CHAPTER VI

INDUSTRIAL UNREST

In this chapter we propose to study the industrial unrest, resulting from group grievances and individual grievances, in the two plants. We shall first examine the unrest due to group grievances as such unrest is more widespread and of greater magnitude. Strikes and lock outs in each plant have been described in chronological order. An attempt has been made to give important details of the genesis, nature and settlement of each dispute. Unrest due to individual grievances is discussed afterwards.

**Strikes/Lock-out in HE(I) L.**

The frequency of strikes and other forms of agitation was high in HE(I)L. The history of strikes in HE(I) L can be studied under four different periods:

(i) January 1961, to May 1964 (period of high strike proneness)
(ii) June 1964 to July 1967 (period of comparative industrial peace)
(iii) August 1967 to August 1970 (period of intense inter-union rivalries and acute conflict between the unions and the management)
(iv) September 1970 to August 1974 (period of no strikes).

**January 1961 to May 1964 (The period of high strike proneness).** During 1961 there were two strikes in HE(I)L, one by the security guards and the other by the trainees. The security guards protested against the alleged misbehaviour of the security officers and dismissal of six persons. The strikers, however, returned to work unconditionally the next day. The trainees went on strike because the management could not absorb them as artisans for lack of
vacancies. The management wanted them to remain trainees for some
time more. Artisans also joined the trainees in the strike, which
continued for fifteen days causing a loss of 23,060 man-days and
of production worth about Rs. 1,66 lakhs.\(^1\) The strike was called
off as a result of an agreement between the management and the
representatives of trainees.

The next major strike was launched by HSTU on February 13,
1962. The main demands\(^2\) of the union were (a) recognition of
the union, (b) wage revision, (c) dearness allowance at central
rates, (d) promotion of A grade employees to charge hand,
(e) equal leave facilities to industrial and non-industrial em-
ployees, (f) starting of joint management council, (g) provision
of quarters.\(^3\)

During the strike period there were processions, picketing
and hunger strikes. Clashes between workers and police also took
place resulting in the death of some workers. The union leaders
were arrested and sent to jail. The man-days lost due to this
strike were 1,20 lakhs and loss of production was worth Rs.33.75
lakhs (For table see Appendix \(6.1\)). The strike was called off on
March 12, 1962 as a result of an agreement between the management
and the representative union. Certain political leaders like
S. K. Banerjee, a communist member of Parliament, also helped in the
settlement of the strike. A letter from the then Prime Minister,

\(^1\) For table showing number of unions involved, mandays, production
and wages lost in strikes in H\(2\)1L during 1961-70, see Appendix
\(6.1\)
\(^2\) The union submitted a charter of 49 demands to the management.
\(^3\) The management wanted to give N-2 type quarters on sharing basis
to the third batch trainees. The trainees wanted N-3 type without
sharing basis or N-2 type on a sharing basis as was done in the
case of first and the second batches of trainees.
Jawaharlal Nehru to the President of HESTU also contributed to the withdrawal of the strike.4

Since October 1962, when the state of emergency was declared in the country till about mid-July 1963, HESTU was somewhat quiescent. However, in November 1963, HESTU again served a notice of strike,5 the main demands being HESTU's recognition under the MPR Act, 1960, removal of disparities between the leave facilities of industrial and non-industrial workers, dearness allowance at central rates, and revision of the wage scale of artisans.

The union started a hunger strike from January 3, 1964. The union formed a 'Gandhi Samiti' on March 17, 1964 to conduct the strike and started issuing daily bulletins under this name. The aim of the Gandhi Samiti was non-co-operation with the management. The programme of the whole day was circulated to the workers everyday at 6 A.M. Workers resorted to peculiar behaviour. They danced, clapped, laughed or remained silent during particular periods of a day. Sometimes workers of one block of the factory would go to meet the workers of another block on a "Bhaiyara" (brotherhood) campaign. They also used to ride bicycles inside the workshop.6 The management on March 29, 1964 declared a lock-out of the entire factory. About 80 strikers were also arrested under Defence of India Rules. Man-days lost were 11.7 lakhs and production worth Rs. 1.84 lakhs7 was lost (also see Appendix 6.1).

