisation. Almost all the affiliated unions of the A.I.R.F. were surprised at the initiative of role of the then President Miss Maniben Kara, who was also at that time, President of Western Railway Employees' Union as well. The Western Rly Employees' Union did not join the strike and the inability of Miss Maniben Kara to launch the strike on Western Railway was an indication of her disappointing role at that time.

It is noteworthy that one-day strike was successful in the Central Government establishment - particularly in the P & T Deptt. It virtually failed on the Railways. The Unions affiliated to NFIR did not participate in this strike, rather they opposed it.

The failure of the strike on the railways was a severe blow to the AIRF leadership. A section of them started heart searching to discover the causes leading to the failure.

The categorical organisations extended their "normal support" but they did not take any active role. They did not issue any directive to their members either to associate or disassociate themselves with the said All India Railway strike for one day. Earlier the All India Station Masters' Association decided to launch "work to rule" movement from the midnight of 18th Aug, 1968 i.e. from 19th August. In view of the "One day strike" organised by AIRF on the same day, the All India Station Masters' Organisation deferred their own programme. R. N. Ghosh, Secretary General, All India Stn. Masters' Association extended "Whole hearted support" of the Association to the "One day token strike" which was supposed to commence from 6 hrs., on 19th Sept, 1968 and communicated the decision to defer the 'work to rule' movement to Priya Gutpa Gen. Secretary, AIRF in their letter no. AIRF/19/68-1 dated 16.8.68. which was acknowledged by him in his letter dated 24.8.1968.

A joint Council of Action (JCA) was formed for the Second time at the national level with S.M. Joshi as President to conduct the strike. In view of such developments R. N. Ghosh, on behalf of the All India Station Masters' Association, addressed a letter to Joshi on 5th Sept., seeking his opinion if the All India Station Masters' Association could

officially be included in the JCA as a unit. But this was not heeded to. The Station Masters' Association also suggested that the pattern of the JCA should be modified and that there should be a three-tier structure at the centre, zones & divisions, consisting of the representatives of the recognised and unrecognised unions. It was not acceptable to the AIRF. The demand for three-tier JCA was felt necessary as a reasonable safeguard against repetition of withdrawal of strike in 1949 and 1960. Since it was a token strike for one-day the AIRF leadership did not count on the categorical organisations and treated a deaf ear to the suggestion. The strike failed but agitation after agitation broke out on the railways under the leadership of categorical unions. Firemen of Southern Railway and South Central Railway launched a strike in July 1968 demanding reduction of working hours. Workers of the Chitta Ranjan Locomotive Labour Union started agitation. The AIRF usually co-operated with Railway Administration in Zones & Divisions to oppose such spontaneous movements. It is curious to note that at this stage the AIRF and NFIR tried to convince the Railway Board that growth of categorical organisation was subversive of total unity of Railwaymen. They, therefore, advised the Railways that such trend should be reversed and the Railway Administration should avoid the leaders of such organisations. Atal Behari Vajpayee M.P., Samar Mukherjee, M. P. Ramaswami Shastri, M. P. and parbati Krishan M. P. however, lent their continued support to such movements of the categorical organisations.

In 1972 there was peace on almost all the Railways for the whole year. President of India. V. V. Giri gave a call on behalf of the Central Government that Central Govt.

employees should voluntarily agree to impose moratorium on strikes for a period of 3 years on the ground that the Government had decided to amend labour laws and service rules of their employees in such a way that major problems of the Central Government Employees would be ameliorated by no time after the same came to the notice of the Govt.

The Indian National Congress had a "Socialist Forum" consisting of some members of Parliament and people of eminence. Sashi Bhusan, M. P. issued letters by name to the selected Trade Union Leaders. There being no agreement among the representatives of the Trade Unions on the issue, the proposal did not get off to a start. The Prime Minister, however, had directed these people to the President of India who had proposed the scheme. A good number of such representatives including R. N. Ghosh, Secretary General All India Station Masters' Association and founder President All India Railway employees' confederation met V. V. Giri, President of India at Rastrapati Bhavan to discuss the issue. The proposal was shelved once for all.

The Government was deeply concerned with categorical unions and their activities during the period as will be seen from the Rly Minister's Budget speech in 1973 :

"1973 was particularly a bad year so far as staff discipline was concerned. From the very beginning the Railways were hit by "go slow", "work to rule" and "work to designation", agitations, bandhs, squatting on tracks etc. Amongst such agitations there were the strike of Station Masters / Assistant Station Masters during April on the W. Railway, successive strike and agitations by Loco Running Staff in May, July, August and December, agitation of staff of Sholapur

Division, the work to rule agitation carried on by S & T during November and December and a similar agitation carried on by the Carriage & Wagon Department Staff. As a matter of fact, not a month has passed on the Railway this year during which their operations were not held up or hampered on one part or the other of the country by such agitations sponsored by some organisation of category-wise Associations. As a result earnings upto December 1973 fell short of expectations by about Rs. 81.50 crores".

The Loco Running staff Association resorted to various forms of movements in May and June. In August and December they went on a strike demanding reduced working hours. The Railway Administration made an agreement with this unrecognised Association.

During the period the Loco Running staff, Train examiners and All India Station Masters' Council had threatened to launch a movement against the policy of 14 hours duty from signing on to signing off that was agreed to with the Rly. Board by both AILM and NFIR. The wisest step taken by the Ministry of Railways led to formation of "Grievance Cell" under the Chairmanship of Mtd. Safi Quarashi, Minister of State, Railways and this led to defacto recognition of Loco Running Staff Association, Train examining staff Association and All India Station Masters' Council by the Government. There was a shift in the emphasis on 'Grievance' irrespective of the source from which it came to the notice of the Government.

The Prime Minister made a statement in Lok Sabha on 21.11.69 that Government had taken a decision in principle to appoint a Central Pay Commission. Subsequently the Central Government appointed the Third Pay

Commission by a resolution No. F.7(25)-III (A)/69 dt. 23rd. April, 1970. Further, by resolution No. E(RB) 1-71/21/19 dated 25.2.1972, the Central Government appointed Mr. Justice M. N. Miabhoy, retired Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court as Chairman, of "Railway Labour Tribunal - 1971". The Tribunal was responsible for arbitration on five items - all relating to working hours of certain categories on which no agreement could be arrived at between the All India Railwaymen's Federation and the Railway Board. Priya Gupta, General Secretary was nominated to act as representative of the Federation with J. P. Chowbey, its treasurer, as alternative representative. Railway Board nominated P. S. Mahadeban, Additional Director, Establishment to represent the Railway Board with P. M. Narasingham, Jt. Director, Establishment as alternative representative. The recommendations of the Third Pay Commission was available in 1973. Commission's Report disappointed the entire Central Government Employees including the Railwaymen.

It was for the first time in the annals of Railwaymen's struggle the unions affiliated to AIRF & NFIR jointly took strike ballot in 1973. The AIRF's President, Peter Alvares and General Secretary Priya Gupta seemed to be more inclined to form joint front with NFIR to the exclusion of the unrecognised categorical Associations. Accordingly they

moved in this direction and succeeded in forming some kind of unity. Subsequently it was announced on behalf of the Ministry of Railways that the demand for "bonus" for Railways was an issue on which the Government could take decision only after the report of 'Bonus Review Committee' was received. After this announcement the NFIR decided to withdraw their strike notice. Naturally they left the AIRF at lurch. At this stage there was a change in AIRF leadership and George Fernandes took charge of the office of its President in place of Peter Alvares. He was in search of new partners for the forthcoming struggle. He correctly assessed that the categorical organisations had the dependable strength of a struggle and in spite of opposition from inside, he formed a joint platform with these organisations. This led to the formation of NCCRS at the National Level. Thus Railwaymen's Organisations irrespective of their recognition or non-recognition formed a common front to plan and conduct strike from 6 hrs. of 8th July, 1974. The AITUC, BMS, CITU, AIRF, AIREC & LRSA were represented with 2 members each, in this body with George Fernandes as Convenor. This committee was entrusted with the responsibility to negotiate with the Government on 6 point demands for which Strike Notice was served. The strike continued for 27 days. The chart below will reveal the position of victimisation as on 1st November 1974 in connection with the strike.

Sl. No.	Railway	Dismissed/Removal/Terminated			Suspension	Total
		Permanent	Temporary	Casual		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1.	N.R.	500 (including temporary & casual)			10	500
2.	N.E.R.	1252 (including casual labour)	800	—	751	2803

Sl. No. (1)	Railway (2)	Dismissed/Removal/Terminated			Suspension (6)	Total (7)
		Permanent (3)	Temporary (4)	Casual (5)		
3.	N.F.R.	2867	302	3500	—	6669
4.	S.R.	477	5200 (including casual)	—	42	5719
5.	S.E.R.	1563	6213 (including casual)	—	1935	9711
6.	S.C.R.	579 (including casual)	—	—	—	579
7.	E.R.	2512	4676 (including casual)	—	Not known	7188
8.	C.R.	446	135	2000	48	2629
9.	W.R.	1642	8000	10000	3431	23073
10.	I.C.F.	119	—	—	—	119
11.	I.C.W.	44	24	185	12	265
12.	D.L.W.	11	—	—	—	11
		16532	25350	15685	6229	63776

An exclusive interview of V.V. Giri with P.T.I. on 18.8.1974 will reveal the state of affairs in this regard.

Giri "My advice to both, the workers and employers in this matter will be that they should bury the hatches and forget what has happened. Employers and the workers are partners in any industry, and I would say that the workers are the dominant partners. This has been my view for the last half a century and more. I have led many a strikes on the Railways which have become historic both nationally and internationally.

"In all cases of strikes and lockouts with which I was concerned, I saw to it that the workers went back to their works without feeling of bitterness. At no time should the

workers' solidarity be disturbed and workers should not be divided into strikers and non-strikers".

"Talking of the recent strike, I would like that those who are not responsible for violence and sabotage should, without exception, be taken back to service. If this is followed we shall have no regrets later and economy of railway improves."

"I met Railway Minister on 17th and we had a fruitful discussion regarding the reinstatement of all the employees not charged with sabotage and violence. He assured me that this will be resolved soon to the satisfaction of everyone. I want all parties to unite in this effort. I am sure justice will not be delayed".

The table in the preceding paragraph was contrary to the desire expressed by V. V. Giri.

Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, was determined from the beginning to crush the Railway strike in the event no settlement was agreed to by the AIRF accepting the terms of the Government. Top leaders of the N.C.C.R.S. were arrested and put behind the bar before the strike was launched. George Fernandes, the convenor and N.S. Bhangoo, a member N.C.C. R.S. were sent to Tihar Jail. George Fernandes thought it expedient to make a last time attempt to contact L.N. Mishra, Railway Minister, from Tihar Jail, so as to offer the terms for settlement of Railway Strike. He also criticised the Railway Minister for making false publicity through Press and All India Radio Bulletin against the demands and terms offered by the Railwaymen for settlement. In his-turn he repeated the demands of Railwaymen and the cost of settlement. The said letter of Mr. Fernandes is appended below 'A' good sense, however, did not prevail upon the Government and no settlement was arrived at. The Railwaymen created a history of struggle for themselves. The struggle and the fall out of the repressive measures of the Govt. were the main reasons behind the fall of the Congress Govt. in 1975.

**WHO IS TRYING TO FOOL WHOM
MR. MISHRA ?**

George Fernandes

The following is the text of the letter written by Shri George Fernandes, Convener of the National Co-ordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle, from Tihar Jail, Delhi on May 7, 1974 :

Dear Lalit,

If the sole purpose of your letter of May 7, was to once again present a distorted picture

of our demands and our positions to the people. I notice that the All India Radio's news bulletin tonight (May 7) has already done so. An interim reply to your letter which I wrote out at 7.15 p.m., I learn, is still lying with the prison authorities, because they have no arrangements to deliver it to you. I take it that tomorrow morning's newspapers will faithfully carry some extracts from your letter, especially those where you flaunt figures of what our demands will deal in terms of railway fares and freights. Incidentally, I find that in the last two days, you have raised the total cost of our demands from Rs. 500 crores to Rs. 700 crores. Crores do come so easily to you.

I do not see why should you take umbrage at my statement that "the Railway Ministry has totally rejected all the vital issues on which we seek a settlement".

Please look at the facts,

Fooling the Workers

These are the 'vital issues' on which we seek a settlement. There is no agreement, broad or otherwise, on any of these issues. All that you have said is that the Ministry Tribunal recommendations in regard to working hours for certain categories of workmen and decasualisation in certain departments will be accepted. That was not our demand.

On grain shops, you are fooling the workers. You should not do that. What is your offer? Railwaymen will get food grains in the same quantity and at the same price as other people in any given area of the country. That is the prevailing position. You are saying that you will set up shops where there are 300 and more workmen. What is the use of these shops, if there is no food grain?

Let me illustrate the ludicrousness of your grain shops offer : in Uttar Pradesh, issues of

wheat on ration cards has been totally stopped in 27 out of the 54 districts and there is a drastic reduction in issued quantities in 15 districts. Will the railwaymen get any rations in those districts where rationing has been stopped? As in Uttar Pradesh so in other States and in other areas.

So what precisely is your offer on adequate and subsidised food grains? Nothing. A few empty shops at the very best.

And what is this agreement on Anomalies committee? That was not in our charter of demands. Nor we discussed that issue. The NFIR people may have raised it and might have made some offers. But we never raised the anomalies question in our demands, nor did we seek a settlement on it.

I dispute this figure of Rs. 80 crores that is bandied about for some days now as the value of "concessions" made. This figure is constantly quoted with the sole purpose of misleading people. I do not think the railway workers will fall for this kind of bluff.

I strongly object to your insinuation that we took an "accept all demands or else" stance at any stage of the so-called negotiations. On the other hand; it is the Railway Ministry which adopted an attitude of take what we offer or go to jail.

This is not how negotiations are conducted anywhere in the world.

I am prepared to have any impartial body to hold a probe into the farcical way the Railways conducted the recent negotiations. You may ask a team from the I.L.O, or the ICFTU of which the INTUC is an affiliate or the WFTU of which the AITUC is an affiliate to hold an inquiry into our respective conduct at the negotiations on the railwaymen's demands.

On page 2, para one, of your letter you say:

"From your letter, I gather the impression that you insist on the Government accepting your demand for parity in wages with the public sector undertakings, as an interim measure, pending the completion of job-evaluation with need-based minimum wage (of Rs. 314 per month)."

Are you trying to say that this is the first time you heard about this? Is this not what was argued by me during the talks? Have you not got this point from the transcripts of my speeches delivered in the last six months? Money or principle?

In the course of the negotiations, a point was made that parity with certain public undertakings has been mooted as a possibility for an interim wage increase. As you have seen, we have named HMT, BHEL, ICI, etc. Modern Bakeries as the public undertakings. We have not cited the wages in I.L.O, Airlines, etc. The latter undertakings pay much more than those with whom we are seeking parity. I elaborated the point by saying that the difference between the present wages and those prevailing in the public sector undertakings whose demands is roughly 75 per cent. The average annual pay per employee in the public sector undertakings Rs. 6,317. The average per capita income was Rs. 1,000 for railwaymen during that year which was Rs. 1,000. It was Mr. Bery who, perhaps, asked me why not a 100 per cent rise. I gave the above figures to tell him why not.

I, however, note that you have conveniently ignored to mention a significant part of our discussion on discussing the wage demands. I had asked one question to your mind. The problem one of money or of principle. S.A. Dange also asked the same question.

And we said very emphatically during our talks that once the principle is accepted, we could discuss the resources position and find a way out.

In our letter you say :

"It is not, therefore, possible for the Government to discard the wage structure recommended by the Pay Commission even before it has been implemented, and evolve new standards of remuneration whose applicability cannot be "restricted to railwaymen alone along Government employees".

Which means you are prepared to accept the principle that railwaymen are industrial workers whose wages and service conditions should be patterned after those of other industrial workers in the country.

If that is your position, then what is there to discuss ?

We have repeatedly said that we shall not accept the Pay Commission's recommendations for the railwaymen. Railwaymen are not civil servants. They are industrial workers all over the world, and their wages and service conditions the world over are on par with if not better than those of other industrial workers in the respective countries.

Misleading Figures

Why then do you indulge in deliberate distortion of our positions ? Why do you go on producing daily new figures of the total money involved in meeting our demands ?

We do not want Rs. 700 crores, we do not want Rs. 580 crores, nor Rs. 450 crores, nor Rs. 400 crores - the various figures put out by you from time to time. We shall sign a settlement with only Rs. 300 crores. So for heaven's sake, will you also persuade the Chairman of the Railway Board to stop dishing out all these irrelevant figures ?

Assuming it is correct as stated by you in your letter - that "to come to a settlement on (my) terms - and on (my) terms alone - the Railways will have to raise an additional revenue of over Rs. 700 crores per year." I am repeating my offer to settle the demands at Rs. 300 crores, an offer that I have made even before coming to the negotiating table. So, Mr. Railway Minister, who is trying to fool whom, I keep repeating that we shall settle our demands at Rs. 300 crores. You keep saying that they will cost Rs. 700 crores. And then you waste your time in working out the new fare structure from Darbhanga to Timbuctoo and the freight rates on bamboos and match boxes. Are you not carrying this Joke a little too far ? It you are serious if you are sincere, why do you not accept my offer ?

In any case, will you at least from now on say that we are demanding Rs. 300 crores and not all those fantastic figures that you and the Chairman of the Railway Board have been saying merrily all these days with the sole purpose of damning us and fooling the people ?

You have made some points on railway finances. I am prepared to have a debate on this subject. I say that the Railways are the most mismanaged, bureaucratised, corrupt, inefficient establishment in the country. And I am prepared to prove each of my charges. So, what is new about railway finances being in a sound position ? In fact, let me warn you. If the management of the Railways remains as it is to be treated as chattel, then the condition of the Indian Railways will deteriorate to a point from where even a salvage operation may become difficult, if not impossible.

Social Burdens ?

Be that as it may, why should 20 lakh railwaymen who with their dependents

account for one in every fifty of the country's population be asked to bear the burden of the "social cost" which the Railways decide to underwrite ?

After lamenting that the "social burdens" of the Indian Railways for 1973-74 would be Rs. 225.44 crores, your own report states as follows :

"In many countries the railways are compensated for the loss sustained by them on account of these social burdens by grants-in-aid from the Central or State Government or local bodies for these services, as indicated below :

(1) British, German, French, Italian and Canadian railways are given compensation for losses on uneconomic branches ; British, German, and French railways get compensation for losses on suburban traffic also.

(ii) French Railways are compensated for the difference between the concessional tariff rate and economic rate charged on freight traffic, where uneconomic rate is charged at the instance of the Government. The Italian railways receive compensation in respect of concessional rates charged for postal traffic.

(iii) On some of these railways the working expenses are subsidised : British and French railways are exempted from excise duty on diesel oil and Japanese railways pay local taxes at reduced rates.

(iv) French, German and Japanese railways are charged interest at subsidised rates in certain cases." So ?

I am glad you have asked me if it is my case "that the community should make interest free and tax-free investments in the railways, diverting the money so saved to enhance the emoluments of railwaymen."

May I ask you a question : Is it your case that the railwaymen should accept

emoluments less than those of workers in HMT, HSL, BHEL, LIC, STC, MMTTC, Modern Bakeries and a host of other industries and enterprises in the private and public sectors and thus bear the "social burdens" of the community ?

It is a Lie

Is the corollary not obvious : What is left to argue about in this matter ? I think in posing the question to me, you have stumbled on the answer.

Incidentally, I heard your Hindi and English language broadcast last night. In the course of the English language broadcast, you said that the AIRF has asked you to raise the fares to pay higher wages to the railwaymen. You know it is a lie. Why did you speak it ?

There is no substance whatsoever in your case that meeting the just and legitimate demands of the railwaymen would mean, firstly, increased fares and freights and secondly, inflation. You have revised fares and freights at least 18 times in the last 15 years. But the railwaymen's wages were last revised with the Second Pay Commission's recommendations in 1969. As for the dearness allowances (which also does not neutralise the entire rise in the cost of living), it is paid after the price index has gone up.

But I must once again protest at the campaign of lies and slander unleashed by you, by your Deputy Minister and by the Chairman of the Railway Board through the All India Radio and through those newsmen who are ever willing to prostitute their pen against me personally and against the railwaymen. I also take strong exception to the lies you have uttered in Parliament about my activities. If anyone has injected politics into the railwaymen's demand for wages, bonus, etc. it is you and your Ministry.

I accuse you of having never been serious to hold the talks on the railwaymen's demands.

I accuse you of continuously provoking the railwaymen to go on strike with the sole object of hoping to beat them into submission.

I accuse you of plunging the country into a calamitous strike whose consequences for the economy will be disastrous.

I accuse you of misleading the country through a campaign of lies and slander against the railwaymen and their leaders.

An Ocean of Lies

I have noted your discomfiture at the publication of my letters to you and to the Prime Minister. Should you really make this complaint, Mr. Railway Minister? You have AIR, the TV, full page newspaper advertisements, non-stop campaign through AIR and newspapers. Crores of rupees of public money to squander as only you and Railway Bhavan can. And yet you complain that some points from my letters got into the press: An ounce of truth can not be drowned

in an ocean of lies, is it not? And when truth is defiant, it hurts; does it not?

Mr Railway Minister, please do not get lost in the web of your contradictions. Even now, let us get together and talk and settle. I share your views that political adventurism has no place in the trade union movement.

Just now, our quarrel is not over philosophical definitions. Our dispute is over wages, bonus, hours of work, trade union rights, food grains, decasualisation, etc. To hell with all political adventurists, but let us talk over our demands, settle the strike and spare the railwaymen and the country from prolonged agony and anxiety.

As I suggested in my letter written earlier this evening, we can meet and talk here in Tihar Prison, if you have objections to releasing me.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- George Fernandes

George Fernandes

Believer in Brotherhood, Love and Imancipation, Renunciation and service

Bimal De

Mr. Bimal De, the third son of a teacher in Bandura Govindapur Holy Cross High School in the Dacca District of Undivided Bengal was born on 3rd October 1923. His father had joined in the Salt Satyagraha Movement started by Gandhiji.

Mr. Bimal De was influenced immensely by the teaching of Vivekananda and on joining the Bengal Volunteers. (B.V.), he was imbibed with a keen sense of Patriotism. He came in contact with revolutionary leaders but had left the home district after joining '42 movement. While underground, he joined the Railways. He came to India after partition. He was the General Secretary of E. Rlymen's union for 10 years and was Working President of A.I.R.F. for many years. He was also the Assistant General Secretary of the AIRF. He was President of ERMU for 5 years.

I had been one of the top boys in my school. But I can not explain how in my childhood I developed a yearning for doing something for the poor. Firmly two ideas got into my mind — Remove the Britishers from the country and give life for that.

Subsequently, I became the member of the then Bengal Volunteers (B.V.). I was given Swamiji's (Vivekananda) book "KARMAYOGA" and Swami Swarupananda's "SANJAM SADHANA" or "BIRYAKSHYAN PRATIKAR" - a book for yogasan and character building only. Afterward I was utilised to copy many proscribed revolutionary books and also to carry those to different persons. However Swami Vivekananda's "Renunciation and Service" became my motto which I tried to follow my whole life.

In politics Subhas Chandra Bose had been my guiding star. Perhaps in 1939 Mahatma Gandhi went to Malikanda Ashram, the birth place of Prafulla Ch. Ghosh. It was about five miles from my village Gobindapur. I went there not to praise but to shout against. Our

party already organised protest and some arches were set on fire.

After Subhas Bose gave the Britishers a slip and went to Germany, leaflets were issued secretly. Panchananda Paul who had enrolled me in the Bengal Volunteers as my political Guru gave some leaflets for distribution and I did that. In this way at first I was told to go to Garohill on the side of Mymensingh for Party work. But this was not successful. In 1942 I was given the charge of halting the steamer service in the Padma river. This plan was divided in 5 parts. My charge would be to stop engine, others to bring coal bags for that, another group to protect the other groups to take the passengers on shore and finally one group had to place Dynamite and destroy the steamer. This plan did not mature because of the communists activities. Nawabganj was to be ransacked and Congress planned an operation and mass action and ghosha in the thana. They held a mass meeting in the cremation ground of Kalscopa near Nawabganj. Many of the top leaders were

arrested before the Thana. New leadership with no political background mushroomed. We were asked to loot the arms from the armoury. Police started firing resulting in instant death of a boy on 9th Aug 1942. After this incident random arrest and torture started and the communists helped the Government much in this regard. One of my friends Sri Shambhu Goswami got bullet injury.

I had to leave and come to Chandpur at the residence of my paternal uncle for underground activities. I lived there in a coolypatty for months together.

In latter part of 1943, I came to see my native village, I witnessed the horrible scene of Famine. Dead bodies of victims of hunger were found floating in the river Ichamati. The Police ransacked our village mercilessly. Finally, I had to leave my village with the motive to join I.N.A. In the meantime I had an opportunity to enter in Rly. ARP Service with Defence of India enrolment at Akhaura near Singerbil air base which was bombed by Japanese later on. We had information of Netaji's arrival there very soon and thus we were enthused to serve as soldier for the country's freedom. During this period the Teachings of Ramkrishna-Vivekananda's universal religion, love and renunciation inspired me to follow the path of unity, sacrifice and love for others. I felt it essential to fight against Britishers from within as Netaji had been doing from outside. Various incidents occurred during my service within war period including Court Marshal. My cherished desire to serve as a soldier in INA had been shattered owing to the great "betrayal". News of Netaji's plane-crash came as a great shock.

I joined regular service in Railway in 1945 and my life took a new turn since then.

At that time, Prof. Humayun Kabir had been the President of the B.A. Rly Employees' Association. Most fortunately I met Harun Sahab, a Travelling Ticket Examiner while travelling from Chandpur to Comilla. He was a leader of B.A. Rly. Employees' Association. His charming behaviour attracted me and this helped me to enter into the affairs of Association and finally become a member of the same in 1945. In the same year Prof. Kabir was contesting against Jyoti Basu of B.A. Rail Road Workers' Union in Legislative Assembly election and was defeated by Com. Basu. I was very much eager to cast my vote at Comilla but was unfortunately, while reaching there along with others found that our votes had already been cast.

During the early period of 1946 Railway Muslim League was started with Choudhury as the Secretary. He had appointed some leaders of B.A. Rail Road Workers' Union with Jyoti Basu as President.

At the material period Prof. Kabir was assaulted in his saloon at Burdwan. However, Harun Sahab, Minto and others of the Association held a meeting at Laksham Jn and we all went to Comilla and guarded Prof. Kabir against hooliganism. Here we heard Prof. Kabir saying about the parity in pay scale of General Manager and Ganguly for freedom.

The horror of 1946 came to Burdwan brought miseries to the life of people in Noakhali and we arranged food for them even breaking open food stores for them among those unfortunate who were sent to East Pakistan to India, in 1947. I was posting at Burdwan.

At Burdwan I totally engaged in social activities and started organizing

Branch of EIR Employees' Association at Burdwan. At that time P.C. Dasgupta was the General secretary and Jayaprakash Narayan was the President of the Union.

Union office started functioning at the 1st floor of a Doctor's dispensary on payment of monthly rent of Rs. 5/-. H.B. Bhattacharya and myself were President and Br. Secretary respectively. A demonstration was organised before Asstt. Engineer Burdwan for the scarcity of water. A.M. Williams, although out of the union, assisted us during this period and finally scarcity of water was removed in Loco Colony. In the mean time Strike ballot was taken in 1949 and Rlymen in general took part in the same with all sincerity. I also took much interest for the same. All categories of staff at Burdwan cooperated with me in this regard.

Paritosh Banerjee and others of EIRlymen's union visited Burdwan in 1948 to organise a union under their control but was unsuccessful. He made me a member of Congress Socialist party. During this period I came in touch with Jayaprakash Narayan and other noted trade union leaders. I started my Trade Union career at Burdwan but due to unforeseen circumstances I had to leave Burdwan. The President of the Branch, H.B. Bhattacharya who was also the manager of the Grain shop was accused for underhand practice. This incident shocked me much and I decided to leave the arena of trade union for ever. With an intention of higher studies, I got myself admitted in the Bangabasi College, Calcutta.

I was transferred to food supply section of the Divisional office as a clerk in the same pay scale as enjoyed at Burdwan. My detachment from the union activities did not last long when I found that staff were not allowed their

entry through Gate No. 1 of Divl. Supdt.'s office which was reserved for 'officers only'. I took up on myself the tasks of organising a meeting during Tiffin hours against this injustice and after a couple of days, the then Divisional Superintendent, Howrah, Keith Bathgate declared gate no. 1 open for all.

In 1948 Ex B.A. Rly Employees' Association, E.I. Rly. Employees' Association and E.I.Rly Men's Union were amalgamated and renamed as E.I.Rly. Employees Union with Jaya Prakash as President and P.C. Dasgupta as General Secretary with 23 & 24 Strand Road as its Head Office. I became the Branch Secretary at Howrah and we had our office at Strand Road, Howrah.

In 1949 Keith Bathgate, the then Divisional Superintendent, Howrah, refused to hold the Bimonthly meeting and apologised. A demonstration was held under my leadership before his departure to Liluah. Finally he was compelled to hold Bimonthly meeting under presence of Basu, a nationalist General Manager of the Railway Board. In the year 1950, defying AIRF the Communist Party of India the union launched a strike but was shortlly, resulting in victimisation of a number of staff for participation in it. At Danapur Conference of 1950 Communist led unions were dissolved and noted communist leaders like Sundaram, Anand Narayan and others were expelled. While the Central meeting was held in Kanpur in 1950 Paritosh Banerjee was expelled and leaflets against union leaders were distributed. J.N. Karmakar and Kamal were manhandled by P.K. Mukherjee, office bearer and I sometimes faced a situation.

In 1949/50 the influx of Refugees started again as a result of further riot that broke out in East Bengal. I had been the Secretary of E.I. Rly displaced workers union and also being incharge of Bangabasi College Saranathi Sevadai, took part in the Refugee Movement at Bongaon, along with others from different sevadals. In 1951 I arranged for Training of first batch of two female staff of Divisional office, Howrah, under Workers' Education Scheme of Central Govt. Although Strike Ballot was taken in the same year, no strike was launched. With the amalgamation of the partion of B.N. Rly. with E. Rly. with HQ at Fairlie Place, I became Asstt. General Secretary of Union. At Amingaon convention in the same year, I was requested by some of my Communist friends to move a resolution for bringing back the members expelled during 1949 who were Rlymen but unfortunately only eight votes were in favour of such a move and thus the proposal was rejected finally.

In 1952 General Election I took a leading part in organising anti-Congress left political parties in Jadavpur area resulting in Jyotish Joardar, BV leader and Sadhan Gupta of undivided communist party being elected as MLA and MP from the said area. In the same year Jayaprakash Narayan Left Trade Union Movement. He and Harihar Nath Shastri took a great initiative for amalgamation of the AIRF & INRWF at Mysore convention with R.A. Khedgikar as Chairman of the said convention. But unfortunately this unity did not last long as Dr. Jaisurya made a remark that "this Honeymoon will not last for ever". At Bezwada Conference N.K. Banerjee Asst. Secretary, NRMU, Pune Branch was killed and subsequently AIRF was renamed as NFIR (Madras) and INRWF as NFIR

(Bezwada). I was a Zonal secretary of the Amalgamated NFIR and continued as such in the AIRF also. During the visit of Rly Minister Shahnawaz Khan in Calcutta I had the privilege to lead a deputation with Sunil Bhattacharya (S.E. Rly.) & Anadi Bhattacharya (E.Rly).

The movement for Puja Holidays for Commercial staff in 1951 and Lister Truck Driver's Movement in 1955 at Khragpur workshop where Pentaiah and others lost their service, are glorious Movements in the history of Rlymen's struggle.

In 1956 during an eventful episode, Nirapada Banerjee, R.K. basu and H.D. Bagchi were retrenched from service when G.D. Khandelwala was Divisional Superintendent, Asansol. I being the Asst. General Secretary of the Central was entrusted to reorganise the Asansol Branch and held a camp there for a month. A large meeting was held where Taher Hussain MLA, Md. Ilias Mp and other Trade Union leaders from all left parties spoke. Meeting was very successful and the Branch was reorganised but unfortunately H.D. Bagchi and R.K. Basu did not get back their job inspite of legal action taken for the same. The same year should be marked as a land mark in the history of Union in Eastern Zone while Ram Chandra Chakravarty took over the charge as General Secretary. Time rolled on and historical strike of Central Govt. employees started on 11th July 1960. I moved from Howrah to Barkakana to organise the strike for making it a complete success. On 11.7.60 noon I was arrested at the gate of the Divisional Office, Howrah and sent to Dum Dum Central Jail. I remained there for a month and after my release I remained under suspension for 3 years. During my long suspension I stayed

legal practice in Alipur Judicial Court as a Junior to Kamakshya Da. Sibnath Da also introduced me with Dwijen Sengupta and Nani Chakraborty, leading practitioners at that time. In a criminal case I had to argue in favour of our client who was a hardened criminal. He was freed. But I left the Court for-ever as law failed to punish the real offender. Subsequently, I went back to my original service when my suspension was withdrawn finally.

In 1961, AGM was held in Gaya where Ram Chakravarty did not submit nomination for the post of General Secretary. He preferred the post of Vice President. After the date for withdrawal my name was circulated as the General Secretary uncontested vide union letter no. AGM/VI dated 18.7.1961. But at Gaya the entire procedure was shelved and Ram Chakravarty was declared as General Secretary and continued as such. This however became the seed of rift resulting in his exit finally from the union.

The above fact was the resultant effect of running two parallel unions with Ram Chakravarty as General Secretary for one wing and Paritosh Banerjee for the other. The latter one where I had been associated, was recognised by the AIRF.

On 19th sept. 1968 an All India Central Govt. Employees' Strike was organised. But on this railway the same was not successful. I lost my father this year. An untoward incident occurred during this period in a PNM meeting with the then Divisional Superintendent, Howrah, Mr. S.C. Uppal and the situation became out of control inspite of the presence of Paritosh Banerjee, General Secretary. Anil Bhattacharya and Gopal Ganguly were seriously taken up by the administration. In this case I personally talked to Mr. Uppal and

he, being satisfied, withdrew all penal measures including FIR against the above named.

I became General Secretary of the Union (ERMU) in the year 1973 and continued as such upto 1983 and selected Sujit Roy in my place afterwards before my retirement. As a result of my retirement from service under age limit I followed the decision taken in the year 1948 that none of non-railwayman should hold the post of General Secretary & Treasurer and thus I became President of the union.

In 1973 George Fernandes became President of AIRF and on 27.2.74 he initiated to form National Coordination Committee of Railwaymen's struggle (NCCRS) for launching a bigger movement on the railways on various demands. It was formed in Zonal levels also and I became the Convener of Eastern Zone including Metro Rly. Prior to 1974 strike although Categorical unions were very strong but unfortunately strike was not successful at the Head Quarters of Categorical unions at Dhanbad except where Branches were under the control of AIRF namely at Gomoh. This Strike was almost a lost one.

The Railway strike had been one of the prime causes that led to fall of the Government of Indira Gandhi in the election held in 1975 under the stewardship of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan.

On 24th May '74 I was arrested during the strike and remained in Presidency Jail till my release on 27th June '74. After release I remain busy for rehabilitation of the affected staff. Three comrades committed suicide in E.Rly when they were jobless. I arranged financial help and service to their family. At the meeting arranged in Howrah

General Institute, Madhu Dandavate the then Rly. Minister assured us to withdraw all penal measures taken by previous Govt. during the 1974 strike. Benefit of service of Retired Employees' sons and dependents was actually started in bulk during Dandavate's regime and total benefit on well-being of Rly. men was more or less successful.

In 1975 National Emergency was declared by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, she had declared that the Railwaymen were anti-National. The President of AIRF George Fernandes continued his underground activities. Maniben Kara, then President of Western Rly Employees' Union advised J.P. Chaubey, General Secretary of AIRF to write to Prime Minister regretting. But ultimately it was not written after discussion with us.

In the Eastern Railway we passed an unanimous resolution against imposition of Emergency, and for releasing all who were arrested without trial. During the underground period of George Fernandes, I had constant touch with him and tried my best to send his circular and other important cyclostyled reports among railwaymen and others in general.

In 1976 convention of AIRF at Maligaon during the period of National Emergency, I had taken a bold stand by giving notice of a resolution urging repeal of Emergency and release of all detainees including George Fernandes, A.V.K. Chaitanya (S.C. Rly) and M.N. Bajpayee (E.Rly). Although I had to face many a obstruction for such a move openly, the resolution was adopted in two parts. This created a new chapter in the annals of Railwaymen's Struggle.

During my tenure of General Secretaryship we had set a new objective to the movement. Our aim was 'Socialism' -

means - 'Struggle' and Weapon - 'Unity'. This was included in the constitution of the union. It was further added that "all the office bearers of the union shall be "above board" in the matter of corruption of any type".

Further to stop the practice of corruption I advised the Branches not to accept any donation from staff for winning a case through union's negotiation. During my tenure a printing press was started. A house on 2 acres of land was purchased at Madhapur in the name of "Loko Nayak Jayaprakash" for Trade Union Workers' Training. During this long period of General secretaryship out of so many achievement, I may mention the greatest one is the productivity linked Bonus to Railwaymen.

I became Zonal Secretary, Asstt. General Secretary and then Working President of the AIRF. I was also member Corporate Enterprise Group (Rly. Board) and a member of the Standing Committee of the Joint Consultative Machinery of the National Council and held these posts for a long time.

I attended the 32nd Congress of the International Transport Workers Federation held in Dublin from 21 to 29 July 1977. On invitation I visited various countries like Paris, London, Ireland, Geneva, Austria, Switzerland, West Germany, Vienna, Holland (Amsterdam), East Germany (GDR), Brussel (Seminar), Moscow, Rome etc. I also went to Israel on invitation from the Asian Labour college under Histadut University. During my stay for two and half months there I had the privilege to visit many historical places of Israel.

In Gorakhpur Convention of the AIRF I was replaced by Sujit Roy as office bearer in AIRF and I continued as President of the Rly and Vice President of AIRF. Sujit Roy was the Treasurer of the AIRF.

On 31st January 1984, the day before my retirement, I came to know that my settlement dues would be withheld as a result of an injunction from the Hon'ble High Court obtained by some of the so-called progressive (communist) friends of Eastern Railway Co-operative Bank. This politically motivated injustice was made on the plea that I earned Taxi hire as T.A. during my tenure of Directorship in Eastern railway Co-operative Bank. But this harassment did not last long and this injunction was vacated finally in court. I had received my settlement dues in full later on. This is the saddest experience of the glorious chapter of my Trade Union life. Trade Union leaders of any level under political party's influence failed to restrain themselves in any way from such kind of nefarious activities. Truth will stand out for ever denouncing all sorts of such misdeed under political pressure.

As I failed to attend Jamalpur meeting (Annual General Meeting) in Sept '88 due to an accident I met with on 22nd August '88. I was in Howrah Hospital for Femerbone crack and dislocation. I suffered for more than a year. I was replaced from the post of President in the Election by Sujit Roy whom I made General Secretary. It was a boon in disguise to me.

I decided to leave the post of General Secretaryship of Eastern Railway men's Union soon after my retirement from service on ethical ground as the same might develop vested interest in power yielding post in a Trade union.

After the historical strike of 1974 and threat thereafter during black National emergency I played a vital role and after formation of Janata Government, I had a privilege to go up in all respects and finally

determined to make room for other in my place. At the material time a friend of mine expressed his desire to become General Secretary for only two years. Being agreed with this proposal when I vacated the post of General Secretary in his favour, he wanted to build a house in Calcutta as he had no such in near Calcutta, which made me disenchant much.

I also relinquished the post of General Secretary of AIRF when offered and consented with the nomination of Sri J.P. Chaubey's name for the same. I had taken the decision correctly and wisely as the same could have dragged me in the gnatwire of either vested interest or evils.

My good conscience helped me much to finish with bright innings in the field of Trade Union. My vow of 'Renunciation and Service' prevented me from going down for post, power and boundless desire and for the same I whole heartedly thank the Almighty God.

In spite of so many odds the consolation I have is that I wanted to create a brotherhood but clash of ideals among committed Trade Union Workers had prevented me from doing so in the Trade Union field. Ordinary Railwaymen had to pay much for this disparity in any bigger struggle. I earnestly believe that spirit of love, service and emancipation will continue to encourage them towards a better life through the struggles that may be necessary.

My relation with George Fernandes during Railwaymen's strike of 1974 and the National Emergency

George Fernandes became President after the end of 1973 defeating Peter Alvares. In fact George was the architect of 1974 strike - NCCRS or The National Co-ordination

Committee of Railway Men's Struggle formed on 27th February 1974 at New Delhi where all the representatives of Leftist Political parties assembled. During National Emergency promulgated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Fernandes went underground and came to Calcutta and I had close contact with him. Although I differed with him in many points of sabotage planned by him, I helped him in all way in publishing his secret circular and in keeping contact with others.

In 1976, prior to the AIRF Convention at Maligaon, I discussed with him about the election of President of AIRF at Maligaon. I told him that High Official quarters came to me and told that many of our Union heads agreed to make Sanjay Gandhi, President of the AIRF. They were also ready for Money Packets. George flatly told, "Bimal I am practically not interested because I know, so long an Aurat remains there will be no democracy in the country. Forget about AIRF. I will give you a statement, you take it from me before you leave Maligaon". It could not materialise because he was arrested. Then also some high officials came to me and I told them that I have decided to have Priya Gupta to become the President of AIRF. At

Maligaon I moved resolution against Emergency, lastly passed after much interruption.

Next came the Janata Party Government and George Fernandes became the Minister-in-charge for Industries. I am not going to give my views about his role during that period. I requested him in presence of others to keep the NCCRS alive being he is a Convenor or some other else of his choice. When he did not agree I insisted upon him and told that NCCRS in E-Zone would remain alive as myself as Convenor. This discussion was made in Camera at dead night at his house because he had no time.

My life is full of strife and struggle for others. My ultimate realisation is that merely economic improvement of the masses as in socialism of the day cannot create a peaceful world ; **IT IS RENUNCIATION AND SERVICE MINDEDNESS OF THE MASSES ESPECIALLY OF THE LEADERS THAT CAN TAKE US TO THE CHERISHED GOAL OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY.**

Lastly I express my sincere gratitude to those who constantly stood by me and wish them best of health and happiness to serve the Railwaymen unitedly and sincerely.

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION - KANCHRAPARA BRANCH OF THE UNION HAS A GLORIOUS CHAPTER TO ADD TO

S.B. Lahiri

(Mr. S. B. Lahiri born in 1929 had a struggling life from the very childhood. He passed the Matriculation Examination in 1945 and intended to go in for further studies in the Jackson Medical School of Jalpaiguri. But circumstances were so unfavourable that he had to settle down with a job first in the Central Bank which he left in disgust and later joined as a clerk in the Railway Workshop at Kanchrapara in 1948. He wanted to continue his studies in Rishi Bankim College, Naihati. But as ill luck would have it, he could not continue.

He joined in the then E.I. Railwaymen's Union in 1950. He became Secretary of Eastern Rly men's union at Kanchrapara Branch in course of time and finally President of the Kanchrapara Branch. During the most eventful period of changes and clash of ideals, change of leadership and break away of the union and its period of unity again, he played the most important role and demonstrated his steady fastness of purpose to shape the union into a living organisation in the midst of gloom and despair. His soldierly character is rarely to be found. He unfolds the story of the struggle from Kanchrapara. He has presented a vivid picture of the trials and tribulation he was faced with during 40 years of his association with E.R.M.U.).

I never thought that I was a very prominent figure in the Eastern Railway Men's Union. Rather, I always considered myself as a disciplined soldier of the first line whose main task was to protest against all kinds of unjust and irregularities relating to staff interest and fight against the same in an uncompromising manner. In course of doing so during the long 40 years of my Trade Union life, I came across various leaders, workers, officers, friends, foes and rivals who were different in class, different in nature and different in character also. I give you in the humblest way a pen picture of the course I followed.

Before that, I intend to indicate my mental frame up- and characteristics since my early childhood.

At the outset I would like to quote a line from the famous book "Our India" of Minoo

Masani. "India Presents a Paradox - Poverty in the land of plenty". My early life was, perhaps, a facsimile of the statement.

My father left this world when I was a mere child of 2 years only. Inspite of having enough resources for our livelihood, my widow mother was thrown into great distress because none from my paternal or maternal side stood behind us.

Besides, our relatives started to behave mischievously to ruin us. My father was hardly thirty then and was accused of having a long veil according to the social custom of the time. She was very tall, stout, energetic and also having a strong personality. She had to toil day and night tirelessly and was the only mainstay of our survival.

