

GOVERNMENT TRIBUNALS

AND THE

DEMANDS OF RAILWAYMEN

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ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

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NOTE

THIS report on the demands of railwaymen is being published in order to help the railway workers, their unions and the NFIR in placing their case before the Sankar Saran Tribunal and the Railway Board and in the work of organising railwaymen to realise those demands.

This report has been sent in advance to Com. Guruswamy, the General Secretary of the NFIR. The letter to Com. Guruswamy is also printed here-with so that railwaymen should be aware of the position of the AITUC.

We hope railway workers, their unions and organisers will find this report helpful in their work.

The AITUC Session will discuss this report and railwaymen who cannot participate in these discussions are welcome to send their criticisms, even if they are not members of AITUC unions.

May 8, 1954

S. A. DANGE,

General Secretary

ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS,
BOMBAY.

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GOVERNMENT TRIBUNALS AND THE DEMANDS OF RAILWAYMEN

INTRODUCTORY

THE railwaymen all over India are agitating for the redress of their long-standing grievances. One of their most urgent and major demands relates to the rectification of the drawbacks left by the Central Pay Commission and the removal of anomalies created by the Railway Administration in the implementation of its recommendations. In fact, the agitation in this connection has been constantly going on since the very time the C.P.C. made its recommendations seven years back in *May 1947*. But the Government of India and the Railway Board have done little during all these years to improve the position beyond appointing committees to go into the question.

Thus a Committee known as Running Staff Pay and Allowances Committee was appointed in *July 1948*, which issued its report in December, 1948. But this Committee failed to satisfy the demands of the running staff.

Then again, in *May 1949*, another Committee, the Railway Joint Advisory Committee, was appointed by the Government. It consisted of four representatives each of railway labour and of the Railway Board, with an independent chairman.

It should, however, be remembered that the appointment of this Committee was the result of the compromise arrived at between the All-India Railwaymen's Federation and the Minister for Transport and Railways in January, 1949, when the AIRF had taken a ballot and received sanction for an India-wide General Strike. It was as a result of this compromise that the strike decision was withdrawn by the Federation.

Over a year and half passed before this Committee made its recommendations in *December 1950*. But even though no less than 193 representations were received by it from railwaymen's unions and associations and 3,665 representations from individual employees containing the demands of the various categories of the staff, its recommendations failed to satisfy the demands of the workers.

In spite of this, many of its recommendations were not accepted by the Government; some were accepted in a modified form and not all of these even have been implemented.

This situation, coupled with a series of further attacks on the existing rights and privileges of railwaymen (for example, a drastic curtailment in grainshops facilities and curtailment in the number of PTOs), led to another call by the A.I.R.F. in July, 1951 for a General Strike to begin from August 27, 1951. The appeal made by Prime Minister Nehru led the Federation to postpone the strike by two months while negotiations were started between the Federation and the Railway Board. After a series of protracted negotiations, an agreement was reached on the setting up of permanent negotiating machinery to deal with disputes between railway labour and the railway administrations and, as a result, the strike call was finally withdrawn.

Even this machinery failed to solve any of the major problems of the railwaymen with the result that ultimately, on July 7, 1953, the Government, in agreement with the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR), announced the appointment of a one-man *ad hoc* Tribunal consisting of Mr. Sankar Saran, ex-Judge, Allahabad High Court, as provided for in the permanent negotiating machinery for cases when agreement was not reached between the two sides on any matters of importance. The representatives of the NFIR and the Railway Board were required to present their cases before him.

To this Tribunal, the Government has referred the following issues:

- (i) The re-distribution of grades for various categories of staff decided upon as a result of the recommendations of the Joint Advisory Committee should be reviewed.
- (ii) The revised scales of pay introduced for certain categories of staff in place of the prescribed scales of pay originally allotted to these categories should apply with retrospective effect from January 1, 1947 and arrears should be paid accordingly.
- (iii) The Second proviso to Rule 203-R of the State Railway Establishment Code, Vol. I, as modified by the orders of August 21, 1951, should be reviewed.
- (iv) Officiating pay should be admissible to staff acting in higher grades without the imposition of any mini-

mum time-limit for periods below which no officiating pay is paid.

