

A DECADE

On the eve of 54th General Council Meeting of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) being held at Bangalore from 22nd to 24th October, 2005, the Federation desires to highlight true picture of a decade – 1995 to 2005 – of events and performance of NFIR through this brief compilation. It is hoped, the cadre of NFIR would appreciate the contents contained in the brief and take upon themselves the tasks of reaching every worker and work tirelessly to successfully face the challenges and carry all Rail Work Force under the banner of NFIR.

DECADE'S PRE-VIEW

In the history of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) the years 1992 to 1995, were indeed turbulent as the right thinking rank and file, who wanted to restore the democratic functioning of the organisation were unfortunately subjected to intimidation and harassment by a section of leadership. A wide spread revolt came to surface as a result of unethical decisions and undemocratic actions resorted to by a few senior leaders of NFIR. Consequently, a Special requisitioned General Body Meeting of NFIR was held on 14th December, 1993, at Secunderabad with the participation of majority of NFIR Unions, wherein crucial decisions were taken to save NFIR, which step was also opposed by the leadership of minority group forcing the whole dispute to be adjudicated by Supreme Court. The Apex Court cleared the whole mess by appointing Justice T.P.S. Chawla, Chief Justice (Retd), Delhi High Court to conduct elections at New Delhi and accordingly elections were held on 16th July, 1995, under the control and supervision of Justice T.P.S. Chawla, the outcome of which was upheld by Hon'ble Supreme Court.

JULY, 1995 – BEGINNING OF NEW ERA

The dark chapter of turbulent period ended and a new era of relief to the Railway Trade Union Movement in general and NFIR members in particular dawned solely by the strenuous efforts of honest and upright rank and file of NFIR. The new era of the decade (1995-2005) commenced with the new team of Office Bearers at the helm of affairs treading through a purely democratic and transparent path. The leadership along with rank and file, scanned thoroughly the tasks ahead, and started restoring the NFIR

Working Machinery on rails. As a first step, formal negotiations with the Railway Board had started and the PNM Meeting between the NFIR and Railway Board was held on 13th and 14th October, 1995 chaired by the Chairman Railway Board and the DC(JCM) meeting was held on 29th November, 1995.

PRODUCTIVITY LINKED BONUS (PLB)

Agreement signed between the Railway Board and the two Federations (All India Railwaymen's Federation and National Federation of Indian Railwaymen) on 22nd November, 1979, states that -

"The Indian Railways are a departmental undertaking of the Government of India and as such, are excluded from the purview of Payment of Bonus Act. The Railwaymen have, however, been representing for a long time that being industrial employees they should be covered by the Payment of Bonus Act and paid bonus accordingly.

Discussions have been held since August 1979 with the representatives of the Railwaymen to see if any solution can be found to this problem since the railway employees are not covered by the Payment of Bonns Act, the Railways being a departmental undertaking. The chief consideration borne in the mind was the important role of the Railways as an infrastructural activity in the performance of the economy as a whole. Having regard to this, it was felt by the Government that any solution to the problem would have to stress higher productivity on the part of the railwaymen which in turn would result in better performance by the Railways. This line of thought suggested the desirability of , accepting the concept of productivity-linked bonus in lieu of bonus on the lines of Payment of Bonus Act. After discussion held in a very cordial manner, the representatives of All India Railwaymen's Federation and National Federation of Indian Railwaymen responded in a spirit of coordination to the Government's suggestion for accepting the concept of Productivity Linked Bonus.

Having regard to the above consideration, the Government have in consultation with the representatives of railwaymen evolved a scheme for payment of Productivity Linked Bonus to railwaymen. The Railwaymen represented by the All India Railwaymen's Federation with their central office at 4, State Entry Road, New Delhi and National Federation of Indian Railwaymen with their central office at 166/1, Panchkuian Road, New

Delhi(now at 3, Chelmsford Road, New Delhi) and the Government of India represented by Railway Board have accepted this scheme.”

This PLB Scheme was accepted by the two Federations (NFIR & AIRF) when there were no takers for this scheme. The scheme having been evolved by an agreement between the two recognised Federations and the Railway Board bilaterally, is reviewed periodically.

During the year 1995, the Federation insisted that the rate of PLB should be enhanced upward from Rs.1600/-. The Government have considered and revised the rate from Rs.1600 to Rs.2500 on 20-9-95 through an Ordinance.

