Chapter – VI

Summary and Conclusions
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Industrial relations is one of the interesting subjects attracting the attention of all the policy makers, economists, industrialists, trade unions, researchers including academic globally. Industrial relations is the system through which the industrial growth and development can be accomplished and, thus, sustainable economic progress of the economy can be attained. The concept of industrial relations can be understood as the relationship between employees and employers in the day-to-day working of industry. It is the complex of interrelationships among employees, management and government. Absence of cordial relationships between management and employees would lead to wastage, foment class hatred, embitter mutual relations and inflict damages on the progress of the nation. Industrial relations system is the one that harmonises the economic growth with social justice, ensures observance of labour standards; promotes a culture of non-interference by one party into the affairs of another.

Search for alternative strategies for achieving both efficient development and improvements in workers’ welfare tends to lay emphasis on (a) a minimal number of basic labour standards (b) free trade unions, (c) Collective bargaining (d) good labour welfare and social security measures, (e) congenial employer-employee relations and (f) mobility of capital and labour resources and the state should facilitate the factors and processes so that industrial relations institutions and employment practices are adapted to the different cultural settings of developing nations.
Indian Railways is the second largest service industry in the world providing employment to 1.58 million people. It is a people oriented industry. Thus, the effective and efficient functioning of this industry virtually depends upon its human resources management practices, employee welfare and social security measures, redressal of employee grievances, collective bargaining processes, functioning of trade unions and more so on employer-employee relations. The present study is an humble attempt in this direction.

The review of literature revealed that many research studies leading to doctoral degrees have been made on industrial relations on various public and private sector undertakings in the country. Such studies on Indian Railways are very few and relate to 1960s and 1980s. Surprisingly, no studies of this nature are witnessed in South Central Railways. Hence, the present study assumes significance. Besides, the researcher being an insider felt that he would be able to contribute for effective functioning of his parent organization through this academic endeavour.

For detailed analysis, both primary and secondary data were collected, compiled and analysed. Primary data were collected by administering a questionnaire among 500 employees on various aspects of industrial relations on 5-point scale, while secondary data were gathered from the official records of South Central Railways, Secunderabad, Trade Unions, Railway Board, Ministry of Railways, published books, journals and reports. Personal interviews were also conducted with the trade union leaders and top level executives for getting first hand information on various aspects of industrial relations in South Central Railways.
In the following pages, the major findings of the study are presented along with suggestions for achieving cordial industrial relations, peace and restoring the industrial democracy in Indian Railways in general and South Central Railway in particular.

Employee Welfare and Social security.

The idea of employee welfare originally was conceived as a humanitarian approach to redress the grievances of the working community. The term Employee Welfare often lends itself to various interpretations and it has not always been given the same significance in different countries. Sometimes, the concept is a very wide one and is more or less synonymous with the conditions of work as a whole. It may include not only the minimum standard of hygiene and safety laid down in general labour legislation, but also such aspects of working life as social insurance schemes, means for the protection of women and young workers, limitation of hours of work, paid holidays.

Employee Welfare includes all activities undertaken by employers, state, trade unions and other agencies to help workers and their families to get greater extent of satisfaction from life and living.

The aims and objectives of employee welfare have successfully changed during the last few decades. The modern philosophy of employee welfare is to develop efficiency and productivity of labour. Today, the conspicuous trend is that labour welfare is concerned with development of total human personality and employees’ well being.
After independence, the employee welfare movement gained momentum. It was realized that labour play a vital role in increasing labour productivity. Factories Act which was enacted in 1948 on the recommendations of the Rege Committee replaced all previous legislations on labour welfare.

The Committee on labour welfare constituted under the chairmanship of Sri R.K. Malviya, in 1966, examined various statutory and non-statutory welfare schemes in industries in public and private sector and made recommendations for their improvement. The first National Commission on Labour was constituted on 24th December, 1966 and submitted its report covering several aspects of welfare services in different establishments and made useful suggestions for their improvement. The Second National Commission on Labour set up in October, 1999 ensure to provide greater welfare to workers.

In the arena of labour welfare, the Government is now playing three roles – that of a legislator, administrator and promoter. Welfare measures implemented in India are considerably below the set standards in other countries. However, in the years to come welfare measures and amenities provided are bound to make rapid progress.