My mother was kind hearted but very strict in respect of my education. She was not spared from severe punishment for lapses.

I had to pass my School life in utter distress and stringency so much so that I had to forego many essentials of daily life and had no means to procure even the text books properly.

I inherited all the qualities of my mother, which paved my way to passing the Matriculation Examination in 1945. After that I became very much interested to get myself admitted in the Jackson Medical School of Jalpaiguri. Since I was a local boy, I had all resources for getting admission. My mother too was equally interested.

But, my aspirations were nipped in the bud. The strain of continuous struggle for existence caused a serious setback to my mother's health and no option was left to me but to give up my desire and accept a job when I was not even 17.

In October '45, I got an appointment in the Central Bank of India Jalpaiguri Branch on pay of Rs. 60/- p.m. as a Godown Clerk and was posted at Baurah a remote Railway Station on the then Bengal Dooars Railway, now in Bangladesh. I worked in different three or four places for about a year and a half, after which I returned to Jalpaiguri just before independence of India in August, 1947.

One day, the Agent of the Bank called me for checking my Registers. So far as I remember, my only fault was that I did not wish him after entering into his chamber nor did I use 'Sir', while talking to him. Probably, he might have taken a serious exception to this. In course of checking the Registers, suddenly he started shouting and abusing me.

Obviously man of my nature could hardly bear the insult and humiliation. In no time I composed myself. I threw the Registers at him along with the bunch of keys and uttered only the words "Am I your lackey that you are abusing me? Damn your job", and instantly

left his chamber, hurriedly went out of the Bank. Later, I sent my resignation and thus a chapter of my life was closed for ever.

For a few months I was engaged in Coaching junior students. Residents of Jalpaiguri being economically well off, my earnings were fair.

In December, 1947 I received an interview letter from Kanchrapara Workshops and came to Kanchrapara along with my mother. After the interview I was selected and my name was also enlisted in the panel. But it was uncertain as to when I could get the appointment,

In the meantime, unfortunately, my beloved mother who was not only my mother but a friend, guide and every thing suddenly left the World leaving me alone. The gloom and void completely enveloped me.

It was very difficult for me to be a burden of my uncle, I joined the West Bengal National Volunteer Force at Chandmani (now Kalyani) some time in July '48. But, unfortunately in the next evening I was driven out along with two other boys from the camp on a vague allegation that we were "Communists".

At long last I joined as a Clerk in Scale of Rs. 55-130/- later Rs. 60-130/- under the Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer, Kanchrapara and was posted in the office of Loc. Shop No. 2. I was made to work in night shift about a month after month. I had no opportunity to get myself acquainted even with my own colleagues of the same office and let alone the position of the Workshop. But this provided me with a scope for continuing my studies in the College at day time and I got admitted in the Rishi Bankim Chandra College, Narail in July, 1950 along with Paresht Chandra Mondal, a colleague of mine

But, Providence willed otherwise. After completion of my 1st year Class, I got married, just after that I was transferred to Loco Erecting Shop No. 1 along with Mondal. Our transfer to Shop No. 1 brought an end to our student career as we were to work in day time.

Shop No. 1 was the most important and biggest of all the Shops of Loco, with about 750 employees including the Supervisors.

The Shop was divided into two parts, Erecting Shop and Fitting Shop. The main office of Shop No. 1 stood in the Erecting Shop. But the office had another wing in the Fitting shop attached to the Chamber of the Asstt. Foreman/Fiting, known as Store Section. Out of 12 Clerks of the office, four used to work in the Store Section. One literate Workshop staff was also deputed in that Section to assist. Both Mondal and myself were posted in the Store Section. The literate hand of Store Section was Nirmal Chowdhury. He happened to be the Secretary of the Eastern Railway Men's Union.

As a matter of fact I had till then no idea about any union and I knew very little about the Workshop. After my acquaintance with Chowdhury, gradually I tried to know about various matters of the Workshops.

Out of 600 clerks under the Dy. Chief Mechl. Engineer, there were only four head clerks and only one Chief Clerk. All the remaining clerks even the oldest one who were about to retire and regarded as "Bara Babu", in the shops, were in same scale of pay, i.e. Rs. 60-130/-. During their entire service life they had no scope for promotion. Pensionary benefit till then was far away. After retirement they used to get very meagre amount of Settlement dues and had to pass the rest of life in utter distress.

The condition of the Workshop staff was much more miserable. For them also there was no scope for promotion. A khalasi's starting pay was Rs.30/- only in Scale Rs. 30-35/- with yearly increment of Eight annas only. In many of the Shops, namely shop No. 4 and 5 of Loco and Shops 16, 24, 25 and 29 of C & W Shops the number of Semi-skilled staff was three times more than that of the Skilled staff.

Their miseries knew no bound. They could meet both ends for 15 days in a month with their poor pay. Most of the staff had no other way than to take loan from the Kabuliwalas on high interest. There were blood-sucking money-lenders also inside the workshop. They were so cruel that they used to snatch the entire pay of the workers on the Pay day.

The only source for their survival was the Grain Shop. But the Government became determined to withdraw the said benefit and gradually proceeded by offering the workers lumpsum amount from time to time and succeeded finally to snatch a great benefit from the workers.

At that time most of the Workshop people were from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh with no literacy at all. After my transfer to Shop No. 1 and after coming in contact with Nirmal Chowdhury I noticed that every day some workers invariably came to Chowdhury for helping them either in writing certain applications or for some other matters. Although Chowdhury was sympathetic to them, he could hardly help them in such matters so quickly as they wanted. The workers had often to go back disappointed. The other clerks of the Section were indifferent in the matter. Later, I found that the Workshop people very seldom got any help.

from any of the clerks (regarded as Babus) of the Shops. It was my experience that most of the Babus were very much apathetic in such matters. The situation filled my heart with distress.

I observed the repetition of the episode for a few days. Once while a worker was going back on being refused by Chowdhury I asked him whether I could help in the matter. He became very much pleased to hear me and instructed me to write an application in the manner as required by the staff. I wrote down the same then and there.

From the next day it became almost my daily business to write a few applications. Gradually a larger number of workers started approaching me to get their things done. My tenacity to serve the workers was noted by Nirmal Chowdhury, who called me to the Union office one evening. I accompanied Chowdhury to the Union office at Ghatak Road. I was introduced there to Makhan Lal Chanda, the Organising Secretary and Ranjan Kumar Banerjee, the Asst. Secretary. My activities made me very familiar to Chowdhury and soon we started to address each other 'Tui' instead of 'Apni' or 'Tumi'

In the meantime I came to know of another Union named Eastern Railway Men's Congress, whose Secretary was Gorakh Nath Dubey. But I did not know him. Dubey had a small office of the Union opposite to the Canteen Building, where Chowdhury once introduced me to Dubey. I also learnt that Dubey was the secretary of the Spalding Institute and the Committee members of the Canteen were his pet men.

When I learnt that special tea in special cup and dishes was supplied to him from the Canteen regularly free of cost, my impression on G. N. Dubey, changed diametrically.

I started attending the Union Office regularly and in course of time I came in contact with Haricharan Dubey, a worker of Fitting Shop. He was persuaded to attend the Union Office regularly since he was quite popular in Shop floor. Soon we became very close to each other.

None of the Unions at that time had much of activities or publicity through meetings, posters or leaflets etc. Therefore the Unions had no popularity. The Shop representative system was in vogue and the Administration used to settle staff matters like fixation of Holidays etc. in Shop Representatives' meeting.

In E.R.M.U. Ranjan Banerjee used to carry on with the office work. The office work including representation of staff grievances, if any, used to be entirely done by Makhan Chanda. Compared to Nirmal Chowdhury, Chanda was a more prominent figure in the Workshops. Therefore, a few people used to say "Makhan Chanda's Union". Although Banerjee and Chanda were the two vital pillars of the Union it was amazing to me that they could not address each other and often picked up quarrels.

Membership of the Union was also very poor. They could hardly enroll 200 members which was far below the minimum number for a Branch's existence. The remaining portion was manipulated which I came to know later.

In this way about three years passed. By this time a few young people on completion of their Trade Apprenticeship were posted to the Fitting Shop. Out of them, Manoj Singh, Dipak Mitra, Anil Ghosh and others became very close to me. These persons came to Kanchrapara from the completion of Trade Apprenticeship.

posting. One was Minsar Ahmed who was posted in Shop No. 1 and the other was Sheo Sankar Ojha posted in Shop No. 3. I helped Ahmed in the matter of his posting in a good Section for which he started regarding me from the very day and since Ojha was his friend he also did so.

In the year 1954, Nirmal Chowdhury arranged an Election of the Union. Quite a few who claimed to be progressive, contested. They tried their best to convince Ranjan Banerjee to side with them. But they failed in their mission. It was entirely due to Ranjan Banerjee, that whole Group of Chowdhury won the Election because Sri Banerjee alone had enrolled 150 members from the Stores Department and they did cast their votes enblock.

The Office-bearers elected consisted of M.N. Guha, M.L. Gupta, J.C. Ghosal, Nirmal Chowdhury, Ranjan Banerjee, M.L. Chanda and A. Chakraborty as President. Vice-President (s), Secretary, Asstt. Secretary, Organising Secretary and Treasurer respectively. I also was elected Branch Council Member.

In the early part of 1955, the election of the Loco Canteen was announced. My impression of Gorakh Nath Dubey was uppermost in my mind and the election of the Canteen appeared to me as a challenge for ousting Dubey from the Canteen. I gave a hint of my idea to Chowdhury who appreciated the idea and inspired me to make necessary preparations.

I set up candidates for the Canteen Committee and conducted vigorous publicity. I got a small leaflet printed in Hindi and Bengali explaining the corrupt practices of the then committee members and their main leader Dubey and distributed the same in the morning of the election day.

The leaflet led to a miraculous result. All the companions of G. N. Dubey were defeated and our full team consisting of Haricharan Dubey, Mahendra Singh, Sambhu Roy came out with flying colours.

This was my first struggle, which undoubtedly earned me a bit of popularity. The defeat of Dubey's Group in the Canteen became a sensational event.

In 1956 a few posts of Head Clerk and Clerk Gr. I posts were filled up by the existing Graduate Clerks. M.N. Guha, B.G. Ghosh, Parimal Bose etc. were promoted against such posts for one time only. From the next chance the said benefit of the Graduate Clerks was withdrawn. One Head Clerk also was posted in each of the big shops for the first time in the history of the Workshops.

At that time the Personnel Branch suddenly became de-centralised and again after a short period it was declared as a tight compartment. During the short span, my friend Mondal managed his transfer to the personnel branch and B.G. Ghosh was posted in shop no. 5 from the Personnel Branch.

Jagadish Ghosal who was one of the Past Presidents of the Union soon after his promotion as Head Clerk managed to become Welfare Inspector.

In Shop No. 1, Madan Mohan Das was posted as Head Clerk. He brought the Store Section to the main branch in consultation with Nirmal Chowdhury. My main task was to assist him in all matters and also to work in other sections in absence of the respective dealing clerks. Soon I was shifted to the Establishment Section, by the order of the shop. In that section, apart from my routine work in respect of recruitment, promotion, engagement, retirement and transfer of staff etc. my main task was to

prepare at least 5/6 explanation sheets every day and issue the same to the concerned staff.

At that time, as a matter of fact, the staff could hardly get their due privileges and benefits without offering undue gratification to the dealing Clerks. For a pass, for a loan application form or a P.F. withdrawal form they had invariably to pay money. Again, for getting such applications filled up, separate fixed charges had to be paid. Even for their annual increment the staff were in the habit of offering some thing in advance so that they could get it in time. Nobody did ever hesitate to accept such tips.

It became very much difficult for me to be free from the temptation of accepting such cash offers. My dealing with the staff enraged other colleagues in the matter. Still, without accepting anything from the staff I often used to advise them to become members of the Union but most of them paid a deaf ear. By dint of my sincere service in respect of issue of their Passes in due time, filling up of the loan applications and also helping them to reply to the explanation sheets, I became very popular amongst the workers in the shop. Within a year or so, I could identify each of the shop not only by their names but also by their Ticket Numbers and could induce them to accompany me in a body in cases of necessity.

By the middle of the year D.J. Batiwala took over the charge of the Workshops as Dy. Chief Mech. Engineer. He was very much whimsical but not an unkind person. During his time a lot of changes in the Workshops as well as in the Colonies took place. Amongst the favourites of Batiwala were Jagadish Ghosal and Gorakh Nath Dubey.

A rumour was heard at that time that the next selection of welfare Inspectors would be held at Kanchrapara under the control of Mr.

Batiwala. It was also heard that Clerks staff of lowest grade including women Artisan staff would be eligible to apply provided that they were appointed before Dec. '48 and were matriculates. This was an unprecedented opportunity for the Workshop staff.

The aspirants were many-Nirmal Chowdhury was also one of them. In following few days I noticed Ghosal to speak to Chowdhury very frequently. I did not know what poison Ghosal had injected in Chowdhury but later I found Chowdhury severing his connection with the Union.

Lastly, when the rumour turned out to be according to the notice issued by the administration. I observed to my surprise that a saintly-man-like Ghosal detached himself completely from the Union.

Although M.N. Guba, the Secretary of the Branch, was a man of strong physique, he was very busy with his profession of Chartered Accountancy and did not leave. Therefore, there was none to prevent Ghosal from doing his undesired.

In the meantime, Shop election was being held in the Shop. Sreckanta Pal who had been chosen as Representative from Workshop was one of my favourites in active service and strait. Batiwala did not like him and got away with Pal.

Batiwala deputed G.N. Dubey in defeat of Pal. Dubey set up one against Pal. At that time there having the largest number of votes most were from Bihar and there Dubey had great influence on me.

On the date of election, I was Mahendra Singh, Hiricharan Dubey and others.

others had been to the Wagon Shop in support of Pal and to encourage him. We remained there as silent spectators. But G. N. Dubey was present there along with his full force. There was a long queue. Dubey continued to press on them to cast their votes in favour of his candidate, Sewji Sha. But, inspite of his best efforts, Dubey could not succeed and Sreekantha pal won the election by big margin of votes. This was one of the most significant events of that time.

In the later part of the year due to sincere and whole-hearted efforts, particularly of Benoy Krishna Bhattacharjee and a few of his associates such as Nashu Chakraborty, Harabangshi Yadav, Anil Kar, Rajendra Pathak etc. a grand conference of the Class IV staff was held at Circus Maidan under the guidance of the Union.

Till then I did not know any of our central office-bearers other than Paritosh Banerjee. It was for the first time for me that I personally saw the then General Secretary of our Union P.C. Das Gupta in the conference.

In the said year i.e. 1957, we came to know that Ram Chakravarty had been elected as General Secretary of the Union in the Annual General Meeting at Asansol. Chakravarty was known to be a very strong minded person and was very much opposed to the Communists. It was heard that he had already superseded a few of the Branches, such as, Howrah, Calcutta, Sealdah etc. which were dominated by such people.

In the year 1957-58, we enrolled about three hundred solid members and pressed for holding of the Branch Election. But Ghosal did not care anything.

In early Nov, '58, a new man came to the Union office one evening. He was introduced by Chanda as Nani Chakravarty and also as younger brother of R.C. Chakravarty. Nani

Babu told that he was one of the contestants of the ensuing election of the Union to be held shortly at Delri-on-Sone and sought our help in the election.

It was my first opportunity to attend the Union's Annual General Meeting as a delegate at Dehri-on-Sone in 1958. So far I remember a few leaflets were distributed advising the delegates to be watchful of the Communist-minded people. It was also heard that some people would be heckled. But nothing of the kind happened.

At Dehri-on-Sone B.P. Roy Chowdhury (widely known as Bistu Babu) and Subhas Mitra were elected as Asstt. General Secretaries for the first time in the Union. Nani Chakravarty and his group, however, was defeated.

Returning from Dehri-on-Sone we pressed Ghosal to arrange the Annual General meeting of the Branch. But he did not heed to us. Then we submitted a representation to the General Secretary with signatures of adequate number of members according to the provisions of the bye-laws of the Union, but to no effect.

In the meantime we heard that Chakravarty, Tarun Chatterjee and others had been removed from office under Rule 149.

Another Annual General Meeting of the Union took place at Dhanbad in 1958. So far I remember Manoj Bose and others (Non-Rly. men) were elected as office-bearers in the said Annual General Meeting.

In course of the meeting I came in contact with Sreekantha Pal. I remember I personally saw the Communist Party representative who represented the affairs of the Branch. Unfortunately we only heard of his thrashing from him.

In the said Annual General Meeting an important issue was the Second Pay Commission's Report. The delegates were told that the leaders of the Unions and Federations were not satisfied with the recommendations and they were considering the question of a Strike of all the central Government Employees.

Soon after our return from Dhanbad, certain portions of the Pay Commission's Report were published in the dailies. It appeared that actually nothing more was being paid to the employees other than giving a higher start by merger of the existing Pay and Dearness Allowances.

By the middle of December '59, the General Secretary, R.C. Chakravarty for the first time came to Kanchrapara for holding a meeting over the main issue of Pay Commission. Moreover, by that time the General Secretary earned a great reputation. There was a huge gathering of the workers at the circus Maidan in his meeting.

As a matter of fact I was at the time immatured, without consulting anybody or taking any advice from others I got leaflets printed and distributed to the mass through Mahendra Singh.

In the leaflet the only point against the General Secretary was about the inclusion of delegates from Kanchrapara Branch irregularly at the Annual General Meeting of Dehri-on-Sone in 1958. All other matters were in regard to holding the Branch Election and the misdeeds of Ghosal.

The Hindi speech of the General Secretary had a great effect over the mass. Referring to the 15th Labour Conference held under the Presidentship of the then Labour Minister G.L. Nanda, he gave a very clear picture and explained nicely about the

minimum requirements of a worker for the maintenance of his family with wife and two children and emphasised that according to the decision of the said Labour Commission, the Unions and the Federations had demanded for a minimum pay of Rs. 125/- for the workers. The General Secretary, however, did not take any cognisance of the leaflet but only expressed his regret that no such question had ever been raised by any of the 48 branches.

But Ghosal became very much furious. He thumped his legs again and again on the dias and warned that whoever would stand against him would be tread over and crushed into dust. The mass started shouting "Shame, Shame".

Meanwhile, one day we heard that the then President of the Union Rajendra Singh (M.P.) had come to Howrah and was staying in the Retiring Room. The next morning we started for Howrah with about 250 members and saw our President Singh. After hearing us he assured that he would surely do something in respect of the Branch Election. Our General Secy, Chakravarty was also present there.

Our President Sri Singh was really very true to his words, because a few days later Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury who was one of the most closest persons of the General Secretary came to Kanchrapara and held a gathering of all of us. He made an official proposal before us. We could not accept it and, therefore, he went back.

A few days later one night B.P. Roy Chowdhury came again and informed that the election of the Union would be held on 27th January in the Hindmarsh Institute according to the instructions of the General Secretary.

On 27th January, arrangements for the Union's election was made. We tried to bring the fullest strength of our members.

Ghosal and his associates also brought large number of people but they were less than that of ours. The Institute hall was full and a severe tumult arose in the hall. When the hall became a bit quiet B.P. Roychowdhury suddenly proposed to elect the candidates by raising of hands. At this the people burst out and pandemonium took place. B.P. Roychowdhury ultimately had to dissolve the meeting for the day.

The most disgraceful incident of the day to me was the appearance of Brojo Gobinda Ghosh along with a good number of staff from Shop No. 5 to Join hands with Ghosal.

I became very much amazed. He who did not become a member in 1959 even, had all along been telling me to remove Ghosal and Chanda from the Union could be a party to such betrayal. For the first time in my life I became very much perplexed to note how lust for power and position could break the moral of a man and bring him down.

After that, the election of the Union was held on 12.3.60 at the Spalding Institute. But in spite of our best efforts and submitting joint application to the General Secretary in terms of clause 42(b) of the Constitution of the Union, the electoral roll was not made available. Identity cards were printed for the members but were not supplied to our genuine members for which they could not cast their votes. The only way left to us to desist Ghosal and his associates from their design was to go in for a clash but that was not possible. Lastly, Ghosal and his entire group won the election, entirely due to unholy alliance of B.P. Roy Chowdhury, the then Asst. General Secretary with one of the closest friends of Ghosal namely Gorakh Nath Dubey, Secretary of the Spalding Institute.

We became disheartened and frustrated.

We had then nothing to do but disassociate ourselves from the Union for the time being.

Both Sri Dubey and myself were placed in a very critical position. Right from 1951 it had been our daily habit to attend the Union Office. That habit came to an end but not for a long period.

Very soon the issue of Strike Ballot came up and we had to come back again actively. Shortly after this the strike was to commence from 00 hrs. of 11th July. The Workers' only slogan was "Baroi July Ko-Ka-Hoga Railka Chakka Bandh Hoga".

In our Branch also preparation for the strike continued in full swing. Action Committee was formed, divided into two parts one for the Eastern colonies under the leadership of M.L. Chanda and the other for the Western Colonies under B.G. Ghosh. All my friends and companions who had fought the Branch Election were enlisted in the action Committee. The secretary Ghosal was overall incharge. The general Railway workers supported the Strike call since they were under the grip of severe financial stringency.

Just before a week or so, the General Secretary, Chakravarty again came to Kanchrapara and marched through the Colonies and a part of the Township in a historical procession. Just 2 or 3 days before the strike it was learnt that the General secretary was arrested.

Then came 11th July, 1960. The entire Loco Shop was found to be almost empty in the second half. None of the leaders were traced out. Just in the evening, I found Ghosal, proceeding through the Bongaon Road towards the Thana Maidan. As soon as I called him from behind, he turned towards me in a very perplexed mood. When I asked him as to where he was going, he said

that he was going to the Western Colonies to watch the situation there.

Then came the historical 12th July morning. In the Eastern Colonies we were deputed to watch two main places through which the workers used to pass in huge numbers - one at the Level Crossing Gate and the other near the Rly. Bridge adjacent to the outdoor Hospital. I was deputed near the Hospital bridge along with several others where no worker was found to pass till 6.30 hrs. When all 3 buzzers were blown. Ram Dev who was at the level crossing gate came to tell us they also did not see any worker to pass through the level crossing.

Then myself along with Ram Dev and few others proceeded towards the Sittee Bazar Colony where Sambhu Roy, Mahendra Singh, S. S. Ojha, Minser Ahmed and few others were found to wait with certain workers whom they had prevented from going to the workshops. The PSP leader Byomkesh Banerjee also happened to be there. Mahendra Singh and my other friends informed me that almost all the workers of Dangapara, Sittee Bazar and Store Block colonies had already entered the Workshop when it was not even 5 A.M. A Police van was standing near the Loco main gate. We were practically at a loss to decide as to what to do. Suddenly an idea struck in my mind to start a procession with the men available. A small procession of hardly 50/60 people with Sambhu Roy and Sri Byomkesh Banerjee at the front proceeded to the Loco Gate shouting slogans. From the Loco Gate the procession came in front of Sittee Bazar. There also a few of our Action Committee members and a few willing workers joined us. In the meantime, M. L. Chanda along with Sunil Nag appeared there. Then the procession again started to the

Loco Gate and from Loco Gate it proceeded towards carriage Gate touching the Power House Gate also. Again from Carriage Gate we came back to Sittee Bazar. Thus we marched twice or thrice and then the entire procession proceeded towards Babu Block through 5th Avenue when B. G. Ghosh along with few others joined the procession. When we came near the Bratachari Park, a few persons prevented by Abani Bose (Choto Bose) of Stores and others were also made to join the procession. Then the procession proceeded towards AEN office. All the staff under the IOWs and few under the PWIs were standing outside the AEN's office without joining work. They also joined the procession when it gathered a strength of about 300. We came back to Loco Gate again when we found a great sensation amongst the workers who were inside. They accumulated at the gate and shouted for opening of the gate so that they could come out. We again proceeded towards Carriage Shop Gate, where the same sensation was found amongst the workers inside. The procession again came back to Sittee Bazar when it was about 9.45. A good number of clerks who came to attend the office were made to join the procession. At about 10.15 the workers of Loco and Carriage and Elect. Shop became so much restive that they themselves tried to break the gates for coming out. At this, the Sainiks of both Loco & Carriage sides, perhaps, at the instruction of the higher authorities opened all the gates and the workers began to come out in tide but none could go away. Whoever came out of the Workshops joined the procession. Then the procession became a historical one. When the front of the procession reached the Thana More, the end of the same was near the Indoor Hospital. From Thana More the procession marched through Workshop Road, Station

Road and through Nakari Mondal Road and ended at the Circus Maidan.

Till then we did not know anything about the betrayal of Ghosal. But at the Circus Maidan we came to know only little of his misdeed. In the meantime, B. K. Sar who was the President of the Branch appeared there. We then took him on the shoulder and told the gathering that the Secretary Ghosal had betrayed and fled away but the President is still with us. Next I myself lifted B. G. Ghosh holding his waist with my hands and announced before the gathering that since Ghosal had fled away, B. G. Ghosh would be our Secretary right from now. The entire mob was earnestly requested not to go back again to the Workshops and continue the strike till it was declared over by the leader. The entire mob gradually dispersed.

In the same afternoon, 5 boys came in my quarters headed by Bishnu Bhattacharjee. They narrated vivid picture of the entire colony and gave an assessment of the number of staff who were determined to join duty from the colony. They also said that they would be at my back and call and would do whatever would be entrusted to them.

Satyen Ganguly who was an old leader of the Rail Road Workers' Union and a resolute person on all account and had been removed from service, was also present at Kancharapara.

No liaison with the Branch leaders could be maintained, as neither their whereabouts were known nor were they found anywhere in the Rly. Colonies.

Still we continued to hold meetings every night either in Nani Sen's school or in my Quarters where Satyen Ganguly, Byomkesh Banerjee, Lakshman Chatterjee of Accounts, Ram Deb, Ranjan Banerjee and others used to

attend regularly. Jagadish Das of CPI also used to attend such meetings almost regularly. On 17th morning, we heard that the Strike had already been called off i.e. 18th. So in the afternoon of 17th July we organised a meeting at Kabarsthan Maidan which was a huge one and we were compelled to advise the workers to go back to their duties from the following morning and thus a glorious chapter of the Central Govt. Employees' Struggle came to an end.

On 18th morning, as soon as I entered the Workshops for signing my attendance register in the Time Office I was prevented by V. K. Kapoor, the then AWM(F). He told me not to enter the Workshops and to go back. There was a hot exchange of words with him, when Brojo Babu also arrived there. 16 staff from Loco Shop were suspended including Brojo Babu and myself. Both myself and Brojo Babu went out together in a Tea stall in front of the Loco Gate where all the suspended persons i.e. 16 from Loco, 17 from C&W Shops gathered gradually.

The entire history of betrayal of Ghosal became the matter of our discussion. Both Ghosal and B. K. Sar saw the DMO Dr. B. S. Agarwal to manage sick certificates for them but they were refused by the DMO. B. K. Sar returned back alone but Ghosal could not withstand the situation. He went inside the Shops, surrendered himself to the Administration and handed over the entire list of the members of the Action Committee. In lieu he managed leave for the strike period from the Administration, probably on the ground that the news of his betrayal might throw the wrath of the strikers on his family and he fled away.

Among the suspended staff majority belonged to our Group. Out of the Office

Bearers, M. L. Chanda, Sunil Nag, B. K. Sar and Brojo Babu were only suspended. Amongst us, Haricharan Dubey was overwhelmed with grief for being suspended from service and it became very much difficult for us to restore his normalcy.

The position of central office bearers of the union was not known. I could only know that R. C. Chakravarty, Bimal Dey and Subhas Mitra were suspended from service.

Subhas Mitra who was none of the Asstt. General Secretary's at that time, had resumed his duty within a week of his suspension.

Here at Kanchrapara also, the man whose suspension was withdrawn first was Brojo Babu, within 5/6 days. At this, Haricharan Dubey became very much furious and started saying "Is Brojo Babu a better dalal than me ? I would just now go to Bijoy Da (Bijoy Basanta Nandy) and request him to phone B. B. Lal, the then Works Manager and get my suspension withdrawn". Dubey also did the same and his suspension was also withdrawn within 10/12 days. Minser Ahmed also resumed his duty after a fortnight.

Cases of all the suspended staff of Loco and Carriage other than the aforesaid three were enquired into. Most of the cases were defended by Brojo Babu and a few by Subhas Mitra also. On completion of the enquiry of the DA cases all the concerned staff were put back to duty by the end of December '60 and the rest in the first week of January '60.

9 staff of DCOS Halişahar including Ranjan Banerjee, Abani Bose and Narattam Misra, were suspended. From Accounts there was only one person Lakshman Chatterje, Two Stock verifiers were also suspended - one Satyendra Nath Duta and name of other is missing. Suspension of all the above persons were withdrawn later on.

After the Strike, there was a vacuum in the Union. Kishori Sharma, who was one of the Vice Presidents had already left. B. K. Sar, after withdrawal of his suspension submitted resignation from his services and also severed his connection with the Union. The General Workers were distressed at the loss of their pay during the strike period and none of them was interested to attend the Union.

Such a situation compelled Brojo Babu to request us to attend the office regularly.

In 1961, either in March or April a new Committee was formed. M. L. Chanda became President of the Union and Hari Charan Dubey and Parash Sharma were Vice Presidents, Brojo Babu as Secretary and myself as Assistant Secretary, Sunil Nag and Nihar Chatterjee remained in their former position.

Due to our concerted efforts, the shape of the Union took a turn within a year. membership increased. Till then Brojo Gobinda Ghosh was Secretary of the Union in one side and on other side, he was the President of the staff Council and was in the good books of the Administration. Taking the advantage of his position, he used to do fair and unfair, all types of matters particularly being pressurised by Chanda.

In the year 1962, during the period of C. N. Putty, Dy. CME, Brojobabu and Hari Charan Dubey managed to get the period of their suspension, during 1960's strike regularised. But I did not know how they had managed it. It was unfortunate that all workers including myself had suffered during our entire service period a cumulative loss of yearly increment for six months.

In the month of September, 1962, our country faced a very critical situation due to the Chinese aggression. Right from that

period a difference developed in the Central body of the Union. - B. P. Roychowdhury, S. C. Mitra and Monoj Bose joined together to remove R. C. Chakravarty from the post of General Secretary in the next Annual General Meeting

On 25th and 26th October, 1962 the Annual General Meeting of the Union was held at Mughalsarai. A great procession was made by the Railwaymen at Mughalsarai against the Chinese aggression. In the delegate session some historical resolutions were also adopted, such as the Railwaymen would have to work day and night to keep the wheels moving faster and faster. For the cause of Country, money would have to be donated for the fighting Jawans blood donation would have to be arranged.

In the election B. P. Roychowdhury along with his entire group was completely defeated.

In all the former meetings I had attended so far I found none to deliver speech in English. But at Sahebganj only I found B. B. Dey of Ranaghat to deliver his speech in English.

At that time B. B. Dey was the Branch Secretary of Ranaghat and R. N. Ghosh was the President of the Branch. Both of them were very efficient and they were equally popular.

Dey was also very much desperate. His challenge against A. P. Sharma, the then General Secy, while making a meeting at Ranaghat became a very sensational issue over the Eastern Railway. Of course, Dey had to face adverse consequences. But it was due to R. C. Chakravarty, General Secretary, that no harm could be done to Dey.

At Sahebganj also, the crack of the Union did not come to the surface. In June, 1963

Makhan Lal Chanda, Sunil Nag and S. S. Ojha from K. P. A. Branch started for Patna where we heard, the President Rajendra Singh had summoned a Central Council Meeting.

On the other hand, General Secretary, Chakravarty had convened a Central Council meeting at Howrah Institute on 28th and 19th June, I attended the said meeting along with Brojobabu. It was observed that more than 2/3rd of the actual Central Council members as per the original record were present in the meeting. The power of the President was withdrawn in the said meeting.

The next day a whispering was going on that the President Rajendra Singh had suspended R. C. Chakravarty from the post of General Secretary which was immediately communicated to the Chief Personnel Officer through telephone and telegram from Patna.

However, all the delegates who were present in the meeting, entered the chamber of Chief Personnel Officer along with R. C. Chakravarty. Chakravarty was in a very agitated mood. He threw the original register of the Central Council members on table of the then Chief Personnel Officer started questioning him one after another.

Later we came to know that the then Chief Personnel Officer was the main person who had helped B. P. Roychowdhury to ruin the union.

As a result all of our efforts became futile. Although the Central office at 23 & 24 Strand Road remained under the custody of Chakravarty, but the Administration had withdrawn all his facilities, including recognition.

At such a stage almost all the Branches were bifurcated. In major strength in Kanchrapara Sunil Nag, S. S. Ojha and a few other members left Ghatak Road Office of the

Union and opened a new office of their own at Dhobipukur Road.

As a protest against the AIRF for supporting the undesirable activities of B. P. Roy Chowdhury's group, R. C. Chakravarty arranged a grand demonstration before the convention of AIRF at Gaya. Thousands of Railwaymen from different parts of E. Railway mustered strong at Gaya. At that time Sankar Bose of Sahebganj Branch made a unique show. He brought about 2000 Santhal Gangmen from Sahebganj area who had bows, arrows, Dholoks and Madols with them. There was a very big procession by all the Railwaymen who had come from different parts of Eastern Railway with the troop of Sankar Bose at the front of the procession.

The railwaymen were frustrated. In such a state R. C. Chakravarty again convened a meeting of all his followers at Jamalpur in September and after reviewing the entire situation, it was decided that he would hand over the Strand Road Office to the opponents along with all other official records in the greater interest of the Railwaymen. I appreciated his spirit of sacrifice and since then I regarded him as "Dada".

Paritosh Banerjee, whom I always regarded as "Dada" ever since my acquaintance with him, seemed to me to be the most simple and honest of all the known leaders of the Union. He also seemed to be very prudent. I did not know what alliance he had with B.P. Roy Chowdhury and others but he joined with them.

Soon after the Central Office was handed over Rajendra Singh convened a meeting at Asansol in May/64. Almost all the leaders of both Central and Branches were present. At Asansol the matter was finally decided. A new set of Office bearers was elected with Paritosh Banerjee as General Secretary.

Still in almost all the Branches no unity in true sense of the term could be achieved amongst the workers. A few months passed in this way and by the end of November '64 Paritosh Banerjee held the Annual General Meeting at Naihati.

In all fairness Ram Chakravarty thought that he would be included as Office bearer in the said meeting along with at least a few of his followers. But this did not happen.

The said injustice infuriated R.C. Chakravarty so much so that at his own initiative a new parallel committee was formed in the name of E. Rly Men's Union and three of the office bearers of the said new Committee were from Kanchrapara Workshop. Suroj Singh became the first President, Kapil Deo Giri became Vice President and myself the General Secretary. The other office bearers such as S.K. Das, S.K. Sarkar, S. Bose, H.D. Bagchi and others were included from almost all the Branches of E. Rly. The new Committee started functioning from R.C. Chakravarty's Railway Qrs. at Golmohars/Howrah. H.D. Bagchi normally used to preside over all our meetings. He had lost his Railway service due to Railwaymen's struggle.

After only 2 months our first Annual general Meeting was held on 9th January '65 at Mughalsarai. Almost all the Office Bearers remained in their places but Subodh Kumar Bag of Howrah was elected Treasurer.

In an internal meeting it was decided at Mughalsarai that we should try to contact George Fernandes in Delhi through Madhu Limya, M.P. By that time, Fernandes was a well known personality in the Trade Union field.

It was also decided in the said meeting that till the Central Office at 23/24, Strand

Road was restored, the Ghatak Road Office of the Kanchrapara Branch would be the Camp office of the General Secretary.

In the following months I had no rest at all and had to move like a shuttle-cock, through out the Eastern Railway to visit all the Branches.

In August, 1965 I had been to Delhi along with R.C. Chakravarty and S.K. Das and P.K. Sanyal. We had two sittings with Fernandes who advised us to arrange a conference of Railwaymen from all Zones at Mughalsarai sometime in early 1966.

In December, we had our Central Council meeting in Dchri-on-Sone. Our opponents tried their best to spoil the meeting. Subhas Mitra was watching our activities in a Dharmashala where we were holding the meeting. The action of Mitra came to the notice of A.N. Das of Dhanbad. Subhas Mitra left the place.

They had contacted the Dalmia Company and kept their watchmen in readiness. In the afternoon, while we were holding the mass meeting on the Dalmia Company's playground, the said watchmen fell upon us and started beating us. There was no alternative for the people but to run away. R.K. Lal of Mughalsarai was severely injured and lying on the ground. Finding nobody there I, myself went to him and carried him on my shoulder.

In the middle of December, 1965 the most unpleasant incident occurred. Paritosh Banerjee had convened a Working Committee Meeting at Rampurhat. He started from Sealdah along with the other office bearers and members by Sealdah-Gaya Passenger Train. We had also fixed up a programme of Mass meeting at Rampurhat Loco on the same day. Accordingly we also availed of the same train. Most of our people were from Kanchrapara and Liluah.

As soon as the train stopped at Rampurhat Station, Paritosh Banerjee and others came out of the train, and our men fell upon them.

Inspite of this incident, in the afternoon, we organised a good procession and after passing through the Railway colonies held Mass meeting near the Loco Shed.

In January, 1966 on being informed by Madhu Limya, M.P. I went to see him along with R.C. Chakravarty at JMP where Madhu Limya was holding a mass meeting. Later he enquired from us about the proposed Conference to be held at Mughalsarai. We indicated the position. He assured us that George Fernandes would definitely attend the proposed conference.

In the meantime the preparation for holding conference at Mughalsarai was going on in full swing. The responsibility of the preparation of the conference was entirely thrown on the shoulder of Ranjit Mukherjee of Mughalsarai. Although he was assisted by Y.N. Singh, K.P. Lall, R.J. Sukla and many others but Ranjit Mukherjee alone had left no stone unturned in this direction. Persons were sent to All the Head Quarters of the Zonal Railways to contact people for attending the conference at Mughalsarai. Thousands of pamphlets with the caption heading "Mughalsarai Cholo" were printed and distributed on all Railways. All the Eastern Railway Branches were flooded with such pamphlets.

The conference was held at Mughalsarai on 19th and 20th February, 1966. Delegates came from all parts of Indian Railway. The conference was inaugurated by S. M. Joshi. Criticising the then AIRP leaders vehemently, George Fernandes demanded withdrawal of Air condition Passes from the leader. But he mainly stressed the need of

unity of all categories of railwaymen. He added that amongst the Central Government employees, the Railway employees were the largest in number. If they could be free from their class interest and fight unitedly, the Government would surely have to bend down. He also sought for the blessings of the Railwaymen so that he could get his victory over S.K. Patil in the ensuing Lok Sabha Election.

P.K. Sanyal dragged me and R.C. Chakravarty from Mughalsarai to Chopan where he put up a splendid show. He organised a torch light procession at night with about 200 gangmen in accompaniment of Dollaks and cymbals. The loud sound of the Dhollaks and cymbals made the winter sky sonorous. They were also singing :—

“Doro-mat Agay Bartya — Cholo Jera Jhutkay,

P.K. Sannial Ladray Samarmay Datkay”.

We returned from Mughalsarai with a new spirit, zeal and enthusiasm. There our only task was to attend different Branches and hold meeting with the workers. Gatherings in such meetings were increasing by leaps and bounds.

In the meantime, in March, 1966, a notable incident took place. In the case of assault on Paritosh Banerjee and others, a criminal suit was going on against R.C. Chakravarty, Brojo Babu, mahendra Singh, Jagadish Chakraborty and Bimal Chakraborty and a few others who were on bail. On 24th March the bail was to be granted afresh. All of us duly attended Rampurhat. Unfortunately the Executive Magistrate who was meant to grant the bail was not present. As a result all of them had to be under Police custody in jail of Rampurhat for the night. Before going to the Jail, I found a tragic scene that a strong

personality like R.C. Chakravarty had tears in his eyes while taking his meal.

A fresh bail was granted next morning.

From the month of April 1966 it became our only business to conduct demonstration in almost all big Branches on the grievances of the staff. The first demonstration was staged at Dhanbad Divisional Office on 22nd April, next at Asansol and on May 17 at Kanchrapara Workshop, on 19th at Danapur, on 21st May at Howrah Divisional office. The workers of Liluah staged another demonstration on the same day in the General Manager's Office.

It was possible for Ram Da to be present everywhere. He was the leader and the others who followed him were Sudhir Das of Howrah, Sudhir Sarkar of Asansol, Ardhendu Das of Dhanbad including myself.

4th June, 1966, was undoubtedly a glorious day in the history of Railway's struggle particularly for the largest gathering of Railwaymen in the demonstration and the subsequent rally at the Monument maidan. Several thousands of workers from all parts of Eastern Railway accumulated. Kanchrapara and Liluah Workshop workers were in greater numbers but still Sankar Bose of Sahebganj who was at that time one of our Asstt. General Secretaries excelled everybody. He brought more than a thousand Adibashi gangmen from Sahebganj area.

After the demonstration before the General Manager's Office, the entire crowd proceeded towards the Monument where a mass meeting was organised. All our people joined in procession.

The mass meeting was held under the Presidentship of R.C. Chakravarty. Due to whole-hearted efforts of Sudhir Das, Sailen Ghosh and Subodh Bag the entire gathering was nicely arranged. Sudhir Das, Ranjit

Mukherjee and a few leaders of the HMP including the President of the meeting delivered speech. I also spoke a few words before the gathering. Referring to pandit Nehru's assurance of hanging the black-marketcers at the nearest lamp post, I had mentioned about his failure in fulfilling his assurance. Probably my said speech had given the police an impression that I was a member of the Communist Party.

Later a book-let with the heading "A Glimpse of the Railwaymen's struggle on Eastern Railway", was published. This was the product of the tireless efforts of R.C. Chakravarty, Sailen Ghosh and S.K. Das. The book-let contained the memorandum submitted to the General Manager on 4th June, 1966 and the manifesto of All India Railway Men's unity Committee. Thousands of copies of the booklet were sent to all the Branches.

But after successful completion of the programme of 4th June '66 a sense of self-satisfaction was noticed amongst our active workers and the onward march of the organisation was slowed down.

The other group of Eastern Railwaymen's Union became very much active and resorted to disrupting our mass meetings wherever possible. They did it at Ranaghat and also at Dhanbad. A special convention at Dhanbad could not be held due to court injunction and promulgation of Section 144.

In February '67 the defeat of the ruling Congress party in West Bengal was a memorable incident. George Fernandes also got victory over S.K. Patil. J.M. Biswas, the Railway Men's leader who defeated Atulya Ghosh of West Bengal Congress became famous.

On 5th March '67 the Annual General meeting of the Union was held at Jamui. It was decided unanimously that George Fernandes would be our President, provided his consent was received. R.N. Ghosh became the President of the Union temporarily on condition that he would resign in case of acceptance by Fernandes. In the said Annual General Meeting, R.C. Chakravarty became very much aggrieved to note that nobody even proposed his name for any of the posts.

After receiving the consent of George Fernandes the office bearers of the Union sat together to chalk out a plan for a conference in Calcutta along with George Fernandes. R.N. Ghosh resigned in that meeting from the post of President.

In the said meeting also R.C. Chakravarty was not given due importance by others although he had worked full steam with active co-operation for the betterment of the organisation. But he was still neglected and he had aired his disappointment. However, in the said meeting a programme of conference in Calcutta for three days along with George Fernandes was chalked out and R.C. Chakravarty was made the Chairman of the the Reception Committee.

On the other hand right from the formation of the new United Front Govt. in west Bengal, a few of our leaders started speaking in a different tone. Following this myself and Sailen Ghosh ran to Sudhir Sarkar of Asansol and then to Ardhendu Das of Dhanbad. From Dhanbad, we went to Gaya, Dheri-on-Sone and Mughalsarai and saw Debakinandan, A.N. Singh, R.J. Sukla, Ranjit Mukherjee and several others and had a detailed talk with them about the future of the union. From Mughalsarai I started for Danapur. Sailen Ghosh on his return, got

down at Dhanbad again and in consultation with Ardhendu Das arranged for a meeting at Dhanbad in April, 1967. The proposed meeting was held at Dhanbad in due course on 23rd April, 1967. Only members from 13 Branches attended the meeting. I became very much surprised to note that most of the members put up a proposal for changing the name of the Union.

The moment I heard the proposal it became very clear to me that the plant which was planted at Naihati in November '64, in the name of Eastern Railwaymen's Union (Parallel Committee) and had an exuberant growth within 3 years due to the tireless efforts, sacrifice and sincerity of the planters, was being suddenly cut down by some of the planters themselves. Although the breaking of the Union started from within, yet the programme of the conference along with George Fernandes was going on in full swing.

George Fernandes had given a programme earlier in Calcutta from 9 to 11th May. Later he cancelled it and confirmed the programme from 18 to 20 May, 1967. Accordingly, the programme was circulated to all Branches.