The Minister for Railways is the final authority in this matter and no role is envisaged in the agreement either of the Finance Ministry or the Finance Minister. The unilateral intervention of the Finance Ministry causes anguish and resentment amongst the Railwaymen all over the country.

SALARY ELIGIBILITY CEILING

As the Government had imposed salary eligibility ceiling for payment of PLB, vital categories viz., Drivers, Station Masters, Guards, Section Controllers, Section Engineers, etc., were not covered by the norms. Thus they were denied payment of PL Bonus. These categories are directly related to freight and passenger movement and equally responsible to increase of productivity. Salary Eligibility ceiling had resulted in a discriminatory treatment, while one section of workers were paid bonus, the other section were denied the same.

The Federation took up the matter with the Railway Ministry and demanded that the discrimination should end and payment of bonus should be ensured to all group 'C' and 'D' employees of Indian Railways. As the Government had not responded to the genuine demand, the Federation had taken a decision to launch agitation and accordingly mass Dharnas, Hunger Strike, Demonstrations were held by NFIR Unions during the period September, 1996 and as a follow up action in support of demand, the Federation rank and file had undertaken FAST on 2nd October, 1996 – Mahatma Gandhi Birth Day – at all important places on Indian Railways. The Federation also warned the Railway Ministry

that agitation would be intensified paralysing services if the bonus is not paid to all Group 'C' and 'D' employees irrespective of their salaries.

Sensing the grave situation developing on Indian Railways, the Cabinet met on 17th October, 1996 and decided to remove salary eligibility ceiling paving the way for payment of PLB to all Group 'C' and 'D' employees. This is one of the historic achievements to the credit of NFIR.

VTH CENTRAL PAY COMMISSION

The NFIR's unstinted efforts before the Vth Central Pay Commission were very commendable and known to many. The whole cadre led by the General Secretary, NFIR, rose to the expectations of Railwaymen spread over 740 categories, minutely understanding the pinching issues of each category, prepared an exhaustive and detailed brief with a view to benefiting the Railwaymen.

The major task fallen upon the new team of NFIR Office Bearers was "preparation for tendering evidence before the Vth Central Pay Commission". The Federation leadership took initiative without loss of time in analysing the conditions prevailing in various categories of Railways and marathon internal discussions were held at New Delhi during the first half of December, 1995.

Responding to the invitation received from Vth CPC to tender oral evidence, the delegates of NFIR had appeared before Commission from 18th to 22nd December, 1995 and tendered oral evidence exhaustively covering the issues related to all the categories on Indian Railways. The General Secretary, NFIR made presentation in a very elaborate manner in respect of job content, duties and responsibilities besides adverse working conditions and unsatisfactory service conditions before the Commission. It was also pleaded that duties being performed by Railway employees were not comparable with any other Department or category and in view of uncommon, hazardous and strenuous nature of jobs undertaken by the Railwaymen and majority of them working at remote places with no minimum facilities for leading life, they deserve to be treated on a special footing and recommended better pay scales, allowances, etc.

Hunger Strike by JCM Leaders, Demanding 3rd Interim Relief

The Leaders of JCM Constituent Organisations have undertaken indefinite Hunger Strike in front of Vth Central Pay Commission's Office at New Delhi from 8th July, 1996. On behalf of NFIR Sarvshri M. Raghaviah General Secretary, NFIR, Guman Singh, Joint General Secretary and R. P. Bhatnagar, Treasurer undertook indefinite "Fast". The Hunger Strike was called off on 13th July, 1996 as the Government conceded grant of 3rd instalment of Interim Relief to the Central Government Employees.

Retrograde Recommendations of Vth CPC

The Vth CPC had given its report on 30th January, 1997 to the Government. The said report had generated serious disappointment and resentment among the Central Government employees, particularly the Railwaymen, as many of the recommendations were retrograde. The pay fixation formula recommended by the Commission amounted to reduction of take-home-pay of the employee, while minimum of the lowest pay scale was also very low.

Staff side JCM took note of the serious situation developed in the country consequent upon the Government's decision to implement the retrograde recommendations of the Pay Commission and demanded the Government to modify negative recommendations after dialogue with JCM constituent organisations. As the Government was adamant, a decision was taken to give call for "Indefinite General Strike" by the Central Government Employees. NFIR being a major constituent of the JCM took immediate action, convened the Working Committee meeting on 7th August, 1997, wherein it was decided that NFIR Unions should serve Strike Notice on the respective General Managers on 4th September, 1997 and launch Indefinite Strike from 24th September, 1997 on important demands among many, revision of fixation formula, fixation of pension to senior citizens. All the NFIR Unions have served Strike Notice along with Charter of demands on General Managers of Zonal Railways on 19th September, 1997 while thousands of employees took out rallies in support of Strike Decision.