Social Security measures is the relief offered to individuals during the period of distress which is caused due to loss or stoppage of income. This enables the worker to work wholeheartedly.

The analysis of employee welfare and social security measures in Indian Railways in general and South Central Railway in particular, has disclosed the following:
Indian Railways is the pioneer in introducing many types of employee welfare programmes aiming at social security. It provides medical service to its employees through a network of 124 hospitals and 657 health units, with more than 2500 experienced doctors. In this regard, it has emerged as the biggest welfare organization in the country. It has specialized hospitals for heart diseases at Perambur, for cancer at Varanasi, for Orthopaedics at Calcutta, for Plastic surgery at Mumbai, etc. To look after the health of mothers and children it has its own family planning and family welfare centers. It has also extended medical facilities to the retired employees and their families. To cater to the educational needs of the employees children, it has opened 685 schools, 1 degree college, 7 inter colleges, 87 higher secondary/high schools and 60 central schools. For the benefit of outstation students, Railways are managing 20 subsidised hostels at selected stations.

Indian Railways runs 267 canteens serving subsidized meals and refreshments for the convenience of its employees. It has provided more than 6.3 lakh houses with facilities of water supply, electricity, roads, shopping centers, parks. This has benefited 46 per cent of employees on different zones of railways. A large number of thrift and credit societies, 375 registered Railwaymen’s Consumer Co-operative Societies, 30 Railwaymen’s Housing Co-operative Societies and 151 Labour Contract Co-operative Societies are functioning in Railways as a part of the welfare programme for railway employees.

Indian Railways has established a large number of holiday homes, at 61 centres, for the benefit of its serving and retired employees and families. This enables the employees and their families to enjoy holidays at nominal expenses. It has attached due importance for the recreation of
its employees and provided excellent facilities through institutes and clubs. Railway Ministers Welfare and Relief Fund provide financial assistance in times of distress. The primary source of this fund is voluntary contributions of the employees and Railway women's organizations. Staff benefit fund also provides additional facilities to railway employees and their families in the spheres of medicare, education, sports and cultural activities.

A separate department called Employees Welfare Department in South Central Railway is functioning under the Chief Personnel Officer assisted by the Deputy Chief Personnel Officer and an Assistant Personnel Officer at the Zonal Head Quarters level. At the Divisional level, it functions under the Senior Divisional Personnel Officer/Divisional Personnel Officer. He manages with the help of an Assistant Personnel Officer (welfare) and a team of Welfare Inspectors. Similarly, on workshop side a Personnel Officer attached to workshops is assisted by Welfare Inspectors. 62 Welfare Inspectors and 10 Welfare Inspectors for sports are working in this Railway. Welfare of workforce covers various aspects like medical, health, educational institutions, subsidized hostel, housing accommodation, canteens, institutes, clubs, various types of co-operatives, holiday homes, children camps and services of South Central Railway Women's Welfare Organization.

To cater to the educational needs of the children of South Central Railway employees, there are 57 educational institutions including one Degree College, 4 Junior Colleges, 1 Higher Secondary School, 15 High Schools, 7 Upper Primary Schools, 9 Primary Schools and 20 austerity type primary schools and these are situated in three different states viz. Andhra Pradesh, Maharastra, Karnataka. South Central Railway is also
running 6 statutory canteens, 12 non/statutory canteens and 3 holiday homes, at Aurangabad, Tirupathi and Mao.

Handicraft centres are also set up in South Central Railway, for the benefit of the families of Railway employees, for imparting training to women members with the object of helping them in learning some trade to augment their family income. Handicrafts such as weaving, knitting, spinning, tailoring of garments are taught whereas, the main activity is fabrication of uniforms of Railway employees.

To sort out the housing accommodation problem, South Central Railway have been constructing Quarters to accommodate their employees. As on 31-3-99 South Central Railway has 46357 Quarters in different divisions viz., Secunderabad division 8663, Hyderabad 10560, Vijayawada 9560, Guntakal 9531 and Hubli Division 8043 Quarters. In Zonal headquarters, 19,223 Quarters are available to accommodate the employees. Quarter-Type I to III are meant for class IV & III employees whereas, type IV & V are meant for officers. Non Gazetted employees are provided 44920 whereas officers are provided 1437 Quarters.