- (v) The orders that in workshops, leave, with or without allowances, shall not be for less than half a day should be reviewed.

It is very clear from the above-stated terms of reference of the Tribunal that they are very inadequate and unsatisfactory as they do not cover the most urgent and major grievances of various categories of the staff, particularly in respect to pay and allowances. Today, almost all categories of railwaymen are demanding not only a rectification and removal of drawbacks and anomalies in the C.P.C. scales but a full-scale revision of pay-scales as such.

The railwaymen are justifiably demanding a widening of the terms of reference of the Tribunal. The NFIR Working Committee meeting held on November 17, 1953, has of course criticised the inadequate and unsatisfactory nature of the terms of reference and demanded a widening of these terms and announced its intention to raise the question of running allowance when the question of grades allotted to the running staff comes up before the Tribunal. It has also urged upon the Government to reconsider the existing pay structure on the railways and to rectify injustices to railwaymen without delay. But the task that should have simultaneously been taken up to win these demands, that is the task of mobilising the mass of railwaymen to press upon the Government to accede these legitimate and just demands, has not been taken up by the Unions and the Federation. There has also been some delay in preparing a memorandum on even these five restricted terms of reference and presenting it to the tribunal. The argument that the delay in the work of the Tribunal is due to the fact that the Federation was required by the Tribunal to present its memorandum on issues in respect of all the 727 categories of railway employees before regular sittings of the Tribunal could be arranged will not convince anyone because, during the last seven years almost all of these 727 categories have put forward their demands very explicitly and in a written form. Besides, after the Federation directive on August 10, 1953 to its affiliated unions to send to its office their memoranda or even notes relating to particular categories as prepared from time to time, such memoranda and notes have poured into its office in large numbers but have remained unattended to. In the unions too, the state of affairs is generally not very heartening, the various

groups inside the unions being busy in negotiations over positions and posts in the various unions, particularly where amalgamation of the ex-AIRF and ex-INRWF unions has not yet taken place, as on the Eastern and North-Eastern Railways.

Under these circumstances, it is essential for the mass of railwaymen to rouse themselves to overcome this state of affairs and mobilise themselves in their Federation and respective unions to realise their long-standing demands.

I

The demands of the railwaymen in connection with the terms before the Tribunal can briefly be stated as follows.

Re: Item (i) of the Terms of Reference: Regarding distribution of posts in various grades, there is widespread discontent. The grievance is that too big a percentage, 75% in most cases, has been allotted to the lowest scales and too small a percentage to the higher scales. The demand in this connection generally is:

(a) where four grades are provided, the employees should be allotted as follows:

10% in the highest grade,
20% in the next grade,
30% in the third grade,
and 40% in the lowest grade;

(b) in case there are three grades, the staff should be allotted as follows:

20% in the highest grade.
45% in the next grade,
and 35% in the lowest grade;

and (c) where there are only two grades,
the higher should have 60%
and the lower 40% of the staff.

As regards the ministerial staff, the general grievance is that the majority of clerical staff (75%) has been put into the initial recruiting grade of Rs. 55—3—85 — EB —4—125 —5—130 meant for clerks doing routine work. As generally only 3 to 5% of an entire office establishment has to do work of a purely routine nature, the remaining 95 to 97% actually doing the disposal work, their demand is that only

this 3 to 5% coming within the category of routine clerks be placed in the 55—130 grade and that the disposal clerks, constituting 95 to 97% of the staff, be put in the higher grade of 80—220 (i.e. the C.P.C. scale of Rs. 80—5—120 EB—8—200—10|2—220).

In addition to the above demands regarding distribution of posts in various grades, the following demands should also be conceded:

- (a) That the percentage of staff allotted to each grade should be on the basis of the *total* number of staff in any category, i.e. including both the permanent and the temporary staff.
- (b) The percentages should be applicable to each unit of a department and not to the department as a whole.

Re: Item (ii) of the Terms of Reference: The revised scales of pay introduced for certain categories of staff (such as cabin signalmen, guards, drivers, shunters, firemen etc.) to replace the prescribed scales of pay originally allotted to these categories and scales of pay in upgraded posts should be given retrospective effect from January 1, 1947 or August 16, 1947 as the case may be and arrears should be paid accordingly.