The programme of conference was for two days. The Delegates session was fixed from 10.00 hrs. to 13.00 hrs. and a mass meeting at Howrah Maidan from 17.00 hrs. on 19th May and on 20th May. A demonstration was to be held before the General Manager, Eastern Railway from 15.00 hrs. Fernandes was to come on 18th morning.

On 18th morning myself and Sailen Ghosh duly attended the Airport of Dum Dum. But George Fernandes did not turn up. We became very much depressed and returned disheartenedly. On the following date i.e. on 19th May, the long desired

conference was held at Bagala Dharmashala of Howrah. But it would have been better if the said programme would have been deferred or cancelled. Shout, tumults and aspersions on each other was the net outcome. In the afternoon a mass meeting was held at Howrah Maidan where Sushil Dhara, Minister of the United Front Government, Satyen Ganguly, Sadhan Gupta and several others spoke.

Although the programme was for 2 days, but the members had actually no money due to internal bickerings among the members themselves, and therefore, participation of members from the Branches was very poor. In such a situation, the leaders amongst us ought to have thought of postponing the programme of demonstration before the General Manager on the 20th, particularly in view of the incident of 19th May. But who would take such a decision? Everybody became a leader.

Therefore, the programme of 20th May, 1967, was also followed. A procession started from Howrah Station and soon reached Fairlie Place through the Strand Road. From the other side, a procession of the members of Kanchrapara, Ranghat, Naihati etc. was also coming. In the meantime, suddenly a few of our leaders entered inside the office premises of the General Manager through the Fairlie Place gate with the procession.

There was an assurance of the United Front Government that police would not interfere in democratic movements. But I was surprised to see the whole Headquarters building surrounded by Police.

I hurriedly went to the front of the procession and was surprised when I found the processionists going to the first floor through the main stairs by the side of the Officers Lift. Immediately myself and others

Ghosh ran behind them and with great difficulty stopped them at the turn of the stairs- Then they squatted over there.

I could not follow what they wanted to do as I noticed that the friends who were companions of so many struggles, had overnight become so much indisciplined. Myself and Sailen Ghosh stood there in the gloomy humid corner for over 3 hours and perspired profusely.

At about 6 p.m. the General Manager came out surrounded by Police who made the staircase clear. At that moment I requested the General Manager to take the Memorandum but without uttering a single word he straightway went to his car. As soon as he entered into his car, our people gharaoed him along with the car from all sides and squatted on the ground.

I stood outside the barrier wall helplessly. No other leader was found. Thus about half an hour passed. I could foresee the results of such harshness. I was keen on doing something to save the situation. A few Police Officers along with one Asstt. Commissioner of Police were standing by the side of the General manager's car. I looked to the Asstt. Commissioner of Police and told him to ask for the General Manager's permission to allow me to stand on the Bonnet of his car so that I could address the gathering and convince them for dispersal. He talked to the General Manger, came back to me and told that the General manger had agreed to it.

I crossed the barrier wall and went to the car. I climbed on the hood of the car. The entire gathering came to my view. I could hardly utter a few words. I explained to them that it was not the last day of our struggle. Our struggle would continue. We would have to come again and again to the General Manager

till our demands were fulfilled. Let us end the move for the day. After that our men gradually dispersed. Taking the Memorandum from me the General Manager also went away.

Within three days after the said demonstration three of us, myself, Sailen Ghosh and Batakrishna Mitra were placed under suspension. But inspite of suspension of three of the vital office bearers, no effective protest was made.

The Kanchrapara Branch of the Union only succeeded in staging a demonstration for seven consecutive days and make a procession also following my suspension. Jagadish Das, M.L.A.(M) also addressed a gathering in Loco Gate in protest against my suspension.

Our president George Fernandes expressed his agony over the incident through a letter. Then he came to Calcutta for 2 days. He saw the General Manager on the 1st July and attended a mass meeting at Lilluah. On the 2nd July he came to Kanchrapara Branch and addressed mass meeting and then went away.

Following Geogre's visit, I went to Asansol as programmed earlier. Some Oli Mohammed had an accidental death in Loco Shed on the said day and the workers became very much agitated and wanted to bury the dead body in the Divisional Office premises. Though it seemed to me to be unwise but nothing could prevent the workers at that moment. The dead body was then brought to the office of the Divil. Supdt. and was buried. After two days. Sudhir Sarkar was also suspended.

Struggle Fund coupons were printed and distributed in the Branches but excepting kanchrapara Branch very few Branches could collect any funds.

In such a stage when no money was coming from the Branches, I went to some

Branches so that I could revitalise them and after that I called a meeting at Asansol in July '67. The meeting was duly held but the attendance was very poor, because the organisation actually reached a breaking point at that moment. In September '67, George Fernandes wrote to me to see him at Katihar. I went there in due time but George did not turn up.

A few of my associates who were still interested insisted on instituting a suit in the High Court against the General Manager and Paritosh Banerjee. As decided at a later stage a case was filed in the High Court through Advocate Satyen Ganguly in August '67.

In the meantime the issue of Election of Eastern Railway Co-operative Credit Society came up. R.C. Chakravarty became very much interested and began to contact people of different Branches including our key persons.

The Election was held at Howrah Institute on 25th October, 1967. Out of 9 posts of Directors, our men won 6. But R.C. Chakravarty was defeated.

His defeat was a great surprise. It was a pre-planned arrangement by our own men. On this occasion again, the character of a few of our fiends who were politically motivated became very clear to me. I became astonished to see how a man like him, who was full of energy, vigour and vitality, who stood in one line with them in all matters and was the actual founder of the parallel organisation, could have been betrayed in that way. B.G. Ghosh, who was one of the most favourites of R.C. Chakravarty was also present there for the whole day long along with me. He also became very much aggrieved at the happening.

At a later stage when I came to know more and more about the internal affairs of the

Union, it became very clear to me that the E.C.C.S. was the root of all evils which had resulted in the breaking of the Union including downfall of R.C. Chakravarty.

In spite of all the odds I contacted Sarkar of Asansol and Das of Dhanbd again and again and in January, 1968, we arranged for a sitting of all our ranking men at Madhupur. Only members of 12 Branches attended the said meeting. All the persons present were unanimous on the change of the name of the Union to which I could not agree under any circumstances.

As a matter of fact, the organisation existed in name only without any activity or programme and was proceeding towards its natural death. I then thought that it would be better to gather all our men and declare jointly, either the closure of our wing of the Union or merge with the other wing of Eastern Railwaymen's Union. As such I convened the Annual General Meeting at Gaya on 26th and 27th May 1968. R.C. Chakravarty also had greatly influenced me on this score.

I was all along considered to be a non-political person by my so-called progressive friends. They did not believe me fully nor did they disbelieve me fully. But I was also having resentment against them till the occurrence of 19th May '67 and also for subsequent happening. In my Annual Report at Gaya Annual General Meeting on the 26th May '68, I strongly criticised their blunder and the Organisation by their politically motivated action. For this a few became very much annoyed with me.

However, as soon as the proposal for unity and the proposal for inclusion of R.C. Chakravarty as Working President of our Union was raised, a group of our members suddenly became very much agitated and submitted written objection alleging the

meeting as an irregular one and a few also walked out in protest.

But the 'UNITY' proposal arising out of 5 vital points, i.e. that the existence of the two Eastern Railwaymen's Unions (i) created bickering and hatred amongst the Railwaymen, (ii) resulted into loss of confidence of the Railwaymen on Union (iii) rendered both the wings weak organisationally and incapable of leading the Railwaymen for a successful movement against their sufferings, (iv) helped the interest of motivated elements to misguide the Railwaymen, (v) and damaged the cause and interest of the Railwaymen in their movement, was passed by the majority unanimously, along with other decisions. It was also resolved that the final decisions would be taken by the Working Committee after holding discussions with the other group of Union in regard to 'UNITY'.

After returning from GAYA the most unfortunate episode was that I had to miss a friend like Brojo Gobinda Ghosh. Ghosh had all other qualifications of a good Trade Union leader, but he had neither any personality nor any command. Due to political change in West Bengal and formation of the United Front Government, some politically motivated Railwaymen who were blind supporters of a particular political ideology started thinking that a new era had come for them. Although Ghosh was not free from that muse, he was deadly against hooliganism. Still he could not make himself free from the clutches of his political friends and became completely hostile.

A man like B. G. Ghosh who had jointly worked with me for long 7/8 years through rain and sunshine, miseries and distress, joys and sorrows and fought so many struggles together, proposed to compensate me fully for

the period of my suspension, started a campaign of villification against me only due to political reasons although I was never a political rival of any one.

But, not only Brojo Gobinda Ghosh, Mahendra Singh too, the same Mahendra Singh whom from the very period of his apprenticeship I had helped in all matters to raise him up step by step and who had also become one of my best followers, stood against me.

In June, 1968, Brojo Gobinda Ghosh arranged for an active workers' meeting in a Primary School at Nichubasa near the Union Office. Although Haricharan Dubey was the Branch President at that time, Suraj Singh was requested to preside over this meeting. As the meeting was a motivated one against me I did not attend the same but was waiting outside.

At the outset Brojo Gobinda Ghosh stood up and started criticising R. C. Chakravarty and me in a very unseemly way. Dubey became very much furious and he along with Srikanta Paul and several others started shouting and stopped Brojo Gobinda Ghosh, Sanat Bhattacharjee, who was elected as Central Treasurer of our Group at Gaya from Kanchrapara Branch, played a very heroic role that day. He himself stood up and stopped Dubey and all others who had been shouting. Then in a very cool temperament he strongly criticised Brojo Gobinda Ghosh and his friends who were being guided politically and held them entirely responsible for falling and expediting the death of our Wing of the Union. Then he walked out of the meeting along with all our men who were in majority. Suraj Singh closed the meeting. Sudhir Sarkar and Sudhir Sarkar were also present in the said meeting.

The Union office at Ghatak Road became the General Secretary's office and rest

receipts were also issued in my name according to the decision of the Annual Meeting held at Mughalsarai in 1965. Brojo Gobinda Ghosh approached Gopal Roy, the owner of the house and requested him to issue rent receipt in his name, offering a huge amount as advance so that he could oust me from the Union Office. But he failed as Roy did not agree to it. Brojo Gobinda Ghosh then tried to get forceful occupation of the Union office by his men, but could not succeed due to our majority. Then in one opportunity he took away all the important Registers, files and the Register of Struggle fund Coupons and left the Ghatak Road Union office for good along with his followers who were very few at that time.

Brojo Gobinda Ghosh did not come to the Ghatak Road Union office any more. But he had returned to our present Union office at Rly. Bungalow No. L/32 which stands behind the Bizpur Police Station, in the year 1978 i.e. after long ten years of his attachment with the Co-ordination Committee.

My very existence was at stake. I was deprived of the financial help for the time being, as no coupon collection could be made by our members due to continuous internal conflict with Brojo Govinda Ghosh's men.

In almost all the Branches the same thing happened as had happened in the Kanchrapara Branch. A few members of such Branches associated themselves with the Co-ordination Committee, some were trying to get entry into the recognised Union, some became inactive altogether.

After the Annual General Meeting at Gaya I had no scope and opportunity to see the General Secretary of the recognised Group Paritosh Banerjee and discuss about the proposal of 'UNITY'. R. C. Chakravarty and

myself were able to contact Banerjee on 1st July '68 for the first time and discuss matters. But nothing came out instantly. When we went to Banerjee next, B. P. Roychowdhury was present. He at the outset of the discussion shouted very excitedly - 'UNITY' ? What 'UNITY' ? But he was stopped by Banerjee. Then after a long deliberation and several discussion with Banerjee, a bit of progress could be achieved at the end of July '68, when R. C. Chakravarty asked me to sign a joint declaration with Banerjee. But I could not agree to sign the declaration before holding the Working Committee Meeting. At this, R.C. Chakravarty became very much displeased.

In accordance with the discussion with Paritosh Banerjee, I issued a notice convening the Working Committee Meeting at Jhaja on the 4th August '68. In the meantime, Haricharan Dubey, to some extent arrogantly and suspended B. G. Ghosh from the post of Branch Secretary of Kanchrapara Branch for non-submission of accounts and taking away the official records from the Union. This also became an issue in the Working Committee Meeting.

The meeting of the Working Committee was duly held at Jhaja on the scheduled date under the Presidentship of R. C. Chakravarty. It was attended to by 17 members of the Working Committee and several visitors including S. N. Sinha, who was the then Asstt. General Secretary of the Recognised Group.

The meeting expressed its thanks to George Fernandes, the President of our Wing of the Union and M. P. for his message supporting the unity move. It also thanked S. N. Sinha for expressing his views in the meeting in regard to real unity. The meeting also authorised me to sign a joint declaration

along with Paritosh Banerjee announcing that the two wings of Eastern Railwaymen's Union have amalgamated into one and all should work together for greater interests of the Trade Union and for success in the ensuing struggle.

Returning from Jhaja When I met Paritosh Banerjee he told me that he had already decided to make me the President of Kanchrapara Branch. He added that since they were very much busy on 'one day Token Strike' of September '68, he would discuss about the other Branches when the strike would be over. He further requested me to look after the Branch affairs as an unannounced President of the Branch so that the Branch could get prepared for the ensuing Strike. He also said that he had already advised the Branch Secretary S. S. Ojha on this score.

In the Recognised Group of Kanchrapara Branch, there was a great change by then. In 1964, at the beginning of the parallel Committee, Makhanlal Chanda, had been the President of the Branch with Sunil Nag as Secretary. Next, Raja Chowdhury became the President and M. L. Chanda became Secretary. In 1967, S. S. Ojha entirely by his own capability and perseverance succeeded in becoming the Secretary of the Branch.

He tried his best to establish his position in the Union. For his own interest and also for proper functioning of the Branch, two very effective persons had been collected by him. One of them was Paritosh Chakraborty, who was the Asstt. Secretary and other was Sailendra Nath Das as Organising Secretary.

Chakraborty and M. L. Chanda were the oldest Trade Union Workers of Kanchrapara amongst us. Both of them had joined the Union when it was having the name B. A.

Railway Employees' Association. Both also became office bearers during that period. But their relation was very bitter. As expressed by Chakraborty, it was only due to Chanda that Chakraborty had been compelled to sever his connection with the Union thereafter.

Chakraborty became an asset to Ojha and Ojha's position in respect of written representation, and maintenance of the office Records became very much secure.

Sailendra Nath Das, widely known as Saila Das, who was out and out a Communist from his early student life had an inherent qualification of lecturing and talking. If a mike was made available to him, it was no matter for Das to continue for hours together on any issue.

But even after getting such efficient office bearers for both indoor activities of the Union, Ojha had very little influence over the labour force, as at that time we had been their strongest rivals and were enjoying mass confidence. Therefore, the all-out preparation which was necessary for a successful strike, could not be organised by Ojha and his associates.

We had no say also to the workers on that issue till then. Moreover, the Central Leaders of the Recognised Group were not found to be so much vigilant at the moment.

The instructions of Paritosh Banerjee to me for helping Ojha's Group on Strike Issue had thrown me in a very difficult situation. And as soon as I started negotiations with Ojha and others of his group in respect of their preparation for the strike, another danger came before me.

The enquiry into my DA case had already been completed and at the end of August 1968 a Show Cause Notice was issued. Although I was sure that I would be removed from my services and also was mentally prepared for

the same, I did not expect it to happen so quickly.

In the early stage, I had talks with Brojo Gobinda Ghosh in the matter. We had already decided to go to the Court if such an eventuality arose. I had a special fascination to be helped by Snehangshu Acharya, the leading Barrister of the time and Brojo Gobinda Ghosh also had assured me that they would arrange for the same in case of necessity. But, when the actual necessity arose, Brojo Gobinda Ghosh went back in his assurance. Still I went to his quarters immediately on receipt of the Show Cause Notice. But he was not found in his Qrs. and was holding a meeting of the Co-ordination Committee in another Qrs. His wife sent a man to call Brojo Govinda Ghosh from the meeting. The man was known to me and he also knew me. The man came back and told me that he had duly informed Ghosh that I was waiting in his Qrs. But even after the lapse of more than an hour he did not come, when I had to return disheartened.

I then went to Subodh Bagh of Howrah and to R. N. Ghosh of Ranaghat and requested them for necessary help. R. C. Chakravarty was not available in Calcutta. I sent him a telegram at Beneras. Then I saw nani Chakravorty one of the renowned Advocate of Calcutta High Court along with Bag and Bata Krishna Mitra and Chakravorty accepted the case.

But there was no money at all. After receiving the Show Cause Notice I became so restless and busy for contacting the lawyer that I had no scope till then to talk to my friends in the Branch within four day, I arranged a gathering of all our men in the Union Office, where I explained everything and also about the required money. Our

members and supporters really showed exemplary cooperation. Under the leadership of Sanat Bhattacharjee, Haricharan Dubey, Srikanta Paul, they collected about Rs. 4,000/- within 3 days only. Suraj Singh and a few others donated even Rs. 100/- each. Ojha and others of his Group also helped a little. I still owe my gratitude to them.

On the 9th of Sept '69, an Injunction was issued in my favour restraining the Railway administration to take any further action against me till disposal of the case. Then I could only have an easy breath.

The Central Government Employees' one-day token strike on 19th Sept '68, was not very successful in some parts of Railways in West Bengal area but the strike had created a great sensation all over the country. At Kanchrapara Railway Workshop, it was a tragedy that there were only two strikers, who as disciplined soldiers had carried out the mandate of the Union and duly participated in the Strike. They were S. S. Ojha and Sallen Das of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union.

For the one-day Token Strike the Government had taken a very drastic action and the strikers were oppressed severely. Nine of the Strikers became martyrs. Thousands had been placed under suspension. The massacre done by the police in the Indraprastha Bhavan of Delhi, became a history.

In Nov, 1968 I persuaded Paritosh Banerjee again for the desired unity in the Branches. But as a matter of fact, it appeared to be a beggar's business. Still after getting the assurance from him about all the other Branches, I tried to contact different Branches as far as possible through Telephone and advised them to come to Howrah on the 24th December.

A GLIMPSE OF RAILWAYMEN'S STRUGGLE ON EASTERN RAILWAY.



A partial view of the massive demonstration of 25000 railwaymen in front of the office of the General Manager, Eastern Railway, Fairlie Place, Calcutta on 4th June 1966.

Photo—by courtesy of 'Dainik Basumati'

Published by :—
Sri S. B. Lahiri
General Secretary,
Eastern Railwaymen's Union.

Hardly ten persons came. The entire development in regard to "Unity" with Paritosh Banerjee's group was explained to them. That was the last meeting and discussion of our group. On the 25th March I served the last circular as General Secretary and on the 26th of November, 1968, I signed the joint declaration with Paritosh Banerjee.

Alghouth a part of the chapter that had started in November, 1964 at Naihati, came to an end, the threat of victimisation which was one of the presentations of the period, still continued.

In December 1968, I was officially declared to be the President of Kanchrapara Branch of the one and same E. Railwaymen's Union. At the first opportunity I shifted the Union Office from Dhobipukur Road to the original union office at Ghatak Road, With a view to re-vitalising the Branch I was eager for a mass action programme. I proposed it to Ojha, the Branch Secretary who also agreed to the same.

The Central Govt. employees were still being oppressed by the Government for the "Token Strike" of September '68. As a protest against the Government onslaughts on the strikers, we organised a programme of Mass Dhama in front of the Loco Gate.

The said Dhama was staged on the 15th January, 1969 for 24 hours from 6.30 hrs. The members participated in the "Dhama" were sixty including five ladies. The General Secretary, Paritosh Banerjee himself attended the programme to encourage us and also addressed the gathering after the workshop hours. The programme was a grand success. In the history of the Kanchrapara Branch of the Union it was the first programme of "Dhama" and as such it created a great sensation amongst the workers.

In February, 1969, as a result of the midterm election, the United Front Government came back again with a larger majority. A "Hartal" was declared on 10th April for firing on the cossipore Gun and Shell Factory workers. On the day a great chaos took place in the Store Block of Kanchrapara where two Railwaymen were killed by police firing. Union's interference also became necessary after the incident. Later a peace committee consisting of Union Representatives also made a procession around the Railway colonies. Com. Jyoti Basu, the then Dy. Chief Minister, West Bengal, also came to Kanchrapara on the following day and addressed a gathering in the Municipal Hall to cool down the situation. In that meeting Union's representatives were invited.

My suspension was still continuing and I was told again and again by the Central leaders at that time to withdraw my Court case on assurance that they had talked at Hq. Ors. level and suspension would be withdrawn as soon as I would withdraw my court case. But I was not very sure about the attitude and intention of the Rly. administration and as such I also continued to evade their advice in the matter and devoted myself deeply to find out means for solving the problem.

Meanwhile, B. P. Roy Chowdhury, Asst. General Secretary came to Kanchrapara Branch and proposed to take preparation for a conference of Workshop staff in the Spinning Institute sometime in September '69.

In July, 1969, the then General Manager G. P. Warrior visited the Kanchrapara Workshops when the Union had a meeting with him. G. P. Warrior did not seem to be of bureaucratic type, as in an earlier demonstration staged by the E. Rly. Men's

Union. I had seen him to come out physically at the main gate of the Hd. Qrs. to receive the memorandum. We mainly pointed out to him the deplorable condition of the Railway Hospital and asked for remedial measures. We also demanded immediate abolition of all R & RT type, back to back qrs.

The Branch Secretary Ojah, however raised the issue of my suspension. He then smiled a little and started telling me "you see Mr. Lahiri, V. T. Narayanam, General Manager E. Rly. in 1967 is still phoning from Hyderabad enquiring about your case. I had also a talk with your General Secretary on this account. You withdraw your court case, your suspension will also be withdrawn." But his words also could not convince me.

Following the General Manager's visit, the DCOS/Halishar became "Gheraoed" by the Casual Labourers of Stores Department in August, 1969, for regularising their service and giving them temporary status of Railway employee. The "Gherao" continued for more than 24 hrs. The incident of "Gherao" was also a new one in the history of struggle of the Railwaymen of Kanchrapara.

The said incident threw a new light to me and I began to think of a turn that I was waiting for.

Then on 14th September '69 a conference of the Workshop staff was held at the Spalding Institute under the leadership of B. P. Roy Chowdhury. But it was not very successful.

At the end of the conference all the office bearers along with a few active workers sat together for a very special discussions.

In the year 1962 due to introduction of Incentive System in all the Workshops of the Country, the staff strength had been reduced to a great extent in every Workshop. In Kanchrapara Workshops the staff strength was reduced due to winding up of Steam Loco

and switching over to Electric Loco. A few new shops such as Shop Nos. 9, 10, 11, 14 and 15 were established.

Due to the new establishment a major change took place in the staff position of shop No. 17, 18 & 19 of Carriage and Wagon Wing of the Workshops.

Adequate Skilled hands for the Electric Loco repair work not being available, a good number of Ex-Trade Apprentices who were below 40 years had been drafted from the said Shops of Carriage and Wagon and transferred to Shop Nos. 9, 11, 14 and were put under training. This has resulted in a vacuum in most of the Shops. Moreover, there had been no recruitment of Class IV staff in the Workshops since the year 1955.

During our discussion, I narrated the entire position very clearly to my friends and proposed for an immediate mass action on the score. The issue of recruitment, attracted attention of everybody. They wanted to know about the nature of the proposed programme. I suggested a programme of 'fasting' on the Verandah of the Workshop Superintendent's Chamber, which was readily accepted by all.

Accordingly, a letter was immediately written to Supdt. Workshops, Kanchrapara indicating that "a mass fast" would be staged by the Union in the Workshops premises on the 23rd September 69, on two particular demands :-

i) Immediate issue of Recruitment Notice for Class IV staff.

ii) Immediate withdrawal of suspension of Sri S. B. Lahiri.

The "fast" started from 6.30 hrs. of 23rd as scheduled. The participants in the "fast-cum-dharma" were P. Chakraborty, P. K. Bose, Rajendra Pathak, Kedar Ojha and 25 other including 3 ladies.

As the programme of 'fast' was also a new one in the history of workers' movement in Kanchrapara, it also created a great sensation amongst the workers. The workers gathered spontaneously at the spot of 'mass fast'.

The Supdt. Workshops, Kanchrapara Mr. K. P. Jayaram became very upset and had already engaged all his Welfare Inspectors to trace me out with a view to talk to me on the issue. But I remained away as it was useless to hold any discussion at that stage. Mr. Jayaram then contacted the Hd. Qrs. to apprise the position. At noon, B. P. Roy Chowdhury contacted Kanchrapara on phone and wanted to talk to me. But instead of talking to him directly on phone, I sent Ojha to talk to Roy Chowdhury with direction not to agree under any circumstances to withdraw the programme till the demands were fulfilled. Quite in conformity with my apprehension B. P. Roy Chowdhury told Ojha to withdraw the movement as the Chief Personnel Officer had assured to finalise the issue within a couple of days, to which Ojha did not agree and as such the movement continued.

Since the issue of recruitment of Class IV staff was a burning problem of the Workshop staff, the major section of the employees were directly interested on the issue and they turned up in large numbers at the spot at 15.30 hrs. i.e. after their day's work.

They also started shouting slogans

"Recruitment Notice - Nikalnay Hoga, Nikalna Hoga, Abbhi Nikalo, Jaldi Nikalo."

"Lahiri Babu Ko suspension-Uthana Parega, Uthana Parega, Abbhi Uthao, Jaldi Uthao."

They continued the slogans for more than an hour.

At about 17.30 hrs. Mr. K. P. Jayaram himself along with the Workshop Personnel Officer came to the spot and handed over two orders (i) Notice for Recruitment of Class IV staff and (ii) Withdrawal of suspension of S. B. Lahiri, to Ojha. Just at that moment I appeared on the spot. At this, the jubilation of the workers reached its peak and they all shouted at the top of their voice "Jai"

I then took the two orders in my two hands, showed to the workers and congratulated them for their active part in the struggle and for their glorious victory. They became so much delighted that they themselves ran to the market and brought so many garlands and "it was roses roses all the way"

Another Chapter, covering the remaining 22 years of my struggling Trade Union life, during which I sustained bullet injury, and blood shed, remains to be indicated.

After my retirement from the service from 1st March, 1987, as Office Superintendent, Grade-I, I continued to hold the Office of the President of Kanchrapara Branch of the Union for long 4 years and relinquished the post finally on the 8th of July, 1991 last.

But at this stage, I am afraid of the fate of the Union. The Eastern Railwaymen's Union had a traditional glorious record of being a non-political organisation. Whether the Union is going to lose its traditional character and becoming a puppet in the hands of the political elements, is a question that exercises the mind of all men. The people like us, who have still enough love and regard for the Union, have nothing to give to the Railwaymen except giving opportunity to understand the past and shape their own future.

Nothing comes out of a clean sky

S. Subrahmanyam

(Mr. S. Subrahmanyam joined in the service of S. E. Rly. in early forties. He had an eventful career in S. E. Rly. Union. His sacrifice for the organisation had given encouragement to all those who are now in the Trade Union field. He was the Asstt. General Secretary of E. R. M. U. in 1953 and later became the General Secretary of SERMU. He had close touches with V. V. Giri, the former President of India and S. Guruswami of A.I.R.F.)

After becoming a member of the old B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union, I was first elected to the post of Asst. Secretary of Kharagpur Branch of the Union sometime in April 1952. Since then I started working and mobilising the railwaymen. There was a pay Boycott in Kharagpur Workshops in that year but the Union could not prolong the same as the workers could not sustain the sufferings. In spite of the all manner of opposition by G. V. Raghavan of Nagpur Division, S. N. Singh, a Section Controller of Waltair Division was elected President, as successor to Prof. Ramlingam (V. V. Giri's guru). Rajmanna and the then firebrand Trade Unionist, Baikuntha Banerjee were his advisers. S. N. Singh, in spite of several obstacles from pro-Administration elements, organised all the branches of the union on the then B. N. Railway System. Subsequently the regrouping of Railways brought about amalgamation of three unions in the Eastern Zone as Eastern Railwaymen's Union. S. N. Singh was the President, Muralidhar Dubey, the General Secretary but the mightiest uncrowned king was Ram Chakravarty who was in the driving seat. Under pressure from Railway Ministry the proposals for amalgamation with the Railwaymen's Congress had been formulated in each zone and in 1953 there was a move but this move could not materialise due to some

unacceptable terms of the Railwaymen's Congress headed by A. P. Sharma. So the talks of amalgamation failed. But S. N. Singh and his group inside the union left the Union and joined the Railwaymen's Congress. Myself and several others of the B. N. Railway system remained with Eastern Railwaymen's Union. Only two to three branches of Waltair District had disobeyed the Central leadership. However, they were all superseded by the ad-hoc committee set up in Waltair District with the assistance of S. N. Bhattacharjee the then Asstt. General Secretary and D. Gurunatha Rao. In the annual general meeting of the union held later in 1953 I was elected Assistant General Secretary of the union with full powers of organising the union in the best way possible and the Iron man behind this decision was Ram Chakravarty, the then Asst. General Secretary of the Union. This gave me an opportunity to work hard and build a strong organisation capable of creating confidence among workers and the Railway Administration realised the importance of the union. All our representations were being promptly replied. Negotiations on issues took place almost daily. The organisation was further strengthened by the visit of V. V. Giri, the then union Labour Minister to as many as fifteen centres Viz ; Nagpur, Gondia, Raipur, Dongargarh, Bilaspur, Chakradharpur,

Khargpur, Adra, Khurda Road, Waltair and some others.

After his resignation, V. V. Giri had helped the Union immensely. Subsequently in early 1955 the employees of Kharagpur workshops designated as Lister Truck Drivers had served a notice of Strike and actually commenced the strike also. There was considerable pressure from other workers of Kharagpur Workshops headed by Pantayya, the then Workshops Branch Secretay to spread the strike to the entire workshops and also on to the open line system. However, due to timely intervention of the central leadership of the then E.R.M.U., the strike was called off after an amicable settlement and these employees were subsequently promoted as crane drivrs. The railway Administrtrion were at that time so eager for a peaceful solution that they had even conceded a demand for cancellation of Fault point system, a draconian rule envisaging automatic reversion of Loco Running Staff. The Railway Ministry had decided on the formation of S. E. Railway Zone in August 1955 which recessitated a break up of ERMU into two i.e. ERMU and SERMU. Loco Running Staff Conference was held during this period and not only V. V. Giri and S. Guruswami, but also Satyapriya Banerjee, Union leader of a very big stature in West Bengal attended the conference. At that time the issue of leadership of S.E.R.M.U. after formation of S. E. Rly. was discussed. V. V. Giri wanted S. Guruswami to head the Union as President and myself as General Secretary and accordingly in the first Annual General Meeting of S.E.R.M.U. I was elected General Secretary by a margin of about 27 to 30 votes over my rival. The Railway Administration at that time did not like the

militant Trade Union of S. E. Rly. and wanted to crush the Union. They held the view that the union's recognition should be a new one and offered conditions which were wholly unacceptable. The All India Railwaymen's Federation annulled its merger with NFIR and got it separated arising out of a dispute in the Western Railway Zonal merger. The erstwhile union over there with affiliation to A.I.R.F. was revived with Maniben Kara as President. Sometime in June/July 1955, the A.I.R.F. had its convention at Perambur. V. V. Giri was elected President. But Giri declined to accept the Presidentship of A.I.R.F. on the plea that he will be more useful to the Railway Trade Union Movement without being the President of A.I.R.F. I was one of those who had called upon Giri and urged him to accept the Presidentship of A.I.R.F. This happened in Bangalore where he was on rest at that time. However Giri took upon himself the task of getting recognition to the A.I.R.F., and urged the then Railway Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastry to recognise A. I. R. F. Lalbahadur Shastry was keen on the idea of arbitration to bring about a merged Railwaymen's Federations and wanted the arbitration be entrusted to Gulzarilal Nanda the then Central Minister. however Giri wrote back to him conveying opposition of some of the Railway Unions for that arrangement. Before Shastry could proceed further, he resigned after the Ariyalur Train Accident. The matter was undecided at that stage but Railway Ministry's hostility towards A.I.R.F. and its affiliated unions continued unabated. Subsequently when pressure was mounted, the Railway Minister, (presumably Jagjivan Ram) had appointed justice Mazumdar, a retired judge to be the arbitrator. Ultimately Justice Mazumdar in his award had squarely

blamed the NFIR for breakdown of the merger. I remember to have attended those sittings along with Peter Alvares, Ram Chakravarty and Priya Gupta.

It was Justice Mazumder's award and efforts of Peter Alvares assisted ably by R. C. Chakravarty that helped us in building up of A.I.R.F. and its affiliated unions. Official recognition of A.I.R.F. towards the end of 1957 or early 1958 was attained through their enormous endeavour.

The Railway Administration without hesitation provoked and incited the workers to go on lightning strikes on many minor and major issues and some of the strikes of gigantic nature took place in Adra and Chakradharpur Divisions and also at Kharagpur. The Kharagpur strike took a serious turn. There was a crewless train accident injuring several loyal workers. The strike became uncontrollable, as all leaders were kept behind the bars (myself and Pantayya etc.). The strike was called off on 28.5.56. The demand for a judicial enquiry was rejected by the Government and the Administration dictated terms to the Union for grant of recognition. One such condition was that myself and two others should not be office bearers. Circumstances forced the Union to accept the terms which were democratically accepted by the Annual General Body of the Union in 1957. I did not regret for the decision. My urge to fight for workers grew up day by day. The circumstances also forced Government to review the relations, as at that time besides strikes, firings also took place at Kalka, Kazipeta and Kharagpur. There was a general condemnation of Railway Board's Labour Policy in 1958 all over the country.

In the middle of 1958, Ram Chakravarty took pains to use his personal influence and

his ERMU organisational strength to urge the then General Manager of S. E. Railway A. K. Basu to take me back on to duty dropping the charges against me. At that time I had three charge-sheets of Major penalty against me and a criminal case although the trend was that all others would be taken back to duty and I would be dismissed from service. However, the pressure from Ram Chakravarty prompted A. K. Basu to remark on the files that he (S. Subrahmanyam, clerk Loco shed) may be given some punishment by the Divisional Mechanical Engineer, Kharagpur. The punishment of stoppage of increment was inflicted on me. As for the court cases against myself and others, the same were withdrawn after a high level delegation of left parties of West Bengal met and pleaded before Dr. B. C. Roy. The then Union leadership comprising S. Guruswami, B. Rajalu, R. N. Banerjee, N. N. Chakrabarty, and others also repeatedly pressed the Railway Administration for relief and their endless activity brought good relief to the last batch of suspended employees. The entire period for suspension from 1956 to August 1958 was treated as duty.

All these gave a good deal of strength and encouragement to me to take up the Trade Union work more vigorously and help not only S.E.R.M.U. but also the All India Railwaymen's Federation. I was the General Secretary of this All India Body then and I used to be consulted by Comrade Ram Chakravarty on all crucial matters.

In 1959 Second Pay Commission Report headed by Justice Jagannath Das of Honourable Supreme Court was published. The Second Pay Commission Report was a great disappointment and a set-back as the Pay Commission had rejected the plea of Organised Labour about need-based

minimum wages as the base. In the Dearness Allowance too, the formula was unhelpful and a very low rate was indicated. Hundreds of categories of Railwaymen had their pay scales determined at a very low level. There was a widespread discontentment among Railwaymen but unfortunately Railwaymen were not prepared for struggle immediately after Pay Commission's report. But the Govt. also did not act promptly and there was considerable delay in implementing the same. As the demands of Organised Labour were not accepted, the indefinite strike on Railways and in other Central Government departments had become inevitable.

For the Railwaymen July 1960 strike was a strike of historical importance with no political climate in favour of the strike. The Railwaymen were on the war path to wrest from the Govt. a charter. But the repressive measures taken by the Govt. being of an unprecedented character the railwaymen had to yield. The failure opened up a new horizon to regroup themselves for a greater challenge which was seen in 1974. The All India Railwaymen's Federation at that time constituted a committee to go into various aspects of the Strike of July 1960 with Ram Chakravarty the then General Secretary of

ERMU as Convener. But the report was kept in cold storage as no body was keen to know the details and rectify the mistakes for the future. Some sad things happened during 1960 strike. B. J. Rayalu, the then Working President of the S.E.R.M.U. gave a message from Mandla jail (which was flashed all over the S. E. Railway and elsewhere) calling off the Strike without the approval of Joint Action Committee for which we had to face criticism in all A.I.R.F.'S meetings. Rayalu had innocently done it without understanding its far-reaching consequences.

We had to pay the price but this did not prevent us from raising our voice again. For some unknown reasons a serious rift developed between the socialist leaders in A.I.R.F. and R. C. Chakravarty 1961-63. In spite of R. C. Chakravarty having a large number of railwaymen behind him as demonstrated in the Gaya Convention of AIRF the AIRF leaders had been hostile to R.C. Chakravarty who had fought relentlessly but ultimately gave in for the greater interests of Railwaymen. The episode marked the close of a chapter of glorious and eventful struggle of R. C. Chakravarty in the Railway Trade Union Movement.

Railwaymen - as seen by Thinkers in Political Philosophy

S. K. Das

(Mr. S. K. Das born on 1st August in 1928 joined in the Commercial Branch of the E. I. Railway in 1949 and organised a heroic struggle against transfer of a large number of surplus Staff of the Commercial Branch to Gorakhpur. A large contingent of about 3500 Railwaymen kept J. N. Das, the then Chief Commercial Superintendent confined in office till midnight. The orders of transfer of staff were cancelled by the Railway Board in the face of such a vehement protest. He had led a number of movements including some against retrenchment of Casual Labour on the Howrah Division. He had to suffer a lot but he did not abandon the path of struggle. He tried to focus on the need of struggle of the toiling mass in the changing political situation of the country after independence).

In the year 1949 the All India Railwaymen's Federation under the leadership of Jaya Prakash Narayan had given a call to Railwaymen for a Strike all over India, but due to difference of opinion, the A.I.R.F. decided not to resort to a strike. At that time I belonged to the Bengal Assam Rail Road Workers' Union affiliated to the AIRF. Cm. Satyen Ganguly, Purnendu Dutta Roy and Sukumar Roy were with me. Jyoti Basu who was the President of the Union was also the Vice President of AIRF. We had decided to go on strike from the 9th March 1949.

Many comrades were victimised due to the unconditional surrender of the leadership inspite of firm resistances in many places in the Eastern and the Southern parts of the railway system.

In 1950 after merger of North Eastern part with the E. I. Railway, fortyfour staff of the Chief Commercial Superintendent's office at Koilaghat in E. I. Rly. were declared surplus and ordered to be transferred to Gorakhpur by J. N. Das, the then CCS-E.I. Rly. To resist such arbitrary and punitive orders of the Railway Board, an organised struggle was launched by the union workers and all railwaymen working in Koilaghat under the

leadership of Biswanath Roy. I was in forefront of that movement. On a unanimous decision about three thousand and five hundred staff including the watch & ward staff blocked all the gates of the Koilaghat Building and kept J. N. Das, the then CCS confined in office with the demand of compelling the Railway Board and the General Manager to withdraw the said undemocratic orders. It is remarkable that although the said day was the day of "Jannaisasthi (son-in-law's festival)", all "the Jamai" staff boycotted the said enjoyment and participated with undaunted courage in the movement. In spite of provocations of Police with the connivance of the General Manager, they could not rescue J. N. Das, CCS from the human wall built by 3500 railwaymen. At last at midnight through a telephonic message the Railway Board kept the said mass Transfer orders in abeyance. Thus it was proved that united resistance movement only could make the Administration submit to the employees on a just demand. But it was a tragedy that the leadership of the union and Federation were reluctant to give wide publicity of that movement to the railwaymen all over the country with view to building up forceful

trade union movement. On the contrary they played the part of betraying the railwaymen and eliminating their opponents with the help of the Govt. and the railway administration by way of victimisation. As a result I was the first target to be transferred to Howrah Lost Property office from Koilaghat and my daily movement used to be communicated to the Higher Authorities. On the other hand I was offered by J. N. Das, the then CCS and S. P. Chatterjee, the then CPO a better career in the Railways on the condition that I would dissociate myself from T. U. activities. I declined the offer in unmistakable terms.

Thereafter I joined Eastern Railway men's union in 1951 and was elected branch Secretary of the Riverside Branch in 1953.

In 1955 I took a leading part to make one day's token strike at Howrah on the demand of Puja Holidays of Commercial Staff under the banner of Eastern Railwaymen's Union during the tenure of Com. Ram Chakravarty as the General Secretary, but could not succeed due to want of a solid organisational programme throughout the zone.

During the period from 1955 to 1959 a historical movement for decasualisation of a large number of casual labour working on the Railway Electrification Project of the Howrah Division was launched by the Riverside Branch, E. Rly Men's Union under my Secretaryship. The casual labour on the open line viz. those under PWI and I.O.W. Branch joined. It got full support of the permanent railwaymen as well. This added a new dimension to the movement of the railwaymen as a whole. But unfortunately some leaders of the Central body of the union like Paritosh Banerjee, Bishnu Pada Roychowdhury and Bimal Dey did not like the movement, although the General

Secretary, Ram Chakrvaorty gave me in writing that the union would stand by them in their struggle.

Mr. D. V. Reddy was the Divisional Superintendent Eastern Railway, Howrah when the Electrification of the section from Howrah to Bandel was completed and the introduction of EMU Coaches in the local trains upto Bandel was opened by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. Thereafter all on a sudden five hundred and fifty casual gangmen of the project were declared surplus and they were asked to deposit their tools to the authorities and go back home. In protest a vehement resistance movement was launched by the Riverside Branch, E.R.M.U. when all the Comrades viz. Sailen Ghosh, S. K. Bag, Ananta Gupta, Mithai Pandey, R. P. Nath, R.D. Banerjee and many others stood by my side with the struggling workers. We faced the Armed Police force without surrendering inspite of the threats of victimisation. Ultimately the Divisional Superintendent, Howrah made a written agreement with the River side Branch in my presence as the Branch Secretary and other representatives that all those 550 casual gangmen would be absorbed in Chandrapura-Muri Project and accordingly they were given free pass and contingency fund to meet the expenses of those casual labour for joining the scheme. Through continuous movement all those casual labour were subsequently absorbed in pemanent vacancies in the Engineering departments on the South Eastern and the Eastern Railways.

With the growing rise in market price of food grains and other necessary commodities, toiling people including railwaymen began to feel the hardship. At the same time repressive measues on the struggling toiling railwaymen

and the working class in general were adopted by the authorities both in the Public and Private Sectors. At that time it was decided by the AIRF, ATTUC & HMS to launch a country-wide movement unitedly to compel the Govt. to change their economic and administrative policy with a view to control price Index and provide employees and workers with a better wage and other amenities, so that they could maintain livelihood of their family members. But it was a tragedy that the leadership of all central Trade unions including AIRF did not pay any heed to the said clarion call of the working class. The AIRF launched All India Railwaymen's strike in 1960. The ruling class made a propaganda that inspite of having a fair wage and better amenities the railwaymen had rebelled against the Govt. and tried to block the transport of food-grains, material for industrial production and other daily necessities of the people of this vast contry. As a result the struggling railwaymen did not get any fruitful assistance from the people. Untold police atrocities and other repressive measures had to be faced by the railwaymen all over the country.

Inspite of the above, the brave railway employees were continuing their historic struggle and organised militant pockets in many places with the help of other toiling people. Ultimately after 5 days' struggle under the leadership of Ashoke Mehta the strike was called off unconditionally without having any consent from the member unions, resulting in victimisation of many active workers including myself who remained under suspension for 29 months. A large number of railwaymen suffered break-in-service, stoppage of increment, promotions etc.

After 1960 a popular slogan of ensuring democratic functioning in the AIRF and also in all Zonal Central Unions was raised from the rank and file with a view to bring a change in Trade Union activities on the Indian Railways and also to replace the old and conservative leadership by the devoted and trustworthy leadership. Naturally this frightened the puppets in the hands of the Administration in the disguise of the union leaders and attempts were made to victimise the sincere Trade Union Workers by various means with the help of Administrative machinery. The situation paved the way for rise of categorical organisations in respective spheres viz. Loco Running Staff Association, Guards Council, Commercial Staff Association etc. The struggling rank and file in the recognised unions affiliated to AIRF began to bring pressure on their leadership to build united movement on the burning issues of different categories with the categorical organisations but it was turned down on the plea that those organisations were not recognised by the Railway Authorities. Such an attitude of the calcified leadership led the rank and file to raise their voice of starting democratic struggle in the zonal unions. As a result of the above, the Eastern Railwaymen's union was sharply divided in two groups. In 1964 during the Annual General Meeting of two camps of E. Rly. Men's union was held at Naihati, one AGM with the leadership of Paritosh Banerje, Monoj Bata, Binay Deb, Bishrupada Roy Chowdhary and Sujit Ray and their skeleton supporters in the Naihati Railway Institute with full protection from Police and the Administration, and another AGM held publicly in the Railway building at Naihati followed by overwhelming majority of delegates and visitors under the leadership

of Ram Chakravarty, S.K. Das, Subodh Bandhu Lahiri, R.K. Mukherjee, Sailen Ghosh, S.K. Bag, A.N. Das, Sukumar Roy, Sankar Chatterjee and many other associates. Although the AGM held by the anti-struggling leaders did not get the support of the railwaymen, the Eastern Railway Administration recognised the Central Body of E.R.M.U. led by Paritosh Banerjee as General Secretary followed by Bimal Dey, Manoj Basu, Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury and their associates as Central Office Bearers. It was disgraceful that the democratically elected central body of the Eastern Rly. men's Union led by Subodh Bandhu Lahiri, S.K. Das, R.K. Mukherjee, S. Chakraborty, D.R. Adhikari and others from the divisions and their General Secretary, Asstt. Genl. Secretaries and other office bearers including Ram Chakravarty did not get recognition from the Eastern railway Administration and lost affiliation to the A.I.R.F.