The cost of medical services in South Central Railway has shown a continuous increase throughout the study period. However, the rate of increase is faster during the recent five years period of 1994-95 and 1998-99. The cost of Medical Services has increased from Rs.90982 thousand in 1989-90 to Rs.2,93,612 thousand in 1998-99, thereby showing a net increase of Rs.202630 thousand accounting to 222.71 percent over the base year. The cost of medical services per head, per annum, has shown increasing tendency (from Rs.700 in 1989-90 to Rs.2939 in 1989-99) thereby recording an appreciation of 319.85 percent over the base year.
Cost of Health Services is not an exception to the above tendency. This expenditure has increased from Rs.29443 thousand in 1989-90 and doubled in 1995-96 thereby reaching Rs.99396 thousand in 1998-99 to touch 237.59 percent over the base year. Same is the case with regard to the cost of health services per head per annum.

Number of Doctors and Hospitals in South Central Railway remained constant at 201 and 6 respectively, throughout the study period. With regard to number of health units a marginal increase is noticed, they increased from 54 to 56 during 1989-90 and 1998-99. The number of beds in the above mentioned hospitals has increased marginally from 858 in 1989-90 to 868 in 1998-99, showing a net increase of only 10 beds.

The number of educational institutions in South Central Railway remained same. However, the expenditure on these educational institutions showed an upward trend. It has increased from Rs. 329.43 lakhs in 1989-90 to Rs. 936.23 lakhs in 1998-99, recording an increase of 184 percent over the base year.

The staff welfare expenditure has increased a little in the first three years period of study (1989-90 to 1991-92). Further, from 1992-93 and onwards the expenditure on welfare amenities has shown a rapid increase till 1998-99. The overall decimal increase of staff welfare expenditure is Rs. 6195.87 lakhs, thereby showing an indexed increase of 302.15 percent over the base year. This increase in the recent six years period might be due to the increasing cost on one hand and quality of service offered vis-à-vis the railway board’s decision on the other.
It was observed that the allocation from staff benefit fund is erratic throughout the study period particularly in case of education. However, it has shown a little increase in the recent five years period commencing from 1994-95. The recreation and amusement expenditure has negligibly varied during 1989-90 and 1995-96. However, 1996-97 and 1997-98 have witnessed a growth in this head of expenditure. The year 1998-99 incurred all time low expenditure during the study period. Relief to the distressed is also erratic from 1989-90 to 1994-95. However, 1995-96 onwards, there is a rise of expenditure in this head with an exception of 1998-99. The expenditure towards miscellaneous activities is not an exception to this trend. Officers' clubs, which offer membership to Class I & II officers of SCR, are not getting adequate funds. This is depicted by the steady level of expenditure from 1991-92 to 1995-96. Expenditure on these clubs has increased from Rs.78,000 in 1989-90 to Rs. 2,64,000 and Rs. 2,18,218 during 1996-97 and 1997-98 respectively.

The South Central Railway Employees Cooperative Credit Society (SCRECCS) Limited was established way back in 1923, under the Andhra Pradesh Cooperative Societies Act, to give loans at a low rate of interest to share holders of the society, who are railway employees. The society raises funds mainly by means of (i) Compulsory monthly thrift deposits from the share holders (ii) Issue of share certificates towards the share capital, and (iii) inviting fixed deposits from the members as well as outsiders. The number of loans granted to the members reveal that it is erratic throughout the study period, the highest number of loans were granted in the year 1997-98 and the lowest was recorded in 1996-97 in the range of 27866 and 17585 respectively.
The amount of loans granted is in correspondence with the number of loans approved. Therefore, there is a close association between the number of loans approved and the amount of loans granted to the members of S.C.R.E.C.C.S Ltd.

Indebtedness per member expresses a relationship between the amount of loans granted and number of loans. This ratio is computed to know the average amount of loan granted per member by the society. This indebtedness per member in South Central Railway has shown a continuously increasing tendency throughout the study period. Gradually, the amount of indebtedness has increased from Rs. 7598 in 1989-90 to Rs. 21,484 in 1998-99 thereby, showing an overall increase of Rs. 13,886/- accounting for 182.76 percent over the base year. The pace of indebtedness is more in the post V Pay Commission implementation era due to the pay revisions of employees on one hand and raising of credit limits by society on the other.