Re: Item (iii) of the Terms of Reference: This item refers to the Daily Allowance for the engineering staff. The highlights of rule 203-R of the "State Railway, Establishment Code", Vol. I, as modified by the orders of August 21, 1951 are:

- (i) The fundamental principles for grant of daily allowance to a railway servant who is not in receipt of a permanent travelling allowance are (a) the employee should proceed on a tour beyond a radius of five miles from his headquarters or return to his headquarters from a similar distance and, (b) if he makes a journey by an open line on a railway, he should be so out for eight consecutive hours during the day (i.e. twenty-four hours of the calendar day).
- (ii) In the case of Engineering Department staff, trolley-men, khalasies, gangmen, chainmen and artisan staff of the Engineering Department and other persons of that department holding posts of the inspectors' class, e.g. IOWs, PWIs, overseers, supervisors,

sub-engineers etc. and the block maintenance staff shall earn daily allowance only if the period of absence from headquarters is, (a) a period of more than eight consecutive hours between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m. or, (b) a period of twelve consecutive hours on any day.

It is this discrimination imposed upon the Engineering Department staff which has created great discontent.

Hence the demand is that daily allowance should be paid to the Engineering Department staff when the period of absence from headquarters on duty exceeds eight consecutive hours on any day, as in the case of other staff.

In addition to the above specific point referred to the Tribunal, in this connection it is also demanded—

- (i) That there should be a general revision of TA rules;
- (ii) That the rates of TA should be the same for all employees drawing the same pay;
- (iii) That double rates of TA should be paid for night outside headquarters, and
- (iv) That all Class IV staff should get TA at the enhanced rate of Rs. 1-8 to which they are entitled after the integration of 50% of dearness allowance with pay.

Re: Item (iv) in the Terms of Reference: The position in this regard has changed many times during the last fifteen years or so. Before World War II, the minimum time limit for payment of officiating pay was fourteen days. During the war period it was raised to twenty-one days. But, about the time of partition, the old limit of fourteen days was restored but was later again raised to twenty-one days and after some time further raised to forty-two days. The latter is the prevailing minimum time making one eligible for drawing officiating pay. Only in cases of dual duty is the time limit twenty-one days applicable at the discretion of the respective officers. In actual practice, it is seldom recommended and sanctioned for subordinate staff but officers almost always get it.

Hence the demand for abolition of any time limit for eligibility for officiating pay is a legitimate demand which should be conceded.

Re: Item (v) in the Terms of Reference: Formerly, the system of short leave for workshop staff was on the basis

of the actual number of hours for which leave was taken by an employee. Recently, the Railway Board issued orders that leave over half-an-hour, either during the first period before interval or the second period of any day on which the workshops remain open for both the periods, with or without allowances, shall not be for less than half a day.

The demand is that the old system of granting short leave to the workshop staff be re-introduced.

II

Apart from the demands relating specifically to the Tribunal's Terms of Reference which only touch a fraction of the demands and grievances of railwaymen, it is high time that the other long-standing issues are also seriously taken in hand by the Federation and its various affiliated unions in each railway zone. But this cannot be done unless the mass of railwaymen themselves take the initiative in the matter.

The main issues agitating the minds of the railwaymen and their demands on them can be summed up as follows:

1. *Re: Drawbacks in the CPC Recommendations*

a) One of the main grievances of the railwaymen is that the rate of increment provided for in the CPC scales is ridiculously low. It takes an employee twenty to twenty-five years, i.e. almost the whole of his railway service to reach the maximum of the scale, even if he is not held up by the efficiency bars.

The most general demand in this connection is that every Class IV employee must reach the maximum of his grade in not less than seven years and, in case of Class III staff, every employee must reach the maximum of his grade within ten years.

(b) The efficiency bar (EB) must be abolished for all scales of pay for Class III and Class IV staff.

(c) *Truncation of Scales:* There is great resentment against truncation of CPC scales, as for example, the CPC scale of Rs. 80—5—120—EB—8—200—10½—220 has been arbitrarily truncated by the Railway Board into Rs. 80—5—120—EB—8—160 and Rs. 160—8—200—10½—220. Such truncation must be cancelled forthwith.