A new era in the railway Trade Union movement had thus begun with the slogan of building the union with the recognition of the railwaymen defying the recognition of the Railway Administration and the affiliation to the AIRF. It was their attempt to forge close ties with the working class and it generated a great impact in the trade union field. It was also remarkable that All India Loco Running Staff Association launched "Wild Cat Strikes" throughout India without giving any prior notice to the administration which practically created a dead-lock in running of the Railway Transport system. Those struggles had unstinted support from the toiling mass inspite of police atrocities unleashed on them by the Govt. and the Railway Administration. Anti-propaganda steps were adopted by AIRF, NFIR and their

pro-administration unions. Ultimately Govt. was compelled to meet up the main grievance of duty hours and other rights through negotiations with the leadership of non-recognised All India Railway Loco Running staff Association.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that on the issue of curtailment of the privilege of existing working hours of the employees and workers of Eastern Railway's Liluah Workshop, a resistance movement was launched by the Liluah Workers' legal action Committee, led by the E. Railwaymen's Union (Parallel). It is a disgrace that the counter leadership of the E.R.M.U. being the puppet organisation of the Railway administration and the Govt. supported the Lock out declared in Liluah workshop illegally. It was the first time that the Govt. of India and the Railway Board declared Lock-out in a Railway Workshop in the country.

Against such anti-working class policy of the Govt. vehement and continuous struggle was launched by the E.Rly. Men's Union (Parallel) and the Liluah Workers Legal Action Committee unitedly. It got the wholehearted support not only from railwaymen in the Eastern Zone but also from other Central Govt. Employees' Organisations. Rallies, processions, meetings, demonstrations of several thousand Railwaymen inspired the leading Dailies to give wide publicity to that struggle. At the same time largely attended meetings were addressed by George Fernandes (President, E.R.M.U. (Parallel), K.G. Bose and Vivekananda Mukherjee, eminent Editor of the then leading Daily, 'Dainik Bangla'. Ultimately the Railway Board had to lift the illegal lock-out unconditionally. The earned privileges and rights of workers and

employees of Liluah workshop were restored.

I will draw attention to the causes of failure of establishing the Trade Union movement in the Railway vis-a-vis in other public and private sectors in the country for total emancipation from the wage-slavery of the working class as the vanguard of the National struggle to ensure a socialistic pattern of economy in the country.

Under the provisions of the Trade Union Act (1926) adopted by the then British Rulers, all the political parties viz. AICC, PSP, SP, CPI, CPM, RSP, SUC, FB and their Trade Union wings on the Railways, Port, Docks, Post & Telegraphs, Defence under the control of the Central Govt. and also in Jute, Cotton, Iron & Steel, Mining and other big industries of the private sectors in different status had always made the workers confined to bargaining only on economic demands, keeping them detached from the actual struggle of the working class to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariats. Instead of being in isolation many Progressive Comrades viz. Sukumar Roy, Sankar Chatterjee, Provat Banerjee, Madhu Mukherjee, K.R. De and their followers in other divisions joined the recognised E.R.M.U. The devoted and struggling workers of E.R.M.U. (Parallel) formed a new platform in the Eastern Zone under the banner of the Eastern Railway Men's Co-ordination Committee of which I was elected "Convenor". With the united efforts a team consisting of myself, Ram Chakravarty, S.B. Lahiri, Sailen Ghosh, S.K. Bagg, Batu Mitra, Jagadish Chakraborty, Jagadish Chowdhury, Biswanath Roy, R.K. Mukherjee, H.N. Singh, Nishikanta Deb, Sudama Ram and others, a new programme was chalked out. The Eastern Railway Men's Convention was held at

Mughalsarai where George Fernandes, S.M. Joshi and delegates from different railways participated. It is notable that in that convention a decision was taken to hold an All India Railway Men's Convention under the Presidentship of George Fernandes. But it could not be held on account of betrayal by reactionary forces.

In spite of the above a huge rally of about 20,000 railwaymen was held at Naihati under the banner of the Eastern Railway Men's Co-ordination Committee in 1967 presided over by Com. Biswanath Roy wherein a pledge was placed before the gathering by me to create a new era in the Railway Trade Union movement unitedly with the main stream of the working class.

This gave a new impetus to all railwaymen in the Eastern Zone from Howrah to Mughalsarai. Large rallies were organised in Howrah, Dhanbad, Liluah, Mughalsarai, Kanchrapara, Dchri-on-sona, Gaya, Asansol and at many other places on the said pledge and those were addressed by the leaders of CITU, 12th July Committee and even by the then Labour Minister of Left Front Govt. in West Bengal. I take the opportunity of citing the names of K.G. Bose, Md. Ismail, Saldhan Gupta, Dipen Ghosh, Kesto Ghosh and Monoranjan Hazra amongst others. The new wave had frightened the reactionary regime and they created a split in the Eastern Railway Men's Co-ordination Committee. Myself and Satyen Ganguly on behalf of the Eastern Railway Men's Co-ordination Committee represented the problems of casual labourers before the Justice Meabhoy Tribunal at New Delhi and exposed the anti-working class role of AIRF, NFIR and their affiliated unions. Subsequently recommendations of Meabhoy Tribunal came into force in the shape of Railway Labour Tribunal.

A movement of casual labours in the Andul Calcutta chord link Project (ACCL) was also conducted by the Eastern Railway Men's Co-ordination Committee and all the casual labours engaged there were absorbed permanently in S.E. Rly. In response to the call of All India strike in the Indian Railways in 1974 led by All India Railway men's Federation and Joint Council of Action, gallant leadership of the rank and file continued the said historic Strike for 20 days and while it was going to take a new turn in the history of trade union movements in the Indian Railways, the Joint Council of action and the AIRF called off the strike unconditionally and allowed the Government

to declare 'Emergency' thereafter with a view to terrorise the toiling people in the Country as a whole.

I conclude my memoirs with the conviction that the sacrifice and devotion of thousands of railwaymen in making trade union movement on the Indian Railways a vanguard in achieving emancipation of the Indian people as a whole would never go in vain. And ultimately those who have betrayed the working class would be thrown out and railwaymen's struggle will merge with the main stream of the struggle of all sections of the working class and the peasantry in the Country.

STRUGGLE HIS COMPANION

Ram Balak Singh

[Mr. Ram Balak Singh Born in a middle class farmer's family on 2-10-1922. His father Ambika Singh and mother Kalawati Devi were very pious and their devotion to Hindu religion was beyond question. They were followers of the father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi in true spirit. Ram Balak Singh started his education a bit late. When the freedom struggle was at its peak, he joined the movement inspired by the lives of Khudiram Bose and Bhagat Singh. In the Quit India movement of 1942, he mobilised the mass and took part in direct action against the British Rule. He had to go underground to avoid arrest. He passed the School Examination in the year 1943. He married Smt. Lakshmi Devi who became his true life partner and actively participated in all the struggles with her husband. He joined Railway Service at Jamalpur Workshop as a Clerk in the year 1946 and mobilised the railway workers there and became a champion of their cause. He was suspended several times and even jailed and ultimately removed from the Railway Service. He was a member of undivided Communist Party of India and elected to the Bihar Assembly in the year 1969 and he is still working for the toiling mass.]

I was born in a village situated beside the holy Ganges. My father was a patriot and a true follower of Gandhiji. I still remember the teachings of my departed father, based on love, devotion and dedication for the country. The spirit of patriotism of my father inspired me to join the Independence Movement of India after my school life. For this, my college career got doomed and I had to suffer a lot.

On 20th March, 1946, I joined the E.I. Railway as a Clerk in Jamalpur Workshop. It was a time when the country was rapidly proceeding to achieve her independence on one side and simultaneously the Railwaymen all over the country were preparing for a greater struggle for fulfilment of their demands through Trade Union movements.

Soon after my appointment I got involved in Trade Union movement and took active part in all meetings, processions, rallies. My services were recognised and I was immediately accepted by the leaders as an active Trade Union Worker. To give vent to the pent up demands of the railwaymen, on

26th June 1946, a notice for General Strike in the Railways throughout the country was served and preparation for it started in full swing. But in a clever and diplomatic move, the then British Govt. suddenly announced setting up of a Pay Commission and also granted lump-sum amount as allowances and thus succeeded in averting the strike. However, there were serious irregularities in the working of the Pay Commission and its awards were far from satisfactory. Utter resentment and frustration of the Railwaymen prevailed everywhere and in Jamalpur workshop, series of strikes took place. I took an active role in all such strikes and was thereby black-listed by the local Rly. administration. In such a situation while we were struggling hard for our demands, one selfmade leader Ratan Ram started advocating on behalf of the administration for cessation of Grainshop facilities. This aggravated the resentment of the Railwaymen to such an extent that apprehending a total strike of the Workshops, my services were

terminated by the administration on 2nd June 1949. The same day I was also arrested and convicted for anti-Government activities, causing strikes in three shops. Also on the suspicion that I was a communist, I was confined in Gaya jail for more than a year.

Com. Jyoti Basu, the present Chief Minister, West Bengal was the supreme head of the Rail Road Workers Union which was formed on behest of A.I.T.U.C. After my release from Jail in January 1950, I again started to organise and mobilise Railwaymen but was directed by the party high command to go underground.

After dissolution of the Rail Road Workers Union, its members joined the E. Railway Men's Union under the banner of A.I.R.F. Accordingly, I also started to work in the said Union and was nominated as Branch Secretary of the Union at Jamalpur. This enabled me to attend the A.I.R.F.'s conference at Madras where I saw the most veteran Trade Union leader, V.V. Giri.

Later on, I was elected as Organising Secretary of E.R.M.U. The President of the Union was Thakur Jugal Kishore Singh and the General Secretary was P.C. Dasgupta. Ram Chakravarty, who was a very famous figure in the union, was not having good relations with Dasgupta. A notable incident arising out of the tussle between Chakravarty and Dasgupta, is still lying afresh in my memory. It so happened that the Union was to send one representative to Czechoslovakia. Dasgupta was in favour of my participation. Ram Chakravarty was also an aspirant. Lastly it was decided that the oldest member should attend. Ultimately, Chakravarty won the game. But when he was not spared by the administration, he suspected Dasgupta's hands behind it. Ram Chakravarty then called

me and advised to participate in lieu of him with assurance that all arrangements would be done by the union. But, I was advised by some of my colleagues that it was a trick of Ram Chakravarty to capture the Union in my absence. However, I realised later that 'Ramda' had seriously intended to send me abroad. I thus lost a golden chance.

Another important event of my Trade Union life was to succeed in fighting out the money lenders of Jamalpur. The money-lenders often instituted cases in the court against the borrower Railwaymen. Such Railwaymen were suspended by the Rly. Administration at the instance of the money lenders. The borrowers so suspended could come back to duty only after repayment of entire amount of loan along with high interests. The fact was narrated in a memorandum and represented to Mr. Jagjivan Ram, the then Rly. Minister during his visit to Jamalpur Workshops, Mr. Ram instantly forbade the system.

After a long period of my suspension, I received a joining order on 10.9.57. But, it was queer that on reporting to duty I was served with a letter on that very day ~~boasting~~ the words "your service is no longer required".

Although I was still carrying on T.U. Work with great enthusiasm, I was suffering from utter financial distress. And I remember, at that stage, Ram Chakravarty as General Secretary of ERMU, issued circulars to all concerned for affording me necessary monetary help.

Subsequently, I met Snehanshu Acharya, the leading Barrister to file a suit in the Calcutta High Court. But he told me to represent my case personally to the Rly. Minister. In Delhi, I met several MPS

including B.T. Ranadive but received no help from anybody. Then at my own initiative, I met Jagjivan Ram but he was reluctant to do anything for me. Lastly, I met Jaya Prakash Narayan, the President of A.I.R.F. and a National leader but my efforts were in vain, I did not get any help.

After a few months, the Central Govt. employees decided to go on strike. As soon as the A.I.R.F. declared to Strike from midnight of 11th July, 1960, a high level meeting of the C.P.I. was held in Calcutta under the observation of Comrade Jyoti Basu for taking a decision whether to support the strike or not. I do not hesitate to state that no decision could be arrived at even after a debate for five hours. Jyoti Basu asked me about the result of the meeting. I replied 'you know better than me'. He became annoyed and expressed his anger for lingering the meeting unnecessarily. In the next meeting, it was, however, decided to support the strike.

As a result, the strike was very much successful in Eastern and South Eastern Railways, which was unprecedented in Indian Railways. Jyoti Basu appreciated and greeted us.

After the strike, a General Council meeting of the ERMU was convened for taking stock of the situation and action against the Office Bearers of different Branches who had not participated in the strike.

As advised by the General Secretary, Ram Chakravarty, I went to Sahibganj to ascertain the position. Out of Eight Branch Officials, Raghunath Yadav, Branch Org. Secy. was the only striker and remaining seven were loyal workers. I sent this report duly to the General Secretary. The attitude of the General Secretary in this respect was very strict. Although the seven delinquents were

his henchmen but without any discrimination, he removed them all from their portfolios. Raghunath Yadav was made Branch Secretary of Sahibganj and was empowered to select seven office bearers of the Branch.

The action of Ram Chakravarty against the nonstrikers drew my admiration and removed my misunderstanding that he was anti-communist. After his visit to the U.S.S.R. he often used to say that Russia was neither a heaven nor a hell, which made me and a few other comrades a bit shaky to maintain our extinguished views on Russia.

After a few years of the strike of 1960, the group of Socialist forces succeeded in ousting Ram Chakravarty from the union. This resulted in a serious set-back in the Union and for some time a vacuum existed in the Union and it seemed to be paralysed.

The views of Ram Chakravarty in regard to functioning of Union, was that the Union should be independent and free from political influence. Railwaymen should build their own organisation, control the activities themselves and fight for redressal of their grievances.

DURING THE SPAN OF MY ACTIVE LIFE, I CAME ACROSS SO MANY TRADE UNION AND POLITICAL LEADERS. BUT RAM CHAKRAVARTY WAS UNPARALLELED. BY DIRT OF HIS GIGANTIC VIGOUR AND ENERGY, STRONG DETERMINATION, OUTSTANDING PERSONALITY AND UNEQUAL CAPACITY TO ORGANISE, MOTIVATE, MOBILISE AND CONTROL MASS, HE CHAMPIONED THE CAUSE OF THE RAILWAYMEN. A LEADER HAVING SUCH A CAPACITY IN THE TRADE UNION FIELD SHOULD BE ADORED IN ALL TIMES.

We have come a long way and it is time now for the hard climb to the top

Sailen Ghosh

(Mr. Sailen Ghosh born in 1930 joined in the commercial Branch of the Eastern Railway. He had a soldierly character. In course of various trade union activities, he suffered like many other heroes of the past. Arrest, dismissal, suspension in service did not frighten him. He was true to his belief and served the railwaymen as a valiant soldier).

In the beginning I must pay my homage to those who had dedicated their lives for furtherance of the cause of railwaymen and express my best wishes to those who are still fighting for the same.

I joined in the East Indian Railway in 1951 and was posted as a commercial clerk in the Chief Parcel & Luggage Inspector's Office under Divisional Superintendent, Howrah.

With the regrouping of Railways in the year 1952 a portion of East Indian Railway and Bengal Nagpur Railway came under one Zonal Railway named as Eastern Railway. It was proposed to shift the Head Office from Calcutta to Waltair and there was a tremendous movement against it under the leadership of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in which all section of people and Railwaymen participated. A huge Railwaymen's procession was led by Dr. Mukherjee from Mounment Maidan to Rabindra Sarobar to lodge protest to the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who was holding A.I.C.C. meeting there. Finally the Railway Board had to change their decision and the Head office of the Railway was allowed to remain in Calcutta. There was no economic consideration behind the move but it was regionalism that played the main part. Thus from the start of my service career I was deeply involved in the said movement and

thereafter throughout my service career I had participated in all the movements for Railwaymen's cause with utmost sincerity and best of my ability.

After the formation of S.E. Railway with N.C. Kapoor as General Manager there was a big agitation and demonstration over his behaviour and demand of Festival Advance. Ultimately Railways had to yield and the demand was acceded to.

Railwaymen's movements and struggle as I could realise was for economic emancipation and of a revolutionary character. But unfortunately a section of their leaders made relentless efforts to politicise the issues and exploit them for the benefit of their political party.

In the meantime the All India Railwaymen's Federation was bringing pressure on the Government to settle the anomalies of Second Pay Commission for refixation of Pay scale among the staff of different categories. The Government put down all attempts of settlements and ultimately forced the A.I.R.F. to issue a Notice upon the Railway administration in the year 1960.

The Railwaymen in general had to consolidate themselves for a greater struggle on various demands, such as abolition of Minimum Wage, Absorption of casual staff in regular service and adequate allowances

Allowance commensurate with the price Index and also for either Modification or Abolition of some sections of Service Conduct Rules of British period that had placed railwaymen as second class citizens.

I along with others had thrown myself whole-heartedly in the vortex of activities in the preparation of the strike call. After thirteen years of country's Independence this strike called by AIRF had brought a new life among railwaymen and they had taken a vow to struggle till victory was achieved.

It appeared to all railwaymen that "there is an element in human nature which is drawn by the spirit of adventure, the lure of sacrifice and grandeur of secrecy. It is the search of the life's problems". They had shaken off - their slave mentality and marched forward to obtain recognition as a citizen of Free India with material, moral and economic upliftment as members of a civilised society. They had joined in the struggle in large numbers after their hope for a solution was dashed to pieces by the calcified bureaucracy sitting in ivory towers. The refusal of the Prime Minister to meet our representatives was the last straw on the camel's back. The Railway Strike of 11th July 1960 had a longstanding effect not because the railwaymen had gained but because they had realised that there could be no progress towards their cherished objective without sacrifice. The repressive measures could not diminish their determination to forge unity at all levels.

Besides prominent leaders, ordinary workers in thousands including myself were arrested and others were either dismissed or removed from service. Some even dedicated their lives during this period. I must say that on the Eastern Railway especially in Howrah and Sealdah divisions, where the leadership

of the then General Secretary of E.R.M.U., R.C. Chakravarty was beyond any controversy, we all were much inspired by his indomitable courage, determination to wrest from the hands of the Government not mercy but reasonable norms of a civilised society.

Although at this late age I will not be able to analyse the entire situation and the role of a section of Leadership of AIRF and the utmost sacrifice of a large number of railwaymen, the glorious strike had to be finally withdrawn through the intervention of Ashoke Mehata and Firoze Gandhi. The role of Firoze Gandhi was no doubt a fruitful one and his formula had more or less some consistency with the demands of railwaymen.

Although this glorious strike had not brought any immediate relief the cause had added a new dimension to our future movements, which had helped the railwaymen to advance their movement in future and the same had been demonstrated when the railwaymen again had participated in the Strike of 1974, under leadership of George Fernandez.

Political dogma among the leadership of two groups on the labour front in the 1960s was much controversial and to some extent they had failed to get the railwaymen united for final success. The cause of working class in general suffered to a large extent due to this political dogma.

Besides this, the high handedness of the bureaucrats and sentimental approach veiled threat of the then Prime Minister created a confusion among a large section of railwaymen.

Although the above two are the main causes for the failure of the strike, the railwaymen in general had overcome the negative aspects in future. It may be noted

further that spirit which was gained by railwaymen during 1960 strike, had helped them immensely in the fulfilment of their various demands in future. This was proved when the railwaymen had to face a bigger struggle during the Strike of 1974 on various demands.

The divide and rule policy of the Government banking on categorical unions did not succeed and all of them joined in the strike in a concerted way.

The AIRF had planned to launch a bigger movement after 13 years of last general strike of 1960 for consolidating complete unity. The then President of AIRF, George Fernandez had ventured on a new plan to launch the strike under the banner of National Co-ordination Committee for Railway Men's struggle with the help of other categorical organisations. Although the Strike had started on and from 8th July '74 vigorously and continued for more than 20 days, this time also the same was destined to fizzle out abruptly and finally had to be withdrawn. The Government was equally vigilant and had taken stern attitude to break this strike by arresting and dismissing several thousands of railwaymen. I was also victimised.

As a result of this strike and sacrifice of railwaymen in thousands, the Govt. of India had been forced to set up the Third Pay Commission in the year 1976. As a result of the great political change all over the country within a short period, the railwaymen in general had achieved their long cherished desire of enjoying Bonus in the year 1979 and also the effect of very fruitful result on the basis of Pay Commission Report afterwards. Though not fully satisfied, the other Central Govt. employees along with Railwaymen in general had the privilege to co-operate with the new Government for their new deal.

While concluding my experience for last 38 years in the railways I must mention a chapter which would not be surely off the track. During the period of 1964-65 to 1970-71 a parallel organisation was moulded by R.C. Chakravarty and others under the name of Eastern Railwaymen's Union having the same Registration No. of the original one and having its Central office at Kancharapara with the leadership of S.B. Lahiri. Very rapidly a nucleus was formed throughout the Eastern Zone consisting of the very matured union activists. Though not a recognised body by the Railway Administration, the Administration was compelled to listen to the grievances from the representatives of the said body and thus the functioning of the parallel organisation had continued, in spite of many odds. As I was a member of the Central Committee of this organisation, I must mention the massive demonstrations held at four Divisional Head Quarters, namely Howrah, Asansol, Dhanbad and Durgam during 1965. The historical Demonstration held at Fairlie Place, Calcutta on 28th June 1966 had a salutary effect on the Administration. Three Central Office employees including myself were suspended from service by the administration.

History of this chapter would be incomplete if I do not mention the "Liluah Workers Legal Action Committee" challenging the "illegal lockout" at the Workshop in the year 1964. This committee was much assisted by the parallel organisation. Both Legal Action Committee and parallel body of Eastern Railwaymen's Union had worked jointly through meetings, gate meetings, mass meetings and demonstrations. The case was taken to the court of law for four years. Finally the

strong determination of the workers of Liluah workshop, they won the case through a prolonged struggle. All the victimised staff during the period of "Illegal Lockout" got back their dues. I along with others still feel proud to have served the workers of Liluah Workshop in their need.

Although this organisation was very much strong not because of its volume but by its intensity due to service of matured and progressive Trade Unionists. Unfortunately the same was destined to die on the issue of election of the East Indian Railway Employees' Cooperative Credit Society held in the year 1968. Although a large section of militant workers had sincerely relied upon us, they had been left in dark of the actual situation. We had preferred to come to the management of the Society but the measure was a boomerang. The cause of the working class was placed in the second place. The said parallel organisation was finally merged with the former body of Eastern Railwaymen's Union.

Although 22 years had lapsed, still the above facts remain afresh in my mind and now I think that it was a Himalayan blunder. The decision taken by some of our good friends had hampered the growth of the organisation. I retired as Commercial Supervisor on 1st November 1988. Though I had not any political dogma, I had served as an ordinary soldier and my only consolation is that never had I shirked the responsibility of the struggle of the working class. The arrest, dismissal or suspension, and all penal measures, had been experienced by me during the period of my Trade Union activities.

It has always been my belief that the advancement of the working class is dependent on a free Trade Union Movement

in a democratic country like ours both in the public and the private sector. On the Railways, the domination of political party leaders in the two Federations of railwaymen for over four decades had done more harm than good to railwaymen. It is wrong for our political leaders to think that the railwaymen are to be pushed from the edge of the nest just to learn how to fly. With immense change in political, social and economic scenario in the national and international sphere, what stands out as the most desirable for the working class is that they are to be leaders of their own people for any struggle that may be necessary. Political adventurism has no place in trade union activity. History of railwaymen's struggle over the last 50 years is a pointer to the objective that much of the disunity among railwaymen is the result of clash of ideals of political parties and help the government and its bureaucratic machinery to frustrate the legitimate objective of the railwaymen. Multiplicity of unions is the bar to the progress of the working class. It is time now to realise that we have come a long way and the hard climb to the top is a feat of courage and determination. We must get rid of the political leaders and look forward to one Union in one Industry.

Before I conclude I can not refrain myself to add few more lines about the much debated but venerated leader in Railway Trade Union movement, that is R.C. Chakravarty who led Railwaymen in many a struggle. His vocabulary, unparellel courage and dignity inspired many of us throughout fifties and sixties and I still believe that he was most effective leader in the Railway Trade Union movement who earned love and respect from Railwaymen in general.

It is most unfortunate that he, being a free independent and free Trade Unionist, was

often branded by socialist, as a communist and a socialist by the communist whenever these suited them. It is a fact that, had he wished to belong to either any political party or group, surely he might have been elevated to the highest position in the All India Railwaymen's Federation and might also ensure his place as worthwhile labour representative either in Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha. Perhaps it is no longer a distant, if not right now, when R.C. Chakravarty's stand of Free and non-Political out-look in the Railway Trade Union Movement will be

vindicated as correct as the working class is slowly veering round towards freeing itself out of the clutches provided by the sundry political parties and stand on its own leg. This trend is bound to gather strength as at present India is undergoing major metamorphosis as also internationally both communism and socialism have lost appeal to the working class.

When this process takes a full turn, would the ideal of this much esteemed leader be fulfilled.

CHAPTER — II



We Remember

THE GERMAN NOVELIST GUNTER GRASS WROTE THAT THE HUMAN HEAD IS BIGGER THAN THE GLOBE. AND IT'S WITH THIS BIG HEAD THAT MAN IMAGINES KNOWING THAT "WHAT IS, MUST ALWAYS BETTER THAN WHAT WAS, AND THAT WHICH IS TO COME MUST BE BETTER THAN WHAT IS AND WHAT WAS".

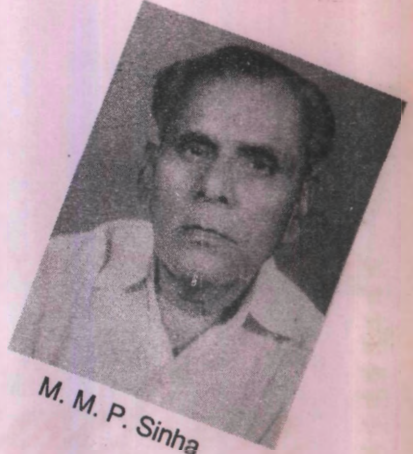
(Miscellany, *The Sunday Statesman Review*,
June 21, 1992)



Satyen Ganguly



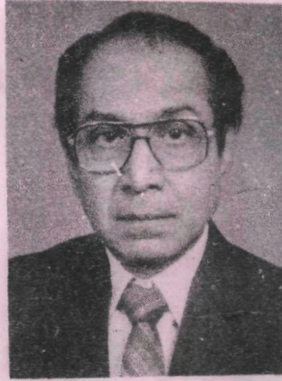
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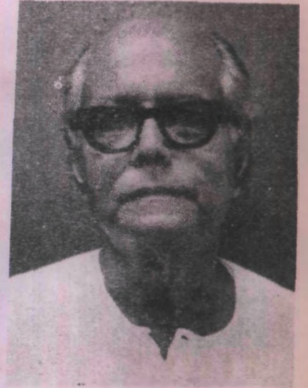
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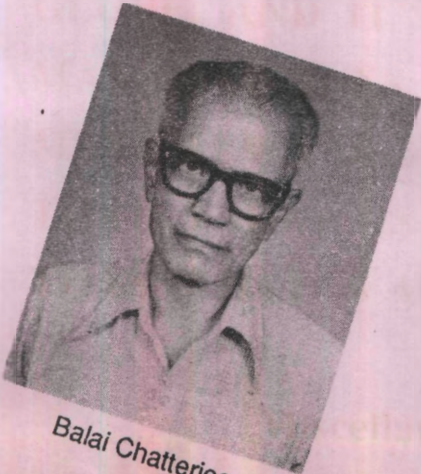
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N. P. Roy



Shanti Chakravorty



Balai Chatterjee



N. M. Chowbey



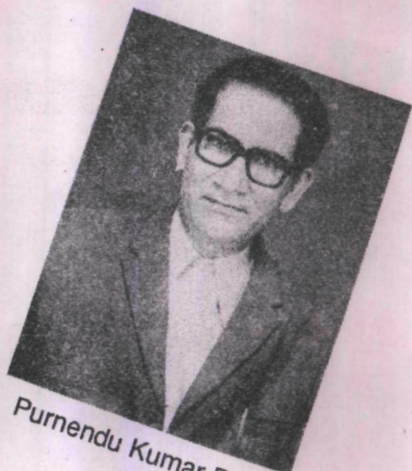
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Nirapada Banerjee



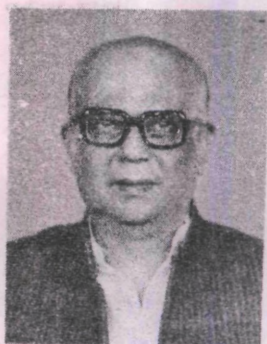
Sunil kusum Sengupta



Purnendu Kumar Basu



Jagadindra Karmakar



Amaresh Chandra Sen



Kashi Nath Mukherjee



Abhoy Pada Chatterjee



T. N. Bajpai.

What matters most is the struggle - not victory or defeat

Satyen Ganguly

(Mr. Satyen Ganguly born in a family of freedom fighters in Jessore District of the Bengal (now Bangladesh) had a touch with the political situation from his school days. On joining the Railways he was associated with the Trade Union movement. He was imprisoned during the Rly. strike of 1949 and was detained in Presidency Jail, Calcutta and Buxa Fort. Later he joined in the legal profession as an Advocate of Calcutta High Court. He still maintains a close connection with railwaymen).

I joined the Railway Trade Union Movement in October, 1944 as a railway employee after giving up my service in the Civil Supply Department in Calcutta. I want to indicate the background of my life as to why and how I joined the Railway Trade Union Movement.

In my tender age of 7 or 8 when I was a mere school-going boy, my entire family had to face the repression of the British Raj. In our village at Bondabila in Jessore District (now in Bangla Desh) a No-Tax Campaign was launched under the leadership of Bijoy Chandra Roy who was my father's cousin. The call was given by Mahatma Gandhi in 1929. Several thousand people and many villagers were arrested and tortured by the police. Women were also not spared. My youngest uncle died when he was a college student due to tuberculosis after he came out from the jail. Next uncle became permanently deaf due to inhuman torture of the police. He was in jail for about two years. My father who was a medical practioner was a freedom fighter of repute though he did not join actively in politics. He burnt all his foreign made suits and started wearing Khadi. Our entire family was used to wear Khadi cloths.

During my college life I joined the student movement and was gradually attracted towards Marxism. I joined the student movement actively. During my student life in the college the Second World War broke out. I came in contact with Kali Mukherjee, the then veteran Trade Union leader. He was a communist leader. Kali-da was known to us as Raghuda. Ultimately Kali-da joined the Congress. He was popularly known in West Bengal as INTUC leader. Although he left us but his influence for joining the Trade Union Movement did not end with his parting ways with us.

When I joined the Civil Supply office I was feeling very much disappointed in office work. As soon as I got an opportunity to enter railway service, I considered it to be a blessing to me and I joined the Railway Trade Union movement. I used to go the Central Office of B & A Railway Workers' Union, the Red Flag Union. There I found many of the veteran organisers who were known to me and I immediately started working along with them the Railway Workers at Narkeldanga Loco Shed, Chitpur and Sealdah Carriage Depot.

The B & A Railway Workers' Union was neither recognised by the Railway

Authorities nor affiliated to All India Railway Mens' Federation (AIRF). The then veteran wellknown Trade Union Leader in West Bengal, Com. Bankim Mukherjee, M.L.A., was the President and Com. Jyoti Basu (now the Chief Minister of West Bengal) was the General Secretary of the Union. In 1945 March at Kanchrapara Conference of the Union was jointly held with another union viz. the B.A. Rail Road Workers' Union led by Mr. J.N.Gupta, retired railway employee and an Ex. M.L.A. from the Railway Constituency with his own brother Com. Biren Das Gupta as General Secretary of the said union. The activities of that Union was limited to North Bengal and Assam. Our Union B & A Rly. Workers' Union merged with that Union to be renamed as B. A. Rail Road Workers' Union. In the conference the same set of office bearers i.e. Com. Bankim Mukherjee and Com. Jyoti Basu were reelected as President and General Secretary. Com. Biren Das Gupta was elected Joint General Secretary. J.N.Gupta retired from the Trade Union movement because of his age.

In 1945 after the Great World War the national leaders came out from the jail and the British Government declared general election. Jyoti Basu was elected M.L.A. from the Railway Constituency defeating Prof. Humayun Kabir, a popular Congress Leader and distinguished educationist. Soon after Joti Basu became an M.L.A. the Railway authorities recognised the Union and the union got the affiliation to AIRF.

After joining the railway service as a prob. Assistant Station Master, I had to wait for a year for training and my name was in the list of relieving staff at Sealdah. I always got co-operation and sympathy

of my friends and they always helped me, so that I could spare more time for the organisation. Ultimately after the recognition and affiliation of our Union I started working on the section from Dum Dum Junction to Rajbari (now in Bangladesh) and Lalgola Section consisting of 320 km, organising and mobilising the Railway Gangmen on the line as well as the workers in shops and sheds. I was actively assisting Kanchrapara Branch of our Union. I was elected Secretary of the Ranaghat Branch in 1945. I was also elected Vice-Chairman of the Railway Grain Shop and also the Central Representative of our Union in the B.A. Railway Food Advisory Committee under the Chair-manship of Dy. General Manager (Food).

I used to represent the grievances of the Railwaymen at the Divisional Level and I had to assist Com. Jyoti Basu in negotiations with the General Manager.

In February 1946 All India Railwaymens' Federation after discussion decided to launch a Strike throughout the Indian Railways. The Strike was to commence on Indian Railways on the 29th June, 1946. I had occasion to accompany Bankim Mukherjee and Jyoti Basu for campaigning and organising the railwaymen to make the Strike a success. I used to pass sleepless nights for group meetings and for organising the campaign. I travelled through the states of Bengal and Assam. The sincerity, love, co-operation and fellow feeling I got from my fellow railwaymen on the job is forgotten even today. In the month of June 1946 All India Railwaymens' Federation had a meeting at Sealdah. I joined in the meeting. Guruswami, the then General Secretary of the Federation (who was a veteran

Union leader and disciple of V.V. Giri, one of the fathers of the Indian Trade Union Movement). We came to know the details of the settlement with the then Secretary, Transport of the Govt. of India during the British Rule. It was decided in the Federation's meeting that since the Government agreed to set up the First Pay Commission to go into details of the pay scales and rationalisation of the different categories for a unified scale of pay throughout India it would not be appropriate to resort to Strike.

Thereafter, I came back to Calcutta and was seriously ill. I was admitted to B.R. Singh Hospital for one month and was released after recovery. I again joined in my work in the Trade Union field and many times I had to go to Connaught Place office of the Federation at Delhi with memorandum of different categories.

In the meantime the Interim National Government was formed. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru the attitude of the Central Government towards the union changed.

In July 1948 a resolution was passed in the Lillah Convention for removal of anomalies in the fixation of pay scales. Jaya Prakash Narayan who was our President at that time started negotiation with Jawaharlal Nehru and Railway Minister Dr. John Mathai. They agreed to set up a Committee for removal of Pay Commission anomalies and to give some other facilities. In Nagpur session resolutions were passed urging quick settlement of the disputes with regard to anomalies in the fixation in pay scales. I was a member of the AIRF working committee and took an active part in the work of AIRF.

Our Union used to work in close co-

operation with the E.I.Rly Employees' Union led by Ram Chakravarty and P.C.Das Gupta.

In the January 1949 Working Committee Meeting I insisted on Jaya Prakash Narayan's starting on negotiations with the Ministry to raise pay scale of the Railwaymen from Rs. 55/- to a minimum of Rs.100/-. Jaya Prakash Narayan did not agree to that. He tried to convince us that it would be wrong to start the movement immediately before the full implementation of the Pay Scale already accepted. This difference between Red Flag Union leaders led by Jyoti Basu assisted by me led to break away from the AIRF.

In February 1949 our union was expelled from the AIRF at the Danapur Session as we gave a call to Railwaymen to resort to strike on the 8th March 1949. About one thousand railwaymen were arrested. I was arrested on the 8th March 1949 at Nalanda Station by the Military Police and sent to Presidency Jail, Alipur. After a year, I was transferred to Buxa Fort. I was released from Buxa Fort on April, 1951 after more than 2 years imprisonment.

After my release from detention I started working among the Railwaymen in the Union, I became the General Secretary of the E.I.Rail Road Workers Union. There was a meeting of the Railway Trade Union leaders where many of us opined that we had taken a wrong line and that we should again go back to our parent organisation i.e. AIRF for unity amongst the Railwaymen. I rushed to Amingaon AIRF council meeting in March 1952 and gave a letter personally as a member of the Working Committee.

General Secretary of the Union. A letter of Jyoti Basu ex-vic President expressing regret was also made over with the request to forget the past for the sake of Railwaymen. Then I met Jaya Prakash Narayan and S.Guruswami. They agreed to take us back. We started working under the leadership of All India Railwaymen's Federation.

In the meantime Railways were regrouped and after merger there were six zones on Indian Railways. The Eastern Zone comprised a portion of the then E.I.Rly. upto Mughalsarai. Our Union was merged along with other Unions. We dissolved our Union and merged with the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. Many of our comrades were taken as Branch office bearers in the Union. However, although I was not officially holding any post of the new Union under the leadership of Ram Chakravarty and P.C. Das Gupta, I used to go to Strand Road Office and attend also many Council meetings. They knew my dedication to the Trade Union Movement.

In 1960 General Strike I took an active part. Although I was not formally in the leadership, I held a large number of meetings. Ram Chakravarty and many other leaders were arrested and many

Railwaymen were either suspended, dismissed or transferred to other places. Ultimately with the help of Bhupesh Gupta, Firoze Gandhi and Asoke Mehta, Members of the Parliament a settlement was arrived at.

Later I joined in the legal profession in Calcutta High Court in 1964 and decided not to appear for the Railwaymen with fees and remuneration but to give them free advice. I felt very much hesitant to accept fees from the Railwaymen. Hearing this many of the railwaymen and active workers came and urged on me to give special attention to the railway cases. They assured me of a proper remuneration so that I could build up a library and a chamber for earning my livelihood. In my 26/27 years' practice the railwaymen have given me many things. They gave me a means of livelihood when I lost the job. Now I am a professional lawyer and they help me in all possible ways to continue in the profession.

Now I am 70 with a broken health but I never forget railwaymen. My chamber will remain open for them. I thank all my old comrades. I cannot forget them specially those who have taken the initiative to publish a brochure of past life of the old Trade Unionist on the Railways.

Trade Union, the greatest Bulwark of Industrial Genetralion

D. R. Adhikary

(Mr. D. R. Adhikary born in 1915 at Haripur, a village in the District of Tripurah joined in the Welfare Department of Ex-Bengal Assam Railway in 1938. He was elected the working President of the E. R.M. U. and served the All India Railwaymens' Federation as one of the members of the working Committee for a long period. In the early part of 1970 he worked in that capacity till 1979. He retired from Railway Service in 1973).

I joined the Railways in 1938 and was appointed as a Physical and Bratachari Instructor in the Welfare wing of the Personnel Department at Santahar in the Bagura District of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Within a short time I came in contact with leaders of the union.

I was later on transferred to the office of Asstt. Traffic Superintendent, Santahar as a clerk. On joining the Trade Union movement I laid stress on the fact that the ordinary workers built the entire superstructure of the society and that they are to be liberated from bonds of servitude and emancipated. In course of my work I was actively associated with an agitation of Railway contractor's labour in 1943 and I was transferred to Parbatipur as clerk under Station Master. Disciplinary action was taken against me for participation in the agitation. In spite of the hardships inflicted on me I continued to work in the Trade Union field. I realised that the men at the bottom indicate the facts as first hand information and they are invaluable as raw material with which to build something large. At Purbatipur I established a Branch of the Ex-Bengal Assam Railway Employees' Association and was elected Branch Secretary. I worked there till 1947 when

I was transferred to Naihati. There was no branch of the Ex-Bengal Assam Railway Employees' Association at Naihati. I organised the workers at Naihati and formed a Branch.

After independence when a portion of the Bengal Assam Railway was merged with the Ex-East Indian Railway, we considered that we could no longer remain in isolation and on merging of the Ex-Bengal Assam Employees' Association with two other unions of old East Bengal Railways, we were members of the organisation of Eastern Railway men as Eastern Railway men's union.

I was elected Vice-President of the R. M. U. in 1961 and, thereafter, became the Working President. My retirement from Railway service continued to be in the midst of my work as President of the Naihati Branch of R. M. U.

I made it clear that the union has its own tradition and had created its own experience to the framework of the order of things. The union is the thread which bound all the workers of the single industry. Though the workers have been shocked by repressive measures of the Government at times in the struggle, it has been possible to

imprint on the minds of Railwaymen that our basic right, a claim to be treated reasonably and as civilised human being, must be secured at all costs. The railwaymen could neither be ignored nor exploited. The big stick has to be taken away by the administration to help develop mutual understanding in the realm of Industrial relations.

During my long service in the Railway Trade Union field I came in close

contact with eminent Trade Union leaders like V. V. Giri, Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan, Humayun Kabir, S. Guruswami, Sibnath Banerjee, Peter Alvares, George Farnandes, Priya gupta and Kiron Chowdhury.

The horizon shifts as the day advances and we should, therefore, prepare ourselves for the formidable challenges ahead of us for our social, economic and humanitarian needs amidst the winds of change throughout the world.

No rose without a thorn

M. M. P. Sinha

(Mr. M. M. P. Sinha born in 1919 was one of the active workers of the then E. I. Rly. Employees' Association. He had the opportunity to take an active part in the merger of E. I. Rly. Employees' Association and the E. I. Rlymen's Union to be known as E. Rly. Employees' Union. He was the Branch Secretary of the Danapur Branch of the Unions. He had the opportunity of having close contact with V. V. Giri, J. P. Narayan, Mahatma Prasad, Anandamohan Sahay and others. On the Danapur - Mughalsarai sections he was known to all railwaymen. His sense of service to the Union earned for him the admiration of railwaymen in general.)

It was in the year 1948 that the two unions in existence on the East Indian Railway viz. E. I. Railwaymen's Union and E. I. Railway Employees' Association were amalgamated into one to be known as E. I. Rly. Employees' Union with Jayaprakash Narayan as President and P. C. Dasgupta as General Secretary. Before amalgamation Jayaprakash Narayan was the President of the E. I. Railwaymen's Union and A. M. A. R. Fatmi was the General Secretary. Ananda Mohan Sahay, an associate of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Minister of his provisional Govt. was President of E. I. Railway Employees' Association. P. C. Dasgupta was the general Secretary. I belonged to E. I. Railway Employees' Association and was the Branch Secretary at Danapur. The Danapur Branch of the Association was very powerful with devoted workers like P. K. Adhikari, Mandhata Prasad, R. N. Roy, J. P. Gupta and A. P. Sharma who subsequently became a cabinet Minister of the Government of India. He was a Railway ticket collector and Branch Secretary of the Mughalsarai Branch of the Association at the time of amalgamation in 1948. A. P. Sharma

opposed the unity move but it did not succeed. He was opposed to Jayaprakash Narayan becoming President of the amalgamated union and was in favour of opting for the President's group (President one Vice President, one Asst. General Secretary and treasurer) so that Ananda Mohan Sahay could remain as President. But his attempt failed.

At the call of the All India Railwaymen's Federation a Strike was taken in 1949. While the result of the ballot in all other Branches was in favour of strike, it was 55% against strike at Mughalsarai due to Mahatma A. P. Sharma for which Jayaprakash Narayan suspended him from the Union.

