

R.A. Mittal, Railway, HMS/AIRF, Delhi

Name	R.A. Mittal, Railway, HMS/AIRF
Date of Interview	September 25, 2002
Time	11.00 am to 1.45 pm.
Place	HMS Head Office in Delhi (Near Shankar Market, CP)
Context	R.A. Mittal is also one of the senior leaders of HMS and at the senior leadership level in AIRF. He is an old trade union leader and reflects that seniority. He is very articulate and forthright in his narration.
Interviewers	Anil Rajimwale & Bobby Poullose.

Biographical Sketches

R.A. Mittal joined the trade union movement in the process of his activities during the 1960 rail strike in which he did not participate but formed the All India Train Examiners Association at Barelley. In the 1968 strike he led in stopping the trains and lost his job which he got only when the Janta Party came to power in 1977. He was also one of the leaders in the 1974 strike.

Transcript Summary

R.A. Mittal narrated his TU life and strikes he participated in and organized. His birthplace was in UP the town of Bulandshar. He did his education in Delhi & Saharanpur and got a job in railways as Apprentice Train Examiner (Mechanical). His job is to certify the fitness of a train and only after that it leaves. He joined his training for the job in Lucknow in 1958 and got his degree in 1963. He joined Delhi in a working post.

He said that he joined the trade union movement in the process of his activities in the formation of the All India Train Examiners Association in Barelley. Though **R.A. Mittal said that he did not participate in the 1960 strike** but he was involved in the effort to unify All India Train Examiners & Chargemens Association & All India Apprentice & Ex Apprentice Association and form the All India Train Examiners Association at Barelley. During the 1960 railway strike he along with others fought for the wage-scale upgradation of these categories i.e. Train Examiners used to get at that time Rs. 150/- & Chargemen were getting Rs. 225/-. The demand R.A. Mittal and others of the category-wise unions were making in 1960 was get Rs.425/- to the Train Examiners & Rs. 380/- for Chargemen. Of course **in the 1960 strike the category-wise unions managed to get their demands met.** However, R.A. Mittal was not involved in the 1960 railway strike.

As regards **the 1968 strike R.A. Mittal not only participated in it but was very much with the leaders.** One of the main problems in the Train Examiners Association was that it was split between the promotes & direct recruits. The promotes were usually for the AIRF whereas the direct recruits were belonging to NFIR. Mr. Mittal described in detail how he stopped along with other leaders in leading the march on 1st September 1968 early morning at 6 am at Delhi rail station in stopping the Kalka Mail. As regards the NFIR's role it was with the government in getting strikers arrested. Due to his active role in the 1968 strike R.A. Mittal was thrown out of service but later got his job back thanks to the efforts of AIRF and coming to power of the Janta Party government in 1977. Mr. Mittal revealed that the portion in the Rail Minister's speech in which he announced in the Parliament that all victims of the 1974 rail strike will be taken back to service. Mittal said the role played by Madhu Dandavate was really great. After the 1968 strike Mittal was involved by the union in writing answers to the chargesheets. He said that due to this experience he was known as an expert in this job. Mittal also revealed that he made lots of membership in the Delhi Loco Shed & in the Carriage & Wagon Sheds. Personally he said that his child was born during the 1968 railway strike. As far as the 1968 strike is concerned Mittalji said that it can be called a one shift strike for the railways because effectively the strike was according the timings of the Central Govt. Employees i.e. from 9 am in the morning to 5 pm in the evening. This for the railways amounts to only one shift and not a day's work, as for the railways a full day strike would mean stopping all trains from 12 am in the morning to next day 12 pm at midnight. This did not happen effectively for the railways as strike as it was along with the Central Govt. Employees

was only from 8 am in the morning till 5 pm in the evening which is a day's work for them but not so for the rail workers. The 1968 strike was important in the sense that it was the first time the railways and the Govt. employees came together over certain issues like Wages & Bonus. The strike had lot of victims and after the 1968 strike the issue of victimization became very important.

As far as the 1974 rail strike is concerned R.A. Mittal said that it was historic in many ways. It was the first time that all the categories were united in struggle and the mobilization from even the category-wise was very good. George Fernandes was brought in to lead the strike from Bombay. He was not in favor of the strike and prior to the strike he was a Bombay based leader of the Taxi Drivers Association. Mittal said the strike was the decision of the entire committee and not of one individual i.e. Fernandes as is popularly believed. Mittalji was involved in the strike from 1st May 1974 and on 2nd May 1974 thousands of rail workers all over the country were arrested including the leaders. One of the most significant achievements of the 1974 rail strike (though the workers had to struggle till the 1977 Janta Party govt. to get the full due and freedom victimization) was the success they got on the issues of Bonus and more importantly on the issue of Promotion. It was as a result of the 1974 strike that the whole promotion policy in the railways improved radically and today only 17% of the total railway cadre is in Class III. All rail workers would get promotion in his life in his category and chances to reach the top improved and more percentage would get a chance to reach that level. This was a great boost as regards work life for the rail workers.