4. Some of the demands of workers such as (a) promotion of 4 grade workers to charge hand, (b) wage increase, (c) taking back of victimised employees, were accepted.
5. HESTU called a convention on November 2 and 3 in which some top trade union leaders of the country participated. At this convention the union passed a resolution containing some demands of the workers.
6. These details of the strike are based upon the responses of workers, trade union leaders and management personnel interviewed.
7. Figures of production lost, as supplied by the Personnel Department, do not appear to be correct.
The situation started improving afterwards. The management lifted
the lockout piece-meal, and normal work was resumed from April 28,
1964.

June 1964 to July 1967 (A period of Comparative Industrial Peace).
The period between June 1964 and July 1967 was a comparatively
peaceful period for the factory. One member of the management
called it, "The golden period". Another said, "These were the
best years of our working. These were the years of consolidation. People having negative attitudes in the union were out".

The existence of comparative industrial peace during this
period may largely be explained in terms of (a) fulfilment of the
various demands of workers through an agreement between the mana-
gement and the recognized union; (b) absence of the militant lea-
ders (who were in jail); and (c) alleged fear of repression by
the management.

August 1967 to August 1970 (Period of Intense Inter-union rivalry
and acute conflict between the unions and the management). During
this period, there was a continuous conflict among different unions
as also between the unions and the management.

On August 5, 1967 all the unions in SE(I)L (except the
recognized wing of HESU) joined hands and gheraoed the administra-
tion building of the factory for about six hours. Their main
demand was the reinstatement of the employees whose services had
been terminated during the 1964 strike. The management (which
had been appointed by the Congress Government at the centre) was
pressurised by the SVD Government to reinstate the dismissed emp-
loyees.

8. The leaders of HESU arrested in 1964, were released in April
9. The Sanyuktta Vidhayeak Dal (SVD) Government replaced the Congress
Government in 1967 in Madhya Pradesh, while the Congress conti-
to have a majority at the Centre.
With the return of these leaders, the group of HESTU (later called HEMTU) started gaining strength. The group of HESTU (led by Tripathi and Siddiqui) and HEFU (affiliated to RNS) could not tolerate the popularity of HESTU led by Bhovick and formed a Joint Council to counter its influence. The Joint Council gave a call of strike for one day on December 19, 1967. The strike was opposed by HESTU (led by Bhovick) and also by the recognized wing of HESU. However, the strikers had the full support of the SVD Government and as a result of this strike workers got two more days of casual leave. Man-days lost were 10,100 and loss of production was to the tune of Rs. 6.79 lakhs (For table see Appendix 6.1).

The management again suspended three prominent leaders of HEMTU in connection with the canteen strike on May 20, 1968 and subsequently terminated their services in February 1969. This sparked off labour trouble in the plant. Various strikes, tools down strikes, hunger strikes, demonstrations etc. were organized by HEMTU during 1969. Clashes also took place amongst the workers belonging to different unions. HESTU (Tripathi group), HEFU and the recognized wing of HESU opposed these strikes. The management adopted a firm attitude and took disciplinary action against 25 active HEMTU workers. It was alleged that the strike was crushed by the management. Because of the various "tools down" and strikes between July 1969 and September 1969 man-days lost were 28,313 and loss of production was of the order of Rs. 1 crore and 12 lakhs (For table see Appendix 6.1).

The plant witnessed another strike in August 1970, when HESTU and HEMTU formed a Joint Council. Various associations also

10. Figures for man-days lost, as supplied by the Personnel Department, do not appear to be correct.
extended support to the Joint Council. These unions wanted a higher benefit for workers than agreed upon by the management and the representative union. There was, however, a very poor response from workers and the strike was a total failure. Speaking about the reasons for the failure of this strike, one trade union leader said, "Workers were afraid due to continuous police repression. Workers were also economically satisfied due to the wage increase. We could not educate them politically."

September 1970 to August 1974 (Period of no Strikes). Man-days lost due to various forms of workers' protests during this period were negligible. Factionalism continued among the workers. No faction considered itself strong enough to organise a strike. Workers received a large number of economic benefits during this period. The plant started earning profits and workers were given bonus. A large number of promotions were also made during 1972-74. Wage increases had also accrued due to implementation of the recommendations of the Third Pay Commission.

Strikes and Lock Outs in LTI

Industrial relations in LTI were cordial in general except for the disputes in 1964 and 1966. A classification of the whole period from 1950 to 1974 on the basis of industrial relations can be made as follows:

(i) From 1950 to October 1964 (period of cordial industrial relations).