In the year 1948 there was a dispute between the Divisional Superintendent Mr. W. H. Gillen and Mr. J. P. Narayan on some staff matters. As far as I know Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Railway Minister for Railways at that time and the matter of the dispute between the union and the Divisional Superintendent was brought to the attention of the Finance Minister, Bihar Govt. in March 1948. The dispute did not

Administration and the union was amicably settled. During those days P. C. Dasgupta was our General Secretary and he had given his best for the solution of the problems of Railwaymen. In March 1948 a meeting of the AIRF was held at Danapore in N. C. Ghose Institute under the Presidentship of J. P. Narayan. During those days Sri Jyoti Basu, now Chief Minister of West Bengal was one of the Vice-Presidents of our Federation. Due to some reason or the other, differences existed between the President J. P. Narayan and Jyoti Basu which resulted in the expulsion of Com. Jyoti Basu from the Federation. This meeting was held in the N. C. Ghose Institute at Danapur.

In December 1948 the Annual General Meeting of our Union was held at Mughlasari Indian Institute and in this meeting A. P. Sharma was expelled from our Union. This meeting was presided over by A. M. Sahay.

After being expelled A. P. Sharma approached me and other union office bearers to join the labour organisation which was then run by Khandu Bhai Desai and Shantilal Sah, the then Labour minister of Maharashtra. I and other office bearers of the union did not agree to the proposal. A. P. Sharma formed E. Rly Men's congress and Khandu Bhai Desai organised the N. F. I. R. Though V. V. Giri was not attached to our Federation he had a soft corner for Railwaymen.

When V. V. Giri was the Governor of U. P. he happened to pass via Gaya by 9 Up. I was posted at Gaya at that time. I sent a note in his saloon indicating my identity as Secretary of the E. Rly. Men's Union, Danapur. He immediately called me inside his saloon and enquired about the Trade Union activities on the Railways.

I explained to him the position. I was introduced to Mrs. V. V. Giri who was also travelling with him. During the scheduled stoppage of the Train he also enquired about P. C. Das Gupta and others of our union.

V. V. Giri was the Governor of U.P. twice. Later on he was the Union Minister for Labour. On some difference in the labour policy he submitted his resignation. While he was out on tour by train to Assam I managed to see him and he agreed to address a meeting of Railway workers under the auspices of our union at Danapur at my request. He was accorded a rousing reception by the Railway workers of Danapur. It was the trouble of walking a distance of one km. and a half with the Railway workers to come to the Railway station. He was very comfortably accommodated in Bungalow No. 4 which was reserved and all possible arrangements were made for his stay over there.

So far as I remember V. V. Giri arrived by 12 Dn and after nightfall he was kind enough to address the Railway workers' meeting at V. N. Sharma Institute. His speech was delivered in English and was translated into Hindi by Chaturvedi, the then Principal of Boys' High School. His speech was given a hearty send-off.

It was our good luck that V. V. Giri was the President of India. After he was elected President of India a message was sent by him to myself and the Rly workers. We very promptly replied. Later he came to Patna I along with the members of the union viz. Jagat Pr. Gupta, Mangab, etc.

others went to see him in the Govt. House at the appointed time. He very kindly called us inside a room and talked to us for about fifteen minutes in regard to union activities. He advised us to keep the Trade Union movement in a proper perspective in the interest of the country and also in the interest of the workers.

In the year 1960 when a strike call was given by the A. I. R. F. I participated in it. I along with many active workers like M. P. Verma, Jagat Pd. Gupta and others were arrested and sent to Jail at Danapur. We were suspended from

service and remained under suspension for over 6 months. It was due to the sincere efforts of Jayaprakashjee and Ashoka Mehta that we were put back to duty. The period of suspension was treated as Dies-non and with no break of service.

In the year 1977 I retired from the Rly. Service. I have organised a Eastern Railway Pensioners' Brotherhood on 23.12.77 which is giving a valuable service to the retired employees and their widows. The E. R. Pensioners' Brotherhood now stands as a premier Pensioners' organisation in this region.

It makes all the difference if you put truth in the first place

K. R. Chatterjee

(Mr. K. R. Chatterjee born in 1932 joined in the then O. T. Rly. in 1951. Before joining in the Railways, he passed the M. A. Examination and was also a graduate in Commerce. He has his own set of principles and did not care for fame and name. He came to the trade union field from the very beginning of his service. He was suspended from service for participation in a local strike in April 1952. He was arrested for participation in the strike of 1960 and remained in suspension from service for eleven months. For participation in demonstration before Dr. Ram Subhag Singh, the then Rly Minister against price rise he was suspended from service from 1963 to 1965. He participated in the Token Strike of 1968 and was suspended from service for seven months. He participated actively in the Railway Strike of 1974 and was placed under suspension from service during the period for May 1974 to April, 1975. Due to Intra-union rivalry raised by V. P. Sinha against K. L. Gupta he was arrested under Sec. 406 IPC and jailed but subsequently acquitted by the Hon'ble court. He took voluntary retirement from Railway Service in 1987, three years ahead of his normal date of retirement. During the eventful period of his trade union career he held posts of Treasurer and Jt. General Secy. of the N. E. Rly Mazdoor Union. He was a member of the National council (J. C. M. - Staffside). He was a member of the Working Committee of A. I. R. F. At present he is the Zonal Secretary of A. I. R. F. and Hony. Member of the N. E. Rly. Mazdoor Union. His frank and outspoken views has raised doubts about honesty, integrity and spirit of service and sacrifice among the present day leaders of Railwaymen. It is for the new generation of Railwaymen to stand against so called dishonest and corrupt & self-seekers in the railway trade union field).

There is nothing to write about railway trade union as you all were and are most conversant with the working of the Trade Union itself.

With my meagre experience I beg to state that I joined the movement in the year 1951 with great expectation that the leadership will lead us for a movement with self sacrifice ; but actually a different picture came before us. Nobody is guilty about the bifurcation of the Federation and Zonal Unions, according to me which resulted due to desire of Intra-leadership

rivalry. A. I. R. F. was organised by those leaders who had a sound political and social thinking. They may be left-inclined or centrist, but they were nationalists. I. N. R. W. F. was also constituted by those who had a nationalist background but it is intra-leadership conflict which did not allow unity agreement to remain. Madras convention of the Federation was historic and the united Federation was split and A. I. R. Madras came in existence. A. I. R. F. resumed at Poona convention and since

then continuing as such. Political leaders including Nath Pal, Basawan Singh, George Fernandez, and others were systematically shunted out to give permanent position to leaders even after their superannuation from railway service. All the Zonal unions repeated the same story one after another on the pretext of principles but factually due to intra-leadership rivalry. Respect for the past services in the Trade Union Movement was not accounted for. There were many court cases between one group of trade union officials against others, in all the Zonal Railways. N. E. and N. E. Rly. unions are still in the midst of court cases since 1988 and 1965 respectively. Earlier to 1965 when Sri Basawan Singh and Genda Singh (both P. S. P. M. L. As.) were at the helm of the affairs of N. E. Rly Mazdoor Union, a great leader like Ram Manohar Lohia blessed a so-called Socialist Union under the leadership of Mr. Raj Narain Singh. The Poorvattar Rly. Mazdoor Sabha survived for some time and collapsed. There were further divisions after Bharitya Jan Sangha formed its Railway Wing under the leadership of Dattapant Thengari. A section of railwaymen from N. E. Rly. Mazdoor Union under the leadership of Ram Janam Pandey, Central organizing Secretary walked out but without any accusation and court case.

Communist Party of India further directed its cadre to come out of the Trade Union and form Workers' Union over the Zonal Railways. On the North Eastern Railway no Workers' Union was formed but so-called Members having leaning towards communism bifurcated from the union with the same name and style in the year 1965. The only

demarcation is that they have changed the name of the union in political style as N. E. Rly. Mazdoor Union (APTUC). The other group conveniently selected Basawan Singh, Basant Chandra Ghose and Priya Gupta on the plea of not leading the trade union in the proper way. It was a classic fate that services of Basawan Singh, B. C. Ghose and Priya Gupta for Trade Union movement were not recognised. This was probably at the behest of the Federation leaders who were afraid of their own position before these leaders.

In any case leaders even after superannuation from the Railway service did not think it proper to leave the organisation honourably for new comers. They declared themselves independent as if they have no "Death" or "grihahni".

The concept of sacrifice and service of the Railwaymen have changed. New leadership whether it is at Council level or Federation level only feels that they are not servants of the society but they want to get their services, should they get them with all might at their own cost. Representatives of the toiling masses require A. C. 1st Class travel and Airlines service. They are required to have lodging facilities in A. C. 1st Class Hotels with Stars/officers' Rate. The whole ethics of sacrifice has changed. It has become now a profession. People are for sacrifice without implementation. It has become the practice. Such behaviour of leadership has not been seen in the new generation in the movement.

The time is too critical and the movement is in the cross-road. The new generation of Railwaymen is coming from the colleges, universities where the movement has become a secondary matter.

copying has become a matter of daily routine. They have joined services not by their own calibre but in many cases by adopting foul means. They are, for all purposes, second grade employees.

The difficulty is that the Government is ruled by those who do not use their own brain for serving the country but they take advantage of all for remaining in chair even at the cost of the nation. Today most of our political leader other than congress (I) are annoyed on the present Prime Minister for not having consultation with them on different issues. Somehow or the other they all have become victims of free trade profession. Multinationals are directing the economy. The greater farce is that President of Indian Union and other dignitaries including some Governors, Vice-President, Prime Minister and some Cabinet Ministers are announcing 10% cut in their salaries. They are not ashamed to spend many lakhs of rupees for their own benevolence annually. our socialist friends in different political parties have also become members of the same opportunist tribe. We can hate Shiva Sena in whole Maharashtra excepting in Rajapur Consultancy where Madhu Dandwate contested and unfortunately failed to win. We have accused B.J.P. as communal because they had tie-up with Shiva Sena in Maharashtra but have not branded Madhu as communal because he did the same thing which B.J.P. did for other constituency.

The militant socialist leader George could not reconcile himself with Chaubey and Purohit and, therefore, he formed his own union and tried his best to attract disgruntled elements towards his own side from AIRF and its affiliated unions.

He has gone one step forward and formed one union on the Railways. The unions have been formed on Zonal, basic and sub-branches further. Trade Union Act has not restricted any such move and therefore it is being done so.

C.P.I. in the recent past thought it proper to merge its A.I.T.U.C. with H.M.S. It is a tactical move to tempt INTUC and B.M.S. Similar action was also taken to wind up All India Railway Workers' Federation and they took a resolution that all C.P.I. unions on the railway systems should join A.I.T.U.C. This was a resolution adopted at the dissolution convention of the All India Federation. But on N.E.Rly separate wing is being maintained.

B.J.P. Trade Union on Railways has got limited membership but with the help of officials of Labour Ministry they managed to show that on the railways they command membership up to the Maximum. They went to Supreme Court also for having a direction in favour of them. This has not been implemented yet. Factually they have increased their membership to the extent of five times of their actual strength and got same certified beneath the Trade Union Act.

It is thus seen that those unions which were proud of their moral character have also become prey to official manipulation for what? Not for serving the interests of employees but for having power attached to the recognition of the State.

Corporate Enterprise in the hands of Management was failed to give railwaymen's participation in the management but except some profit sharing assistance, furniture and other facilities no where there is any participation. Minister for Railways and State

I am afraid are not in the know of how the affairs are being dealt with by the bureaucracy. They do care for only those who obey their command at their finger tip. All Zonal Managers are acting independently without having any care of the Govt. policy. They are making real fun of the National theme.

I, therefore, most respectfully submit that it is better not to have any write-up, as otherwise, it will create further bad blood amongst the present leadership who are very touchy and afraid of the future generation. They have got their photos printed and hung in their own room.

In Retrospect

N. P. Roy

Ex-General Secretary Eastern Railwaymen's Congress,
Treasurer, NFIR, Member, National Council (JCM) & President,
Railway Press Workers Union.

(I was appointed in the Commercial Department of Howrah Division in the then East Indian Railway (now Eastern Railway) in the year 1941. I did not have an iota of experience about trade union and it's activities. It was in the year 1962 that I became conscious of the role of trade union.

Late A. P. Sharma was the President of Eastern Railwaymen's Congress, a recognised trade union organisation affiliated to National Federation of Indian Railwaymen and the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). His leadership, vocabulary, intelligence and the undaunted spirit to fight relentlessly for the cause of labour had attracted and influenced my mind considerably and much to my surprise I was inducted as Divisional Secretary in the year 1964 which post was normally held by the tried and experience trade Union leaders at the lower rung of the organisation.

With the passage of time A. P. Sharma became a member of Parliament and gradually Union Minister to the Government of India. Simultaneously in the trade union field he became the President of Indian Railwaymen and Indian National Trade Union congress. At a much later stage he was posted as the Governor of West Bengal State.

With the glorious progress of A. P. Sharma and with his blessings I held the post of General Secretary of the organisation in the year 1972. I can never forget the abundant love, affection and invaluable guidance from him for shaping my carrier as a trade unionist. I held the said post of General Secretary for a period of about sixteen years. I had retired from railway service in the year 1980.

The other gem of a trade unionist is Sri K. H. Kulkarni, the then General Secretary of NFIR to whom I am greatly indebted for his continued co-operation and guidance. He can be rightly addressed as a ready reckoner for all the departments in the Indian Railways. Being physically indisposed at his old age he is now passing a retired life.).

My long association with the trade union on the Indian Railways has benefitted me with the experience that trade unionism has its merits and demerits but if both sides are weighed the balance is certainly on the plus side. There is no doubt that the organised labour is a vital force to reckon with for the purpose of

bargaining and this bargaining is for the welfare and benefit of the greater number of employees.

The adverse attitude of the bureaucrats towards trade union at its initial stage has undergone a vast change and they have ultimately realised that for the smooth and efficient running of the administration

the active co-operation of the organised labour is of paramount need. This delayed realisation has prompted the administration to set up different tiers at the Zonal and National level for discussing multiple problems of the labour. The continuous dialogue had gone a long way on the one hand in meeting the bonafide demands and for amicable settlement of other disputes of the employees. This has helped arrest the unrest amongst the dissatisfied labour force to a considerable extent on the other.

With the passage of time and changed circumstances politically and economically in the developed and developing countries came the further realisation that the organised labour should actively participate in the management for the greater interest of the administration and the nation as well. Corporate Enterprising Group was thus formed where the organised labour organisations having different political sheds and ideology got an opportunity to sit together with the management and formulate policies for better productivity, greater output and thereby instil amongst the labour at grass root level their whole-hearted involvement in running of the administration in a way that will stimulate the development nationally. Unfortunately, the organised labour organisations could not as yet effectively utilise this forum and as such the discussions in this forum is just, more or less, a formality and one sided.

Apart from the benefit the larger number of employees have gained so far in the matter of their wages and welfare, the administration has also derived the benefit to a greater extent in that such bipartite discussion have opened up various channels for collecting valuable

informations relating to the quality of governance of the administration at different levels both by the employees and the executives and thereby helped identification of the areas governed by undesirable person or persons for taking appropriate remedial measure. Incidentally, the administration, has a vast welfare organisation to look after the welfare and grievances of the employees but it can be said that this organisation unfortunately failed to justify its very existence, far less its nomenclature. Naturally the employees have better confidence in the labour organisation to which they have enlisted their membership for speedy amelioration of their grievances. It has been sadly experienced that the Labour Welfare - Inspectors, with the exception of a few, of different grades attach their loyalty and devotion to their respective superiors than to the employees they are nominally paid for. That this loyalty and devotion to the superiors is only for paving their way towards better promotional prospects is obvious.

Not that this welfare organisation is therefore, redundant to the cause of labour but it should function properly, efficiently and effectively to let the employees justify its existence and effectiveness. The labour organisation, on the other hand should however, not be grudge the effectiveness if any, of this welfare organisation. Both the organisations should function as co-ordinators for the welfare of the employees.

Notwithstanding the prompt settlement of disputes and some degree of satisfaction of the employees through dialogue with the management across the board has been experienced that on occasions

the negative approach of the management of vital issues cause much resentment leading to mass movement, abrupt stoppage of work and work-to-rule etc. by a section of the employees. For instance, on the questionable plea of economy, the administration deprive the employees of their legitimate rise in the wages commensurate with the continuous price hike, non-implementation or partial/delayed implementation of various positive orders benefiting the staff from the appropriate judicial departments, forced curtailment in the required strength of staff, introduction of new trains without correspondingly increased sanction of staff etc. In other words, despite labour's participation in the management, the management do not appear to be so enlightened as it professed to be. Conversely the management sought to encourage categorical organisations to run parallel to and curb the strength and activities of the recognised labour organisations only to keep hanging the vital issues concerning betterment in the working and living condition of the employees. It was only when this divide and rule policy backfired on the management that it woke up not only to abandon this policy but also came on heavily on such categorical associations which held and can hold the administration to ransom. But it is a fact that the militant cadres in the labour force attract more respect and attention from the management which succumb to their demands that were ignored or soft-pedaled earlier when sponsored by the recognised labour organisations. Consequently a militant feeling has developed in the minds of the employees for realisation of their rightful claims and

the leaders are sometimes forced to be led than to lead. The administration should, therefore, ponder over their apathy towards labour disputes of any nature and or non-implementation of the agreed decisions which leads to deterioration in the industrial relation and help rise ugly forces much to the detriment of peaceful labour movement. The management should realise that constructive trade union and healthy industrial relation can never develop through destructive methods. Gone are the days of divide and rule for the reason that the non-gazetted employees in all the categories are now enlightened and conscious enough to see through this game.

Personnel Department play a vital role in co-ordinating with the organised labour and other departments for maintaining this healthy relation. Its performance reflects the credibility or otherwise of the administration in its totality. Therefore it should have the power and authority to overrule any opinion of any other department according to its assessment such opinions are contrary to the reasonable and bonafide demands of the organised labour and/or disproportionate to the nature of such demands. The present set-up does not fulfil this much desired requirement resulting in the personnel department to toe with the opinion of the department concerned. In microscopic number of cases intervention of the General Manager is sought for when the personnel department feel strongly of the bonafides of the case or cases represented. The present set-up needs a welcome change in the power and authority of the personnel department for the better interest of both the organised labour and

the administration. In my opinion this suggested change if given effect to, will help inflow of fresh air in the railways' industrial climate.

Now to the demerits as have been experienced.

While we have successfully made the labour force conscious of their rights and demands we are not half successful in making them equally conscious of their responsibilities and obligations to the administration. This has resulted in want of the required amount of work culture and standard discipline particularly among the new entrants. This generation has been brought up in a different political and social climate and they are so much politically motivated that this motivation is difficult to be channelised in working arena. The sense of involvement in building the nation through their working output appears to be not so encouraging and the trade union organisations can not shun their responsibilities in this regard. It must be remembered that this new

generation is a potential force for running the administration in the near future and they are amenable to reasons if guided properly. I am afraid we are lacking in this direction.

Then comes abuse of power that the organised labour has achieved through struggle and sacrifice against strong current for a protracted period. We indulge in factionalism and ensure benefit of a particular faction at the cost of other faction with the passive support of the administration which finds itself in a happy position to oblige only to incite the policy of divide and rule. Such abuse of power ultimately brings in politicians who merrily infiltrate in and interfere with the working of the labour organisations so much so that both the irregularly satisfied and genuinely aggrieved factions are compelled to turn themselves to political organisations of divergent views and ideology. We should learn our lessons through this unhappy experience.

Continuous United Movement needed

Shanti Chakravorty

(Mr. Shanti Chakravorty born in 1918 in Munshiganj, passed Matriculation Examination in 1938 in the First Division. He joined in the B. N. Rly. in the Accounts Department, Garden Reach.

He joined in the union and was the Branch Secretary of B. N. Railway Employees Union. Thereafter on the merger of S. E. Rlymen's Union he continued as Branch Secretary for three decades. He was also Central Office bearer of S. E. Rly men's union and a member of the working committee of A.I.R.F. He had given leadership in the Garden Reach H. Q. during the strike of 7000 staff from 26th to 30th Jan., 1949 which was called off on settlement of disputes by the General Manager.

He was jailed for one year two months under West Bengal Security Act in 1950.

He joined Radical Democratic Party and was close associate of Jibonlal Chatterjee (old revolutionery & founder of Jugantar Group.)

While in Dacca he worked with E. B. Railway Union in 1940-42, he joined and led the All India Railwaymen's strikes in 1960 for 5 days, and also in 1968 during the one day strike. He participated in the historic 20 days Railway strike from 8th to 28th May 1974.

On the B. N. Rly anti-automation (Computerisation) struggle reached a peak and the General manager Dr. Jagjit Singh approached Com. Jyoti Basu to prevail upon and advise the Railwaymen to abandon the struggle, but he was unsuccessful as Com. Jyoti Basu told him that the workers had inherent right to struggle and he could not intervene in it.

In 1955 the employees at Garden Reach rose to a man demanding Bonus on the then amalgamated Eastern Railway (E. I. R. - B.N.R.). Both the branches of the Union at Garden Reach and Fairlie Place organised a movement. K. M. Bhadra, Central Assistant Secretary took a leading part with Shanti Chakravorty in sustaining the movement in an organised manner. Later the demand was compromised in the shape of 'Festival Advance' on the Railway for the first time. Then it spread to all Central/State/Municipal Employees throughout India. Lastly the benefit of this movement culminated in the shape of Bonus after the strike notice for all India strike was served in 1979 on the Govt. of India by AIRF. This is a historic event in the history of struggle of Government employees).

My association with the Trade Union Movement in the Railway Sector in India spreads over three decades and odd years. Experience gathered during this long span of time prompts me to realise that the

responsibility of the activities in the Trade Union Field has increased manifold with the changing scenario of the world, where the equation of power has suffered a good jolt consequent on the disintegration

of the great Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. Power is now concentrated in the hand of the Government of the particular country which has already left an indelible mark of its imperialist designs and atrocities is as illustrated through its nuclear bombardment in Japan and fierce Savagery against the people of Vietnam. This imperialist power, apart from its principal weapon, called Dollar, has another mighty weapon like the multi-nationals which has a dirty and blood-stained track record of toppling many a democratically instituted Government in various countries including Chilli of sparking off racial and communal holocaust and of crippling the growth of an independent national economy of a country thus relegating its status to that of a stooge of the imperialists.

Here in our country to-day, this imperialist power has let loose its gang of multi-nationals with the blessings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to run a rough-shed on Indian economy. Now that the economic sovereignty of India is mortgaged, the unholy duo, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is fast making deep inroads into our national economy. The present state of affairs reminds me of the operation of East India Company, the then tool of the British Imperialism. It is in this backdrop the assessment of the crisis of our national economy has to be made and the working class can not play the role of a silent spectator at this crucial time. Standing on the granite rock of unity, the working class has to plunge into a heroic struggle to rebuff this attack of unprecedented dimension.

A strong United Movement should be

waged to realise the long outstanding basic demand of need-based minimum wage which has yet to be achieved. Old as the demand may be, it has not at all lost its contemporary importance. This legitimate demand was principally admitted by the then Central Labour Minister, Gulzari Lal Nanda in the 15th Labour Conference held in 1957. Then there is another basic issue like control of inflation and holding of Price-line. Apparently this issue may seem to be more of a general political nature than of a Trade Union importance. The working class being the worst victim of this pernicious economic trend should combat it tooth and nail in order to arrest the malignant erosion of real wage. Again, there is the age-old demand for scrapping of the draconian laws and rules that pose a great challenge to the security of services of the working class. Hence, the working class should rise as one man to recover the Trade Union rights either snatched away or under the threat of being withdrawn. Attack on Trade Union Movement, pruning of the wages and other facilities of the working class, denial of its right to bargain with strike as the last resort of democratic Trade Union Movement are some of the preliminary tasks that IMF — Multi-national combine is hell-bent to continue to maximise their profit and in turn to pauperise the sons of the soil.

The two-three demands cited above are only illustrative and not at all exhaustive and the main reason for mentioning those demands is to highlight some age-old demands of outstanding importance, which have not yet lost contemporary value. Again, fighting for the realisation of the above mentioned

demands will help establish a bridge-head between the working class and the people. A live issue like inflation and price-hike equally affects the people at large and hence it is more a rallying slogan than a Trade Union demand. The people in general and working class in particular should realise that the slogan for combating price-hike has assumed a gigantic dimension particularly after the appearance of the multi-nationals at the centre stage of Indian economy. All that I have gathered as my valuable experience during more than three decades of my association with the Trade Union Movement in the Railways is that (1) the Trade Union Movement needs be carried forward as a continuous process since the Ruling Clique will never spontaneously meet the demand without any kick and jolt, (2) that the unity of the workers and employees of various fields and sectors have to be achieved to deal a severe blow to the redoubtable enemy like big bourgeoisie-landlord combine within and

IMF - Multi-national gang-up without and (3) that the Trade Union Workers have to achieve oneness of heart with the general public since no Trade Union Movement of wider dimension and basic importance can be crowned with success without people's blessings, in order to achieve this objective, organised labour in the Railway Sector should take much care to locate the common areas where they can lend their strength to the fighting countrymen and achieve the gains for themselves as well as for the people. The railwaymen should participate whole-heartedly in this continuous process of struggles since some such measures are still in vogue in Indian Railways as are reminiscent of the medieval age. All must realise that the great May day has become a history for its waging a war for achievement of a 8-hour working day and that has yet to be completed in the Railway Sector. We need the United Struggle of the Railwaymen.

Trade Unions must free themselves from the control of Political parties

Balai Chatterjee

(Mr. Balai Chatterjee born in 1916 at Sahibganj, Bihar joined the E. I. Rly. in 1935 as a Guard. He was connected with the E.I.Rly Employees' Association from the very beginning of his service in the Railways. In course of trade union activity he was removed from service sometime in 1948 by the then Chief Operating Superintendent of E. I. Rly as he had refused to withdraw the struggle against injustice and corruption.

He joined in the legal profession in 1964 and practised at the Calcutta High Court. He decries the role of political parties in the Trade Union movement.)

It was in about 1932 when the formation of E. I. Rly Employees' Association was planned at Asansol at the initiative of one Mr. Adhikary, Guard.

In 1935 I joined the E. I. Rly at Asansol as a guard 'Gr. B'. I did not know about any Trade Union organisation at that age of about 19 yrs, but there was an urge in me to get the Railwaymen united to function for the rights and privileges of workers. I wrote to P. C. Joshi, one of the founders of the Trade Union Movement in India. There was of course one postal class IV staff union organised by Dalvi. P. C. Joshi then wrote back to me to contact A. M. Williams, the then General Secretary of the E. I. R. Rly Employees' Association at Calcutta and by 1940 I was able to form a small unit of E. I. Rly. Employees' Association with a handful of members. I was fortunate enough, to give it a shape of a very potential unit of the E. I. Rly Employees' Association and I found a great deal of concern for the workers in M/s. A. M. Williams and P. N. Sengupta. S. K. Mukherjee was the Treasurer. Prof. A. N. Mallik was the Working President. Sri

Jamna Das Mehta President was always not available, being very busy otherwise. He was also the President of A. I. R. F.

E. I. Rly. Employees' Association had its jurisdiction right from Howrah to Gaziabad. There was another union known as E. I. Rly. men's Union with A. M. A. R. Fatimi as its General Secretary and Late Sibnath Banerjee as its president functioning beyond Mughalsarai. Sri Prafulla Kr. Basu took up the leadership at Lucknow, Sri J. P. Asthana and Sri P. Sharma functioned very well in Mughalsarai Area. When Sri Jamna Das Mehta gave up the Presidentship being appointed as High Commissioner of Burma, we had to search out for a new President. Myself and Late A. M. Williams went to Delhi and met Sri Asan Das who was then the member of Parliament and Deputy leader. He suggested the name of Sri Dewan Chaman Lall. Later however, Sri Ananda Mohan Das who was in Azad Hind Fouz and was a close associate of "Netaji" was elected President at the Moghulsarai Conference. It is not possible to write the whole history to my knowledge from 1937-

when I was removed from service by the orders of the then Chief Operating Superintendent of E. I. Rly., Sri K. B. Mathur who wanted to take revenge upon me, as I had to fight for justice for workers against corrupt and unsympathetic attitude which they could not appreciate when Britishers were ruling the country. I must say that though they were foreign Rulers, they followed certain norms and had respect for honest and sincere Trade Unionists. So I could continue to work for the benefit of the working class but after Independence the Indian bureaucrats who were in power appeared to be more aggressive. I remained undaunted and even had to sale newspaper in the streets to make both ends meet.

I joined the legal profession in 1964 and that was due to the inspiration given to me by Sri Ajit Roy Mukherji, an eminent BAR-at-Law and a close associate of Late Jaya Prakash Narayan and Late Humayun Kabir.

I still have the desire to serve the cause of Railwaymen and am trying to do so. I had did so during the Rlymen's strike although I was out of employment then and I must be grateful to Sri G. Pandey, the then DAO/Asansol and Chairman Railway Board who had great

love and affection for me and feeling of a father for my distressed condition. But for his help for the job of my wife, I could not survive with my family. I must also thank Sri K. B. Mathur and Sri Malhotra for punishing me as the incident was a turning point in my life to rise to give my children the best education which normally I could not do, if I was in the Railways without adopting corrupt practices.

I am really grateful to Late Williams, Late Asthana, P. N. Sengupta, Sri S. R. Mitra, Late S. K. Mukherjee and S. K. Chowdhury who were distressed when I was thrown out of the employment for serving the cause of Rlymen ~~sincerely~~.

But I have no hesitation to **boldly say** that the way the trade Unions are working on the Railways and all over the country is disastrous as political parties have entered into these bodies for their own interest and as such can never deliver the goods. They can not really serve the cause of workers but will utilise the trade unions for political gain taking advantage of illiteracy of the workers. **They do not** even work to make them conscious about their real interest as a community. Some influential persons are utilised to gain over the unconscious mass ~~even after 45~~ years of Independence.

Beginning of Trade Union movement amongst Railwaymen in the Coal Belt area

N. M. Chowbey

(Born in 1917 Mr. N. M. Chowbey joined in the Railway service at Sitarampur Station of Old East Indian Railway in 1939. Sitarampur, a small Township was a focal point of Railway Traffic position. Law and Order State of the British Raj Generated a fear complex and few would come forward for trade union work in those days. Mr. Chowbey came forward and started the work. His efforts were fruitful).

After joining in Railway service I was posted as a clerk at Sitarampur Station. My first contact was with two very important Railwaymen viz Dr. Bhupati Gupta, Asstt. Surgeon of Railway Hospital and Hazari Bhattacharjee working as a clerk at the Weigh bridge. I have a recollection that sometime in 1939 Prof. A. N. Mullick, the Working President of Old E. I. Rly. Employees' Association visited Sitarampur and he held a group meeting of some Railwaymen in the residence of Dr. Gupta. I had been to this meeting along with Hazari Bhattacharjee. After listening to Mr. Mullick, I was very much impressed and decided to join the union. On payment of only six Annas (less than half of rupee) as membership fee I became a member. This was just after the beginning of the Second World War. In those days we had to work secretly. There was, however, a good response and we enrolled members in different departments.

I was transferred to Pathardih in 1943 and there I came in contact with Muralidhar Dubey. I used to go to his house frequently. We used to have a conversation on working conditions and labour problems. I agreed to his proposal

for working in the then East Indian Railway Employees' Association under his guidance.

With the end of the Second World War political scene in India changed and this gave us an impetus to strengthen the Trade Union movement. I have a recollection that after the Cripps Mission's failure political situation became further tense and there was a convulsion amongst Railwaymen for a better living standard. A charter of our demands was placed before Sir Gathri Rastle who was at that time the chief Commissioner of Indian Railways. A meeting of the representatives of All India Railwaymen's Federation was held in Bombay and it was decided that if our demands were not fulfilled by a reasonable period, we would go on strike. Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru intervened and after a meeting with the President of the Federation the Government announced an interim relief.

For improvement of our economic conditions we had to take a ballot for strike but Prime Minister Nehru urged on the All India Railwaymen's Federation to co-operate with the Government of Independent India. For the first time a

Pay Commission for Central Government employees was set up in 1947.

During this period there was a vigorous growth of our union. Several station committees were set up in this region under the Dhanbad Branch of E. I. Rly Employees' Association. At Dhanbad the Branch Committee consisted of Nirmal Chandra Sanyal as President, P. Dayal as Branch Secretary and M. L. Das as Treasurer. I was the organising Secretary. The station Committee at Pathardih consisted of S. B. Pandey, Driver as President and J. Kundu of Grainshop as Secretary. The Katrasgarh Station Committee consisted of Kedar Nath as President and N. P. Karna as Secretary.

Encourage by the good response we made a drive in organising our activities on the Gomoh-Barkakana Section. We found some good workers at Barkakana where a Station committee was set up with S. N. Samanta, ASM as Secretary. Sri R. K. Sharma was the Secretary of Gomoh Branch of the Association. During this period the E. I. Railway Men's Union and E. I. Railway Employees' Association were merged into a single organisation in a meeting at Mughal Sarai. Unfortunately a section of Railwaymen broke away from us and formed Eastern Railwaymen's Congress under the banner of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen, a body formed by the ruling political party Indian National Congress. But this did not deter us from strengthening our organisation and we had made great strides. With the regrouping of Railways in 1952 the organisation structure had under gone

further change. With the creation of Eastern Zone of Indian Railways, the Ex-B. N. Rly was amalgamated with a truncated Old East Indian Railway with jurisdiction upto Mughalsarai. Our organisation was amalgamated with Ex-B. N. Rlymen's Union. Dhanbad Branch of the union had a distinct role in the development of Eastern Railwaymen's Union in the Coal belt area. The pioneering zeal and enthusiasm of the member of the then Dhanbad Branch was praiseworthy. As far as I remember N. R. Roy was President, D. Dayal Branch Secretary, D. C. Chatterjee, Vice President, S. K. Nath, Asst. Secretary and N. C. Bose Treasurer of the Branch at that time. I was the organising Secretary. Then came the strike of July 1960. Railwaymen of Eastern Zone had put up a great challenge with courage and determination in the Coal belt area during the strike. The Government let loose its region of terror and oppression. A large number of railwaymen were arrested and suspended from service. I was kept under suspension upto 31st October of December 1960 and was allowed to resume duties at the intervention of Jaya Prakash Narayan.

I continued to remain a member of the union till 1965 and worked for the growth of the organisation.

We shall continue to remember with pride, how our friends helped us move forward and it is a joy that the staff of Eastern Railwaymen's Union continues to give encouragement to friends of the present to move ahead.

Crusade against Injustice and Corruption in Asansol Division on Eastern Railway

H. D. Bagchi

(H. D. Bagchi was the Secretary of the Asansol branch of Eastern Railway men's union. During the struggle he was removed from service by the administration. He continued his connections with Railwaymen. He became a member of the management committee of the Rlymen's Co-operative Society, President All India Canteen Workers' Union, General Secretary of Sen Raleigh Company Workers' Union. He was connected with the management of three Primary Schools and one High School at Asansol. He was Vice Chairman of the Asansol Municipality for 8 years and still remains as Commissioner. He is now in charge of Mass Literacy Campaign at Asansol within the Jurisdiction of Municipality.).

I joined in Bengal Assam Rly. as a Tally Clerk in a temporary capacity and was then appointed as a Clerk on 17. 4. 44. From the very beginning I became a member of Bengal Assam Railway Employees' Association. The said Association had an eminent person like Prof. Hymayun Kabir, as President and Kiron Chowdhury was the General Secretary. At that time another union (un-recognised) known as Rail Road workers' Union existed with Jyoti Basu as President and Kalipada Das as General Secretary. Later Kalipada Das joined the INTUC.

From the Railways I was selected in the Defence of India Service during the Second World War in Sept. 1944 and I travelled extensively throughout Assam. During 1944-46 although I was a member of the Union I had the least opportunity to keep close contact with Union due to my hazardous duty. I joined the Union with full vigour when I was released finally from the Defence of India Service. I was posted thereafter at Saidpur in Rangpur Distt. (Now in Bangladesh).

There was a workshop on Meter Gauge

Section at Saidpur. With the establishment of new Distt. Office at Sealdah, the Distt. Electrical Engineer's Office was shifted to Sealdah from Saidpur and I was transferred in Sealdah Office. During a short period of time I was again transferred on promotion as Head Clerk, under Foreman, Power House at Sealdah.

While in Santahar I along with others most reluctantly opted for "India" on the partition of our country. At Santahar I had the privilege to see the birth of two states in the midnight of 14th and 15th August 1947.

I was spared from Santahar and posted at Asansol in September 1947. In spite of my preference for Sealdah, due to my transfer from Santahar I being the Asst. Secy. of Union along with others I had the privilege to render our services for a few days to the staff and workers who came from "India" by special train at Santahar Junction and stayed on the platform for want of Railway accommodation. It was a terrible scene and that was my first experience on the partition of the country with the homeless men and women.

There existed two Unions at Asansol and I took the initiative for arranging a Conference of Staff and Workers coming from Ex-Bengal Assam Railway on their various demands.

Kiron Cowdhury presided over the conference and he assured the Railwaymen from Pakistan for fulfilling their demands. Altogether there were about 1600 men in Asansol and Dhanbad area. Two Unions Viz. EIR Employees' Association and East Indian Railway Men's Union existed but they had differences among themselves. Both the Unions were very much concerned with the staff who came from Ex-Bengal Assam Railway.

In 1948 Sibnath Banerjee took the initiative to get these Unions amalgamated. A meeting was held in Durand Institute Hall but on the first day the proposed meeting was disrupted by disturbances. But subsequently, it was decided in the next meeting that one of the Unions who proved their majority in membership would have the office bearers of the Secretary of Amalgamated Body. Thus I became the Assistant Secretary of the Amalgamated Union. My friend Nirapada Banerjee organised the same union very efficiently within a short period. But he was sent to Chittaranjan by P. C. DasGupta the then General Secretary of the Union to organise the Chittaranjan Locomotive Workers. Being a sincere and active worker, Nirapada soon became very popular there and organised a movement against the onslaughts. He was arrested and sent to Jamtara Jail. A. K. Roy, the then Branch Secretary of Madhupur had taken the initiative for Nirapada's release on Bail. Myself and R. K. Bose continued to act

as Asst. Secretaries of Assansol Branch under Nirapada Banerjee as Branch Secretary till his transfer to the office of Chief Commercial superintendent's office in Calcutta.

A one-day strike on local issues was organised at Assansol. During the one-day strike at Asansol. P. C. DasGupta and Ram Chakraborty were entrusted with task of negotiating with Divisional Superintendent, Asansol.

During the period from 1950 to 1960, Men's Union had a strong hold on the Railwaymen in general at Asansol. Various movements were organised on the issue of Puja advance and Rs. 50/- only was granted just two days before Puja. Being dissatisfied with the same the Loco Staff stopped work for two days and a half resulting in the interruption of running of trains. All the trains started running via S. E. Rly. and Sahibganj Loop. The strike however, was withdrawn on the assurance of no victimisation.

During this period the Union had taken a programme to stop corruption at all levels. The movement continued for long and took a serious turn when Divisional Superintendent, Asansol failed to show his proper authority while travelling from Jasidih to Asansol. S. K. Sukla, TTE challenged him. The Divisional Superintendent being insulted planned to take revenge by issuing Charge Sheet to sukla on a false pretext. But on enquiry he was found not guilty and acquitted finally. This incident encouraged Sukla to go further ahead and he started sending letters and Telegrams to Higher Authorities i.e. General Manager, Chairman, Railway Board against the dishonest and corrupt high officials.

There being no response from higher

the General Manager or the Railway Board, Shukla started fasting inside Head Ticket Collector's Office and afterwards on our request he was brought on to Platform No. 5. In spite of requests of Dr. B. C. DasGupta - President and Nirapada Banerjee, Central Office bearer, Shukla did not break his fast. On the 5th day midnight he was taken to Police Station under the direction of Divisional Superintendent. Next morning when Shukla's wife along with their Children came to Divisional Office for interview, they were refused entry. We sent a message to P. C. Dasgupta on phone but the situation remained unchanged. The news spread rapidly throughout the Railway Colony. Staff and workers started gathering before Divisional Superintendent's Chamber. He left his Chamber under Police escort. Next day he left for Head Qtrs. and started for Hazaribagh for rest.

I also left Asansol to attend a meeting at Mughulsarai and received the news of my suspension from service along with R. K. Bose, J. N. Karmakar, Jogesh Majumder, Sadananda Mukherjee, Suprakash Ghosh and T. G. Misra. We were charge sheeted by Police u/s. 142, 141, 147, 342 & 107. At Mughalsarai meeting it was decided that P. C. Dasgupta and M. D. Dubey should be entrusted with the task of negotiating with Higher Authorities on this issue. Immediately we all had to return back to Asansol and found no other alternative but to surrender to Govt. Although Bail Petition was moved for all of us, the same was not granted. Subsequently we all were released on Bail on special recommendation of SDO/Asansol who was present on the date of occurrence and witnessed the peaceful

gathering before Divisional Superintendent's Chamber. In this case we had the services of the most reputed Lawyer Baroda Pyne, of Calcutta, Bikash Roy of Asansol and S. Sen of Burdwan. With the assurance of our sure victory in such a concocted criminal case we were ready to face the Departmental Enquiry.

We made an appeal to get a stay order on the holding of Enquiry till the disposal of the case in High Court at Calcutta. We all obtained such orders to stop the Enquiry, but this was ignored by the administration. We were forced to attend the Enquiry with Manoj Bose as Defence helper. On the first day of Enquiry we could know the motive of the Administration and so we did not attend further in the Enquiry. We obtained permanent injunction on contempt petition filed by our advocate. We were later acquitted from the criminal case honourably.

In the meantime although others involved in this case were allowed to join, I along with R. K. Basu and T. G. Misra were kept under suspension with further charge sheet. The Enquiry started with Ram Chakravarty, A. M. Williams and Manoj Bose as defence helpers. Finally we were discharged. Others were permitted to resume duties but I was not allowed on the ground of non-availability of my original appointment letter in the Service book which was taken away in a planned manner. However Hon'ble High Court passed an order in February '72 to clear my all dues upto 1963 which was not disbursed at all.

I had not received any financial assistance from any corner and I was not allowed to remain in Railway Colony since 1967.

In spite of so many odds I never lost link with the Union and I did not abandon the struggle of Railwaymen. In 1960 strike I was imprisoned and in 1974 I was detained in Police Station for three days. The restrictions imposed on my movement in Railway colony in no way prevented me from getting myself elected a Commissioner of the Asansol Municipality.

I had the privilege to arrange a meeting of Railwaymen at Asansol in which V. V. Giri was the Chief guest immediately before he became the President of India. As a result of our 21 days' Relay fasting, medical facilities in Railway Hospital at

Asansol were improved. Liberalisation of rules were made at our instance for the education of sons of all workers in the Eastern Railway High School at Asansol.

I may mention here that our revered leader Kiron Chowdhury tried his best to accommodate the victimised Railway Staff in the various Welfare Organisation of Railwaymen Co-operative Bank and Insurance Office under Ex-B. A. Railway.

I have made lately a move in my personal capacity for grant of ex-gratia pension for old Trade Union workers who are living in difficult financial conditions. I hope this demand would be fulfilled some day.

Trade Union activity in Chittaranjan Locomotive Works

Nirapada Banerjee

(Nirapada Banerjee born in 1922 joined the Railways in 1944 and became a member of the E. I. Railway Employees' Association. His struggle in Chittaranjan Locomotive Workshop was the beginning of Trade Union movement among the workers of Chittaranjan Locomotive works. He was a dedicated worker of the Union).

I joined in the service of East Indian Railway in 1944 at Varanashi just at a time when the political situation in the country was in a ferment of a spring. The freedom movement of the country had gained a momentum right from the Himalayas to Kanyakumarka. We could see the excitement of people to compel the British Government to leave India to her own people.

I had on my own got myself acquainted with P. C. Dasgupta and R. C. Chakravarty, General Secretary and Organising Secretary of the then E. I. Railway Employees' Association and became a member of the union in 1946.

I was later transferred to the office of Chief Commercial Manager, Koilaghata Building Calcutta in 1947 and this brought me very close to the centre of activity of the union. Pleased at my sincerity and devotion to Trade Union work I was drafted to the field of Trade Union among the workers of Chittaranjan Locomotive Works. The Locomotive Workshop and the residential complex was a "prohibited area" at that time and none dared to

articulate any expression of airing any grievance of the workers. Against all odds I started working fearlessly. A number of workers were unlawfully retrenched by the Chittaranjan Locomotive Workshop authorities. I was associated along with the Local M. L. A. Hridayas Chakravorty and sent to Jamtara Jail as an undertrial prisoner. I was released from the jail after three months and I came on transfer to Asansol as a clerk of the Accounts Branch. I had been an active worker of the union upto 1950 and later I moved on to social and cultural activities amongst railwaymen. My belongingness to the union did not end there. I joined in the strike of 1960 and 1974 as a faithful soldier of the union. I continued to be with all movements of the union to the last day of my service in 1977 when I became a victim of paralysis all on a sudden while working my garden. I was forced to take voluntary retirement.