(d) *Overlapping of scales* must go, i.e. the maximum of the grade from which an employee is to be promoted be

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higher than the minimum of the higher grade into which he is to be promoted. The seriousness of the problem will be realised if the character of the CPC scales is kept in view—the fact that they have high maximums with trivial yearly increments and divide the scales by an Efficiency Bar. As already stated, it will take an employee about twenty to twenty-five years to reach the maximum of the scale. Even if, fortunately the employee gets an earlier chance of promotion to the next higher grade, say after about ten years, he does not get any monetary advantage as he has already reached the minimum of the higher grade by the time he is promoted.

(e) The case of the pre-1931 staff opting for CPC scales still remains to be properly settled, with a view to ensure proper weightage for service to them. The grant of one additional increment, as a result of the Joint Advisory Committee's Report, to employees drawing less than Rs. 250 per month and with twenty-five to thirty years of service on November 1, 1952 and still in the initial recruiting grade, fails to do any justice to the said staff. One increment for every three years of total service rendered should be added to the minimum of the prescribed CPC scale opted for.

(f) The pay of the supervisor should be higher than that of the supervised. This is not always the case. For example, the ASMs and SMs find themselves in the ridiculous situation of having to supervise staff who are in the same and, sometimes, even in higher grades than themselves and drawing higher pay than they do (except in the case of SMs and ASMs of the lowest grade).

(g) There is no provision for the upgrading of workshop artisan staff with the result that they pass their whole lives in the grades into which they were initially recruited. The necessary provision for upgrading must be made.

In fact, there should be an avenue of promotion—well-planned and co-ordinated—for every railwayman, whatever his initial category or scale.

2. Demands in Connection with the Gadgil Committee Recommendations on Merger of 50% D.A. with Pay

(a) Protection against any direct or indirect reduction in net earnings.

(b) Protection against the loss of House Rent Allowance to staff in the pay group of Rs. 76—100 at 'C' Class

stations, the ceiling of pay for the purpose of granting house rent allowance should be raised from Rs. 107 to Rs. 125 in these stations.

(c) Protection against reduction in net earnings due to increase in the amount of house rent to be paid at the rate of 5% of the Dearness Pay.

(d) Increase in pay by the addition of Dearness Pay should be counted for passes and PTOs.

(e) Increase in consequential benefits such as increase in dearness allowance due to 50% of D.A. being treated as pay.

Besides these, there is the demand for merger of full D.A. with pay.

3. *Re: Confirmation of Temporary Staff*

The Railway Board issued orders on November 21, 1953 that workshop staff (which includes skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled staff) be treated as confirmed for all purposes on completion of three years' continuous service in a workshop whether they are working against permanent or temporary posts, but with the reservation that this benefit of confirmation will be in the initial grade of recruitment. Promotion and confirmation in grades higher than that of initial recruitment will be subject to the occurrence of vacancies.

It has been a long-standing demand of the railwaymen that all employees should be confirmed on the completion of one year of service and in the grade he is actually working in (or officiating in) at the time of his confirmation. To provide for this, the number of permanent posts should also be increased.

Hence, the above-mentioned orders have to be suitably amended so as not only to meet the above-stated demands of the workers, but also so that they are extended to the other railway staff as well.

4. *Re: Casual Labour*

The system of employing casual labour should be abolished on the railways and all casual and substitute labour with six months' service and more employed at present must be confirmed. What is happening at present is that employees are classified as 'casual' though they have worked for years together.

5. *Re: Contract Labour*

A large amount of Railway work such as unloading of coal in loco-sheds, transshipment work, certain work in workshops etc. is done through contractors. The wages of the workers employed by the contractors are extremely low and other conditions of service are miserable. The system of doing work through contracts should be abolished and all work should be done by the Railways directly, so that the present conditions will end and the present contract labour will get the same conditions and pay as other employees.

6. *Re: Running Staff Running Allowance*

As already stated, in July 1948 the Railway Board appointed a Running Staff Pay and Allowances Committee to recommend "reasonable" basic scales of pay and to suggest a "rationalised and uniform" procedure for payment of running allowances on all Indian Government Railways. These recommendations were accepted by the Government with some modifications. Under the new rules, the running allowance has been put on a mileage basis and the result has been a considerable reduction in the total emoluments of the running staff, even though the rates of allowance have, ostensibly, been increased. For instance, for working on Sundays and certain approved holidays, Running Staff were eligible for the grant of a special running allowance (at double the normal rates), either in addition to or in lieu of the ordinary running allowance. The grant of a special running allowance was also recognised for staff on goods trains and light engines like those drawing ballast and relief trains. But under the new rules, these special provisions have been withdrawn.