In addition to the above welfare measures provided by Indian Railways to its employees in service, it also provides the following benefits to its employees on Death/Retirement. Pension/Family pension (ii) Commutation of Pension (iii) Gratuity (iv) Provident Fund at the credit of employee (v) voluntary provident fund deposit money (vi) Amount under group insurance scheme (vii) Encashment of leave (viii) Transfer traveling allowance for self and members of family as on transfer (ix) Transfer grant (x) settlement/kit passes (xii) Amount under deposit linked insurance scheme. (xiii) Appointment of dependent on compassionate ground in case of death (xiv) In case of death, allotment of quarters out-of-turn to dependent (xv) Booking of holiday homes.
The retirement benefits have shown a continuous increase from 1990-91 onwards with an exception in 1993-94. The overall decennial increase in 1998-99 over 1989-90 stood at Rs. 79.98 lakhs which is indexed to 1704.43 per cent over the base year. This point clearly reveals that the number of retirements are more in the recent five year period of 1994-95 onwards on one hand and the multiple impact of V Pay commission (1996) on the other.

As per survey of opinions most of the respondents disagree that the scale of pay in relation to qualifications of each job in Railways is satisfactory. Most of the interviewed respondents feel that the scale of pay in relation to experience on job in railways is not satisfactory. About 70 per cent of the interviewers feel that the rate of yearly increments is not satisfactory. The respondents also felt the housing facilities are not good enough in railways. The cooperative credit loans are adequate and education facilities through Staff Benefit Fund to the children of employees are impressive. Many of the interviewers disagree that the housing loans are granted liberally and loans granted by railways for purchase of vehicles and equipment in railways are sufficient. Most of the employees feel that the procedure for grant of loans are rigid and time consuming. The privilege with regard to free passes and privilege ticket orders given to employees is a great gesture and it is welcomed by all. Out of the interviewed respondents more than 66 per cent of the employees agree that the accident benefits in railways are good.

About 70 per cent of the interviewers hail the employee welfare measures in railways as good. Most of the employees believe that the facilities provided by cooperative housing societies, educational facilities,
are not up to the mark. Railway institutes, consumer cooperative societies and the pension and other retirement benefits are rated as satisfactory.

From the above, it can be said that the provision created by railways towards employees welfare measures are good.

**Trade Unionism**

Trade unionism is the result of growth of modern industrial establishment involving the employment of a large number of workers and their working conditions and their helplessness in bargaining individually for their terms of contract. The presence of a prudent and strong union not only stops the exploitation but also makes managers less lethargic. Unions play an important role in enhancing the productivity and in earning profits by improving labour management relations in the organization. Today's trade unions have a wide range of interests, multifarious activities gaining a large extent of recognition.

Ever since the liberalisation process began in 1992 many centralized party based unions came under one roof to protest government efforts of privatization and decentralization in the public sector.

The developments taking place in trade union scenario are incomprehensible. They are: change in leadership with dispossession of any political affiliations, reduction in the number of strikes resulting in minimized loss of mandays with a down trend in the number of workers participation in the strike showing lack of interest in trade unionism.
Another bizarre trend in trade unionism is increasing women force in all the sectors of the industry.

The study relating to trade unionism in Indian Railways and South Central Railway in particular divulged the following:

Trade Union movement in Indian Railways coincides with the labour movement in the country. The year 1897 has a great significance in the annals of history of trade union movement, as it had witnessed blossoming of the first employees’ union of railways in the country. Amalgamated society of Railway Servants of India and Burma was the first organisation formed in 1897, to organize a strike by guards. This was done in order to facilitate a strike by the guards.

While the AIRMF was struggling to make its impact felt, the union at Railway company level were pestered by inter-union and intra union rivalries. These conflicts had seen their worst by formation of communal based unions at company level as a result of splits, thus, weakening the entire structure that was gaining momentum. Splits in North Western Railway Union in 1922; 1924 and 1925 were due to differences among leaders. Great Indian Peninsula Railwaymen’s Union formed in early 1920s had to split in 1929, after nine years of its existence, mainly due to communal differences, which was also a notable feature in Indian history at that time. The result of this split was the birth of a rival union named ‘Great Indian Peninsula Railway Kamgar Union.’