The Government was wiser to invite the JCM leaders for talks on the demands and talks commenced on 6th September, 1997 i.e., after serving the strike notices on the General Managers on 4th September, 1997. On behalf of NFIR S/Shri Mahendra Pratap and M. Raghaviah participated in the talks assisted by other NFIR Office Bearers. After continued marathon discussions between Group of Ministers and the JCM Staff Side Leaders from 6th September to 11th September, 1997, a negotiated settlement was

reached for revising pay fixation formula i.e., 40% pay fixation for serving employees and similar pension fixation for retired employees, revision of annual increments of Group 'D' categories and revision of pay scale S-13 as Rs.7450-11500 and upward revision of minimum pay of Group 'D' employees. The negotiated settlement was a land mark event in the history of JCM and as well NFIR.

IMPROVED PAY SCALES TO ARTISANS

The NFIR took up the issue of improving pay scales to Artisans, with a view to ensuring parity between blue collar and white collar workers and the issue was raised by NFIR in the course of negotiations between the Group of Ministers and JCM constituent organizations held from 6th September, 1997 onwards.

Through an agreement reached between the Government and Staff Side (JCM) on 11th September, 1997, it was agreed that the Railway Ministry would send a Cabinet Note proposing appropriate higher pay scales for Highly Skilled Artisans Gr. I, Master Craftsmen and Mistries. The Government having failed to respond favourably to the Cabinet Note, NFIR took serious note of the indifferent attitude of the Government, through its Working Committee Meeting directed all the affiliated unions to observe protest week from 15th to 20th June, 1998 by holding demonstrations, mass rallies at all levels issuing wall posters, hand bills, etc., throughout the Indian Railways, but no fruitful result emerged. And again NFIR through its Working Committee held on 22nd and 23rd August, 1998 decided to give call to "Tool Down" strike if the higher replacement scales to Artisan categories are not granted in a month's time.

On launching determined struggle by NFIR, ultimately the Union Cabinet met on 26th October, 1998 and cleared the proposal for allotment of higher replacement scales to Artisans with effect from 1-1-1996. This is one of the noteworthy achievement of NFIR.

RUNNING STAFF

Pursuant to the discussion with the Federation on the demand for fixing the pay element and running allowances rates for running staff in the light of implementation of Vth Central Pay Commission pay scales, the Railway Ministry issued orders on 2nd April, 1998 granting adjusted rates of running allowance and allowance in lieu of Kilometrage

(ALK) to running staff with effect from 1-1-1996.

The Railway Board have also decided that the pay element would be 30% of the basic pay in the Vth CPC pay scale for specified benefits and for the purpose of retirement benefit an additional quantum of 55% of basic pay of the Vth CPC pay scale would be included in the basic pay.

The Railway Board have also decided that in the case of Loco Inspectors for the purpose of pensionary benefits, an additional quantum of 30% basic pay of the Vth CPC pay scale would be included in the basic pay.

The rates of Shunting duties to running staff were also revised in December, 1998.

As a result of demand raised by NFIR in PNM meeting, the Railway Board issued orders during the year 1999, equating the grades of running staff with the appropriate grades of stationary staff taking into account pay element.

All the above achievements have benefited Running Staff substantially.

REVISION OF INCENTIVE BONUS TO WORKSHOPS/P.U. STAFF

Since 1996, NFIR has been pursuing the issue of revision of rates of Incentive Bonus to Workshops and certain Production Units staff. After series of meetings, it was decided by the Railway Board to discuss the issue jointly with both the Federations. NFIR's delegation led by the General Secretary effectively pleaded the case. In the final round of discussion held with the Railway Board on 24/25th May, 1999, decisive conclusions were arrived at and accordingly the Railway Board issued orders on 21-6-99 as under:-

- (a) The hourly rates of incentive bonus in Workshops and Production Units operating incentive scheme on CLW pattern were revised.
- (b) It has also been decided that Section Engineers in Rs.6500-10,500 and Senior Engineers in Rs.7450-11500 directly supervising work of staff working on the shop floor will henceforth be entitled to monthly payment of Incentive Bonus calculated at a flat rate of 15% of their basic pay per month.