I am glad to find that my sufferings and sacrifice have not gone in vain and this gives me a joy.

A person who did not care for name and fame

Sunil Kusum Sengupta

After graduation in arts I joined the then EB/BA Rly in December 1942 as a clerk and was posted in the establishment section on Sealdah District. I worked as Welfare Inspector before promotion as Assistant Personnel Officer in September 1975. I was Secretary of Sealdah Branch for a considerable period with Prakash Banerjee as President. I retired on 1. 10. 78 and I am now aged 74. In 1943 one Sisir Babu of the B. A. Rly Employees' Co-operative Insurance Society approached me for taking an insurance policy. On my agreeing to the proposal he took the first premium and one year's subscription for the B. A. Rly. Employees' Association as membership for the Association, as a pre-condition for insurance. This was the beginning of my association with the union.

During the middle of 1945 while in office I received a letter which was a surprise to me. The General Secretary of the Association (Late Kiron Choudhury) intimated that I had been taken as an executive member of the Calcutta Branch which had its office along with the central body at 162, Bowbazar Street. This Branch was subsequently renamed as Sealdah Branch.

In 1947 I was elevated to the rank of Assistant Secretary of the Branch. Sometimes in the middle of 1948 E. I. Rly. Men's Union and B. A. Railway Employees' Association were amalgamated and thereafter with the Eastern Railway Employees' Association. The union was renamed as E. I. Rly.

Men's Union. I, however continued to act as Asstt. Secretary upto 1954 even after my transfer to Kancharapara in 1962. I was about to leave the post of Asstt. Secretary. I agreed to become Secretary of the Sealdah Branch at the request of General Secretary Ram Chakravarty. I was transferred to Sealdah. The Sealdah Branch consisted of all departments located in Sealdah including Sealdah station, Divisional Office which had a separate branch with some contiguous units nearby known as Divisional Building Branch. Both the branches worked in full Co-operation. Our main task was to represent staff grievances which took most of our time. These had to be sorted out by personal discussion with the Divisional Personnel Officer. Where no result could be achieved to our satisfaction the matter was taken to the level to Divisional superintendent for discussion in the monthly meeting and in urgent cases in special meeting with the Divisional Superintendent used to be arranged. When the desired result was not achieved at Divisional level, the matter used to be referred to the Central Office for making up with the General Manager. By this process good results were obtained in ameliorating the grievances of the staff. I continued in this capacity till 1971. During this period there had been two strikes - one in 1960 and another one of one day's token strike in 1968. The 1960 strike was a complete success on the Sealdah Division not to speak of my branch where 99% workers struck.

work. In 1960 strike, the Sealdah Branch had an added importance as it was declared as the office of the Joint action Committee by all Central Government Organisations.

My President N. Prasad, Assistant Secretary Arabindo Roy and Treasurer P. C. Sanyal were arrested from here on the 1st Day of the strike. Our general Secretary Ram Chakravarty was arrested at the entrance of this building a day

before the strike. I avoided arrest only to be with the workers. The one day strike of 1968 was a complete failure in my jurisdiction. Owing full responsibility for the failure of the one-day's strike I tendered my resignation from the Secretaryship though it was almost a total failure every where. My resignation was, however, accepted in 1971. I continued my membership till I was promoted as Assistant Personnel Officer.

It was a sign of Growth

Purnendu Kumar Basu

(Mr. Purnendu Kr. Basu born in 1927 joined in the old B.A. Rly. during the 2nd World War. He was later posted in the Personnel Branch of the Sealdah Divisional office. He was connected with Union from 1946 to 1964. He was the Branch Secretary of General Building Branch, ERMU, Sealdah for a while. He was also a member of the working committee for a period).

During the Second World War when I joined at Saidpur (now in Bangladesh) Trade Union activities were not noticed at all. A large majority of staff in the construction department were retired employees. The Defence of Indian Act was in vogue. A good number of staff were enrolled in Defence of Indian Units and they were forbidden to join any Trade Union Organisation.

The war came to an end in 1945 and the construction project was abandoned. We, the young temporary staff were declared surplus and absorbed in different departments of the open line.

I was transferred to Badarpur in Surma Valley (Assam) where Trade Union activities were noticeable. During the material time staff of the Railway Printing Department at Calcutta resorted to a strike on their demands. The impact of the strike was such that Passenger Ticket stock of all the stations and forms and stationery were almost exhausted resulting in the fall of earnings of the Railway. There was also another strike for about a month by Postal and R. M. S. staff at that time. On the Railways a strike ballot was taken at the call of A. I. R. F. (1946) and result thereof was over-whelmingly in favour of a strike.

It was an exciting experience for me to be associated in the publicity to elicit public support for the proposed Railway strike. During train time we used to make announcements through hand-made tin plate loud speaker (Chonga) on the platforms and in the railway colonies. According to the direction of the A. I. R. F. notice for the Railway Strike from the mid-night of 27.6.46 was served by all the units of unions.

Although preparations of a strike was in progress, dialogue between the Railway Board and the All India Railwaymen's Federation to avert the strike also continued. The government announced the decision to set up the first Pay commission for all Central Govt. Employees. Ultimately the strike call was abandoned. The Railway Board agreed to sanction interim relief @ Rs. 4-8-0 per head to all employees drawing pay of Rs. 250/- and below and some other benefits till the Pay Commission's Report was published.

In the meanwhile I joined in the Divisional Office B. A. Rly. Sealdah on transfer from Dacca in Nov. '46. Here I noticed a spurt in the trade union activities. The Rail Road Workers' Union (Communist Sponsored) was very militant.

Their activities were mainly amongst the staff of Sheds, Workshops and the Engineering Gangmen. I remember Jagoo who was one of the devoted workers amongst the Gangmen.

Com. Jyoti Basu of Rail Road Workers' Union (the present chief Minister of West Bengal) was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly from Rly. Labour Front defeating Prof. Humayun Kabir of B. A. Rly. Employees' Association. Com. Basu used to come very often to Divisional office Building to represent cases of Rly. Workers' Union. I remember one incident of this period. One Mr. Nair, APO, told a clerk (Sudhir Ghosh) of Divisional Mechanical Engineer (C & W)'s Office 'You Bengalee dogs' Sri Ghosh then and there reacted. His outbursts against the filthy remark of Mr. Nair resulted in a spontaneous stoppage of work even by the Engine Crew of Assam Mail due to start from Sealdah within an hour. Train services were totally suspended. Mr. Nair fled from the office and never returned to Sealdah. Unfortunately the Railroad Workers' Union lost its recognition both from Rly. Administration and also from AIRF for the strike call in March 1949. The strike was unsuccessful resulting in victimisation of staff. Byomkesh Bhowmick, clerk was arrested from Chitpur Loco Shed and sent to jail. That was the end of Communist sponsored Rail Road Workers' Union.

B.A. Rly. Employees' Association was also a strong union covering the entire system. Prof. Humaun Kabir was the President and amongst those who had joined with him were Pratul Chatterjee and Kiron Chowdury. The Union lost its existence due to partition of the country

on 15.8.47. A separate (N.E.F.) union was formed with Hd. Qr. in Assam. The truncated portion of Sealdah Division was merged with E. I. Railway (now E. Rly). Accordingly all the Branches of the Union of the Sealdah Division joined the E. I. Rly. Men's Union. The E. I. Rly. men's Union and the E. I. Rly. Employees' Association were merged into one union known as E. Rly. men's Union after the regrouping of Railways.

Ram Chandra Chakravarty was elected General Secretary in Asansol Annual Convention in 1953.

R. C. Chakravarty had attempted a break away from the past to free the trade union field on the railways from the influence of outsiders who were members of political parties. He was opposed to political decisions to suit the requirements of political parties rather than that of railwaymen. He had tried to bring home to the railwaymen that the influence of political parties would do more harm than good to railwaymen and deprive the railwaymen from their rightful place in the largest industry of the country.

In Central Executive Council Meeting of ERMU held at Ranaghat R. C. Chakravarty moved a resolution that Rly. Trade Union should be controlled by Rly. Employees and outsiders should not be allowed to join the Railway Union in any capacity. This resolution was, however, severely criticised by one Mr. M. ... at Coimbatore Convention of ... in 1963.

R. C. Chakravarty had taken command of the situation in full confidence and fought a battle with many leaders of railwaymen. Although he became a controversial figure in the Trade Union field it would be a travesty of truth if one

does not recollect that his challenge was for a principal. He may have made mistakes in choosing his team and his exit from the E. R. M. U. was engineered by a section of Railwaymen who were mere tools in the hands of officials seeking personal gain. It was, therefore,

no surprise that those men have been erased from the memory of railwaymen for all time to come. None can deny the fact that R. C. Chakravarty had raised the Eastern Railwaymen's Union to a position of glory in the most difficult times.

Nothing Can be achieved without devotion

Jagadindra Karmakar

(Mr. Jagadindra Karmakar born in 1926 joined in the E. I. Rly in 1947. He was associated with an agitation in Asansol against the high-handedness of the Divisional Superintendent, Asansol in 1956. He was suspended from service and later reinstated. He was again removed from service for participation in the Railway strike of 1974. He was again reinstated in service after prolonged sufferings. He was a devoted worker of Eastern Railwaymen's Union).

I was born in 1926 and joined as a Pay Commission Clerk in Pay Commission Section of the Office of Divl. Superintendent - Asansol, E. I. Rly. in the June 1947. Priya Nath Mukherjee, a 'Peskar' of Railway Magistrate Court and a close associate of Jaya Prakash Narayan was the Branch Secretary of E. I. Railwaymen's Union. Being introduced to him I was much excited and joined the Union. It was the most difficult times for the country as a large number of Railway staff all over the Railways had opted for "India" on the partition of our country.

Within a very short period of my joining the railway service I found a stream of staff coming from newly born "East Pakistan" (Now Bangladesh) and staying on the Platform for want of Railway Quarters. It was a tragic scene. My Office allotted me the job of enlisting the names of opted staff from East Pakistan and directing them to Transit office and issuing coupons for food. As a result of an agreement between Administration and union the then Divisional Superintendent/Asansol J. W. Holt very kindly arranged for a house to accommodate those displaced railway staff of East Pakistan for a short span. I along with others engaged in this voluntary service besides

my official job (had earned the recognition of being devoted to a selfless cause on behalf of the Union).

In the meantime after six months the Pay Commission Section was about to be disbanded but due to the efforts of Priya Nath Mukherjee, Branch Secretary/E. R. M. U., the tennure of the section was extended.

In 1956 a demonstration was held before the then Divisional Superintendent - G. D. Khandelwal, Asansol for not entertaining a lady who wanted to know the whereabouts of her husband. Her husband Sukla, a Travelling Ticket Examiner of Asansol launched a hunger strike in the station premises. Sukla was arrested at dead of night and shifted from station premises by the police to avoid public agitation.

The demonstration dispersed at about 9.30 P.M. But in the same night seven staff were arrested from their respective houses and a criminal case was filed against them. They were subsequently suspended from service. The case was transferred to Burdwan District Court. Eminent Advocate Barada Pyne appeared on behalf of the staff. The case was finalised in Burdwan but Railway Administration appealed in the Calcutta

High Court (Special Bench). Advocate Nalin Banerjee moved the case in the High Court and the staff were acquitted. Myself, S. P. Ghosh, Sadananda Mukherjee and T. G. Misra were reinstated on 3rd December, 1958. H. D. Bagchi, Branch Secretary and Ranjit Bose - Asstt. Secretary of the Union were not allowed to join and separate proceedings were drawn against them and they were finally removed from service.

During the 1960 Railway Strike I was suspended from service and disciplinary action was initiated against me. After three months I was allowed to resume my duties.

In September 1968 a token strike was launched by AIRF. I also took part in it and I suffered break-in-service. I was transferred from the Divisional Office. After one year I was again restored to my former position in the Divisional Office.

I was harassed in a number of ways during 1973 and vengeance of the Administration sharpened my resolute will to stand against all kinds of injustice of Railwaymen.

In 1974 I took a leading part for organising the Railway strike in Asansol Divn. I was a convener of the National Coordination Committee of Railwaymen's

struggle - Asansol Division, collected huge amounts from different departments in collaboration with various councils and distributed relief to all victimised staff. I also chased 300 court cases and discussed with the Administrative Authorities for cases of staff detained under Maintenance of Internal Security Act and other criminal cases against the members of our Union and other cases too. I was removed from service and again reinstated after nine months. On retirement from railway service in the year 1984 I continued to work in the union as a central council Member of the Branch.

During my Trade Union activities since late forties, I have given my best service inspite of many odds and now I gratefully remember Sibnath Banerjee, Kiron Chowdhury, A. M. Williams, P. C. Dasgupta, A. M. A. R. Fatmi, Ram Chakravarty, Bimal Dey and Priya Nath Mukherjee who always guided me in the sphere of my trade Union activity. I remember also my old associates like M. D. Dubey, Khagen Mukherjee, Santi Sen, Balaram Chatterjee (Balai), Durgesh Gupta, Sambhu Prasad, S. R. Bardhan, Nirapada Banerjee, H. D. Bagchi N. R. Adhikary, Muni Ran and others who always stood by my side in the struggle of Railwaymen.

Winds of Change

Amaresh Chandra Sen

(Born in 1926 and educated at Presidency college Calcutta, Mr. Sen was involved in the freedom movement since his school days and was imprisoned several times. He was the Working president of Eastern Railwaymen's Union for a while. He was also a member of the working committee and Regional Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation).

As far as I remember I joined in the Trade Union Movement in 1948 as the organising Secretary of B.B.C.I. (now Western Railway) Employees' Union at Ajmer. I took an active part in Railwaymen's political and economic struggle and was imprisoned in Ajmer in 1949.

I settled down in Calcutta in course of time and was elected Working President of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. I remained an active office bearer of E. R. M. U. till 1962 and had given my best for the success of the July 1960 strike of Central Govt. Employees. During this period a fear complex existed in minds of staff of the Railways. For fear of repression few would come forward for joining the Trade union movement. The political struggle for Independence has given an impetus to most of us and we were able to convince the general body of Railwaymen that nothing happens as out of a clean sky and that they must pay the price some day. This encouragement helped us to enrol a large number of Railwaymen as union members. I was imprisoned for the Second time for the cause of Railwaymen in 1960.

Later I moved from Trade union work to social organisation in general. I joined the AVARD, a voluntary Agency for Rural Development having a wide

coverage of most parts of the country.

I was elected General Secretary of AVARD in 1970. In course of time my service to the organisation was well appreciated and I was elected President of the organisation in 1987.

While working in this organisation I initiated a number of innovating rural development programmes and micro level plans.

I worked in the various fields and held posts of great responsibility as

- (i) Member, Governing Board of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Geneva
- (ii) Member, Executive Committee, Indian Council of World Affairs
- (iii) Member, Steering Committee, World Bank/NGO Consultative Committee and Co-Chairman, World Bank-NGO (India) Consultative Committee.
- (iv) Member, governing Board of the Asian coalition for Agriculture and Rural Development (ARCARD), Manila, Philippines.

I attended the General Body of FAO as a non-official delegate and travelled widely.

The change was exciting and kept myself abreast of the problems of Railwaymen.

Negotiations are the best in the realm of Industrial Relations

Kashi Nath Mukherjee

(Kashi Nath Mukherjee was Secretary of the Sealdah Divisional Branch of Eastern Railwaymen's Union).

In the field of Industrial relations differences do occur and sometimes they threaten the surface with convulsions and lead to an impasse which, must of necessity, has to be broken in the interest of the labour and also of the management.

Although right to strike or cessation of work by the workers is the last weapon in the hands of labour, it has to be understood that, we, who are privileged to make things better for us and also for the future generations, must deal with problems with a mind and direction that benefits us.

Labour, today, is not merely a cog in a machine but a person who should be given full scope of his development as a good citizen for which there must be consideration of his civic needs and he should be treated with utmost human consideration. He should be given opportunities of a look to the new horizon on the role of labour through his day-to-day task and duties. Negotiations with the management, therefore, assumes a significant importance. What matters most to the workers is not merely the world of money but something finer, social, moral and economic development.

I remember that during the period I worked as Secretary of Sealdah Divisional Office Branch some vexed problems of staff were settled through negotiation.

Promotional opportunity of a large section of railwaymen being dependent on seniority, there was a problem of ministerial staff relating to their seniority from the date of approval on the basis of

rules prevalent on the old Bengal & Assam Rly with those appointed at short notice during the war period in the field offices. The problem of merger of the two groups with distinct rules of date of approval and date of appointment was fraught with serious consequences.

We were able to solve the issue by negotiations at the highest level to the utmost satisfaction of the staff. We had been able to settle the issue with help of Sitangshu Chakravarti, Salil Basu, Jnan Banerjee, Abhoy Catterjee, Ramesh Nag, Manindra Bhaduri, Byomkesh Bhowmick who had discussed the issue at different units for a concensus that benefited all sections.

On another occasion the temperamental outlook of an officer of the division brought the situation to the breaking point but due to our concerted efforts we were able to erase from the minds of the workers the unpleasantness.

I have a recollection that the best that we were able to do was the fixing of a time schedule for redressal of all grievances represented by the union and it was seen that the system worked in a reasonably fair way.

In this art of negotiations it must be remembered that the ability to bring matters to the neutral ground everytime if went out of the door is a quality, sine-qua-non and that on the negotiation table should have the patience and fore-sight to achieve not merely success on a dispute but in bridging the gap of communication on both ends.

A leaping flame on Sealdah Division

Abhoypada Chatterjee

(Mr. Chatterjee born in 1921 joined in the service of former Bengal Assam Railway in 1943. Right from the beginning he was a member of the union and worked with a reasonable degree of success. He enlivened the organisation by adopting an active posture against the punitive measures to secure a respectable status for the workers. On his retirement from Railway service he is engaged in social welfare work. He is also a member of Indian Fellowship of former scouts and guides, Eastern & South Eastern Railways).

I joined the then B. A. Railway system in 1943. It was after 1947 when a portion of the Bengal Assam Railway from Sealdah extending to the border of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was taken over by the East Indian Railway as a distinct divisional unit, I had worked for the formation of Sealdah Branch of the union. The Divisional Office of the Sealdah was the work place of ministerial staff. There were, however, a few units of engineering and workshop establishments in the adjoining area within the jurisdiction of the new Sealdah Branch of the union.

With the formation of the new Branch there was a great enthusiasm amongst the staff. Our objective began a new order of things with the transformation from law and order state to a new welfare state, we made it a principle to provide for a platform for all railwaymen to oppose all acts of whims and fancies of officials who under the tutelage of the British rule had not been able to adjust themselves to the new situation on the independence of India. The effect was so pronounced that it was considered advisable by the central office of the union that some more open line units should be brought on to the fold of this Branch.

It was a flight of imagination that we could venture to spread our activities from the problems of Railwaymen to other organisations like the Co-operative Society and Railway Insurance Society, Institutes, Canteens which were the basic needs of social service for the congenial growth of Railwaymen. The part played by the union had a distinct role in these organisations and the better quality of service of these organisations earned for us admiration and praise from Railwaymen. The challenge of the working towards a better service from day to day prompted us to go ahead and we could find that even those who from the beginning were in doubt about our wisdom joined with us in large numbers.

I would mention here that in those days there was no interference from any political parties and we were wholly opposed to any political overtones in the trade union field. The success of this measure had an imprint on the minds of all railwaymen in Sealdah and we stood for the greatest good for the greatest number at the minimum of time.

A notable achievement of our times

was the training of a large number of members of the union in the matter of conducting themselves as defence helper for staff who were subjected to disciplinary enquiries on misleading and frivolous charges.

This measure had a rich dividend as no case was left unchallenged in our union and the defence helpers provided for by the union stood in good stead

of the railwaymen in their difficulties. The service provided for was, unlike at present, absolutely voluntary. This trend must be reset for the success of the union.

I am glad to know that Com. R. C. Chakravarty had taken the trouble to keep on record our activities up and down the line so that one can get a glimpse of the past.

A New Horizon

T. N. Bajpai

(T. N. Bajpai, President, Northern Railway Men's Union had popularity amongst various cross sections of workers of the old East Indian Railway. He helped the growth of the Union in the formative stage).

I had the opportunity to know how the two unions viz. the East Indian Railway Men's Union with Com. A. M. A. R. Fatmi as General Secretary and the East Indian Railway Employees' Association with Com. P. C. Das Gupta as General Secretary, both spreading the wings in the field of organised labour finally merged into one organisation to be known as Eastern Railway Men's Union in a Conference in 1948 at Mughal Sarai.

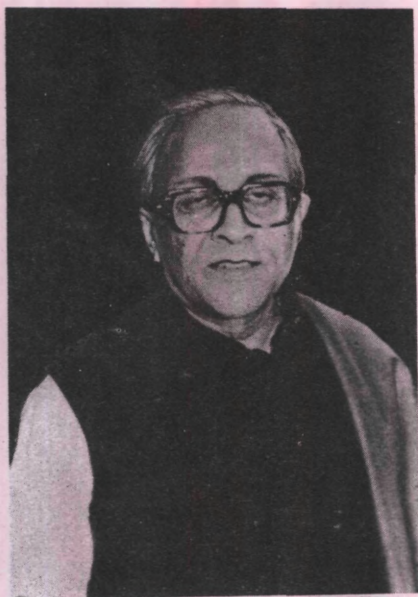
Jayaprakash Narayan was the President and P. C. Dasgupta was the General Secretary of the union. Ram Chakravarty, Asstt. General Secretary was the Kingpin of the organisation. A person of resolute will and indomitable courage as he was, he refused to submit to the

reign of oppression. He could cry halt to the administration on their the march on the sweet will path. At that time the membership of the union was 1, 27,000 and this was the highest figure in one single unit among the unions affiliated to All India Railwaymen's Federation. Com. P. C. Dasgupta having chosen to be relieved of the charge of the General Secretary, Ram Chakravarty was elected General Secretary. He was also elected Treasurer of the All India Railway Men's Federation later.

It was a joy for me to be associated with Ram Chakravarty in his steadfastness of purpose to build a strong union and we have all hoped that all Railwaymen of the present will follow his footsteps to further the cause of trade union movement on the Railways.

CHAPTER — III

Gratitude



Jyoti Basu



George Fernandez

JYOTI BASU

Sri Jyoti Basu, Present Chief Minister of West Bengal, was born on 8th July, 1914 at Calcutta. After graduation from Calcutta University, he visited London in the year 1935 for higher study and returned home as Barrister in 1940.

While in London, he came into close contact with noted communist friends like Rajani Patel, P. N. Haksar, Mohan Kumar Mangalam, Indrajit Gupta, Renu Chakraborty, N. K. Krishnan, Parvati Mangalam (later Krishnan), Nikhil Chakraborty and Arun Bose etc, besides his much admirer like Harry Paulit, Rajani Palm Dutt & Brain Bradley etc. Within a very short period, he became a whole timer of Communist Party of India in 1944. He too was deputed by the party to form Trade Union among Railwaymen in Bengal Assam Railway and started work with Md. Ismail and Nikhil Moitra (who was ousted from Party afterwards). Thus B.A. Rly. workers' union was formed in 1944 with Bankim Mukherjee as President and Jyoti Basu as General Secretary. In later days, in the event of amalgamation of B.A. Railway Workers' Union and Bengal Dooars Rail Road Workers' Union with Biren Dasgupta as General Secretary and Parimal Mitra as Vice President, a new union came into being under the new name & style of B. A. Rail Road Workers Union with Md. Ismail as President, Parimal Mitra as Vice President, Jyoti Basu as Jt. General Secretary. At the material time he was very much assisted by most devoted Trade Union Workers in B. A. Rly. namely Nitya Nanda chowdhury, Amulya Ukil, Purnendu Dutta Roy, Satyen Ganguly and Satya Gupta & others.

In early 46, he was selected by the

Party to Contest in Bengal Legislative Assembly from Railway Constituency along with others namely Somenath Lahiri from Calcutta, Bankim Mukherjee - Howrah, Chatur Ali - Barrackpur, Ratan Lal Bramhan - Darjeeling, Krishna Choud Roy - Jessor, Indrajit Gupta - Asansol, Moni Singh - Maymansingh and Rupnarayan Roy - Dinajpur. Railway constituency was constituted with the entire portion of Bengal Assam Railway excepting that of Assam and also B. I. Railway upto Asansol and B. N. Railway upto Kharagpur. Thus a separate Electoral College was formed and Jyoti Basu had to contest Prof. Humayun Kabir the then President of B.A. Rly. Employees' Association. The great efforts and sincerity of his Party Comrades and also large support of Railwaymen paved his way to success with a very narrow margin defeating Prof. Kabir. Since then he marched forward and was never defeated excepting once in 1972.

At the Annual Convention of AIRF held from Aug 30 to Sept 1949 at Lilloah, Jyoti Basu was elected Vice President. The then President Jaya Prakash Narayan demonstrated his unshakable commitment to democratic practices at the cost by successfully prevailing on the Minister Dr. B.C. Roy in getting Jyoti Basu released on Parole to attend the Convention. In the largely participated debate at the said Convention Jyoti Basu took a vigorous part.

In Danapur Conference of All India Railwaymen's Federation under the Presidentship of Jaya Prakash Narayan on 16th Feb '49, decision on the proposed Railway Strike on 9th March was postponed but unfortunately a striking decision of AIRF, Jyoti Basu and others were determined to launch strike with

their party decision. But this was a total failure resulting in victimisation of a large section of Railwaymen.

Thus most militant organisation like B.A. Rail Road Workers' Union, lost its recognition and finally Jyoti Basu was ousted from AIRF. In 1964 when Communist Party of India was divided on Ideological issue, he joined the newly born party after sometime under the name & style of Communist Party of India (Marxists) and also became a member of Polit Bureau and he continues to be the member till now.

GEORGE FERNANDEZ

George Fernandez a legendary name in the working class of Bombay, was popular amongst the Railwaymen for his role in the strike of July, 1960. As a Socialist he was follower of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He was not liked by Peter Alvares and his group of Socialists and hence could not have a footing in the Railway Trade Union for long.

An all India Railwaymen's conference was held at Moghalsarai on 19th and 20th February 1966 convened by S. B. Lahiri General Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union. George Fernandez inaugurated the conference on invitation. Representatives from all the Railways attended the Conference. This was perhaps the first appearance of George in the gathering of Railwaymen. His dynamic personality and speech impressed many. Thereafter he was elected as President of Eastern Railwaymen's Union of which S.B. Lahiri was the General Secretary. George as president addressed several meetings on the Eastern Railway upto June 1968 viz, the period upto which he was President.

A frustration was setting in the constituent unions of the All India Railwaymen's Federation about the performance of Peter Alvares and at the request of a section of delegates George opposed Peter Alvares for Presidentship of A.I.R.F. in its Annual convention held at Secundrabad in October 1973 and was elected defeating Peter. Railwaymen in India were groaning under burden of burning grievances and a general strike appeared to be the only remedy. George as President formed on 27th February 1974 the National Coordination Committee of Railwaymen's struggle and launched the all India strike from 6 hours in the May 1974 which continued till morning of 28th May 1974. Although the strike was not very successful due to organisational weakness, it left a great impact on all concerned. With the promulgation of National Emergency by Indira Gandhi, George went underground. He was arrested and subsequently released along with other national leaders. When he was released he was replaced by Palya G. in the A.I.R.F. convention at Madras in 1976. George became Minister for Industries in the first non-Janta Party Government with Desai as Prime Minister. His position in the All India Railwaymen's Federation was not liked by many and a group of Railwaymen formed another union and prevailed upon George to be the President. In the second non-Janata Dal Government with Desai as Prime Minister, George became the Railway Minister. As a Minister, he did not take any interest for his Union, nor did he visit the A.I.R.F. which did not visit him. He was fair and magnanimous. George Fernandez still now continues to be a source of inspiration to Railwaymen.

We Salute



THEY HAD ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF TOILING MASS OF INDIA.

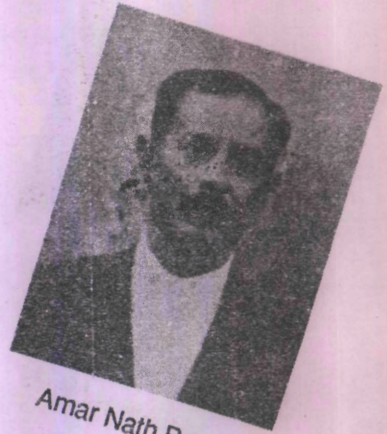
“EVERY MAN IS A VOLUME IF YOU KNOW HOW TO READ HIM”



N. B. Sen



Nilkrishna Sarkar



Amar Nath Bose



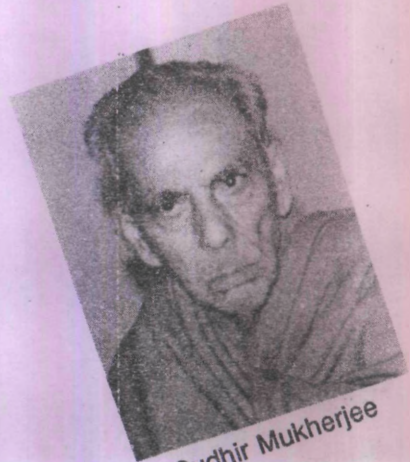
Peter Alvares



R. A. Khedgikar



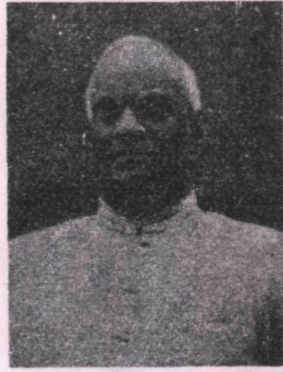
Maniben Kara



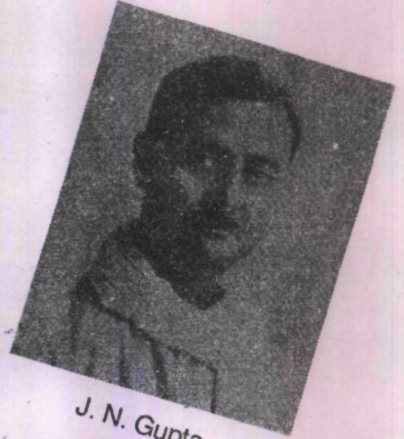
Sudhir Mukherjee



Jamnadas Mehta



V. V. Giri



J. N. Gupta



Prof. A. N. Mallik



S. Guruswami



Sibnath Banerjee



P. C. Dasgupta



A. M. Williams

JAMNADAS MEHTA

Born on August 3, 1884, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta had his education in Bombay and in England and then he joined the Bar.

Entering politics as a member of the Indian National Congress, he soon came into prominence as President of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee. He was the President of Bombay Provincial Congress during 1929-39 and he was Mayor of Bombay during 1936-37.

Known for his independent views and eloquence, Mr. Mehta parted with Congress. He became the first Finance Minister in non-party Government formed in Bombay in 1937. He was a staunch Nationalist.

It was in 1931 that he took over from Sardar V.V. Giri as the President of the All India Railway Men's Federation and continued as such upto 1944 when he went to Burma on a diplomatic assignment from the Government of India. It was mainly due to his pressure as the Delegate to the International Labour Conference in 1934, that the Administration agreed to grant recognition to the Association in 1934. He was associated with the Labour movement of the country specially the Railway Labour from 1928 to 1944 till he went to Burma. Under his leadership the Federation fought many a battle for the cause of the Railwaymen. He forced the Railway Board to absorb the 1931 - retrenched staff, to institute the Rao Court of enquiry and Murphy Court of enquiry and he gave the formula for Dearness allowance.

He played a vital role in I.L.O. in bringing pressure upon the Government

of India to implement the Geneva Conventions in regard to the Workers' rights and demands.

He had been the life force of the Employees' Association and the Federation and he continued to be a source of inspiration to Railwaymen. He was a believer in independent, free and democratic trade unionism.

In him the Railwaymen all over the country have lost a friend, philosopher and guide.

V. V. Giri

Venkata Varaha Giri, son of V.V. Joggiah, member of Central Legislative Assembly, was held in high esteem by all Railwaymen and was loved by the Railwaymen of Bengal, Madras and M & SM Railways.

After obtaining degree of Bachelor of Law from Dublin, he returned to India. On the call of Freedom movement, he joined the Railway Trade Union in Behrampur Ganjam (Orissa) his birth place, Giri chose Kharagpur as Headquarters of the union. He was associated with the Congress and the Union heroes namely V.K. Rajwade, B.N. Das, Prof Ramalingam, S.N. Moitra, Rajamannar, W.V. Giri, Raghavan, Godbale and Sampal.

The Doyen of Indian Trade Union Movement V.V. Giri started the movement when in 1928. He was an Indian & European staff. He received abnormally low wages and suffered illtreatment. As a result B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union taken command of the movement inspired them to battle.

discriminatory treatment. The Kharagpur workers launched a month long vigorous strike on 9th Feb 1927 as a protest against the retrenchment of a large number of workers on the recommendation of Vincent Ravan's "Workshop Committee".

It may be stated further that father of V.V.Giri, V.V.Joggiah, then member of the Central Legislative Assembly moved a motion in support of the Striking Railwaymen and on the repressive measures taken by the Administration against the strikers.

He was the General Secretary of All India Railwaymen's Federation from 1927 to 1937 excepting in 1931 when he accepted the invitation of Government to attend the Round Table conference along with Mahatma Gandhi and others.

On 10th November 1937 he tendered his resignation from the post of General Secretary of AIRF in the General Council meeting at Delhi as he was sworn in as Labour Minister in the Madras Cabinet headed by C. Rajagopalachari.

He served the country in various ways. His illustrious career is full of events. He finally became the President of India, a rare distinction achieved by only a few. He joined in the race of immortals for his selfless service, principled dedication and above all as a man who endeared himself to all those who came in contact with him.

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan was a person of heroic mould, principled and dedicated personality with high moral standards and innate wisdom. His role during the 1942 'Quit India Movement' is

a glorious chapter in the history of our country. His life represented a rich tapestry of events vibrant with valour, piety and human warmth. He had an undoubted charisma and possessed a striking physical frame, incisive intelligence and ready wit. He was, indeed, a unique national hero who had no ambition except his unfailing sense of service to the cause of the downtrodden. He had waged war on all the forces of unuprightness, untruth and injustice to the last day of his life, his sword and shield were based on nonviolence and truth. He had lived from 1922 to 1929 in America and during this period he read most of the books published in English on Marxism. He thought at that time that a revolution on the Marxist concept was perhaps better than the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi for the Independence of India.

He returned to India in 1929. There was no favourable situation to propagation of Marxist ideology. The country witnessed a new wave of nationalism at that time Gandhi started his non-Satyagraha. Complete Independence was declared the ideal of the movement at the Congress. The Communist Party nowhere to be found. The non-violent struggle of Gandhi was termed as a bourgeois revolution and Gandhi was accused of being an agent of the bourgeois by the Communists. This marked a new trend in the country with the communists. He distanced himself from the Communist Party and joined in the Freedom Struggle. He was a great believer in the independence of India.

He believed that life, liberty and happiness are the elementary necessities

of all human beings and society must be the custodian of all these rights.

In later years he came in contact with Sarvodaya Movement. He thought that unless socialism was transformed into Sarvodaya, our ideals would remain at a distance.

He was associated with the movement of the working class. His role in the context of the strike of P.&T. workers in 1946 had drawn him closer to trade union field. In 1947 he was elected President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation and he continued as President till 1953. He was also President of E.I. Railway Employees' union during the said period from 1947 to 1953.

Under his presidentship the A.I.R.F. attained commanding height and it was considered that the Railwaymen in India would set a new trend to trade union movement in the country as a whole.

His life was a voyage through an uncharted sea and he kept his ideal firmly without flinching from his path of service to humanity. He continues to be a shining star to guide the working class in the right direction.

J. N. GUPTA

Jafindra Nath Das Gupta, was born in a family which produced seven male and female freedom fighters during British regime. They had to bear untold sufferings but did not give up the freedom struggle. His elder cousin brother Suresh Chandra Das Gupta was a senior Pleader in Bogura District (now in Bangladesh) and also President of the District Congress Committee. He was known as Bogura Gandhi. He was in jail for several years

along with his wife when the Non-Cooperation movement took place.

His younger brother Birendra Nath Das Gupta was the founder of All Bengal Student Association (now S.P.A.) during British rule. The said Association was declared illegal by the British ruler. He was associated later with the Anisilon Party. For organisational work he had to go underground but was subsequently arrested and imprisoned for unlimited period. After eight years when he tried to escape from Hijli Jail he was caught red handed and convicted with three years rigorous imprisonment with "DANDA BERI" as class three prisoner. On expiry of the punishment period he was kept as a detenu. When the movement was curbed, the British Government released him and kept him in home confinement in Bankura village area. On being released from there he returned to Lalaihat and joined the Railway Trade Union movement there.

Bengal Doars Rail Road Workers' Union was formed by J. N. Das Gupta, popularly known as J. N. Gupta. He was the founder President. He invited B. N. Das Gupta to join the said union as Organizational Secretary and Jyoti Babu as General Secretary. B. N. Das Gupta accepted the offer and worked accordingly. After partition, he moved to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). J. N. Das Gupta was also the General Secretary of the Bengal & Assam Rail Road Workers' Union and Jyoti Babu was the Minister of West Bengal. He was also the General Secretary of the Bengal Doars Rail Road Workers' Union was at Domohant.

J. N. Gupta was the founder of the following Unions in the Bangladesh

1. E. B. Railway Employees' Association later known as B. A. Railway Employees' Association.
2. E. I. Railway Employees' Association.
3. Bengal Dooars Rail Road Workers' Union.
4. B & A Rail Road Workers' Union.
5. East Pakistan Railway Employees' League.

A brief sketch of his life, published during his life time, is enclosed as Annexure. Facts not indicated therein are furnished below.

The remarkable incident which inspired him to agitate against removal of racial discrimination may be mentioned. He was posted as a Guard to work on the Meter Gauge Section (i.e. Kurigram to Tista Ghat). At the material time there was no provision of Booking Clerk or Ticket Collector on the section. The Guard of the train was required to do these job in addition to his own. One day in course of his duty he asked for the ticket from a British Military Officer travelling in First Class in fully drunken state. In return the said military officer used slang language and kicked him off from the compartment. He was lying unconscious on the Platform and the train was stationary. Maharaja of Cossimbazar, Manindra Chandra Nandi was also travelling by that train. Since the train was stranded he asked his staff to know the reason for detention. On hearing the fact from his staff the Maharaja came out with a hunter and whipped the Military Officer mercilessly and compelled him to beg appology from J. N. Gupta. The Maharaja also told that in the event of any disciplinary action by the Railway administration for the incident he should

be informed for further action. He also said that he was a member of the Party Council in England and there was nothing to be worried for the incident.

J. N. Gupta got sincere support and administrative help from one British Officer, Mr. Pingle the then District Traffic Superintendent Lalmonirhat in Malda District to form the Eastern Bengal Railway Employees' Association with its Head Office at Kurigram Rangpur. The Founder President was one Head Master of a school. Jodh Kumar Chatterjee, Station Master Lalmonirhat was also one of the founders. The area of operation of the Association was within the Malda District of Lalmonirhat.

The Head Quarter of the Association was shifted to Calcutta (Sealdah) after the transfer of J. N. Gupta to Calcutta. The office of the Association was situated at Sealdah in front of a building, the ground floor of which was a mess for the Government. The location of the office was just behind the premises (almost opposite to Sealdah)

As a sincere and devoted Leader he got support from He was elected to the Bengal Assembly uncontested in Labour Constituency Parliamentary Secretary for resigned from Railway prior to his superannuation time in the Railway Vice-President of the Railwaymen's Political meetings at Railway for any reason he was the then Chief Committee Mr. Centre could be meeting. He was President

Railway Employees' Association and general secretary of E.I. Railway Employees' Association simultaneously and used to function first half of the day in the former and second half in the later. As a whole time worker of the Association he lived in the Association office on a monthly remuneration of Rs. 100/-.

The partition of the country in 1947 was a great blow to him. The Association founded by him was divided in three parts. Assam portion of the Association in India formed a new union, the portion of Sealdah Division merged with the E.I.Rly. Employees' Association and the remaining part of the Association went to East Pakistan. In the new set-up could not find his place and he went to East Pakistan where he formed the East Pakistan Railway league at Khulna, his home land. The East Pakistan Government did not like the formation of the union and he was arrested and put him behind the bar. His aforesaid cousin brother Suresh Chandra Das Gupta requested his friend, Md. Nazimuddin, the Prime Minister of East Pakistan to release him. He had to furnish a bond for release and leave the country for India permanently.

On return to India he was isolated and none looked after him. His dedication was forgotten. He suffered from financial stringency and nobody came to his rescue except V.V. Giri, who was then Governor of Kerala. He used to remit Rs.50/- P.M. Whenever V.V. Giri came to Calcutta he called on him at Maharastra Nivas in South Calcutta as an old colleague in the Trade Union field. In one such meeting Giri heard the condition of his family. He on return to Delhi arranged for the employment of his son in the Railway by Trunk Call within a week. His old

associates here, however, never enquired about him. A sincere and dedicated Trade Union stalwart, pioneer in the Railway Trade Union left this world in January, 1966 unnoticed and unlamented. In spite of this his son Jahar Lal Dasgupta joined Rly. Trade Union and was taken to custody for Rly. strike in 1960. More to say his grandson a member as the third generation of J. N. Gupta, is also an active worker in Rly. Trade Union.

WHO'S WHO IN WORKERS' WORLD (Annexure)

JATINDRA NATH DAS GUPTA

"J. N. Gupta". doyen and darling of the Railwaymen's Trade Union Movement in India was born in the year 1894. He entered into the service of the then E. B. Railway as a Clerk in the office of the District Traffic Superintendent, Saidpur (now in East Pakistan) in 1917. He was transferred as a Guard in 1918. He successfully agitated for the removal of racial discrimination in the railway service — thanks to the sagacity of one of venerable maharaja of Coimbatore, Manindra Ch. Nandi of blessed memory. He organised the E. B. Railway Employees' Association at Lalmonirhat (East Pakistan) in 1919 for the protection of rights and privileges of the Indian Railway Employees at large. Its hard work eventually wrested the consent of the Government to receive a deputation in the question of granting a deputation to the organization and the deputation was scored in 1921.

When the Association was in the stewardship was gaining momentum and electrical rapidly, a number of

shift him away from the field of activities. Thus he was twice offered the post of paid Secretary to the Staff Welfare Committee on alluring emoluments and price refused by him. By this time, he along with his noble associates and colleagues organised the Association almost to-a-man and it was hailed as the only well-organised Railway Trade Union of the time. Into the wave of the Staff retrenchment scare of 1931 he dived deep and brought succour to the aching and agonising railwaymen left adrift by their employers, the Railway Administration. To foil the activities of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation in respect of an "All-India Strike on mass retrenchment issue" the Railway Administration tried to have the same decried by "Gupta" who stoutly refused to do so at the expense of the Railwaymen's interest. Ultimately to devote his whole time in the cause of his compatriots he resigned from the service in 1931 — six years ahead of the scheduled date of retirement and at an enormous financial sacrifice, a unique example of self-immolation in the field of Indian Trade Union Movement. In the intervening period he organised E.I. Railway Employees' Association and B & A Rail Road Workers' Union as well. He is the prime founder the Railway Labour, of which he was the Editor for a while. His grateful fraternity unanimously elected him a member of the State Legislative Assembly of which he was a Parliamentary Secretary for a while. To bring in young blood in the lime light of Railway Trade Union activities he resigned the General Secretaryship of the Association in 1938. After partition he organised the East Pakistan Railway Employees' League,

ordered progress of which prompted the Pakistan authorities to have him removed from Pakistan on pains of physical health. Even in his present, day retirement he sings "Workers of the world, unite".

"WHEN THE SHORE IS REACHED AT LAST, WHO COUNTS THE BILLOWS PAST"

"LABOUR" — January, 1966

PROF. A. N. MALLIK

Prof. A. N. Mallik, M. A. (Hon.), son of D. N. Mallik Rangier of Calcutta University, joined in the East Indian Railway as a covenanted officer in early thirties. He believed that "what we must change with the times, we must hold on to some unchanging principles".

He was straight forward, independent and firm in his sense of purpose and direction. While serving as operating Superintendent he refused to take pilgrims in Railway Wagons on special occasions. Apart from the "pilgrims" heaped on them the "Officers" made fun out of their insignificance. He protested against such a pattern towards our countrymen. Later he joined in the "Railway Employees' Association".

The Annual Conference of the Railway Employees' Association in Calcutta at Sanehatun. At this conference University Professor, A. N. Mallik was specially invited. At the conference members present he was elected the Working President of the Association.