Later period of 1929, witnessed splits in other unions like Bengal Nagpur Railwaymen’s union because of communal disturbances among employees in Karagpur. This resulted in fragmentation of Muslim welfare
associations. Important communal unions are national union of Railwaymen of India and Burma, and the Parsee Association.

All Indian Railwaymen’s Federation, which was formed in 1925 and recognized in 1930, has been making untiring efforts to protect the employees of different railway by taking a lead in various activities. AIRMF had the opportunity to ventilate employee’s problems and workout settlements amicably through meaningful negotiations on one side, but silently suffered on the other side with intra union rivalries between communist and socialist groups. In 1948, All India Trade Union Congress paved the way for formation of a rival federation for the largest Indian Railway Undertaking by name ‘Indian National Railway Workers federation.’(INRWF). Railway Board accorded recognition immediately and within one year of its formation the membership reached to 1,45,000.

The birth of INRWF had migration of affiliated and recognized unions from AIWF to INRWF. Among the migration unions the important are (1) Great Indian Peninsula National Railway Workers’ Union (2) Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway employees Association (3) Eastern Punjab Railway Staff Union (4) Oudh and Tirhut Railwayman’s Union and (5) East India Railway men’s Congress.

With the formation of new and young zone of South Central Railway by merging the affiliates of AIRF and NFIR working in Secunderabad, Hubli, Vijayawada and Sholapur divisions the formation of South Central Railway Mazdoor Union (SCRMU) and South Central Railway Employees Sangh (SCRES) respectively was necessitated on 2nd October, 1966.
In South Central Railway only two employees organizations are recognized. They are South Central Railway Employees Sangh, which is affiliated to NFIR and South Central Railway Mazdoor Union, which is affiliated to AIRF.

The activities of SCRES and SCRMU are similar whereas the reasons for protests are not similar. SCRES takes up different activities of common benefit, while SCRMU takes up activities not only of common benefit but also individual causes like indifferent attitude of officers with regard to its members. SCRMU also registered protests for causes like postal employees' problems and firing in Jute Mills etc. This is due to their different philosophies and affiliations to national level unions. The SCRMU is guided by communist philosophy, as against its counter part SCRES which is guided by liberalists and plurists philosophy.

The total number of members in SCRES increased from 87215 in 1989-90 to 94,000 in 1998-99, thereby showing an overall decennial increase of 6785 equivalent to 7.78 percent over the base year. The percentage of members in relation to non-gazetted employees has increased from 67.93 percent in 1989-90 to 75.08 percent in 1998-99, thereby showing a decennial growth of 7.15 percent only. This might be due to the stiff competition faced by this union with another recognized union viz. Mazdoor Union.

The total number of members in SCRMU increased from 82510 in 1989-90 to 88,100 in 1998-99, thereby showing an overall increase of 5,590 equivalent to 6.77 percent over the base year. The percentage of members to the total non gazetted employees has shown marginal up trend throughout the study period. The percentage of members to total
non gazetted employees increased by 6.11 per cent over the base year. This might be due to the competition faced by other unions on one hand and new enrolment on the other.

With the analysis and evaluation of income and expenditure of SCRES it is clear that the total incomes of SCRES increased (with minor fluctuation) from Rs. 24.03 lakh in 1991 to Rs. 73.06 lakh in 1998 thereby showing an overall increase of Rs. 49.04 lakh equivalent to 204.10 per cent over the base year while the total expenditure rose (with minor fluctuation) from Rs. 22.37 lakh to Rs. 61.39 for the same period, thereby depicting an appreciation of Rs. 39.02 lakh accounting to 174.43 per cent over the base year. Excess of income over expenditure witnessed many fluctuations but increased from Rs. 1.65 lakh in 1991 to Rs. 11.67 lakh in 1998 equivalent to 604.85 per cent over the base year. Percentage of expenditure to the income moved between 82.87 and 99.00 during the study period. Thus, the financial position of SCRES is satisfactory due to lower expenses, compared to that of SCRMU.