Besides, thousands of other staff like Travelling Ticket Examiners, Travelling Ticket Inspectors, Railway Protection Police, Road Van Porters, Road Van Clerks etc. who are otherwise classified as Running Staff under the Government's own Hours of Employment Regulations, have not been classified as Running Staff for purposes of Running Allowances. This is a gross injustice to this staff and should be rectified.

Moreover, regarding Running Allowances, there is another point. It is that local technical factors—bad condition of engines, quality of coal supplied, etc.—determine the mileage performances, thus taking it beyond the control of the running staff. Because of this, performances

vary on different railways and even on different gauges on the same railway. Hence, Running Allowances based on mileage are bound to go against the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Furthermore, overtime for the running staff is calculated on the basis of hours of work averaged over the month. Now, what happens is that an employee many a time is made to put in overtime work during a particular week and then given long rest so that, averaged over the month, his working hours do not go beyond fifty-four a week. This system is obviously detrimental to his interests, for he gets no overtime payment at all. Hence, hours for overtime calculations and payments should be reckoned on the basis of each week instead of being averaged over the month as is the present practice in loco sheds and carriage and wagon-depots.

As regards scales of pay also, injustice has been done to the running staff. For example, grade 'B' Firemen on the scale of Rs. 50—2—60, have been, after revision of scales of pay, classified as Firemen, grade 'C' with a scale of Rs. 40—1—50—2—60 which is the same as for Second Firemen or Augwallas with a scale of Rs. 40—1—50. This downward revision of scales of pay has to be reviewed and justice must be done to the running staff.

7. *Re: Uniforms*

There are no uniform rules on an all-India basis on the subject of "Dress Regulations and Supply of Uniforms to Railway Staff". The matter is left entirely in the hands of the individual railway administrations and, as a result, there are a variety of incongruities.

However, the fundamental principle recognised by all railway administrations in this connection is that all staff who come in contact with the public in their duties and such staff whose duties involve soiling of clothes must be supplied an adequate number of uniforms for use during the two seasons—winter and summer. Provision should also be made to supply overcoats to staff in cold regions and raincoats in places where the monsoon is heavy.

But this principle is neither followed strictly nor fully implemented on all railways. For instance, on the Northern Railway, goods clerks are supplied with a coat but no trousers. On some other railways they are not supplied with any clothing at all. Then there are other matters such as pattern and type of uniforms, quality and colour of cloth etc. on which there are a number of grievances which

need early redressal. Moreover, there is never a regular and full supply of uniforms even to the categories of staff for whom supply of uniforms has been sanctioned.

On top of all this, reductions and cuts in the uniforms already supplied are going on. To give only one example, on the Northern Railway, the sweepers used formerly to get uniforms but these have now been completely stopped to them. This has naturally caused great discontent.

The demands in this connection, therefore, are:

- (i) Uniformity must be established on all the railways on the subject of dress regulations and supply of uniforms to the staff.
- (ii) The fundamental principle recognised by the railway administrations in regard to the supply of uniforms (enunciated earlier in this note) must be strictly implemented on all the railways.
- (iii) All cuts and reductions in uniforms must be restored.
- (iv) Regular supply of uniforms to the Staff must be ensured.
- (v) Supply of uniforms be introduced for certain other categories which are not, at present, supplied with them, e.g. to gangmen.

8. *Re: Other Privileges*

(a) *Passes and PTOs*: The number of PTOs has been reduced from six sets to three only. There has also been an attack on standards in regard to the class of passes admissible to the staff. Formerly, the position was as follows:

For pay of Rs. 75 p.m. and below	—	III Class
" " " Rs. 76 to Rs. 175	—	Inter Class
For pays above Rs. 175	—	II Class

After the attack on this privilege, the position is:

For pay up to Rs. 130 p.m.	—	III Class
" " of Rs. 131 to Rs. 250	—	Inter Class
For pays of Rs. 251 and above	—	II Class

The demand in this connection is that the old position in respect to class of passes and number of PTOs be restored.