(ii) From November 1964 to December 1966 (period of disturbed industrial relations).

(iii) From January 1967 to August 1974 (period of legal battles).

11. Those workers who had completed ten years of service in the same grade were promoted, provided they were considered suitable by the management.
From 1950 to October 1964 (The period of cordial Industrial Relations). Industrial relations between the management and the ITI employees' union were very cordial during this period. Both the management and the union had been trying to settle workers' problems and grievances by mutual negotiation. Acknowledging these cordial relations, the President of the union wrote, in the union day souvenir, published by the union in October 1963: "With the management the relationship of the union has always been cordial and good. The management deserves credit, for at no time did it try to interfere with the affairs of the union or to dominate its activities. The community of common interests rather than differences has held the parties together in settling the problems". One management member said, "We lived like a happy family".

From November 1964 to December 1966 (Period of Disturbed Industrial relations). Industrial relations received a set back towards the end of 1964 and culminated in a stay-in-strike for three days. The major demands of the union were: (i) increase, ranging from Rs. 40 to Rs. 60, in wages of different categories of workers; (ii) house rent allowance; (iii) leave facilities for the employees similar to those for the officers; (iv) profit-sharing bonus to the extent of 20% of each employee's annual total earning and (v) linking of the dearness allowance with the consumer price index. The management refused to accept these demands. Consequently the union held a strike ballot and claimed that out of a total of 3,138 votes polled, 3,017 were in favour of launching the strike. The union urged the workers to launch a one-day token strike on November 23, 1964. An atmosphere of strike continued.
in the factory. Workers by themselves started a tool-down strike in certain hangars on December 12, 1964. The union leadership was shocked to learn about it. However, it adopted the stay-in-strike and continued it for three days, workers remaining inside the premises of the factory during the strike. The strike was peaceful and the workers maintained complete discipline. The number of man-days lost during this strike was 40,285 and the loss of production was of the order of Rs. 30 lakhs.

The two main demands of the union i.e. the quantum of interim relief to be paid to the workmen, and the house rent allowance, were referred for the arbitration of the Central Communications Minister, Sh. Satya Narayan Sinha. The management and the union also agreed to discuss the remaining demands mutually.

The second strike took place in December 1966. The major issues involved were profit-sharing bonus and the management's refusal to grant an increase in the dearness allowance. From November 8, 1966, at the instance of the union, the employees wore protest badges, adopted go-slow tactics, and refused to work overtime. The conciliation officer intervened in the dispute, but no agreement could be arrived at. The union held a strike ballot and on the basis of its results served a 14-day notice of strike on December 1, 1966. On December 3, 1966 the union gave a call for a one-day strike. The union's strategy was to demonstrate its strength and withdraw the strike. However, workers continued with the strike even after December 3, 1966. Like 1964, this strike also went out of control of the union. The union, again,

12. For the arbitration award also see Chapter VIII on Prevention and Settlement of Disputes.
had to support the action of the workers. The management declared a lockout on December 5, 1966. The workers were living under the most difficult conditions during the stay-in-strike. They used to eat, changed clothes and sleep inside as if they were living in a big concentration camp. There was no proper arrangement for food and medical aid. The few available cloak rooms were untidy. The workers were completely bored.

The leaders of the union, who were opposed to the stay-in-strike, resigned on the 7th day of the strike. They felt disturbed because of the interference of certain outside elements. Their resignation had a devastating effect on the already demoralised workers.

On December 12, 1966 the strike was called off. The withdrawal of the strike was decided upon through an open ballot. The lock-out was lifted by the management on December 15, 1966. The number of man-days lost was reported as 19000 and the production lost was Rs. 84 lakhs. Both the issues concerning Central D.A. and the bonus were referred to the Industrial Tribunal.

From January 1967 to August 1974 (The period of legal battles). The failure of both the strikes in ITI compelled the union to take recourse to law for the redressal of the grievances of the workers. The 'Bonus Case' and the 'Dearness Allowance Case' were referred to the Industrial Tribunal in 1966. The bonus case was settled by it in 1973 and the Dearness Allowance Case by the Supreme Court in 1969. The decisions in both these cases were in favour of the union.

The workers were asked an open-ended question, 'How did you feel during the stay-in strike'? Our analysis is based upon the answers to this question.

