

TOWARDS BETTER INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

**Decisions of General Managers' Conference
(January 21-22, 1974)**



**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI - 110001.**

DECISIONS OF GENERAL MANAGERS' CONFERENCE

AT THEIR CONFERENCE with the Railway Board on January 21 and 22, 1974, held in New Delhi, the General Managers studied in depth the problem of maintaining industrial peace on the Railways, in the context of the wild-cat strikes, go-slow, work-to-rule and work-to-designation agitations in recent months.

These strikes and agitations have had disastrous consequences on Railway operations and finances, especially at a time when, in the light of the continuing shortages of essential goods, the transport infra-structure of the nation is required to be geared to render prompt and efficient service to industry, agriculture and the travelling public.

Twice in the past months, one-fourth of Railways' wagon fleet was immobilised and nearly a thousand goods trains were stabled. Hundreds of passenger trains had to be cancelled and those which were operated ran hours behind schedule.

The General Managers, however, noted with satisfaction that notwithstanding these strikes and agitations, the movement of essential goods, like coal for power houses, raw materials for steel plants and other vital industries, foodgrains and petroleum products, was maintained.

This was achieved in the face of forbidding circumstances, thanks to the unflinching devotion to work of the vast body of railwaymen. Many of them put in long hours of duty, braving intimidation and violence from those who chose to tread the path of agitations. Not only the entire body of officers and men rendered devoted service under very trying circumstances, but nearly 98 per cent of the staff also remained at their posts of duty.

This proved beyond doubt that only a small section of railwaymen had strayed from the path of discipline and devotion.

The General Managers reviewed the labour relations policy in force on the Railways. Legitimate trade unionism has always had a respectable place in the Indian Railways. Many of our best trade union leaders, including the present President of the Republic, Shri V. V. Giri, have been associated with Railway Trade Unions.

Over the years the Railways have developed an excellent negotiating machinery for a continuous dialogue between the management and the employees at all levels—at the Divisional level, the Zonal headquarters and at the Railway Board.

Thanks to this machinery, the Railways have had a strike-free run for the past nearly two decades. Unfortunately, during the past few months, elements seeking recognition for categorywise unions, have sought to stir up trouble which has posed a serious threat to legitimate trade unionism on the Railways.

The General Managers recognised that to meet the challenge there was need to reorient management techniques. They particularly appreciated the Railway Minister's advice to them, at the inauguration of their Conference, to have better communication between the management and the workers.

They expressed their firm resolve to narrow the communication gap and follow the Minister's call for reinforcing discipline for efficient and prompt service to the people.

The General Managers' Conference agreed upon the following measures:—

(1) To discourage elements instigating strikes and agitations and prevent unwary railwaymen from becoming a victim to their

IN MY ADDRESS to the General Managers of the Indian Railways recently, I called for an enlightened man-management policy. Better communication with the vast body of railwaymen is an essential element of such enlightened man-management. **We cannot ensure the co-operation of the staff and industrial labour if the communication gap exists.**

At the same time, there should be no laxity or relaxation in discipline. In any efficient and effective administration, discipline is the first need. Of late, there has been an alarming decline in discipline and responsibility on the part of sections of railway workers.

We have to take a serious note of it, and cannot allow the situation to drift any more. We must cry a halt to it.

I am glad that the General Managers made a serious attempt to analyse the problem.

It is heartening that despite a spate of strikes and agitations, the vast bulk of railwaymen stood at the post of duty under very trying circumstances.

I assure them that their services will not go unrecognised.

Lalit Narayan Mishra
Minister of Railways

propaganda, the principle of "no work no pay" should be rigidly enforced. This would also strengthen the will of the vast bulk of railwaymen, who have no desire to stop work, to stick to the post of duty and not to lend a sympathetic ear to the voices of disruption. If those who go on strike are paid for their absence, it would be tantamount to treating them on par with those men who have shown devotion in any emergency and might act as an incentive to strikes.

(2) Among the several factors which have contributed to the railwaymen's attachment to his job was the knowledge that his children would get preference in employment on the Railways. Special consideration should be given to those employees who render exemplary work, particularly during periods of strain and stress. **By extending the principle of appointment on compassionate grounds, their wards should be given special preference in employment opportunities on the Railways. A percentage of Class III and IV posts would be made available for this purpose.**

(3) Extension of service for a limited period may be granted to those who render outstanding services during emergencies. In addition, advance increments could also be considered in specially deserving cases.

(4) Full protection should be assured to all willing workers and their families.

The Railway Board fully endorsed the measures adopted by the Conference.

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