NFIR further initiated the case of group incentive scheme in new workshops as under:-

Tirupathi: After persistent efforts made by the NFIR, the Railway Board have introduced Group Incentive Scheme at Carriage Repair Shop Tirupathi, South Central Railway on 12-12-2001. The Scheme proved to be successful as the workers' earnings are fairly substantial. Some discrepancies were, however, noticed and brought to the notice of the Railway Administration for rectification.

Rayanapadu: Consequent upon NFIR's initiative, the scheme was also introduced in Rayanapadu Workshop of South Central Railway. By and large, the scheme was successful and workers were happy. A number of deficiencies have, however, been noticed of late and issue have since been taken up with the Administration for rectification.

Mancheswar: The NFIR raised the demand in the Railway Board PNM Meeting and pursuant to discussion; the Railway Board gave a commitment for introduction of Group Incentive Scheme in this Workshop also. Accordingly, Group Incentive Scheme was introduced and the scheme became successful.

NFIR took up with the Railway Ministry demanding introduction of Incentive Scheme in the new workshops. Due to persistent efforts of NFIR, the Railway Ministry have issued order for introduction of Group Incentive Scheme at Bhopal workshop.

Efforts are also on to cover the remaining new workshops under Group Incentive Scheme.

VTH CPC'S ANOMALIES

Several anomalies have cropped up consequent to implementation of pay scales recommended by Vth CPC. The Federation raised all such anomalies in the Departmental Anomalies Committee and as well in National Anomalies Committee. While the result of discussions was not satisfactory, in the case of following categories anomalies rectified and orders got issued by the Railway Ministry:-

Rates Inspectors/Coal Inspectors/Weigh Bridge Clerks; Midwife/Auxiliary Nurses-cum-Midwife; Statistical Inspectors; Typists; Movement Inspector of Traffic Department; Wireless Operators; and House Keepers on Oak Grove School, Jharipani.

ACCOUNTS STAFF

The tenacity of purpose and understanding of NFIR in consummating all resources to fight out issues and stand for the welfare of Railwaymen withstanding all the difficulties on its thorny way, is quite commendable. This is only possible due to establishing worker-friendly relations, transparency and strong will to pursue the path of success oriented conviction.

As in the case of replacement pay of scales of Accounts Department Staff, the Vth Central Pay Commission has done serious injustice by violating its own concept of "Qualification based pay scales" while deciding the pay scales of Accounts Department staff of Indian Railways.

Even the FAST TRACK COMMITTEE appointed by Government of India also failed to do justice. The NFIR did not leave its grip to fight out the issue in all fora umpteen times by raising the matter consistently at Chairman, Member Staff, Railway Board and with Railway Minister.

On 8th November, 2002, the General Secretary, NFIR met Minister for Railways and explained how at various stages the Accounts Department staff were subjected to injustice and got assurance from the Minister that this issue would be pleaded before of Group of Ministers by him. On 11th November, 2002 the Group of Ministers cleared the Cabinet Note of Railways and the Union Cabinet approved on 19th February, 2003 the proposals and formal Notification was issued on 7th March, 2003 effecting the improved/upgraded pay scales to the Accounts Department Staff in Indian Railways.

This is a historic success to the credit of Accounts Staff and NFIR.

CADRE RESTRUCTURING EXERCISE

Pursuant to the demand of NFIR, the Railway Board have constituted Cadre Restructuring Committee (CRC) consisting of Railway Board Officials and nominated representatives of NFIR and AIRF. The CRC met fourteen (14) times and made exercises for restructuring various cadres. Consequently, orders were issued by Railway Board on 9th October, 2003 to grant upgradation effective from 1st November, 2003. The orders of

Railway Board were in violation of bilateral agreement in respect of certain categories. Uncalled for conditions such as matching surrender for implementation of upgradations, trade test, etc., were imposed. The benefit of promotion was not allowed against vacancies occurred prior to 1-11-2003. The Cadre Restructuring orders have not generated expected satisfaction among employees of various categories. In the case of left out categories, the Cadre Restructuring exercise is yet to be undertaken. On the whole, the restructuring/ upgradation has not benefited the employees adequately.

However, the Federation time and again brought to the notice of the Railway Board regarding the following 15 categories of staff, which are left out of the Cadre Restructuring, to include these categories for providing upgradation:

“Prosthetic Technicians, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Dressers/ Operation Theatre, E.C.G. Technicians etc., Heal & Malaria Inspectors, Cardiac Catheterisation Technicians, Dialysis Technicians, Dental Hygienists, Stenographers, Catering Staff, Commercial Couriers, Photographers, Advertising Inspectors of Commercial Department, Vehicle Drivers/Staff Car Drivers.”