The figures of man-days lost, as supplied by the Personnel Department, do not appear to be correct.
INDIVIDUAL GRIEVANCES

Individual grievances also affect the industrial environment, because, through the sympathy of colleagues, these can easily develop into group grievances. It is obvious that industrial relations are vitiated in case a large number of workers have individual grievances over a long period.

**Individual Grievances in HR(1)L and ITI**

*The Grievance Procedure.* The grievance procedures in HR(1)L and ITI laid down time limits for the redressal of grievances at various stages. In HR(1)L, an employee who was not satisfied with the response of his immediate superior and of the departmental head, could refer the case to the grievances committee. However, there was no provision for a worker-management committee to settle grievances in ITI. An employee in ITI, if not satisfied with the reply of his immediate superior or departmental head, could refer the case to the General Manager (technical or production) and later, through the union, to the Managing Director.

The grievance procedures in HR(1)L and ITI also laid down that the total time involved in all the stages should not exceed 30 days.

**Types of Individual Grievances in HR(1)L and ITI.** Individual grievances in HR(1)L and ITI related to promotion, allotment of accommodation, house rent, pay fixation, working hours etc. The following table shows the causes of individual grievances in HR(1)L and ITI.

15. For details of Grievances Committee in HR(1)L see Chapter IV on 'Workers' Participation in Decision-Making'.

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**TABLE 6.2**

Grievances by causes in NE(I)L (1964-71) and ITI (1967-70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Grievances</th>
<th>Percentage of total grievances in NE(I)L</th>
<th>Percentage of total grievances in ITI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Promotion</td>
<td>194 (43.7)</td>
<td>135 (65.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. House allotment</td>
<td>18 ( 4.1)</td>
<td>14 ( 6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. House rent</td>
<td>35 ( 7.9)</td>
<td>10 ( 4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seniority</td>
<td>6  (2.7)</td>
<td>6  (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pay fixation</td>
<td>49 (11.0)</td>
<td>13 ( 6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Working hours</td>
<td>49 (11.0)</td>
<td>13 ( 6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>93 (20.6)</td>
<td>16 ( 8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 444</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 207</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 6.2 shows that the largest number of grievances in both the plants related to promotion (65% in ITI and 43.7% in NE(I)L). Further, we find that a larger percentage of promotion disputes took place in ITI than in NE(I)L. It might be because, seniority, which was the basis of promotion in ITI, could be disputed more easily by the workers than merit, which was the basis of promotion in NE(I)L. The second largest number of grievances (about 12%) related to house rent and house allotment in the two plants. Pay fixation and overtime were each responsible for 11% of the grievances in NE(I)L and 6.3% in ITI.

**Time taken for the Settlement of Grievances.** In neither of the plants were the grievances settled within the time limits prescribed in the grievances procedures. Certain grievances took even one or two years for settlement. The following table shows the time taken for the settlement of grievances in NE(I)L and ITI.
### Table 6.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time taken</th>
<th>Grievances in RE(I)L</th>
<th>Grievances in ITI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one month</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month to three months</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three months to six months</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six months to one year</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year to two years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>420</strong></td>
<td><strong>251</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The total is different from Table 6.2 because it includes the time taken for settlement of grievances in RE(I)L at the first and the second stages also. Moreover, information about time taken on some grievances at the third stage was not available.

- Similarly, the discrepancy in ITI arose from the non-availability of data.

Table 6.3 shows that about 75% of the grievances in ITI and 32% of the grievances in RE(I)L took more than three months for settlement. Thus in ITI the settlement of grievances took longer than in RE(I)L. It may be because of two reasons (1) existence of a worker-management committee to settle grievances in RE(I)L and not in ITI and (2) there existed a single union in ITI for about 12000 workers. It might be difficult for a few leaders of the union to take up individual grievances of a large number of workers. On the contrary, RE(I)L was a multiple-union-structure plant. Different categories of workers had their own associations which could take up individual grievances of their respective categories.

16. The Executive Committee of ITI Employees Union had only 17 members.
There were also complaints, that a large number of grievances were not pursued by the workers in both the plants because they feared harassment at the hands of the officers against whom their grievances lay.

**INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS**

Industrial disputes in the public sector undertakings in India have shown a considerable increase during 1962-74. The number of man-days lost during 1962-72 increased from 5 lakhs to 33 lakhs, and touched an all-time high of 130 lakhs in 1974. Still, comparatively speaking, the number of industrial disputes in the public sector was considerably less than that in the private sector. The range of man-days lost in the public sector per hundred of estimated employment varied from 3.48 to 29.26 during 1962-72, while in the private sector it ranged between 54.86 to 243.51. Even in the public sector, in 1974, the man-days lost per hundred of estimated employment increased to 104.9. However, this figure fell to 16.9 in the year 1975. This decline might have been due to the imposition of emergency in the country. During 1962-75, except for 1974, the number of man-days lost in the private sector was about ten times that in the public sector. Similarly, workers' involvement was also higher in the private sector than in the public sector. But the rate of increase in the number of disputes was proportionately higher in the public sector than in the private sector. Workers' involvement increased in the public sector from 1.72% in 1962 to 3.71% in 1972 and to 10.9%

17. For table of work stoppages and man-days lost in the public and private sectors see Appendix 6.2
18. For table of man-days lost per hundred of estimated employment see Appendix 6.3
in 1974, while in the private sector it increased from 11. to 21.3% during the same period.

Over 40 per cent of the total industrial disputes occurring in the public sector during the year 1971-72, were due to dissatisfaction among workers with wages and allowances. These disputes were responsible for the loss of 68.8% of the total number of man-days during that year. Such a large number of disputes for wages and allowances appeared to be a direct result of the inflationary trends in our economy.

Personnel problems like recruitment, promotion etc. accounted for 14.8% of the total disputes and the issue of bonus accounted for only 6.8% of the disputes in the public sector.

Although the number of disputes on personnel problems was larger than on the question of bonus, the duration of the disputes on the former was less as compared to the duration of the disputes on bonus. Man-days lost per worker involved were 9.07 for wages and allowances, 3.99 for bonus and 3.3 for personnel problems. The reason, perhaps, was that whereas the wages and bonus issues involved the whole of a group, the personnel problems related only to some individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

We find that in 1961, the periods from January 1961 to May 1964, and from August 1967 to August 1970, were of high strike proneness, while during the periods from June 1964 to July 1967,

19. For the table showing workers involved in industrial disputes as a percentage of the estimated employment in private and public sector during 1962-75 see Appendix 6.4.
20. For the industrial disputes in public sector classified by causes see appendix 6.5
21. Man-days lost per worker involved are calculated by dividing the number of man-days lost by the number of workers involved.
and from September 1970 to August 1974, there was comparative industrial peace.

The most common factors responsible for high strike proneness were: (a) granting of recognition of a weaker union, while a stronger union's right was ignored; (b) the alleged discriminatory policies adopted by the management in matters like absorption of trainees, provision of quarters to workers and leave facilities; (c) reinstatement of the employees whose services had been terminated; (d) demand for higher economic advantages such as wage revisions, dearness allowance, introduction of incentive schemes and profit-sharing bonus; and (e) attempt on the part of some leaders to spread communism.

The most common factors which led to periods of comparative peace were: (a) provision of various economic benefits to the workers and (b) absence of militant leadership or neutralization of the effect of militant leadership.

In III, on the other hand, we find that, except for the period from November 1964 to December 1966, industrial relations were, by and large, cordial. The most common factors responsible for strike during this period (1964-66) were (a) demand for economic benefits such as wage revision, central dearness allowance, profit-sharing bonus and (b) allegedly rigid attitude of the management towards the demands of the union during this period. The common factors responsible for comparatively peaceful periods were (i) co-operative attitude of the management and the trade unions towards each other; and (ii) willingness of the union leaders to settle disputes through negotiations and, in case of failure of negotiations, through adjudication, and not through strikes.
A comparative study of the two plants shows that while in ITI economic factors were mainly responsible for the strikes, in HE(I)IL, apart from economic factors, motives like the recognition of the union, attempt to spread communist ideology, reinstatement of the employees whose services had been terminated, and other factors like the intervention of outside political leaders in the union affairs and the alleged discriminative attitude of the management towards different types of workers were also responsible for creating industrial unrest.

A majority of individual grievances in both the plants related to promotion. The time taken in the settlement of grievances in a majority of cases, in both the plants, was much more than that prescribed in the grievances procedure. In HE(I)IL, where the grievances committee was functioning, the time taken to settle individual grievances was shorter as compared to ITI where the grievances committee did not function.