(b) *Medical Facilities*: There has been an attack on this privilege too. Formerly, the family of an employee, for purposes of free medical treatment, meant his wife, legiti-

mate children and step-children residing with and wholly dependent on him. It also included parents, sisters and minor brothers, if residing with and wholly dependent on the employee concerned. Now, the family has been defined to mean only his wife and children.

The demand is that the previous position be restored.

(c) *Restrictions on grant of Special Contribution to Provident Fund or Gratuity*: Under Rule 1314 of the "Indian Railway Establishment Code", Vol. I, special contribution to Provident Fund or Gratuity is credited to the subscriber's account when the controlling officer is satisfied that the service of the subscriber has been good, efficient and faithful. So far, every employee on retirement normally got his gratuity, except in few cases when it was withheld, in full or part, when the employee concerned was dismissed or removed from service for serious offence as laid down in the Establishment Code (Rule 1314-R). Now, by its instructions of May 10, 1952, the Railway Board has revised the Rules for grant of gratuity and laid down a so-called "yardstick" for withholding it in full or part.

What is this yardstick? It is given below:

<i>Nature of case</i>	<i>Percentage payable</i>
1. Retired with a history of more than three serious offences	75%
2. Removed from service for unauthorised absence and or malingering	50%
3. Removed from service for serious offences, for conviction in a criminal court, theft, bribery and corruption etc.	Nil
4. Removed from service for other offences like neglect of duty, repeated minor offences etc.	50%
5. Removal from service for inefficiency and cannot be accommodated in a lower category	60%

It will be seen from the above orders that under them no consideration can be made for the nature of duties, circumstances and the handicaps under which certain categories of employees (e.g. the staff in yards, busy stations, running sheds, running staff, certain branches of workshops, depots) work. Certain lapses are natural and accidentally do take place, but that is no justification for denying an employee the full gratuity. To take another instance, so-called 'unauthorised absence' is often due to circumstances

beyond the control of the employees and is already adequately dealt with by withholding wages for the period of absence, even though the employee may have leave to his credit. 'Malingering' too is just another vague excuse to withhold gratuity. Where are the cases of malingering and what is their nature?

Gratuity is, in fact, a sort of pension, as admissible in other Government services, to which an employee is entitled after retirement. To withhold it is to deprive him of this right and privilege.

This detrimental revision of the rules for the granting of gratuity must be cancelled.

9. Demands Regarding Ex-State Railway Employees

(a) *Implementation of the CPC Scales from April 1950:* The ex-State* Railway employees have been put on CPC scales from April 1, 1950 (August 1, 1949 in the case of ex-GBS Railway Staff) whereas staff on Government railways had been fixed on these scales with retrospective effect from January 1, 1947. This has seriously disturbed the seniority and status of the ex-State Railway employees and they have thus fallen junior by about three and a quarter years. The ex-State Railway employees had already been agitating for the application of the CPC scales with retrospective effect from January 1, 1947 as in the case of Government railway employees. But the ex-State Railway employees got the CPC scales only after their integration with the Government railways, the Government of India fixing April 1, 1950 as the date for the purpose of applying CPC scales to them.

It is but fair that this disparity should be done away with and these employees be given the same option as the other Government Railway employees with retrospective effect from January 1, 1947.

(b) *Retiring Age and Interest on Provident Fund Deposits:* Due to the fact that ex-State railway employees have been treated as having entered Government service on April 1, 1950 (August 1, 1949 in the case of ex-GBS Railway staff) and not from their date of appointment on the ex-State Railways, these employees have suffered a great loss in the matter of interest on provident fund deposits compared to those appointed before March 7, 1938 on Indian Government Railways, because all employees on

* That is, the Princely States.

Indian Government Railways subscribing to the provident fund deposits before March 7, 1938 are allowed interest at 4% and post-March 7, 1938 subscribes at a rate to be determined each year by the Government but which in practice has been declared to be 3% only every year. Thus the ex-State Railway employees will not be entitled to the same benefit even though having the same length of service as the staff on the Government Railways. Moreover, their retiring age will now be 55 instead of 60 as on ex-State Railways and thus they will suffer in total length of service too.