On analysis of incomes and expenses of SCRMU it is evident that total income of SCRMU increased particularly from 1993. This increased from Rs. 19.84 lakh in 1990 to Rs. 77.91 in 1999 thereby showing an overall increase of Rs. 58.07 lakh equivalent to 292.61 per cent over the base year. Total expenditure rose from Rs. 19.02 lakh to Rs. 76.50 lakh for the same period accounting to 302.04 per cent over the base year. The percentage of expenditure to income had been fluctuating between 90.56 and 124.98 during the study period. It can be visualized from the analysis of excess of expenditure over income that the income was not sufficient to meet expenses in 1991, 1992 and 1993 probably due to multifarious activities of SCRMU. It can be said that, despite increase in
income the mazdoor union has faced financial crisis. Hence, SCRMU may find and tap appropriate source of finance, thereby it can strengthen its financial position and secure long term financial solvency. One of the important source is further increase in the rate of subscription of members.

As regards the opinion on the functioning of trade unions in South Central Railway, 35 per cent of the interviewed respondents agree that trade union leaders are not self centered and are working for the welfare of members, while 60 per cent of them disagree to the statement. 45 per cent of the respondents agree that multi trade unionism has not led to any rivalry among the trade unions but about 50 per cent disagree this statement. The finances of the trade unions are not sound. About 40 per cent believe in this while 60 per cent of the respondents do not agree to this statement. It is found that nepotism and favouritism are prevailing in the trade unionism and it is also felt that the executive committee members of the trade unions are not accessible to members, to represent their grievances. This statement is agreed by 60 per cent and 55 per cent respectively.

It is opined by most of the respondents that the management and trade union relations are congenial and conducive and it is also observed that the unions on the South Central Railway are functioning well to the satisfaction and expectation of the members. Interpersonal relationship among trade union leaders and members is not cordial in railways. It is observed that the trade unions are not functioning on democratic lines.

In view of the above, the functioning of trade unions on South Central Railway is satisfactory.
Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is the process by which the parties conduct the search for the acceptance of their varied interests. This process of collective bargaining has become one of the greatest forces in our society. It has become the most important way of life in labour management relationship.

Collective bargaining today has become integral component of the industrial society across the globe in general and developing economies like India in particular. This is more significant in service industry like Railways wherein day-to-day problems are much more concerned with mutual agreements and their implementation.

The study relating to collective bargaining in Indian Railway in general South Central Railway in particular revealed the following:

In the field of joint deliberations, railways in our country set up staff committees as early as 1923. But other public sector undertakings started staff committees in 1954 on the recommendations of First Pay Commission (1946-47). Thus, Indian Railways are the pioneers in introducing innovative techniques in many fields including employer-employee relations. The aim of the staff councils was to promote good relationship between workers and management by enabling the workers to express their grievances freely. Owing to the ineffectiveness of staff councils, both the recognized trade unions demanded the scrapping of these councils. After the setting up of Joint Consultative Machinery, the Railway board abolished the Staff councils on railways in 1967.
Permanent Negotiating Machinery (P.N.M) with a three-tier structure was established on January 1, 1952, when an agreement was reached between Government and employees. This machinery functions at four levels viz. divisional level, zonal level, Railway Board and adhoc tribunal level. The representatives of the branches of recognized unions debate employees grievances of that particular unit and settle them with the divisional officers at periodical meetings. The grievances which are not solved will be referred to Zonal level P.N.M. The issues, which are not settled at this level, are placed before the Railway Board. In case of disagreement with the Railway Board on some matters, these are presented to adhoc Railway Tribunal.

In view of restrictions of the Permanent Negotiating Machinery in solving the disputes, Second Pay commission felt the need of other voluntary organizations in the Ministry of Railways. As a result, the commission suggested the institution of Joint Consultative Machinery on the lines of Whitley Councils. This system works at two levels – Joint National Council at national level and Joint Departmental council at Board level.

The Joint National Council deals with matters, concerning all Central Government employees including railway staff, such as dearness allowances, pay of common categories like office clerks, peons etc. The departmental council at Railway Board deals with common matters pertaining to conditions of service and work, welfare of employees, improvement of efficiency and standard of work.