NFIR has been insisting on the Railway Board to rectify all the deficiencies in the Cadre Restructuring orders while conveying protest through various fora.

REVISION OF DESIGNATIONS

The NFIR had, from time to time, sent proposals to the Railway Board seeking revision of designations of various categories. In the PNM meeting held between NFIR and Railway Board in October, 1996, the proposals of NFIR were discussed. Thereafter, a consolidated list of the categories, for which change of designations needed was given to the Railway Board in the year 1997. Further the Railway Board had held discussions with the Federations and by an agreement, revised designations of several categories were approved. Most notable decision is that Technical Supervisors have been designated as Engineers.

UNIFORMS TO VARIOUS CATEGORIES

The NFIR took up with the Railway Board demanding supply of uniforms of better

quality, inclusion of certain categories of staff, which were hitherto not given uniform and supply of terricot uniform instead cotton uniform. The issue was raised in the PNM meeting held with Railway Board in October, 1995. Consequently, Railway Board appointed Uniforms Committee in December, 1995 to look into all aspects.

The Federation had given a Memorandum to the Uniforms Committee bringing out several proposals. The Committee gave its report, upon which discussions were held and thereafter, Railway Board had given their decision on the recommendations of the Uniforms Committee.

A noteworthy achievement is Railway Board's acceptance for supply of cloth and payment of stitching charges to the -Public Image Categories, which are given hereunder:

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- (i) Station Manager, Station Supdt (Gaz.), Dy. Station Supdt., Station Master, Train Supdt, Foreman accompanying Presidents saloon.
- (ii) Chief Ticket Examiner, Chief Ticket Inspector, Supervisor/Inspector of STEs, Travelling Ticket Examiner, Sr. Travelling Ticket Inspector, Sr. Train Conductor, Conductor, Conductor Guard, Ticket Collector, Head Ticket Collector, Ticket Collector Incharge, Passenger Guide.
- (iii) Supervisor Enquiry, Supervisor Reservation, Supervisor City Booking Office, Chief Reservation Clerk, Foreman Transshipment, Supervisor, Goods Shed.
- (iv) Enquiry Clerk, Reservation Clerk, Commercial Clerks (Coaching and Goods) Booking Clerks.
- (v) All Guards
- (vi) Loco Drivers, Steam, Diesel and Elec., Grade A (Special), Grade A, Grade B, Grade C (Special), Grade C. Shunter Steam, Diesel, and Elec., Driver, Shunting Engine Driver, Asstt. Driver Diesel Elec., Rail Motor, Driver Rail Car, working on hill station, Motorman.
- (vii) Lady Travelling Ticket Examiner, Lady Sr. Ticket Examiner.

- (viii) Lady Enquiry Reservation and Booking Clerks, Lady Commercial Clerks, Matron Retiring Rooms.
- (ix) Lady Ticket Collector, Lady Passenger Guide.
- (x) Inspector Platform, Asstt. Inspector, Licensed Porters Inspector, Passenger Supdt., Passenger Supervisor, Labour Supervisor, Labour Asstt, Beggar and Hawker Checker.
- (xi) Chief Inspector Catering, Catering Inspector, Manger-Catering, Asstt. Manager, Catering Incharge of Units. Bill Issuer.
- (xii) Waiters and Head Waiter

The Federation further demanded inclusion of some more categories to the list of Public Image Categories:

RAKESH MOHAN COMMITTEE REPORT & AFTERMATH

The Expert Group headed by Dr. Rakesh Mohan, an eminent economist, appointed by Government brought out the crucial fact, the growing financial crisis being faced by Indian Railways because of the faulty investment policies pursued during 1990s in its report. The report recommended for restructuring of I. R. System and management, outsourcing of non-core activities and corporatisation of I.R.

NFIR strongly opposed the Rakesh Mohan Committee Report and contended that unwise policies of Government and Management has thrown I. R. into a difficult situation and policy corrections are needed and not corporatisation of I. R.

In the National Seminar held at Vadodara on 15th and 16th September, 2001 on the report of Expert Group on Railways headed by Dr. Rakesh Mohan, NFIR presented the views of the Federation on various issues such as Commercial Orientation, Growth of Traffic, Growing financial crisis, unwise investment, launching new unremunerative lines, construction of Konkan Railway line in a hostile and difficult terrain condition, conversion of some M.G. into B.G. lines which were not economically justified.