From the day he took over the Association the "Railway Employees' Association" diametrically changed.

the substance but also the style that raised the position of the Association to commanding heights. Discipline, regularity and punctuality became the code of conduct for all. Above all the entire executive functioned like a team around a pivot which this little man represented.

Later under the guidance of Prof. A. N. Mallik at Jamalpur Conference in May 1941 was taken the greatest decision of life. It was a bid for the establishment of the leadership of workers themselves. It was decided that the aims and objects of the Association, besides those already mentioned, should be "To advocate, cause and help establish leadership of the workers independent of the outside interference, and that the General Secretary, the Joint General Secretary, the Treasurer and the members of the Central Council should be all Railway employees."

It was due to his efforts that a monthly magazine, "E.I.Rlyman" was published in 1937 with the able assistance of K. C. Banerjee and the magazine served as an organ to educate the members of the Association.

S. GURUSWAMI

The legendary figure of Trade Union Movement on Indian Railways Mr. S. Guruswami was born on 28th September 1904 at Nathakadu, Dharampuram in the Coimbatore district of Madras where his father was a Post master. He obtained his B. A. Degree from Trichy College. He came to Calcutta in search of a job and very fortunately V.R. Kalappa offered him a temporary shelter taking assistance from him in the Accounts work of Railway Catering

Establishment with which Kalappa was concerned. V.V. Giri, the then President of B.N. Railway Indian Labour Union was very much impressed by Guruswami's earnestness and enthusiasm for hard work. He brought him to the Trade Union field. He worked as a Demonstrator for nearly two years in the National college, Jadavpore, Calcutta.

He was the Assistant Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation for 8 years till 1937. He became the General Secretary of AIRF in November 1937 and continued as General Secretary till 1957. He was the President of the AIRF from 1957 to 1963.

He represented Indian Labour in International Labour Organisation in Geneva in 1948. He had toured all over the world at the invitation of Labour Organisations of several countries. He visited Italy, France, East and West Germany, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, U.S.A., U.K., U.S.A., Mexico, China, Pakistan, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Hongkong and Philippines. He attended the Pan American Labour conference in Mexico as an invited speaker. Where Labour leaders of all parts of world were invited. He had a following of over 3 million workers over the world. His speech against the British Government in India had been admired. He was in the rank of top best speakers in the world in labour matters and shared the stage with Com: Johany of France, Com: of U.S.A., and Lambardo of Mexico. He made useful contacts and exchanged ideas with Negro and other leaders from Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados Islands and South Africa.

In 1946 Guruswami was nominated

the Central Assembly. He highlighted the miserable working condition of Indian Railwaymen and the poor wages they received for even the most strenuous job. For the first time in the history of Railwaymen, Guruswami had demanded 3 months' pay as Bonus to Indian Railwaymen. He had organised a movement of Railwaymen and the demand for Bonus was one of the items of demands for which there was a great agitation in 1946.

He had taken the initiative to lodge a complaint against the representative of the Govt. of France for their failure to enforce labour legislation to its territories in India under the provisions of Article 421 of Treaty of Versailles which had given right to any member of I.L.O. to lodge a complaint against any member-country which had failed to implement any convention that had been passed in I.L.O. to which it was a party.

Com. Guruswami's contribution to the cause of Railway labour before a number of Committees, Commissions, tribunals remains as a landmark in history of Indian Railwaymen. His submissions to the Murphy Court of Enquiry, Rao's Dearness Allowance Committee, both First and Second Pay Commission and the Shankar Saran Tribunal bear ample testimony to his indepth study of the problems.

Mr. Guruswami will be remembered as one of the foremost founding fathers of trade union movement in the country. With unparalleled sacrifice, devotion and integrity, he served the cause of Railwaymen for over 40 years. He died at the age of 58 on 2nd September 1963. The Railwaymen in the country lost a valiant fighter who left no stone unturned

for four decades to better the lot of railwaymen at all stages of their struggle for a new world for the working class as a whole. Railwaymen all over the country can pride themselves on the excellence of his unassuming mannerism, simple life style, his keen sense of humour and determination for realisation of an objective. He did not care for attributes. He was conscious of his obligation to the organisation.

He joined with a first generation of trade union leaders of the country and all members of the toiling mass in the country will remember him for his leadership in Championing the cause of the workers with matchless brilliancy.

K. C. MITRA

Mr. K. C. Mitra popularly known amongst workers as Jai Singh, was as he used to put on the cap of a monk lived a life of austerity. Earlier a Station Master on the Rohilkhand Railway he was dismissed from service. Since then he was associated with trade union work of the E.I.Rly.

In the later part of 1920s he took part in the strikes on the B. N. Railway. He took a leading part in organising the Railwaymen at Lucknow and then he shifted to Howrah where he participated in the movement of Liloah workshop workers and published a publication "Mazdoor". He had close contact with the workers.

As a result of workers' protest for wage increase, leave etc. he was arrested and protest against the dismissal

four workers K. C. Mitra exhorted the workers to start a Satyagraha from 7th March '28 in addition to the movement already started in January, 1928.

Although Bengal workers' and Peasants' party under the control of Communist Party of India was much active in this strike, the leadership was firmly in the hands of K. C. Mitra who was very anxious to bring the strike to a victorious end at an early date. But the indifferent attitude of the Authorities forced him to continue the strike and extend it firstly to all workers in the Howrah Area and then to Asansol, Jamalpur and other places.

This was, perhaps, the largest period of strike in the history of Railway Trade Union Movement. There was profound public sympathy for the strikers. The most revered leaders like Rev. C.F. Andrews and Subhas Chandra Bose, Sibnath Banerjee and others made honest attempts for a settlement but due to intransigent attitude of the Railway Authorities the end result was not very much happy.

Lock out was declared by the Authorities to crush the strike but the workers remained united inspite of all kinds of provocation and use of third degree methods to demoralise the workers. Non-violence and obedience to the mandate of the union was the only weapon in the armoury that K. C. Mitra availed himself of in the onerous task of leading the workers in the struggle for over four months when some adventurist people had sought to take the strike from the field of railwaymen to that of a political struggle. His commitment to the interests of the workers prompted him to advise the workers for resumption of duty.

V.V. Giri General Secretary of AIRF and A.N. Bose Asstt. Secretary were deputed by the President of AIRF to visit Liluah and study the situation.

The strike remained as the first milestone in the history as E.I. Rly workers' struggle for peace and prosperity, for sacrifice and dignity and above all for united efforts for a cause of the toiling mass.

SIBNATH BANERJEE

Mr. Sibnath Banerjee born in 1897 in the district of Khulna, now in Bangladesh was the doyen of the socialist movement in the country over six decades. His unstinted public service was the end result of revolutionary spirit. He was fired with, at his youth at the sight of appalling poverty of the countrymen. He had participated in a big way in the Non-Co-operation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi.

After the first World War when the economic conditions in India was so wretched that survival was nearly an impossibility for the people due to high prices and scarcity, he watched with great interest the revolution in Russia and was determined to make a common cause to overthrow the alien rule in India. He went the way through Kabul to meet Lenin in Russia for seeking support to the movement in India for the betterment of the downtrodden, socially and economically.

Unfortunately the day he was in Moscow, Lenin left the world for good. Although he could not meet Lenin, he came back with the grim determination of a struggle of the working class.

He joined in All India Trade Union

Congress and was General Secretary of the AITUC for sometime. He was elected President of AITUC in 1938. His contribution in the freedom struggle is noteworthy. He was one of the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy case.

In course of time with the rise of Hind Mazdoor Sabha, a new central trade union organisation, he was associated with it and became its President for sometime. He was also the Vice-President of the All Indian Railwaymen's Federation and Railway unions.

He was in leadership of the historic strike in the Liluah Workshop of E.I.Rly in 1929. The workers had gone on strike for a reasonable wage and appropriate working hours. True to his ideals he had launched a relentless struggle and had to serve 10 months imprisonment in Dacca Jail. During his jail term he was charged with Meerut Conspiracy Case and he was transferred to Meerut Jail. One of the most memorable incident was the march of over a lakh of workers to the Congress Session at Calcutta in 1928 which Jatadhari Baba (K.C. Mitra) and Sibnath Banerjee had organised with his pioneering zeal and enthusiasm. In his address on this session he had voiced his concern for knowing what would be the labour policy of Independent India.

He had braved the adversities and waged a struggle with Railwaymen in 1960 Central Govt. Employees' strike and the nationwide strike of Railwaymen in 1974.

Sibnath Banerjee was a revolutionary, freedom fighter and a Trade Union Leader, a man of conviction and

revolutionary zeal who had a record of selfless service to the motherland.

As a champion of the working class Sibnath Banerjee was associated with the struggles of Indian Railwaymen since 1920. He belongs to the tribe of Indian who brought a new turning point not only in the freedom struggle but also in the movement of the working class. His closeness to railwaymen after the 1928 strike at Liluah Workshop grew up and to the last day of his life, he was in the thick of all struggles of railwaymen. He attempted to write a history of All India Railwaymen's Federation. His write-up sent to R. C. Chakravarty (annexed below) is an indepth study of railway trade union movement and indicates many hitherto unknown facts. He had tried to complete the noble task of compilation of History of All India Railwaymen's Federation with factual details but unfortunately his death prevented him from doing the same. The unfinished task is now a treasure for those who want to know the truth.

People say the busiest man only has time to spare. This is so very true with Sibnath Banerjee. He did not lose his sense of humour. In quieter movements of life his mind travelled back and he could receive messages of hope, peace and beauty. He did not grow old by living a number of years. A sample of his youthful mind can be found in a letter written in Roman script to Mr. Debraj Adhikari (Copy enclosed)

26.12.69.

My dear Ram Babu,

I am sending the 2nd instalment of 3 pages. The 1st was handed over to you at Calcutta. I may drop at Patna on 4th or 5th Jan. 1970. to see what materials you have got. Please keep ready and oblige with best wishes to yourself & family.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Sibnath Banerjee.

A.I.R.F.

Darft Report

- 1890 The first Trade Union in India was formed in Bombay in 1890, to ameliorate the conditions of Textile workers by name.
- 1914-18 During the years of First World War, a number of Trade Unions all over India. It was due to stress and strain of the War Years.
- 1919 But the 1st Rly. Trade Union was formed in 1921 in M. S.M. Rly. It was more than a century after the 1st Trade Union was formed in India.
- 1920 The All India Trade Union Congress was formed. Most of the Rly. Trade Unions formed till then got themselves affiliated to A.I.T.U.C. where the common grievances of all workers, including particular problems of Rly. men were discussed, formulated and published.
- 1921 In this year, the year of Non co-operation, the workers were also inspired by the spirit of revolt and in the Tea gardens of West Bengal and Assam when the conditions were appalling and they virtually lived as slaves, under indenture system. Being unable to suffer the indignities and oppression they went on strike and started to leave for their native villages in Bihar & Orissa. They were brutally assaulted and fired upon at night when they were resting at Chandpur & Goalondo Stations. Many women and children were wounded and killed. The workers of Assam, Bengal Rly. struck work spontaneously and that was the first sympathetic strike of Rly. men, the inland steamer workers also joined the strike of Rly. men in mass. These were actively helped by Andrews and politicians led by Shri J.M. Sen Gupta and his wife Srimati Nelle Sen Gupta (an English lady). They spent their fortunes and also raised funds and also their powerful voice against the atrocities in the press & platform ultimately, the tea garden workers, who wanted to go back to were sent to..... the tea gardens were sent there and those who wanted to go back to their native villages were also sent there. It was a great victory for Tea garden workers supported by Rly. & steamer workers strike at about 80,000.
- 1921 From 1919 to 1921 several Rly. Trade Union were formed and their representatives or delegates used to meet at the same time as the A.I.T.U.C. met and held Rly. men's Conference to discuss special problems of Rly. men.

- There was also a big strike of Rly. of E.I. Rly. men this year in 1921, the 1st All India Rly. men's Conference was held in Bombay under the Presidency of late Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad.
- 1922 At this time there were two unofficial Federations of Rly. men, one in the North and the other in the South. In Dec. 1922, the Rly. Unions belonging to the North and the south were amalgamated, by the efforts of late Rev. C.F. Andrews at Lahore. This can be stated to be the forerunner of the eventual formation of the A.I.R.F.
- 1923 It was the year of preparation and convening an All India Rly. men's Federation.
- 1924

IMPORTANT COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES ON RAILWAYS

1. Whitley Commission.
2. Conciliation Board for B.B. & C.I. Railway dispute.
3. Suspension of Staff retrenchment in July 1931.
4. Rogers and Tomilson Enquiry Committee.
5. Murphy Court of Enquiry.
6. Mudieman Committee.
7. Ran Court of Enquiry.
8. Interim Relief Settlement 1946.
9. Railway Adjudicator's Award.
10. Central Pay Commission.
11. Railway Classification Tribunal.
12. Running Staff Committee.
13. Harine Staff Committee.
14. Railway JL Advisory Committee.
15. Half yearly Meetings between Rly. Board and A.I.R.F.
16. Second Pay Commission.
17. Gajendra Gadkar Commission.
18. Railway Grainshop Enquiry Committee.
19. Railway Consumption Inquiry Committee.
20. Joint Advisory Council.
21. Railway Accident Committee.
22. Dearness Allowance Committee.
23. Uniform Committee.

IMPORTANT STRIKES IN RAILWAYS

1. Magualpuree Workshop, 1920.
2. N.W. Rly. Workers' Strike 1924-25.

3. S.N.W. Rly.
4. B.N. Rly. 1927-28
5. E.I.Rly. 1921 and 1928.
6. S.I. Rly.
7. Nizam State Rly.
8. G.I.P. Rly.
9. B.B. and C.I. Rly.
10. W. and S.M. Rly.
11. Mysore Rlys.
12. Martines/Light Rly.
13. Barasat Basirhat Light Rlys.
14. Bengal Provincial (light Rly.).
(Tarakeswar - Magra).

Draft Report
On The History of
ALL INDIA RAILWAYMEN'S FEDERATION

by SIBNATH BANERJEE

The first mention we find in print about the All India Railwaymen's Federation, in Indian Labour Journal, Vol. I, February, 1924 which reads as follows :—

"It is proposed to hold a Conference of the representatives of different Trade Unions of Railwaymen in India with a view to form a Central Organisation, known as Federation, through which the needs and grievances of the Railwaymen in India be made known to the authorities in an effective manner and proper redress sought.

Invitations have been issued to all Railway Labour Organisations in India. It is contemplated that the Conference will be held in Calcutta along with the forthcoming Session of the All India Trade Union Congress, so that both the Federation and the Congress, may be attended together with great convenience."

Actual invitations were issued by Shri V.R. Kalappa of B.N.Rly. Labour Union, who was also one of the founders of the Indian Labour Journal along with Shri V.R. Kalappa, Shri R.A. Raghavan, etc. which was the first All India Labour Journal with All India Labour outlook.

1924, 1st April, Calcutta. (Preparatory meeting)

During the fourth Annual Session of the All India Trade Union Congress held in Calcutta, a Conference of the representatives of several Railwaymen's Unions was convened by Shri V.R. Kalappa, on Tuesday the 1st of April, 1924. Shri N.M. Joshi, M.L.A. presided and it was decided unanimously to form a Committee for the purpose of bringing into existence an All India Railwaymen's Federation.

This Committee consisted of :—

1. Shri N.M. Joshi
2. Shri F.J.Ginwala
3. Shri Ramchandra Rane (Bombay)
4. Shri Shamsuddin Hussain (N.W.Rly Union, Lahore)
5. Shri Sadanand Waman (Bombay Port Trust Ry. Employees Union)
6. Shri Biswanath Mukherjee (B & N. W. Rlymen's Association, Gorakhpur, U.P.)
7. Shri P. Krishnaswami Mudaliar (G.I.P. Ry Workers' Union, Bombay)
8. Shri Jamsedji Framji Zavala (B B & Co. C.I. Ry. Employees' Union, Bombay)
9. Shri S. K. Dey (E. B. Ry. Indian Employees Association, Lalmonirhat, Bengal)
10. Shri P. Ramchandra Rao (B.N.Ry Indian Labour Union, Kharagpur)

The office bearers were the following :—

1. Shri N.M. Joshi, Chairman
2. Shri N.C. Sen, Vice-President
3. Shri V.R. Kalappa, Secretary
4. Shri M.N. Mukherjee, Assistant Secretary

The office bearers were authorised to communicate with the different Railwaymen's Unions in India and ascertain their views in the matter of establishing a Federation of railwaymen, as this co-ordination would help to a great extent in securing collective action when necessary on matters affecting the common interest of all workers in different railways in the country and would at the same time avoid railwaymen being used against one another.

1925, 16th February, Bombay. (Formation)

Shri V.R. Kalappa, the Secretary of the Provisional Committee most ably conducted the work in the preceding year and enlisted the sympathy and support of almost all the Railwaymen's Unions towards the formation of the Federation, which had been formally brought into existence at the Conference of Railwaymen held at the Servants of India Society Hall, Sandhurat, Girgaun, Bombay on Monday, the 16th February, 1925. Besides Shri C.F. Andrews, A. Rodrics, R.S. Ruikar, V.J. Sathaye, G. Sethi and Mukunda Lall Sircar, the following representatives were present at the meeting :—

1. Shri Biswanath Mukherjee and Shri Ram Prasad (B & N.W. Railwaymen's Association, Gorakhpur, U.P.)
2. Shri D.K. Singh and Shri K.R. Sabapathy (O.&R.Ry. Union, Lucknow).
3. Shri Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad, Shri Jamsedji Framji Zaivala and Shri C.Bhukandas, (B.B. & C.I.Ry. Employees' Union, Bombay).
4. Shri K.G.Virdaranulu Naidu, Shri M.C. Gnanamuthu, Shri V. Shankar Row, Shri C.Panjakesam Achary, and Shri E.L.Iyer (M.& S.M.Ry. Employees' Union, Perambur, Madras).
5. Shri V.V.Giri (B.N.Rly. Indian Labour Union, Kharagpur).
6. Shri A. S. Thawardas, Shri R.P. Kripalini (N.W. Railwaymen's Union, Karachi).
7. Shri Ernest Kirk (S.E.Rly Labour Board, Coimbatore).

8. Shri Sahmsuddin Hussain (N. W. Railway Labour Union, Lahore).
9. Shri P.S. Bakhala (G.I.P. Railway Staff Union).
10. Shri F.J.Ginwala, Shri V.P. Rele (G.I.P. Railway Workmen's Union, Bombay).
11. Shri Haripada Das (E. B. Railway Indian Employees Association, Lalmonirhat, Bengal).

Shri N.M. Joshi presided in the meeting which formally brought the Federation into existence.

In the said inaugural meeting the following resolutions were passed :—

- I. That a Federation of all the Railwaymen's Unions in India be formed.
- II. That the draft constitution as read and amended be approved and adopted for the All India Railwaymen's Unions Federation and the same be printed and circulated to the Railwaymen's Unions and to the press.
- III. That the General Council of the Federation be formed consisting of the

President Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad

Vice-Presidents. Shri N.M. Joshi,

Shri V.V. Giri,

Shri E.L.Iyer,

Shri Biswa Nath Mukherjee,

Treasurer Shri V.R. Kalappa

Genl. Secretary Shri Mukunda Lall Sircar

and the representatives to be elected by the affiliated Unions according

to Section 7 of the Constitution.

IV. That this Conference recommends that with a view to assist the Railwaymen's Unions in different parts of the country the General Secretary or any other office-bearer should make a tour from time to time.

V. That a monthly journal under the name and style of "ALL INDIA RAILWAYMEN'S BULLETIN" be published in English as early as possible as an official organ of the Federation with Shri Mukunda Lall Sircar as its Editor.

VI. That for the current year the Head Quarters of the Federation shall be in Calcutta. (72 Canning Street, Calcutta).

VII. That this Federation recommends to the Government of India to nominate Shri N.M.Joshi as Indian Workers' Delegate to the forthcoming session of the International Labour Conference at Geneva and to send Messrs. D.R. Thengidi, M.Dand and D.Chaman Lall as advisers.

Official Organ. (I.L.J. Vol.2 No.3, Dec. 1924, pp. 3,4&5)

Appeal for Funds for All India Railwaymen's Bulletin, published in Indian Labour Journal Vol. 2, No. 6, March, 1925.

"As you are aware, at the last Railwaymen's Conference held in Bombay, the delegates unanimously decided to start a monthly Bulletin, as official organ of the Federation. We now beg to invite your attention to the fact that in order to carry on an effective

propaganda and educate public opinion in favour of the legitimate minimum demands of the Railway workers in India, it has become a matter of immediate necessity to take up the publication of the Bulletin and adopt such other measures as may help awakening consciousness of the workers in the matter of their rights and responsibilities.

This Bulletin will deal with the general problems of Railway Labour and ventilate the legitimate grievances, so they may engage the attention and enlist the sympathy of the Railway Board, Government and Legislators for proper remedy. It is hardly necessary for us to impress on you the necessity of our being always watchful of protecting the interests of Railway workers and the same time doing what we can to make the workers and the public, realise the relationship which subsists between them and the public.

The Bulletin will also supply from time to time useful information so as to advance the efficiency of Railwaymen and of the Railway service to the public. It is sanguinely hoped that the members of the Ry service will appreciate the advantages thus placed before them and the steps that are being taken by the Federation on their behalf.

In order to carry on this work of propaganda, in an all round manner, we require at least Rs. 5000/- (five thousand). We therefore earnestly appeal to you and your Union to be good enough to contribute your mite and we fervently hope that our appeal to Railwaymen, numbering about 7,27,000 will not go in vain. Any amount however small, will be thankfully received and duly acknowledged."

The Signatories to the appeal were :—

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad | : | President. |
| 2. Shri N.M. Joshi, M.L.A | : | Vice-President |
| 3. Shri V.V. Giri, Bar-at-Law | : | -do- |
| 4. Shri S.L. Iyer, Bar-at-Law | : | -do- |
| 5. Shri Biswa Nath Mukherjee, I.M.S. | : | -do- |
| 6. Shri V.R. Kalappa | : | Treasurer |
| 7. Shri Mukunda Lall Sircar | : | Genl. Secretary |

N.B. It has not been possible to ascertain how much was raised by the appeal and how many issues of the Bulletin were published, but the need was as urgent then as now, if not more.

Editorial in Indian Labour Journal Vol. 2, No.3, Dec. 1924

All India Railwaymen's Federation :

All Railwaymen in India should feel very happy to note the formation of the above organisation. The Provisional Chairman Mr. N.M.Joshi, M.L.A. and the Secretary Mr. V.R. Kalappa deserve the thanks of all the Railway Unions in the country for the trouble they have taken in the matter of convincing the respective Unions thereof.

The scope of work for the Federation is very great and the success of the same depends on the promptness of its members (namely, individual Unions) in furnishing information about the grievances of the employees of their Railways to Mr. M.

Sircar (72, Canning Street, Calcutta, where the office of the Federation is now situated), the General Secretary, who will be ever vigilant in making use of the same by giving publicity in the All India Railwaymen's Bulletin, of which he has been made the Editor.

The individual Unions must send their subscriptions and donations to the Treasurer immediately and subscribe for large number of copies of the Journal. Railwaymen should remember, whatever they do for the cause of their Unions and Federation, they do so, in their own interest and nothing more.

1927.

A very important year in the struggle of Railwaymen in India, in general and of B.N.Rly (now South Eastern Rly) in particular. The strike there was led successfully and also the negotiation for settlement were carried on under the leadership of Sarbashree V.V. Giri, V.R. Kalappa, Mukundalal Sircar etc. and other leaders of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. The B.N.Rly agreed to pay about fourteen lakhs of rupees as strike wages. This was the first time that any Railway agreed to pay such a large sum as strike wages. So far as we know, this has been the last of such payment of Strike wages. This created greatest enthusiasm not only for B.N.Rly. workers but for all workers—both Rly and non-Rly., for Trade Union movement. The next year, i.e., 1928 there were two big Rly strikes, in E.I.Rly. and G.I.P.Rly. The success in B.N.Rly. strike, encouraged and sustained the strike in the long strikes in these Rlys.

1928.

The Annual Session was held at Jharia, at the same time as the All India Trade Union Congress, which elected Shri Jawaharlal Nehru as President of A.I.T.U.C. Shri Sahib Chandrika Pd. presided over A.I.R.F. and was re-elected President. Shri V.V.Giri as General Secretary.

The year 1928 had been a great strike year of Textiles in Bombay, of workers in Baurea, Chengail and other places of West Bengal, of sweepers in Howrah, of Steel workers in Jamshedpur and also great Railway strike in Calcutta under the leadership of Shri R.S.Ruikar, Shri Khedgikar (both of whom were killed) and last though not the least the four month old strike in Eastern Railway in Howrah, which spread to Ondal and Asansol under the leadership of Shri Mitra and Shri Sibnath Benerjee etc. The payment of strike wages in B.N.Rly. made this year, which was indeed a red letter day for Railway Labour.

1930. General Council of A.I.R.F. Delhi.

An important meeting of the General Council of the All India Railwaymen's Federation was held at the N.W.Railway Institute at Delhi on the 7th, 8th and 9th December, 1930.

The following members were present :—

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Shri S.C.Joshi, | ... | Vice-President |
| 2. Shri V.V. Giri, | ... | General Secretary |
| 3. Shri V.R. Kalappa, | ... | Treasurer |

4. Shri S. Guruswamy,	...	Assistant Secretary
5. Shri Jamnadas Mehta,	...	B. B. & C. I. Rly. Union
6. Shri Marcel Fernandez,	...	-do-
7. Shri L.R. Pradhan,	...	-do-
8. Shri C.R. Samsu,	...	-do-
9. Shri A.N. Bose,	...	B. N. Rly. Union
10. Shri R. Srinivasulu,	...	M. & S.M. Rly. Union
11. Shri Abdul Ahameed,	...	N. S. Rly. Union
12. Shri K.Somayajuly,	...	-do-
13. Shri W.H. Marsh,	...	Mysore Rly. Union
14. Shri Ernest Kirk,	...	S. I. Rly. Union
15. Shri K.P. Banerjee,	...	E. B. Rly. Union
16. Shri J.K. Chatterjee,	...	-do-
17. Shri B.N. Bagchi,	...	-do-
18. Shri S.C. Mukherjee,	...	-do-
19. Shri N.K. Banerjee,	...	-do-
20. Shri T.N. Shenoy,	...	G. I. P. Rly. (Staff) Union
21. Shri M.G. Mundpe,	...	-do-
22. Shri A.N. Pradhan,	...	-do-
23. Shri K.P Nimbkar,	...	-do-
24. Shri R.A. Khedgikar,	...	G. I. P. Rly. Union
25. Shri S.R. Choudhury,	...	-do-
26. Shri K.G. Pundit,	...	-do-
27. Shri V.K. Sohooni	...	-do-
28. Shri Jwalaprasad,	...	-do-
29. Shri Chaman Lall,	...	N. W. Rly. Union
30. Shri Ladikiram,	...	-do-
31. Shri R.A. Mathrani,	...	-do-
32. Shri Thawardas A.S.,	...	-do-
33. Shri Sivramdas,	...	-do-
34. Shri S.B. Mitra,	...	A. B. Rly. Union
35. Shri R.S. Bhatnagar,	...	R. K. & E. I. Rly. Union

The following resolutions were passed unanimously :-

(a) Resolved that the Unions who are in arrears in respect of the payment of their Affiliation fees to the Federation, be informed, that a period of grace until the last day of February, 1930, is given to them to pay off such arrears failing which their affiliation previously enjoyed as component parts of the Federation, will be suspended.

(b) That the A. B. Rly Employees Association and R. & K. Railway Employees Association be permitted to affiliated themselves with the All India Railway Employees Federation.

(c) The Agenda for the Second half-yearly meeting between the Federation and the A. I. R. F. was discussed and resolved :—

That the following do form the personnel of the Deputation from A.I.R.F. at the second half-yearly meeting with the Railway Board :—

1. Diwan Chaman Lall (Leader),
2. Shri Jamnadas Mehta,
3. Shri V.V. Giri,
4. Shri V.R. Kalappa,
5. Shri S. Guruswamy,
6. Shri S.C. Joshi,
7. Shri R.A. Khedgikar,
8. Shri R. Srinivasulu,
9. Shri A.N. Bose,
10. Shri W.H. Marsh,
11. Shri H.S. Bhatnagar,
12. Shri Abdul Hameed,
13. Shri S.B. Mitra,
14. Shri K.P. Bancrjee,
15. Shri Ladikiram,
16. Shri Ernest Kirk.

(d) G. I. P. Strike.

Owing to the situation arising out of the failure on the part of the G.I.P. O to honour the Government of India Communique dated 1.3.30, it was further

"That the General Secretary, A.I.R.F., should inform the Railway Board on the considered opinion of the General Council of the Federation, that the G.I.P. Strike issue is of such paramount importance that discussion at this half-yearly meeting of the Railway Board, should be concentrated on this issue only to get it definitely and satisfactorily settled".

The resolution was taken after the correspondence was read on the subject between Shri A.M. Hayman and Shri V.V. Giri, in connection with G.I.P. Strikers.

(e) Trade Union Unity.

The next question discussed was that of the proposal for Trade Union Unity. The General Secretary explained about his letter to the President of All India Trade Union Congress. it was resolved :—

"That the A.I.R.F., do take the initiative in bringing about Trade Union Unity between the two Trade Union factions on the basis of certain broad principles and that a Sub-Committee consisting of the following be appointed to get the question :—

1. Shri Jamnadas Mehta,
2. Shri V.V. Giri,
3. Shri J.K. Chatterjee,
4. Shri Ernest Kirk,
5. Shri R.A. Khedgikar,
6. Shri W.H. Marsh."

The Sub-Committee submitted its report, when the General Council met next day. Shri Jamnadas Mehta read the Report, formulating certain broad principles to form the basis of the proposed Trade Union Unity. Shri R.R. Bakhale, on being requested, expressed his views. After some discussions, it was decided to approach both the A.I.T.U.C. and the All India Trade Union Federation.

1935: Annual Meeting in Simla Hotel, Simla.

Shri Jamnadas Mehta, President, presided and was re-elected President. This was with Shri Guruswamy, General Secretary. It was very take affair, with a handful of delegates and no public meeting at all, as Railwaymen were rare in Simla.

1942: Special General Meeting, New Delhi (8th August).

The meeting was held just before the historic meeting of the Indian National Congress in Bombay where "Quit India" resolution was passed and implemented. The main demand of the A.I.R.F. was increased D.A. of Rs.30/-, but on the passage of a resolution passed earlier, authorising, its President, Shri Jamnadas Mehta to negotiate on the matter, he settled D.A. at Rs. 14/p.m. This was very strongly resented by most of the delegates, including even Shri N.M.Joshi and other moderate members. They felt that, on the eve of the National struggle, the A.I.R.F. could not ask for compensation for rise in prices. Shri Mehta took the stand very clearly and felt that the settlement made by him must stand, though he could be thrown out. It was felt, he had been wrong. No confidence was moved but could not be passed. A majority, did not support it though Sarbashree N.M. Joshi, V.V. Giri, etc. were in the opposition.

The A.I.R.F. secured however the setting up of cheap Grain shops for the employees. The recommendations of the Rao Committee in this respect were accepted. Other Industrial Labour to launch a country-wide agitation for compensation for rise in real wages due to soaring prices.

1946:

During the War years, 1942 to 1945, the A.I.R.F. most of whom were in Jail or detention, could not function as a fighting body. In 1946, however, it served a Strike notice. Shri Jayaprakash Narayan had been elected President, S. Guruswamy, General Secretary and Shri Peter Alvares as Joint Secretary of A.I.R.F. at Gorakhpur Annual meeting.

The strike notice included the demands for adequate D.A., better pay and other service conditions, reduction in duty hours and the most urgent was 'No retrenchment' of 2,50,000 Railway workers declared to the Railway Board. For the first time the Railway Board had to yield, owing to the organisation and demonstrations of Railwaymen. Retrenchment was stopped. Rajadhyaksha Committee was appointed to adjudicate on the hours of rest period, leave etc. The Railwaymen gained many other privileges added to them. Leave reserves were provided, Running staff were classified as permanent workers.

Not only the Railway workers, but the Principles enunciated by the First Pay Commission, were also benefitted and inspired to organise and agitate on the same lines. Tribunals broadly accepted the Principles in all subsequent adjudications.

The appointment of a Classification Committee for Workshop staff, benefitted hundreds of thousands of railwaymen.

The appointment of the Joint Advisory Committee, to revise the anomalies caused by the recommendations of the First Pay Commission, was also of great benefit to railwaymen.

Permanent Negotiating Machinery was also of great benefit to all railwaymen.

These were indeed the heydays for A.I.R.F. and for all Railwaymen, who saw Revolutionary changes in the attitude of the Railway Board and Government.

1948:

Under such a back-ground, the Annual Session of A.I.R.F. was held in Lilloah, where 20 years back, the Railway workers had a crushing defeat in their great Strike of four months.

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and Shri S. Guruswamy, were re-elected as President and General Secretary, amidst great enthusiasm, in which Shri K.C. Mitra and Shri Sibnath Banerjee, veterans of 1928 struggle in Lilloah also joined.

1951: Nagpur.

There was no change in the Presidentship and General Secretaryship. Shri Jayaprakash Narayan pressed his utmost to be relieved of the responsibilities of Presidentship, but in vain.

1952: Delhi.

It was most unfortunate that the Railwaymen in India were unable to achieve success to success, under the leadership of A.I.R.F., late Shri Hariharanath Shastri with some Congress-men, left the A.I.R.F. and formed Indian Railway Federation. It split the Railwaymen's movement and weakened it. The A.I.R.F. and its President, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan took initiative for merger of A.I.R.F. and I.N.R.W.F. and the proposals which were far more favourable to I.N.R.W.F. than to A.I.R.F., considering the respective strength of the two organisations, were accepted in the Delhi meeting of A.I.R.F. in spite of deep resentment of A.I.R.F. The name of the merged body National Federation of Railwaymen (N.F.R.).

1953: Mysore Meeting of N.F.I.R.

The meeting of N.F.I.R., formed by the merger of A.I.R.F. and I.N.R.W.F. was held in Mysore and Shri Hariharanath Shastri was elected President and Shri S. Guruswamy was elected General Secretary of the merged body by common consent and a Provisional Executive Committee of N.F.I.R. was elected. This arrangement was continued as long as Shri Hariharanath Shastri was alive. Many of the Unions of Railwaymen

belonging to A.I.R.F. and I.N.R.W.F. starts merging, the Central Railway and Western Railway took the lead.

But after the unfortunate death of Shri Hariharnath Shastri, in Air-crash Shri S.R. Vasavda, succeeded him and trouble started in smooth functioning of N.F.I.R.

1955: Madras N.F.I.R

A proposal was made to elect Shri V.V. Giri as the President, but somehow it did not happen and Shri S. Guruswamy continued as General Secretary only in name; all the functions of N.F.I.R. were being done arbitrarily by Shri Vasavda.

1957: Poona (A.I.R.F. revived).

In the meeting of the delegates, it was unanimously decided to revive the A.I.R.F. with Shri Guruswamy as the President and Shri Peter Alvares (who had been the Assistant Secretary of A.I.R.F. for many years), as the General Secretary with a strong Working Committee, taken from the constituent Unions.

It was a very up-hill task, as most of the Unions had become weak, due to the differences between the leadership of A.I.R.F. and I.N.R.W.F. and later on N.F.I.R. there was no money and hardly any organisation. But by very hard and sustained effort, the A.I.R.F. was again put in a fighting shape. It was also urgently necessary. As the Second Pay Commission had in the meantime published its report, which sought to change many of the healthy principles, announced by the First Pay Commission, specially about payment of Dearness Allowance and also curtailed many of the existing privileges of Railwaymen. This the Railwaymen in general and A.I.R.F., representing the over-whelming majority of Railwaymen were prepared to accept. Attempts to Government were in vain. N.F.I.R. was playing a dubious role. The A.I.R.F. had to take up the challenge, which it did to its great credit and in accordance with the long tradition of A.I.R.F.

1959: Delhi. Municipal Hall. 17th to 19th August

In the historic meeting, strike resolution was passed. The old leadership including Shri Guruswamy and Shri Peter Alvares, were re-elected. Under the leadership of A.I.R.F. all other Central Govt. Employees were also included in the strike notice and a Joint Council of Action was formed, representing several millions and a quarter of Central Govt. Employees. This was for the first time in India and was of first-class importance in the Trade Union movement. The Attitude of Central Govt. in general and of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru in particular, was not only not helpful, but positively hostile, Shri Nehru refused to meet the deputation of the Joint Council of Action, on the day after it had served Strike Notice. The demands, were considerably watered down, even then no amicable settlement was possible. The date of settlement was postponed, from 19th June to 11th July, to enable Central Govt. to look into the matter, but it had also no effect. Ultimately, the strike ended on 11th July.

1960: The Strike—11th midnight to 16th July.

The Strike started from the midnight of 11th July. Over half a million people joined the strike, in spite of the Ordinance promulgated two days before the date of General Strike, declaring the Strike illegal. Heavy hand of repression came down on the Central Govt. Employees, specially on Railwaymen. Most of the leaders, who could not go under-ground, were arrested on the eve of the strike. 60,000 workers were arrested, about three times that number were suspended. Indian National Congress, with all its adjuncts — I.N.T.U.C., N.F.I.R. and all Unions affiliated to them, Boys Scouts, N.G.C. etc. were all mobilised to break the strike. Police behaved in the most atrocious manner.

Many leaders of the Unions had bluffed others and also themselves, by saying, they were fully ready for the strike. When the time for strike came, they were arrested by the Police as could be expected, but there was not much response from the Employees in joining the strike. Other leaders for political group interests, withdrew their strike notices before midnight of 11th July. Others, again, withdrew the strike notices within a day or two of the strike, but still from the rank and file of workers was gathered and half a million continued the grim struggle. Ultimately on the 6th day, a few of the leaders, who were not arrested met in Delhi and without consulting the leaders who were in Jail and without even, insisting on "No victimisation", unilaterally called off the Strike. This was 1st against the resolution of Joint Council of Action and against all recognised principle of conducting a Strike. It was rank cowardice, if not pure and simple betrayal, of the interests of the workers in general and of the striking workers in particular.

1960: Meeting of J.C.A. & A.I.R.F. in Delhi in September.

This meeting was a sad affair. A rough analysis showed the weakness of the strike affair. All that was to be done was to salvage, what could still be salvaged, from this ship-wreck. The five Railway workers in Dohad, who lost their lives by this strike and the hundreds of thousands who courted imprisonment or risked it, demanded leadership. However, from this epic struggle, much valuable lessons were learnt which will be of very great value in future struggles.

1961: General Council meeting in Matheron.

Mainly devoted to regrouping the forces and reducing victimisation of strikers and 'licking the wounds'.

1962: Annual Meeting of AIRF in Udaipur—29th to 31st July.

Licking the wounds continued, but already signs of new life were visible in constituent units, which reflected in better membership and morale among the Railwaymen.

Shri S. Guruswamy and Shri Peter Alvares were re-elected as President and Secretary.

But unfortunately, Shri Guruswami died in 1963 and Vice-President, Mr. Kara, acted as the President.

1963: Annual Meeting in Gaya — 9th to 12th October.

In the absence of the President Shri S. Guruswamy, Miss Maniben Kara, Vice-President presided. But deserters led by Shri Ram Chakrabarty, created trouble and Sec. 144 was promulgated in Gaya and as a result the meeting had to be finished quickly.

1964-January: Delhi, Working Committee of A.I.R.F. 18th & 19th January.

In this Working Committee a detailed discussion took place on the working of A.I.R.F., which could not be done at Gaya, due to the disturbances created by some disrupters. A comprehensive resolution was passed on demand for Dearness Allowance. Another comprehensive resolution was passed and the position of A.I.R.F. was made very clear about the Govt. proposal for the Joint Consultative machinery.

1964-17th February : Delhi: Memorandum on D.A. to Railway Minister.

An elaborate and well reasoned, and well documented Memorandum was prepared by A.I.R.F. and submitted to Members of Parliament for their information and necessary action in Parliament. A copy of the same was handed over to the Railway Minister by Miss Maniben Kara and Shri Peter Alvares, President and General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. on 17th Feb., 1964, it was made clear to the Railway Minister to the deputationists that A.I.R.F. feels that mere increase in money wage will not help, therefore Railwaymen demand alteration in the system of payment of Dearness Allowance and protect the real wages by opening cheap grain shops, as was done in the Second World War.

1964-March: Sholapur. General Council Meeting.

A very important meeting of the General Council was held at Sholapur, a city of fighting tradition in National, as well as in Trade Union Movement. It was under Martial Law in 1930, so strong was the National movement that even the four Martyrs of the Martial Law Regime, two were colleagues of late Shri. ... the big strike of G.I.P. in 1928. They are Jagannath Shinde and ...

The General Council meeting was a great success, not only because of the large number of delegates attended and passed important militant resolutions as belated Dearness Allowance, but also for the big mass meeting held at the foot of the ... the rampart of the old Fort, attended by thousand of citizens of the ... thousands of Textile and Transport workers, not to speak of Railway ... thousands from not only Sholapur, but also from surrounding Rly. ...

Sholapur comrades brought out a very informative Souvenir, ... material has been used in preparing this report. This was perhaps the ... and deserves the thanks of all concerned. This General council, also ... to prepare a history of A.I.R.F., being inspired, perhaps by this Souvenir ...

1964-Oct. 24th to 28th - Annual General Meeting in Delhi.

The next Annual General Meeting will be held in Delhi on 24th ... under the Presidentship of Miss Maniben Kara. There will be a ...

on 24th October. It will be much bigger than the demonstration held in February this year.

A purse of Rs. 10,000/- will also be paid to the widow of Late S. Guruswamy. The most important matter that the A.I.R.F. has to tackle this year is how to solve the problem of erosion of real wages of Railwaymen due to constantly soaring prices.

Affiliations.

The A.I.R.F. is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U) and also to International Transport Workers Federation. Sri S. Guruswamy and Miss Maniben Kara have attended several meetings of I.C.F.T.U. and I.T.F.

Besides Sri S. Guruswamy led a delegation to China in 1952 and to U.S.A. in 1958 representing A.I.R.F.

Publications.

(1) All India Railwaymen's Bulletin edited by Sri Mukundalal Sircar was started immediately along with the formation of the A.I.R.F. in 1924, (monthly).

(2) Railwayman: Edited by Sri Peter Alvares, started in 1947 and continued for two years (Monthly).

Besides these two official publications there have been several organs of different Unions or run by Trade Unionists.

(3) Indian Labour Journal, an Weekly organ of the B.N.R. Indian Labour Union, edited by Sri V.R. Kalappa and run by Sri G.R. Raghavan, did yeoman's service to Indian Labour in general and Railway Labour in particular from 1922, its first publication in 1924 and again started in 1928 and stopped again in 1930.

(4) Mazoor, started in 1924 by Sri K.C. Mitra as official organs of E.I.Rly. It was published from Lucknow, Dinapore and then Lillooah and later on in Calcutta. Weekly Mazoor, Worker and Railwayman, by Sibnath Banerjee as the Editor were successively suppressed by Govt. or forced to stop publication. It was published but issues were published in Hindi and Bengali also.

(5) Railway Sentinel. official organ of Central Mizdoor Union. in English. Edited by Sri Jagadish Ajmera.

(6) Organ of Southern Railway, published from Perambour by Sri T. Anand.

(7) Railway Forum — Edited by late Nilkrishna Sircar, in English.

(8) Lal Pattan — Edited by Sri Bimal Banerjee in Bengali from Lillooah.

Education.

Formerly very little was done for Railwaymen's education but these days are trying increasingly to give education, specially Trade Unionists in collaboration with Asian Trade Union College of I.C.F.T.U. in Calcutta.

Co-operatives.

Rly. Unions have made tremendous progress in co-operative movement in credit but also in consumer stores and even in co-op. Life Insurance.

Names of some martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of railwaymen.

1. Lillooah, 1928, 19th March at Bamungachi Firing (two).
2. Gorakhpur Firing in 1923 (five)
3. Dohad Firing in 1960 (five)
4. Sholapur Martial Law, hanging (two).

Foreign delegation to

(a) U.S.S.R.

(b) China

Parliament — Peter Alvares & Priya Gupta.

Sec. 186 torn asunder by Basanta Babu in Supreme Court Indian Railwaymen.

Names of some Comrades, who helped to build up A.I.R.F.