With the objective of facilitating meaningful and effective participation of workers in management, it has been decided in the month
of March 1994, to restructure Corporate Enterprises Group and rename it as Participation of Railway Employees in Management (PREM). To make the functioning of PREM more purposeful, a separate cell headed by a Joint Secretary was established under the direct control of Secretary, Railway Board. The Joint Secretary will assist the Secretary in convening the meetings of PREM periodically and monitor the implementation of various decisions taken. He also monitors its working at zonal and divisional levels.

The meetings of PREM are held every year once in a quarter at the Board, Zonal and Divisional levels. The Railways should, before holding the meeting of the Group, identify critical issues/specific problems needing changes/attention for having in-depth discussions. Themes for discussion at PREM meetings are: care of customers, quality in working, measures to improve Railway earnings, expenditure control, commercialisation of working, human resource development, redeployment of surplus labour and commercialisation of production units and workshops.

In South Central Railway Zonal Permanent Negotiating Machinery meetings are convened by Chief Personnel Officer (Industrial Relations) under the chairmanship of General Manager once in three months. At the divisional level, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer conducts the meeting under the chairmanship of Divisional Railway Manager once in two months. Separate meetings are held with the South Central Railway Employees Sangh (SCRES) and South Central Railway Mazdoor Union (SCRMU).

The number of meetings held between SCRMU and zonal administration ranged between one and four during the study period. In
these meetings the number of subjects discussed also ranged between thirty and three hundred and twenty nine. A notable feature during the study period is that in 1992-93 the performance of union, in terms of meetings held and number of subjects discussed, is all time low. The year 1998-99 signifies remarkable achievement for SCRMU for holding the highest number of meetings (four) and discussing the highest number of issues (329).

The number of meetings held at divisional level during the study period ranged between 22 and 39 as against the number of subjects discussed which is 519 and 1128. Again to note, the performance of SCRMU in holding meetings as well as in discussing issues was splendid during 1998-99. In this year the number of meetings held (39) and the number of issues discussed (1129) are higher than those in any other year. From the above analysis and evaluation, it is clear that the performance of SCRMU is satisfactory.

The number of meetings held between SCRES and zonal administration during the study period ranged between two and four, with the lowest occurring in 1989-90 and 1992-93. The highest was in 1996-97. As far as the number of subjects discussed is concerned, the range is between 60 (1989-90) and 490 (1996-97). However, on an average, the latest year 1998-99 presents satisfactory performance for holding discussions on 322 subjects.

At the divisional level, the number of meetings held ranged between 29 (1993-94) and 39 (1992-93). As far as the number of subjects discussed in these meetings is concerned, it ranges between 584 (1994-
95) and 933 (1997-98). For SCRES, 1998-99 is a remarkable year for its salutary performance.

The nature of subjects dealt in PNM are: recruitment/absorption, regularisation, safety and working conditions, welfare and social security, promotion and upgradation, change and restructuring of cadre, training, uniforms/brief cases, fixation of pay/arrears/allowances, creation of posts, deployment, seniority repatriation, transfer, waiver of penalties and union facilities.

In PNMs SCRES is able to get clearance for all the pending subjects with instant approval/sanction/agreed status, and only in exceptional cases subjects were referred to Railway Board or kept under process for clearance. Hence, the role of SCRES in PNMs from the workers' point of view is commendable.

The SCRMU with its mighty workforce at ground and operational levels and by lacing its arguments with leftist philosophies is able to get clearance to the fresh and pending issues in PNMs, by standing as a collective force on behalf of its members. Hence, its contribution is significant to its members and more or less equivalent to that of SCRES.

The aim of PREM in South Central Railway is to evaluate the working of Railways and exchange views for improving efficiency and viability of it. In PREM meetings the major subject matters discussed are Manpower planning, Family welfare, Duty at Stretch and punctuality. The actual number of PREM meetings held ranges from one to two.
The number of subjects discussed in PREM is also changed to a great extent, with more number of subjects discussed in a few years and very less number of subjects discussed in a few other years. The number of subjects discussed during the study period ranged between 11 and 32. The number of subjects discussed in 1994-95, 1995-96, 1997-98 are more than those of earlier years. Therefore, it can be concluded that the PREM is representing the issues and grievances of the Railways, in general, and SCR, in particular, as a collective force in the place of weak individual bargaining capacities. Hence, it assumes much significance in resolving grievances.