This discrimination against the ex-State Railway employees must go and the rules regarding provident fund deposits applicable to Government Railway employees should be extended to them also.

* * * * *

The above is not an exhaustive list of the demands and grievances of railwaymen, but there are certain other grievances of a local nature also, e.g. that Agra be raised from a 'B' class to an 'A' class station for the purposes of House Rent Allowance as its population has increased and crossed the population limit required for 'A' class stations. Then, there are cities like Ranchi (Bihar), Visakhapatnam, Vellore, Rajahmundry and Tanjore in Madras State, Mathura and Shahjahanpur in U.P., Jamnagar in Saurashtra, Bhopal etc. where the population is more than a lakh and which, according to the C.P.C. recommendations accepted by the Government, should have been classed as 'C' class stations but, as a result of Government's arbitrarily raising the population limit for 'C' classification from one lakh to 1,15,000, cities like those listed above were excluded from grant of full house rent allowance.

Last, but not least, is the curbing of trade union activities and victimisation of railway employees for their trade union activities by the continued application of the Railway Services (Safeguarding of National Security) Rules, 1949. These rules deny any reasonable opportunity to railwaymen for defence before any impartial tribunal against the arbitrary orders passed by the authorities under these rules. During the course of the last five years about 600 railwaymen all over India have been victims of these most undemocratic and arbitrary rules. In addition to these rules, paras 1708 and 148 and other rules of the Discipline and Appeal Rules in the State Railway Establishment Code are freely used to victimise railwaymen and suppress their rightful trade union activities.

The railwaymen all over India are agitating for the repeal of these penal rules but the Government has stubbornly refused even to refer the issue to the Tribunal even though this is demanded by the NFIR and all its affiliated unions. After innumerable representations, only about thirty-nine of the 600 victimised employees have been taken back. For the rest, the Government is still persisting in its refusal to reinstate them while it continues to use these measures to victimise more workers in spite of specific assurances given by the Railway Minister to an all-Parties' Deputation, consisting of all the Opposition Parties' leaders in the House of the People, during the 1952 budget session.

It is unfortunate that the leadership of the Federation (NFIR) and the leaderships of many of its affiliated unions have adopted an attitude of more or less apathy and diffidence towards these long-pending and outstanding issues agitating railwaymen. True, railwaymen have been able to register certain gains recently, e.g. payment of overtime pay for work beyond eight hours a day, computed on a weekly basis of forty-eight hours a week in loco sheds and carriage and wagon depots, enhancement in daily allowance rates for staff eligible for it, confirmation of staff with three years service in the workshops, yet the total picture has been one of unfulfilment of their major and urgent demands.

In this situation, the most important and immediate task before railwaymen all over India is to take the initiative in mobilising behind their respective unions and activating them at all levels, in consolidating and further extending the process of unity which started with the amalgamation of the AIRF and INRWF in June-July, 1953 and the consequent amalgamation of the respective unions of the two federations now effected on some railways and on others yet in the process of amalgamation (e.g. on the ER and NER). But in order to complete and strengthen this unity, the Federation leadership must give up its policy of discrimination against trade union activists for their political opinions and debarring them from participation in the work of the unions. In order to build real trade union unity it is necessary that the S.I.R. Labour Union should be brought into the Federation and there should be no discrimination against any trade unionists. Furthermore, it is to be noted that a mere merger of unions is not enough to build the unions as powerful, united and effective weapons for struggle to win demands. Real unity and effective organised

strength can be built only with the direct participation of the rank and file railwaymen in the day-to-day activities of their unions and at their places of work, promptly taking up issues, grievances and demands that arise in the specific local situations, in addition to the major issues of an all-India character. This is a task which should not remain the concern of a few leaders alone, but must be the concern of every single railwayman without exception.

And to be effective in the fulfilment of the task, every railwayman must be a union member and must become an active functioning member himself, even if his leaders are not. All railwaymen and all trade unionists have to see to it that the NFIR becomes active, organised and democratic, that it unites the workers from below and grows powerful in struggles for the defence of the railwaymen's interests. That alone will make the railway authorities and Government put a stop to the attacks on the conditions of work and living of the railway workers and make possible the achievement of further gains.