1. Late V.R. Kalappa of B.N.R. Indian Labour Union, Nagpur
2. Late N.M. Joshi, M.L.A.
3. Late Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad
4. Late Jamnadas Mehta
5. Late Mukundalal Sirkar
6. Late K.C. Mitra
7. Late S. Guruswamy
8. Sri V.V. Giri
9. Sri Dewan Chaman Lall
10. Sri R.A. Kedgikar
11. Late R.S. Ruikar
12. Sri R.A. Raghavan
13. Miss Maniben Kara
14. Sri J.N. Gupta
15. Sri Kiron Choudhury
16. Sri Humayun Kabir, President, A.I.R.F.
17. Sri Jayaprakash Narayan, Genl. Secretary, A.I.R.F.
18. Sri Peter Alvares, Vice-President, A.I.R.F.
19. Sri Basawan Singh, Asst. Genl. Secretary, A.I.R.F.
20. Sri Priya Gupta, President, N.E. Rly. men's Union.
21. Sri Basantalal Ghosh, M.L.C., Patna, President E.I. Rly. Men's Union Secy./AIRF
22. Sri Rajendra Singh, Vice-President, A.I.R.F.
23. Sri Malgi, Member, Working Committee, A.I.R.F.
24. Sri D.D. Vasistha, Ex. President & Founder of E. D. Rly. Union
25. Late I.B. Sen, Ex. President, B.N.R. Employees Union.
26. Late Nisith Sen, Ex. Genl. Secy -do-
27. Late Nilkesho Srivastava, Ex-President -do-
28. Late Sarat Ch Bose, M.L.A. Ex. Vice-President, E.I. Rly. Union

29. Late Amarnath Dutta, Ex. Vice-President, E.I.Rly Men's Union.
30. Late Tulshi Charan Goswami, Leader of the Strikers of Assam Bengal Ry. in 1921.
31. Late J.M. Sen Gupta, Ex. Editor of Mazdoor, Dinapore.
32. Late B.C. Mitra, Ex. President, I.N.R.W.F & N.F.I.R.
33. Late Hariharnath Sastri, Ex. President, E.I.R. Employees Association.
34. Late A.N. Mullick, Ex. Genl. Secy. of E.I. Rly Men's Union, Lucknow.
35. Sri B.K. Mukherjee, Ex. Genl. Secy and Vice-President E.I. Rly. Men's Union.
36. Sri A.M. Williams, Ex. President of B. & N. W. Rly Men's Union.
37. Late Biswanth Mukherjee, Asstt. Secy. National Ry. Mazdoor Union.
38. Late P. Banerjee (died in Behwada)
39. Sri Omraomal Purohit
40. Sri A.M.A.R. Fatmi, Ex. Genl. Secy, E.I.Rly. Men's Union
41. Sri P.C Das Gupta, Ex. Treasurer of A.I.R.F.
42. Sri Ram Chakravarty
43. Sri A.P. Sharma
44. Sri Chowdhury (Gorakhpur) Ex.Secy, B.&N.W.Rly. Men's Union.
45. Late B.F. Bradly, Leader of G.I.P.Ry. Workers Strike in 1921.
46. Sri Philip Spratt, Leader of E.I.Rly. strike in Lillooah and Assam.
47. Sri Gopen Chakravarty, Leader of -do-
48. Sri Kalidas Bhattacharjee -do-
49. Sri D.R. Adhikari, Working President, E.I.Rly. Men's Union
50. Sri Sibnath Banerjee, Ex. Vice-President, A.I.R.F.
51. Sri Ladikaram (Karachi)
52. Late Kali Sen, leader of Lillooah strike
53. Late D.P. Godbole -do-
54. Sri Santi Ram Mondol -do-
55. Sri Dinesh Roy -do-

Name of some Comrades who helped and are helping to build Sp... Union

1. Late V.R.Kalappa of B.N.R. Indian Labour Union, Nagpur
2. Late N.M. Joshi, M.L.A.
3. Late Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad
4. Late Jamnadas Mehta
5. Late Mukundalal Sircar
6. Late K.C. Mitra
7. Late S. Guruswamy.
8. Sri V.V. Giri
9. Sri Dewan Chaman Lall
10. Sri R.A. Khedgikar.
11. Late R.S. Rufkar

12. Sri R.A. Raghavan
13. Miss Maniben Kara, President, of A.I.R.F.
14. Sri J.N.Gupta
15. Sri Kiron Choudhury
16. Sri Humayun Kabir
17. Sir Jayaprakash Narayan, President, A.I.R.F.
18. Sri Peter Alvares, Gen. Secy., A.I.R.F.
19. Sri Baswan Singh, Vice-President, A.I.R.F.
20. Sri Priya Gupta, Asstt. Genl. Secretary, A.I.R.F.
21. Sri Basantallal Ghosh, M.L.C./Patna, President, N.E.Rlymen's Union.
22. Sri Rajendra Singh, President E.I.Rly Men's Union Asstt. Secy. Genl. A.I.R.F.
23. Sri V.R. Malgi, Vice-President, A.I.R.F.
24. Sri Bimal Ganguly, Editor, Lal Pattam of LLH Strike
25. Sri I.B. Sen, Ex-President, B. N. Rly. Employees Union.
26. Sri Nisith Sen Ex. president B.N.R. Emp. Union.
27. Sri Nilkesto Sircar, Ex.Genl. Secy do
28. Sri Sarat Ch. Bose, Ex.President, Assam, B.Rly. Emp. Union.
29. Late Amarnath Dutta, MLA Ex. Vice-President, E.I.Rly. Men's Union.
30. Late Tulshi Charan Goswami do
31. Late J.M.Sen Gupta, Leader of the strikers of Assam Bengal Railway in 1921.
32. Late B.C. Mitra, Ex. Editor of Mazdoor, Dinapore
33. Late Hariharnath Shastri, Ex. President, I.N.R.W.F. and N.E.I.R.
34. Late A.N. Mullick, Ex. President, E.I.R. Employees Association.
35. Shri B.K. Mukherjee, Ex. General Secretary of E.I.R. Men's Union, Lucknow.
36. Shri A.M.Williams, Ex. General Secretary and Vice-President, B.N.R. Emp. Union.
37. Late Biswanath Mukherjee, Ex.President of B. & N.W. Rlymen's Union.
38. Late P. Banerjee (died in Bezwada), Asstt. Secretary, National Rly. Workers Union.
39. Shri Umraomal Purohit, Asstt. General Secretary, A.I.R.F.
40. Shri A.M.A.R. Fatmi, Ex. General Secretary, E.I.Rly. Men's Union.
41. Shri P.C. Das Gupta, Ex. Asstt. Secretary, A.I.R.F.
42. Shri Ram Chakravarty, Ex. Treasurer, A.I.R.F.
43. Shri A.P. Sarma,
44. Shri Chowdhury (Gorakhpur), Ex. Secretary, B. & N.W. Rlymen's Union.
45. Late B.F. Bradly, Leader of G.I.P. Rly. Workers Strike in 1921.
46. Shri Philip Spratt, Leader of E.I.Rly. Strike in Lilloochee in 1921.
47. Shri Gopen Chakravarty, do
48. Shri Kalidas Bhattacharjee, do
49. Shri D.R. Adhikari, Working President, E.Rlymen's Union.
50. Shri Sibnath Banerjee, Ex. Vice-President, A.I.R.F.

51. Shri Ladikaram (Karachi).
52. Late Kali Sen, Leader of Lilloah Strike.
53. Late D.P. Godbole, -do-
54. Shri Santi Ram Mondal, -do-
55. Shri Dinesh Roy -do-
56. Shri J.P. Chaubey, Treasurer, A.I.R.F.
57. Shri Manoj Mohan Basu, Zonal Secretary, A.I.R.F. (E.Rly).
58. Shri T.N. Bajpai, A.I.R.F. (N. Rly).
59. Shri K.L. Gupta, Zonal Secretary, A.I.R.F. (NE.Rly).
60. Shri S.S. Bhattacharjee, Zonal Secretary, AIRF (N.F. Rly).
61. Shri P. Govinda Menon, Zonal Secretary, AIRF (S. Rly).
62. Shri N.C. Roy Chowdhury, Zonal Secretary, AIRF (S.E.Rly).
63. Shri T.C. Jain, Zonal Secretary, A.I.R.F. (W. Rly).
64. Shri S.N. Patil, Zonal Secretary, A.I.R.F. (C. Rly.).
65. Shri J.D, Sharma, (Bombay)
66. Shri V.B. Manadeshwar, (Bombay-12)
67. Shri R.S. Bhatnagar, Gwallior, (U.P).
68. Shri B.D. Raut, (Bombay-14)
69. Shri R.Hanumant Rao, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)
70. Shri B.K. Gandharva, (Nagpur)
71. Shri K.N. Gokarn, (Poona-2)
72. Shri Y.P. Singh, Dalmia Nagar (Bihar)
73. Paritosh Banerjee, Howrah.
74. Shri Subhaschandra Mitra, Calcutta
75. Shri D.R. Adhikary, 24 Parganas, West Bengal.
76. Shri R. Sarhadi, New Delhi.
77. Shri Lalji Maliviya, Allahabad
78. Shri SriKrishna, Bikaner (Raj).
79. Shri D.D. Vashist, Delhi-6
80. Shri Ved Parkash Sinha, Gorakhpur.
81. Shri Genda Singh, Lucknow.
82. Shri Bhabesh Chandra Sen, Kamrup.
83. Shri Bidhu Sekhar Sen, Assam.
84. Shri Anil Das Sharma, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal.
85. Shri G. Ramchandran, S.Rly., Madras State.
86. Shri T. Umopathy, Aynavaram, S.Rly.
87. Shri T. Sivaraman, Tiruchirapalli Jn., (Madras State)
88. Shri P.B. Kotaya, Nagpur.
89. Shri B.J. Rayalu, Nagpur.
90. Shri S. Subramaniam, Calcutta.
91. Shri S.C. Sinha, Bilashpur.
92. Shri B.N. Joshi, Baroda.
93. Shri J.N. Bhatnagar, Ajmeer.

94. Shri G.B. Sukhee, Bombay.
95. Shri Jagdish Ajmera, Bombay.
96. Shri Jagdish Kohil, Ratlam (M.P.)
97. Shri S.R. Dass, Burdwan, West Bengal.
98. Shri Hareswar Goswami,
99. Shri M.L. Chatterjee,
100. Shri N.C. Batabyal,
101. Shri Sakti Bose,
102. Shri R.C. Sharma,
103. Shri Nibaran Bora,
104. Shri Bistu Roy Chowdhury,

Bekar Bhata Dabi Committee

Founder & President --- **Sibnath Banerjee**
EX, M. L. A.

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Ref, No

Date 18.8.77

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H.B. je karoj khuanu
 Sibnath Banerjee
 24 Jaganan.

B. K. MUKHERJEE

B enoy Kumar Mukherjee commonly known as B. K. Mukherjee was an employee of the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway, Lucknow and office-bearer by the O & R Railwaymen's Union. After the merger of the O & R Railway with the State managed E. I. Railway, the Union was renamed as E. I. Railwaymen's Union of which he became General Secretary sometimes in 1934 and continued till 1946. He was dismissed from Railway service without assigning any reason in May, 1934 after he organised a Railwaymen's Conference on 13th and 14th April 1934. He then became a full time worker of the Union. He was an energetic Trade Union worker and was considered as a pillar of All India Railwaymen's Federation in 1930. He was a Congressman and a freedom fighter during the British regime and suffered several imprisonments including the one during August 1942 movement. Although a Socialist by conviction he remained in National congress after the Congress Socialist party left it. After independence he became a member of Parliament representing Congress and Indian National Trade Union congress. In addition to Railway labour he was connected with Post & Telegraph labour organisation and represented in several foreign delegations.

He was a selfless man and led a very simple life. He was a true friend of working class.

P. C. DASGUPTA

P C. Dasgupta was a gem of the purest ray serene. He was born in 1916 in a remote village of Faridpur District of

East Bengal (now Bangladesh). He completed his early education in a school with great difficulty. He had to walk almost 10 miles to reach the school. His family circumstances was far from satisfactory. He obtained a scholarship in the Matriculation Examination and came to Calcutta for further studies. He stood first class first in Economics in the M.A. Examination of the University of Calcutta. He had also obtained a law degree later. Man has not the stature to make circumstances and so was it with Prad chandra Dasgupta who joined in the Railways as a "A grade" guard. The burden of his family compelled him to accept the job. He was the General Secretary of E. I. Rly. Employees' Association. He played a leading part in the amalgamation with E. I. Rlymen's Union and subsequently with old Bengal Assam Railway Employees' Association. He was elected General Secretary of the amalgamated union. He worked up his career in the Railways and was elevated to the highest rank. A smiling face full of confidence, courage and determination he had earned the goodwill and affection of all sections of railwaymen. He was in close relation with Jaya Prakash Dasgupta who used to address him as "My dear P. C.". He retired from Railway service in 1985. He was seriously ill since 1988 and passed away in January 1990. He was a man who could say "I Can".

He is sadly missed by many.

A. M. WILLIAMS

Born in a Punjabi family in East Bengal Mr. A. M. Williams was a Christian at an early age.

four languages Gurumukhi, Urdu and English and Bengali. He had little formal education and grew up to be a self-taught person. In 1920 he joined the East Indian company as a crewman for checking tickets in running trains. He was sincere, honest and dutiful. Nobody could escape his attention. He earned a name in his job and was transferred to Calcutta as TTE. It was a turning point in his life. Soon he made friendship with many young and old Bengalees. Once he charged excess fare from a next of keen of Nizam of Hyderabad and on a complaint from them he was almost loosing his job. But due to his good service career he was not punished. In Calcutta he married a Bengali girl of a reputed family of Comilla (Now in Bangladesh). Then he joined in the Trade Union Movement on the Railways and moved throughout E.I.Rly. At that time Rly. employees were afraid of losing jobs for joining the union. Later he became the General Secretary of E.I.Rly Employees' Association in January 1940 and held the post upto March 1946 and piloted this institution through its difficult phases. He had given his best to develop this organisation. Williams also made an impact on the All India Rlymen's Federation to which this union was affiliated. He was connected with the union of railwaymen of Darjeeling — Himalayan Rly. for some time. He came in contact with many other Trade Union leaders with political affiliations. Notable among them were Rajani Mukherjee, Maniben Kara, Jamnadas Mehta, Jyoti Basu, V. B. Karnik, Ashoke Mehta, Jaya Prakash Narayan and Sibnath Banerjee. He had a keen sense of humour and loved "adda" in Bengali homes. He had a large contingent of friends and admirers

amongst railwaymen. He was maintaining a good library. He edited a weekly paper named "Our Voice" — devoted to the cause of Rlymen. Prior to his retirement he was elevated upto the rank of Asstt. Personnel Officer of Eastern Railway. He was a follower of M. N. Roy's ideals. After retirement he was also associated with the union. He had spent his last life in seclusion. He died in the Mother Teresa's Charity - Hospital in Lucknow.

N. B. SEN

Mr. N. B. Sen was Born in 1906 in village Ranamati in the Bakharganj District (now in Bangladesh). His father Indu Bhusan Sen Inspector, Govt. Railway Police was known to a large number of Railwaymen. He completed early education from Thakargaon High School, Dinajpur. He was educated later in Scottish Church College, Calcutta and Jagannath College, Dacca. He was a freedom fighter. During the non-cooperation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi his studies were interrupted for active participation in struggle for Independence. He was an important Executive Member of the student Wing. He passed B.A. Examination from City college, Calcutta later and joined in Railway service in 1928. He became a member of the then East Indian Railway Employees' Association from its very birth. He was a man of character, initiative, and intelligence who could be trusted in any responsible work. He became Vice President of the E. I. R. Employees' Association in 1942 and held the post upto 1946 and became General Secretary of the Association in the Annual General

Meeting held in March' 46 at Moradabad. He died in 1947. He had the opportunity to discuss problems of Railwaymen with V.V. Giri, President of AIRF at that time.

Apart from his trade union activities he had worked relentlessly for maintaining communal peace and harmony during the 1946 riot in Calcutta.

D. P. JOSHI

Devendra Prasad Joshi commonly known as D. P. Joshi a leader of the Socialist Party at Lucknow joined the E.I. Railwaymen's Union as president of the Charbagh workshop Branch sometimes in 1946. He was deputed by the Party to work in the Railway workshop labour at Jamalpur with a view to bring them back to Socialist fold from the clutches of Communists, which he successfully did. He was a dynamic personality with militant views for fighting the cause of the Railwaymen and gave lead to many show downs in Lucknow, Moradabad and Allahabad divisions. He was Working President of E.I. Railway Employee's Union when Jayaprakash Narayan was its President. After partition of East Indian Railway into Eastern and Northern, he became President of the Northern Railwaymen's Union and revitalised it into a militant one. He was victim of conspiracy and had to leave the Northern Railwaymen's Union. He again became the Working President of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union in 1962 and its President in 1963.

D. P. Joshi was a bachelor and used to live a very simple life. A true friend of Railway labour died a premature death.

NIL KRISHNA SIRCAR

Nil Krishna Sircar born in 1898 at Midnapore passed the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University in 1912 with Gold Medal in Sanskrit. He was a brilliant student. He passed B.Sc. Examination with distinction and then passed the M.A. in English Examination with first Class. He was cost accountant in those days when the scope of Cost Accountancy was practically very little. He had completed the course of Bachelor of Law but did not appear in the final examination.

He belonged to the family of freedom fighters. Between 1926 to 1930 three British Magistrates were assassinated in Midnapore and in this connection one of his brother was sentenced to life imprisonment and another brother was sent to gallows. The entire family was forbidden from entering into the Midnapore township for a long time.

He joined the B. N. P. as an Accountant at Garden Reach during the Post-First World War period. This was at a time when the emergence of Russian Revolution of the Working class in 1917 had a new dimension to the thought and concept of aspirations of the working class all over the world. It was in the vortex of this situation in 1920 that I. Rly. Indian Labour Union was formed and Sircar joined the Union.

He was associated for a long time with Railway Trade Union movement during the historic strike of Kharagpur in 1924 and lock-out of workshops in 1925 for months. When the Government took oppressive measures to crush the Union struggle, difference of opinion among leadership surfaced on the question

of spreading the strike all over the Railway and on the modus operandi for conducting the strike. In the end the difference between V. V. Giri's followers and the dissidents including W. V. R. Naidu, Nilkrishna Sircar and others further widened which resulted in the formation of two more unions on the B. N. Rly e.g. B. N. Rly Workers' Union headed by Mukundalal Sarkar & W.V.R. Naidu and B. N. Rly. Employees' Union under N. C. Sen Bar-at-Law as President and Nilkrishna sircar as its General Secretary. He was the uncontested General Secretary for a number of years.

N. K. Sircar maintained a balanced relations with Administration and had two strikes at Garden Reach to his credit led by Shanti Chakraborty, Satyen Kar & others from 26th Jan to 30th January 1948.

With the reorganisation of the zonal Rlys in 1952 the old B. N. and old E. I. Rly. upto Moghalsarai was renamed as Eastern Rly. In line with the administrative set-up the three affiliates of AIRF e.g. B. N. Rly. Indian Labour Union, B. N. Rly Employees' Union and E. I. Rly. Employees' Union were merged into one single and biggest union on Indian Rlys under the name and style of Eastern Rlymen's Union. In a joint extraordinary convention held at Waltair in June 1955 the said merger was effected. Nil Krishna Sircar became Assistant Genl. Secretary while K. M. Bhadra and P. C. Das Gupta & R. C. Chakravarty became Vice-President, Genl. Secy. and Assistant Genl. Secy. of the union respectively.

During the 2nd World War Mr. Sircar served as ARP Deputy Chief Warden in B. N. Railway Headquarters. Mr. Fitzgerald, the British General Manager was the

Chief Warden. In 1942 the Japanese sheles landed on the Railway siding near the headquarters office, Mr. Sircar had saved one of the Deputy Wardens and a few class IV category staff from the nearly inevitable death at the risk of his life. In recognition of his brave and heroic service, he was honoured with the title of Rai Sahib. Mr. Sircar, however, renounced the title later. He had taken a leading part in maintaining communal harmony after the Great killing in Calcutta in 1946.

Mr. Sircar had a well-built up stature with in-built wisdom to see things in a clear perspective to make his decision without being influenced by other.

Judged by the circumstances of his period he was certainly a man of courage and devotion. Railway on this region of the country is proud of his contribution in the betterment of railwaymen.

This celebrated Trade Unionist left this world in 1962.

A. P. SHARMA

Late Shri A. P. Sharma was one of the colourful personalities that the Indian Labour Movement did ever throw up. Beginning his career as Ticket Collector on the E. I. Railway he rose to be the President of the NFIR and also the President of the premier national labour centre namely the INTUC. Born in a lower middle class family he became a full-fledged Cabinet Minister in the Cabinet of Smt. Indira Gandhi and was also appointed as Governor of Punjab and West Bengal.

Shri A. P. Sharma was born on December 25, 1919 in a small village Gaudand presently in Bhojpur District of Bihar. His father Sh. Ram Naresh Sharma an upright God fearing and contented man was a poor low paid employee of the E. I. Railway.

Shri A. P. Sharma started his early primary education in the nearby Rudranagar and Sitarampur, he later joined the D. A. V. School at Asansol and the Town School in Ara for his High School education. After completing his High School, Sh. Sharma later joined the Bihar National College in Patna which was known for its high quality education and strict discipline. In those days Bihar Students Federation which was Bihar Branch of the All-India Students Federation under the leadership of Communist Party, was very strong. By temperament and conviction Sh. Sharma did not like Communist ideology and way of working and took lead in setting up All Bihar Students Federation with Dr. Srikrishna Sinha as a President. Sh. Sharma himself became the Joint General Secretary.

From his High School days Sh. Sharma began to take interest in political matters and particularly in the Indian National Congress. He attended the Tripuri Congress Session.

While politics greatly attracted him, the poor family circumstances forced him to end the student life and seek employment on the Railways. From the beginning Sh. Sharma was attracted to Trade Union activities and he began to take part in the local branch. Soon with his hard and dedicated work Sh. Sharma earned a name for himself amongst the E. I. Railwaymen and in a few years was elected as General Secretary of the Union.

In the wake of independence, the INTUC was formed and subsequently the INRWF. Having been an anti-Communist, Shri Sharma was necessarily drawn to the INTUC and INRWF. As a founder member, he set himself to organise Railwaymen under the banner of INRWF. Shri Sharma was elected as a working President of the INRWF and later in 1952 at the Fourth Convention of INRWF at Bhavnagar he was elected as its General Secretary and Shri Harihar Nath Shastri became the President. With the merger of INRWF and AIRF into NFIR in 1952 Shri Sharma became the Assistant General Secretary of the merged Federation. Unfortunately the merger did not last long. In the First National Convention of the NFIR at Vijaywada in November, 1955 he was elected as Vice President with Shri S. R. Vasavada as the President. He was Vice President of the NFIR till 1958 when he was elected as the General Secretary which post he continued to hold till 1969. In 1969 he was elected as the President and continued to hold the post till 1974 when he joined the Indira Gandhi Government as a Minister. Later on two occasions when he was not in Ministry Shri Sharma was invited and unanimously made the President of the NFIR. Due to failing health he retired from the post of Presidentship in 1986.

Shri Sharma was an active full time Trade Unionist. His base was the Eastern Railway but he functioned successfully at national level as the General Secretary of the NFIR and later its President. Following in Gandhian ideology, he had always a constructive approach to problems. He believed in the efficacy of decision by discussion failing which by Arbitration. In his long career as a Railway Labour

leader he successfully conducted a number of negotiations resulting in amelioration of the condition of the Railwaymen. He proved to be a shrewd and successful negotiator and he had a good grasp of Railwaymen's problems and he knew the art of putting across his point of view. This made Shri A.P. Sharma popular both amongst the administration and the Labour.

The Joint Consultation Machinery for Central Government employees including Railways was established in 1969 providing for compulsory Arbitration for the settlement of disputes in Government departments failing agreement. Though not statutory this was a highly prestigious institution. Shri A. P. Sharma then the President of the NFIR was elected unanimously as leader of the Staff side which post he continued to hold with distinction throughout. So much so that when he came back to his Trade Union career from his political activities as the Minister, he was again and again chosen as the leader unanimously by the Staff side members in spite of their different political colours. While in the JCM he led joint Delegation of the officials and staff side to United Kingdom, Germany and ILO to study the working of Whitley Council in U. K., Co-determination System of Germany and Joint Consultation methods in other countries.

Shri A. P. Sharma proved that he was not only a successful Trade Union leader but he could be a successful political leader as well. On account of his amiable nature and effective Trade Union work he was already well known in Bihar Congress circles and also in the Congress circles at the All India level. He got his first opportunity to make a name for himself

in 1962 when he fought against the Maharaja of Domerao for the Lok Sabha seat from Buxar. In 1968 Shri A. P. Sharma was elected as Member of Rajya Sabha from Bihar. In 1971 once again Shri Sharma was given Congress ticket to fight the Lok Sabha seat from the very Buxar constituency, this time against Dr. Ram Sabhag Singh who having left the Congress had joined the opposition party. In 1974 he was elected as the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in Parliament with Smt. Indira Gandhi as the Leader. The same year Shri Sharma joined the Indira Gandhi Cabinet as Minister of State for Industry and Civil Supplies.

The Congress was in pretty bad shape in 1967 and 1972. During this difficult time he was entrusted the work of Bihar Pradesh Congress as its President which post he occupied for four years. In 1969 when there was mid term poll in Bihar Shri Sharma led Congress Party to an unprecedented victory. During this time he was Member of the Central Working Committee of the Congress.

In the General Election held in 1977, the Congress was badly defeated, so once again he came back to the field of his first love namely labour and became the President of the NFIR. In the Annual Session held at Indore in 1978, he was unanimously elected as the President of the INTUC. When Indira Gandhi came back to power in 1980 having swept the elections, he joined the Indira Gandhi Cabinet as a Cabinet Minister and served in various Ministries.

Shri Sharma always took abiding interest in Trade Union activities. In 1956 he attended the ILO General Session at Geneva as a Member of the Workers Delegation. He visited USSR on the

invitation of the Soviet Railway Trade Union. He participated in the Inland Transport Committee Meeting of the ILO in Geneva. He visited U. K. in 1978 on the invitation of the British Trade Union Congress to participate in its 110th Annual Convention. When he was the President of the INTUC, he was elected as the Vice President of the ICFTU with its Headquarter at Brussel.

It must be said to the credit of Shri A. P. Sharma that he had a successful Parliamentary career for nearly a decade and a half. As elected Member of the Parliament, Chairman of various Committees and as Minister-in-charge of Industry and Civil Supplies, Transport and Communication he earned a name for himself for his efficiency and good work.

Being a natural leader he also filled with distinction the gubernatorial posts. In 1983, he was appointed as Governor of Punjab and later as a Governor of West Bengal.

The veteran leader Shri A. P. Sharma passed away on October 12, 1988 as a result of heart disease.

By Courtesy— Keshav H. Kulkarni

AMARNATH BOSE

Amarnath Bose was born in 1884 at Meerut where his father was employed in the Commissariat. He came back to Bengal in 1910 and joined in the Bengal Nagpur Railway (B.N.R.) in 1912 as a Clerk in Store Accounts. At the end of the second decade of the twentieth century the whole of India was seething in discontent against the British Rule. The brute face of colonialism came out in the open in the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre

and martial law in Punjab and the British Government undertook repressive legislative measures to curb the freedom of the Indian in the form of Rowlatt Bills. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms satisfied none and the Indian Muslims, betrayed by the British, started the Khilafat Movement. In such a situation, when organised working class movement was still in a formative stage in India, Amarnath Bose defied the might of British colonial masters to protect the rights of railway workers. In 1919 there was a strike at Kharagpur Railway Workshop which had a tremendous impact upon railwaymen and inspired them to form a union. Amarnath Bose and some of his colleagues played a vital and pioneering role at this time in forming the All India Railway Labour Union with N. G. Sen Bar-at-Law, as its first President. At the first General Meeting of this body held on April 23, 1921 its name was changed unanimously and was renamed as Bengal Nagpur Railway Indian Labour Union and Amarnath Bose was elected as the first General Secretary. The formation of B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union in early twenties definitely had much impact in furtherance of working class movement in future.

During the historic strike and lock-out at Kharagpur Workshop on 9th February 1927 Amarnath Bose took a leading part. Subsequently, a group from the B. N. Railway Indian Labour Union, formed a separate union named as Bengal Nagpur Railway Employees' Union. It was registered under the Trade Union Act of 1926 and its registered number was 1000 Bengal. This union together with the B.N.R. Indian Labour Union continued to be affiliated to AIRF till 1953.

At the fourth session of the Convention of the AIRF held at Cawnpore on 25th November 1927, A. N. Bose became Asstt. Secretary. When workers of Liluah workshop resumed work on 8th August 1928 after a continuous struggle for more than four months under the leadership of K. C. Mitra, he along with V. V. Giri then General Secretary AIRF visited Liluah to study the situation and appealed for public help. At the second Half Yearly meeting between the Railway Board and the AIRF Deputation held at Simla on 25th & 26th June, 1931, A. N. Bose had a privilege to represent B. N. Rly along with Jamnadas Mehta and V. V. Giri, the then President and General Secretary of All India Railwaymen's Federation.

We most gratefully remember this selfless, fearless and dedicated trade union leader who never compromised with any injustice and always stood by the side of railwaymen in their struggle for the furtherance of their cause while imperial Britain was trying to smother them with its policy of 'blood and iron'. Small wonder, Amarnath Bose had to suffer a lot during his long career. He had never been in the good book of the administration and had to retire as a Stock Verifier. His sons were denied entry into service under the B.N.R. although his eldest son, a reputed first class Cricketer at that time, appeared in an interview for a job for which he had due qualifications too. After retiring as Stock Verifier in 1942 this noted trade unionist moved to Calcutta where he died on 17th September 1944. He was closely associated with Mirnalkanti Bose, V. V. Giri, C. R. Das, E.L.Iyer, V.R. Kalappa, T. P. Chaudhuri, A. P. Routjee, K. N. Muttu, V. R. Naidu, B. D. Pathalu and others.

HUMAYUN KABIR

Humayun Kabir, an educationist and Professor of Philosophy in Calcutta University joined the Railway Trade Union as President of B.A. Railway Employees' Association in the year 1945. He was a Nationalist and attached to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, President of the National Congress whom he served as Secretary.

During his Presidentship the B.A. Railway Employees' Association was organisationally in highest peak. He as President visited all important Branches of the Association and addressed them. When Justice Rajadhyaksha was appointed Adjudicator to adjudicate the dispute of working hours and leave of Railwaymen, Prof Kabir helped him as an assessor. Railwaymen found in him a champion of their cause and wanted him to represent them in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. In those days Bombay, Madras and Bengal Presidencies had one seat each in the legislative assemblies reserved for Railwaymen. J. N. Gupta founded the B.A. Railway Employees' Association and B. A. Railway Employees' Association was member in the assembly contesting the said reserved seat which was won in election in 1946. Jyoti Basu then Chief Minister, West Bengal was then president of B.A. Railway Employees' Union. Both Humayun Kabir and Jyoti Basu contested in the said reserved seat and Humayun Kabir lost by a narrow margin. With the independence of the Country and partition of B.A. Railway Employees' Association into I. Railwaymen's Union and E. Railwaymen's Association were merged. Jayaprakash Narayan as President, Humayun Kabir stepped down and joined politics.

PETER ALVARES

Peter Alvares a devoted Socialist and follower of Jayaprakash Narayan helped organising G.I.P. Railway Mazdoor Panchayet, (an Union in the G. I. P. Railway) against the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union which was under the control of the Communists. He was Asstt. General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation from 1947 to 1953 when the Federation was amalgamated with Indian national Railway Workers' Federation to form the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen. He came back as General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. in Poona convention held on 14.8.1957 and continued as such till 1968, after which he became the President of the Federation. He lost the election in a straight contest with George Fernandez in Secunderabad convention held in October 1973. He was an ardent fighter for Goa's liberation and became Member of the Parliament from the said Constituency. He as General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. led the General strike of July 1960 and Token strike of September 1968. He shifted the A.I.R.F. office from Bombay to New Delhi in 1963 and maintained a good Secretariat. He also published a monthly journal 'The Indian Railwayman' as organ of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. He was a sobre, soft spoken and good negotiator and secured very many benefits for Railwaymen. Grant of Bonus for Railwaymen was one of his great achievements. He died a premature death sometimes in 1974.

KIRON CHOWDHURY

Kiron Chowdhury a Welfare Inspector in the B.A. Railway, became General Secretary of the B.A. Railway Employees' Association after R. N. Bagchi General Secretary opted for Pakistan on partition of the Country. He was a good orator and a good organiser too. After formation of the E.I. Railway Employees' Union and Eastern Railwaymen's union he continued to be an office-bearer, either Vice-President or Working President till the strike of July 1960. During the strike he played a vital role and as Working President fought against victimisation of striking workers.

P. K. CHATTERJEE

P. K. Chatterjee commonly known as Pratul Chatterjee was Assistant General Secretary of B.A. Railway Employees' Association from 1943 when R. N. Bagchi was the General Secretary. He was although not a good orator but a good penman and used to do most of the representations and literary work of the Association. Humayun Kabir was much impressed about his work. When the B.A. Railway Employees' Association was amalgamated with the E. I. Railwaymen's Union and E. I. Railway Employees' Association after partition of the country and the Railway, he became Assistant General Secretary of the amalgamated Union (E.I. Railway Employees' Union) in December 1948. He also became the Treasurer of the All India Railwaymen's Federation in early 1948, and continued till 1950. When the Joint Advisory

Committee was appointed in May 1949 to go into the anomalies arising out of the application of the recommendations of the Central Pay Commission to Railway employees, he represented the Federation along with S. Guruswami, Harihar Nath Shastri and R. A. Khedgikar. P. K. Chatterjee although qualified did never agree to become General Secretary of the Association and when R. N. Bagchi General Secretary opted for Pakistan, he pro-posed Kiron Chowdhury to be the General Secretary. He was a knowledgeable person and was helpful to everybody.

MURLIDHAR DUBEY

M. D. Dubey as he was known commonly was elected as Vice-President of E. I. Rly. Employees' Association in March 1946 and Working President in August 1947. He continued in the Eastern Railwaymen's Union as Office-bearer till the Asansol Annual General meeting of 1957 after which he accepted the Gazetted Post. M.D. Dubey was highly respected for his honesty, integrity, and sobriety. His technical knowledge helped the Union in solving many grievances. He was General Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union in 1954 when the Railway had jurisdiction from Moghalsarai to Waltair and Nagpur. He had a loving personality and was a good negotiator. He had no enemy and was respected by all.

R. A. KHEDGIKAR

Born in October 1887 in the village Sindagi, dist. Bijpur, Maharashtra, Mr. R. A. Khedgikar had his early

education in Kannada, Marathi and English. In early twenties of this century, Khedgikar associated himself largely with the Indian Labour Movement and principally on the Railways. He became the President of Ex. Great Indian Peninsula Railwaymen's Union and was also elected Vice-President of All India Railwaymen's Federation in the year 1947 at Gorakhpur Convention. At Gorakhpur biennial Convention it was demanded and subsequently accepted by Railway Ministry that a Classification Tribunal of skilled and unskilled artisan staff should be set up. The Railway Board agreed to the proposal and Khedgikar became a member of the said Tribunal on behalf Railway Labour. He also became a member in Rly. Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) formed by Railway Board in 1949. On several occasions he attended International Labour Conference in London and Paris. He was a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly from 1937 to 1952 and although he was elected to the next Legislative Council he resigned on the Marathi Maharashtra Issue.

This Veteran Trade Union Leader and one of the founders of AIRF among the Railwaymen for more than 50 years, died in Bombay on the 25th Feb. 1962 at the age of 78.

MANIBEN KARA

Maniben Kara was born in 1891 in a rich business house of Bhatsa Camp. Although her father Liladhar Kara was a great lover of Art and Drama, it is a paradox, that Maniben having a relationship with big Industrial Houses and being the daughter of such a family of art, devoted herself to the cause of

working class. After completing the course of social service in England, she returned to Bombay in 1929 and initiated some Projects in the Municipal Colony. It was the turning point of her life and she formed Municipal Workers' Union in 1930. Since then she marched forward to dedicate herself to the cause of working class in different spheres namely Girni Kamgar Union, Textile Workers' Union, Western Railway Employees' Union and lastly All India Railwaymen's Federation. She was also convicted under Section 124 and 153 of I.P.C. for a speech in a "May Day" meeting in 1932. She presided over the Bombay Session of AITUC in 1936. She was arrested and detained under D.I.R. in connection with Central Govt. Employees' Strike in 1960. She was awarded 'Padmashree' by the President of India in 1970. With courage and conviction she had been in the mainstream of emancipation of the working class and occupied a place of pride amongst the toiling mass for her selfless service and devotion. During the long and eventful period she was president of Indian Federation of Labour and went to England to attend the Foundation Conference of W.F.T.U. She was nominated as a member of the Central Legislative Assmby in 1946.

She visited London to attend the Foundation Conference of ICFTU. and was elected a member of its Executive Council. She also visited U.S.A on Leadership Exchange Programme in 1952. She died on the 28th Oct. 1979.

A. M. SAHAY

Mr. Anandamohan Sahay of Nath Nagar in the Bhagalpur District of

Bihar was the President of the E.I. Railway Employees' Association during late forties. He was a Minister of the Provisional Azad Hind Government established by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose prior to Independence of India. His eldest daughter Captain Asha was also associated with Azad Hind Fauz. His second daughter was married in Mauritius when he was Ambassador of India in Mauritius. His third daughter was married to the eldest son of S. P. Varma, Inspector General of Police. On his return from Mauritius Mr. Sahay was Secretary to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India. He joined the E. I. Rly Employees' Association as its President and during that time P. C. Das Gupta was the General Secretary of the E. Rly Employees' Association. Mr. Sahay's association with Azad Hind Fauz speaks of his sense of patriotism, courage and sacrifice for the independence of India. During his time with Railway Trade Union Movement, he had brought home to the railwaymen that courage, hope and purpose could be found by the knowledge of a new order of things in our social system and towards that end no sacrifice could be termed as great. He considered trade unions as centres of growing and becoming healthy members of a civilised society.

PRIYA GUPTA

Born in July 1921, Priya Gupta was selected as Assistant Electrical Foreman in the B.A. Railway in Gorakhpur in 1944. While posted at Badarpur in 1946 he joined the B.A. Railway Employees' Association. After Partition of the Railway he joined the newly formed Assam

Railway Labour Association and became its Joint General Secretary in 1951 with Nibaran Bera as General Secretary. Although selected for the Gazetted post of Assistant Electrical Engineer he refused to accept the same just to continue in the Trade Union.

After the formation of Zonal Railways he became the General Secretary of N.E. Railway Mazdoor Union in October 1955. His activities enraged the Railway Administration and the Railway Minister Lal Bhadur Shastri with the result that his services were terminated by the General Manager N.E. Railway under rule 148 R. I. in 1956. This Rule was challenged in the Allahabad High Court and later in the Supreme Court of India who declared the said Rule 148-RI as ultravires. Although Priya Gupta was reinstated in Railway Service he did not accept the same and continued to work in the Trade Union. Although the Assam Portion of N.F. Railway was exempted from the strike of July 1960, the strike was successful in other areas of N.F. Railway due to untiring efforts of Priya Gupta. He was arrested at Katihar along with others. In the year 1962, Priya Gupta contested Lok Sabha election from Katihar as a Praja Socialist Party Candidate and was elected by defeating Congress Candidate. He was elected as General Secretary of the A.I.R.F. in August 1968 at Jamalpur and continued as such till the strike of 1974 after which he became Working President and subsequently President. He left this mortal world on 12th August in 1979. Priya Gupta was a fearless, uncompromising and militant Trade Union leader with rare qualities. he was a bachelor and led a very simple life. In his death the

Railwaymen lost a friend, Philosopher and guide.

S. K. MUKHERJEE

S. K. Mukherjee known as Sudhir Mukherjee, a Puncher in Fuel Section of CAO's Statistical office became Treasurer of E.I. Railway Employees' Association in 1940 when the financial position of the Union was very bad. He in short time repaid the debts and cleared House rent dues, thus earning a reputation for him. He was a soft spoken man and silent worker. He was instrumental in enrolling many good workers including Ram Chakravarty and helped organising the Branches of the Association in upper divisions of E.I.R. He was friend to all and enemy to none.

PARITOSH BANERJEE

Paritosh Banerjee an Asst. Booking Clerk in the E.I. Railway at Jamalpur and a Socialist by conviction was a member of E.I. Railway Employees' Association. He was much attracted by the dynamic personality of Sibnath Banerjee and joined the E.I. Railwaymen's Union sometimes in 1938. He was a good worker and organiser and during the pre-independence period worked for the All India Trade Union Congress. He joined the Hind Mazdoor Sabha after its formation in 1948 and was associated with it in various capacities till his death in 1963. Paritosh Banerjee was Organising Secretary of the Eastern Railwaymen's Union from time to time upto 1963 and became General Secretary thereafter. He became

President of the Union after the death of Rajendra Singh and continued as such till Bimal Dey replaced him in 1983. He represented A.I.R.F. in the 28th Congress of International Transport Federation held at Copenhagen in July-August 1965.

He was an admirer of George Fernandez and worked for his election as President of A.I.R.F. at Secundrabad Convention in 1973. He was a friend to working class and stood by them in many struggles. His hard labour in making the Strike of July 1960 a success was praiseworthy. This much lamented leader left this world very recently due to heart failure.

S. K. CHOWDHURY

Known as Subodh Chowdhury, he became the first Branch Secretary of E.I. Rly Employees' Association at Calcutta Hd. Qrt. office in early 1946. In those days Calcutta Branch of the Association could represent grievances to Heads of Departments and Deputy General Manager (Personnel). He enhanced the prestige and position of the Association with his good penmanship and persuasive arguments with the Administration. The Administration was so much impressed with him that the General Manager permitted the Branch to take Strike Ballot of 1946 in the Railway premises. An unique honour was shown to the Association when S. K. Chowdhury was asked to hoist the National Flag in Fairlie Place on 15th August 1947 the Independence Day. He was althrough a well wisher of the Union and its friend, philosopher and guide.

V. R. MALGI

When the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union was expelled from the All India Railwaymen's Federation in its General Council meeting held at Danapur in February 1949 for disobeying A.I.R.F.'s mandate, another Union viz. G.I.P. Railway Mazdoor Panchayet was formed. Sri V. R. Malgi was one of the pioneers in forming the Union along with P. R. Singh and Peter Alvares. After amalgamation of the said Panchayet with the INRWF Union, the Union was renamed as National Railway Mazdoor Union. Sri Malgi served the said Union in various capacity and when P. R. Singh General Secretary resigned on the eve of the General Strike of 1960, V. P. Malgi came forward and gave a bold lead. Malgi along with P. R. Singh and A. P. Varma was instrumental in bringing back Peter Alvares in AIPF in the Annual Convention at Poona in 1957. His understanding of the Railwaymen's problems was thorough and his delivery was convincing. He helped Peter Alvares in almost all important matters and problems of A.I.R.F. so long the Federation office was in Bombay. He represented the Federation as a delegate in the 28th Congress of International Transport Federation held at Copenhagen in July-August 1965.

V. R. Malgi while organising the strike of 1974 under leadership of George Fernandez was arrested on 2nd May 1974, unfortunately collapsed in the office of the Assistant Commissioner of Police Bombay. Thus the Railwaymen lost an ardent fighter for their cause in the death of Malgi.

WE ALSO SALUTE

We also Salute the following departed souls who by their hard labour and sacrifice furthered the cause of the Railway Trade Union movement in Eastern Region :—

J. S. Gillard, D. K. Biswas, S. N. Bose, S. N. Ghosh, P. K. Munshi, Pulin Sen, Santi Sen, Biswanath Roy, Promode Kumar Dasgupta, N. N. Sinha, K. K. Dutta, P. K. Mukherjee, Khagen Mazumder, Pankaj Chatterjee, N. R. Roy, P. Dayal, Dulal Chatterjee, S. C. Nandy, P. K. Adhikary, R. N. Roy, Mandhata Prasad Varma, Rameswar Prasad. J. P.

Asthana, Batuk Bhattacharya, R. N. Chowdhury., Buddhoo Ram, P. P. Roy, A. N. Das, Sati Banerjee, A. M. A. R. Patni, Jibesh Prasad, P. N. Chatterjee, Bhabadeb Banerjee, Sri Krishna Sinha, P. S. Tandon, S. K. Dey, B. K. Dey, D. M. Ganguly, Kedar Nath, Brajagovinda Ghosh, B. Singh, Deoki Nandan, Pinak Paul, Sukumar Roy, T. N. Roy, P. C. Moitra, U. N. Singh, B. T. Burman, Basudev Majumder, R. K. Mukherjee, Buttokrishna Mitra, D. R. Adhikary Jnau Thakur, Ujal Thakur, N. R. Adhikary, Subodh Acharjee, S. S. Dutta and many others.