On appraisal of opinions about 57 per cent of the employees opined that frequency of collective bargaining in South Central Railway are strictly followed and accordingly meetings are held whereas 39.4 per cent of the employees viewed that collective bargaining meetings will be of economic rather than welfare nature. It is also understood in most of the cases decisions are taken towards the edge of the employee rather than management. Collective bargaining capacity among the employees in railways is less when compared with other public sector undertakings but 72 per cent of the respondents disagree while 9 per cent strongly agree.

It is believed that more than 62 per cent of the respondents have opined that collective bargaining agreements are strictly and timely implemented without delay. More than 55 per cent of the respondents felt that the collective bargaining agreements were never violated either by the management or by the unions. The trade union leaders in railways were of the opinion that the collective bargaining procedure will be greatly helpful for cordial industrial relations. It is only a few that do not believe in this statement. It is also understood that most of the grievances are
settled only through negotiations and collective bargaining procedure, while very few respondents do not believe in this. So, through negotiations and collective bargaining procedure the grievances of the employees can be settled amicably to their advantage.

**SUGGESTIONS**

The following suggestions are offered to strengthen the Industrial Relations in the Indian Railways in general and South Central Railway in particular.

With regard to housing in South Central Railway, Railway administration, in contrast to the existing pattern of construction of quarters to their employees, should sanction more number of house building advances and reduce the waiting period.

In the area of education, there is a need for employment-oriented training. This can be done by establishing of vocational training centres to impart technical training to unskilled and semi-skilled workers during their off duty hours and to children of railway employees. Further, in educational institutions run by railways, need based and job oriented courses should be introduced.

In the field of medical services to the employees and their families, there is an urgent need to increase the number of doctors to cater to the needs of increasing number of patients at railway hospitals. At least at the zonal level hospital, all specialists should be made available either through permanent or contract recruitment.
To strengthen the cooperative movement in South Central Railway, efforts and encouragement in the formation of co-operative credit societies, co-operative stores, co-operative housing societies are needed from all the levels of employees and management of railways. This is to encourage the savings, and, benefit the members with quality goods at reasonable prices and provide housing facilities to the member employees.

In the field of union management relations, trade unions should change their attitude towards railway management and behave as professional leaders. They should adopt revival strategies to gain their original mandate and play an effective role in the new economic environment.

As far as the membership is concerned, trade unions have to be strengthened through the development of specialist cadres as in developed countries like England. Systematic efforts should be made to develop leaders and impart training at various levels of leadership. The training of trade union leaders includes areas of business, besides the trade union practices.

In order to achieve the objectives of protecting and promoting the interests of their members, trade unions have to increase the rate of subscription of members, raising the size of membership, prompt collection of subscriptions and collection of donations.

In the area of Human Resources Development, as expectations of employees are changing, trade unions and management have to pay
attention on areas of job satisfaction, job progression, work autonomy, job design etc., besides salary and service conditions.

To professionalise the leadership in Indian Railways, both management and employees have to promote a high degree of democratization in their system. This leads to better professional approach.

In modern times, corporate Governance is the buzzword for balancing ethics and profits in an organization. In this direction, more representatives of employees should be involved in long term planning to facilitate shared governance from the top to shop floor level. Both the parties should join hands to make the organization commercially viable. Creation of capital-labour management partnerships fortifies Indian Railways with a new organizational capacity and this, in turn provides greater competitive advantage.

In view of liberalization, globalisation and privatization, trade unions should play constructive roles and look for solutions instead of despairing. They should influence structural reforms with positive response to technological changes, involvement in reforms, acquiring new skills resulting in improving productivity and enhancing efficiency. Unions should evolve a common approach with employers for making industry cost effective and quality conscious so as to invite foreign investment. Thus, corroborative role of trade unions positively respond to privatization. As far as down sizing concept is concerned, South Central Railway should make a plan for opinion building. Indirect canvassing is necessary to create a climate acceptable to downsizing.
When the above-mentioned suggestions are followed and implemented, the employer and employee relations in South Central Railway will be more efficient and effective leading to better productivity and profitability. It would also develop “we ness” and a sense of belonging among the employees and make South Central Railway a model zone and dazzling star on the firmament of Indian Railways.