A detailed analysis of various aspects with suggestions for corrective measures were

also presented in the seminar including staff related costs, spinning off non-core business etc., and explained the necessity to shelve the report of Dr. Rakesh Mohan Committee. In his valedictory address the Railway Minister announced that Indian Railways being a strategic infrastructure, it should continue under Government's control.

SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS

The culture of NFIR is shaped in such a way as to benefit every Railway Worker in particular and the industry in general. Conferences, Seminars and Workshops have been given an intellectual and practical importance, by which Railwaymen from the field level relating to all departments have been provided an opportunity to ventilate and share their experience without fear or favour to better their service conditions and help Rail Industry grow with safety to the needs of common man. With this in view, the NFIR has been successfully organizing right from 1995 Conferences, Seminars and Workshops on various issues, from time to time at national level. These in turn, enthuse the Railwaymen to participate in the activities of the organization with more zeal and dedication to benefit themselves and as well Railways. As of now, this culture is observed at Branch, Divisional and Zonal Level of the Unions of NFIR thereby the transparency of democratic functioning of the organization and the management is well understood and will go a long way to tread through in future endeavours judiciously by the coming generation in the industry.

RAIL SAFETY

The Indian Railways are one of the largest railway networks in the world, running more than 14,000 trains daily including 8500 passenger carrying trains on about 64,000 route Kms. These trains pass through several bridges, culverts, curves, tunnels, remote and very difficult areas. Looking to the volume of traffic handled by the Indian Railways, the safety record cannot be taken as a startling situation.

Major accidents involving passenger trains, when occur at short intervals; create excited state for the press, parliament and public at large. In the recent past some of the accidents of passenger trains caused concern but these accidents cannot be taken to mean that consciousness towards safety in train operations and efficiency amongst the Railwaymen has been deteriorated.

The Railway employees are the most dedicated and duty conscious personnel. They are equally concerned over accidents. When they hear about the rail accident, they develop a sense of guilt although the accident might not have occurred due to human failure.

National Federation of Indian Railwaymen being a responsible Federation of Railwaymen has all along been making efforts for inculcating greater safety consciousness among Railwaymen and motivates them to work with high degree of discipline and run the services without compromising on safety. The Federation has been organising Seminars, Workshops and Conventions at different levels with an aim for not only minimising the rail accidents on account of failure of human element but also achieving the goal of zero accident.

A National Seminar on "Safety of Railway track-Role of Machines and Manpower in Track Maintenance" was held NFIR at New Delhi on 28th May, 2002, wherein the Railway Minister accompanied by C.R.B. and Railway Board members have participated and addressed the Seminar. Over 900 Delegates drawn from different parts of Indian Railways have attended the Seminar. Among them, many made presentations highlighting the deficiencies and adverse working conditions faced by the staff connected with permanent way and Track Machines.

WHITE PAPER ON SAFETY

The Railway Minister presented "THE WHITE PAPER ON SAFETY ON THE INDIAN RAILWAYS" in the Parliament during April, 2003 offering a review of safety performance of the Indian Railways, in terms of accidents occurring on the system during the last 40 years, with a specific reference to the previous decade. The highlights of the paper revolved around modernisation of infrastructure viz., track, bridges, rolling stock etc., and examination of the role of 'Human Element', especially that of 'Human Error' causing accidents. It had also gone into issues related to accident inquiry, fixing up of responsibility and recommendations made by various inquiry Committees and Commissions. The document had also raised certain vital issues, for which public response was sought to facilitate resolving the issues.

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON SAFETY

As a follow up to the presentation of White Paper on Rail Safety, Ministry of Railways initiated a two-day National Workshop on Safety on Indian Railways at New Delhi on 12th and 13th July, 2003 inviting the employees belonging to various safety categories particularly Drivers, Asst. Drivers, Guards, Station Masters, Gang men, Points men, Section Engineers belonging to Signal, Mechanical, Civil Engineering Departments, Signal Maintainers, Technicians of Maintenance Departments, Trackmen, etc., and representatives from all recognized Federations/Associations in the Industry. In the Workshop, various aspects of working, shortcomings and deficiencies in the system were comprehensively deliberated in the midst of General Managers of Zonal Railways, Production Units and Railway Board Members including Chairman. 22 representatives of NFIR have spoken in the Workshop and highlighted various deficiencies in the system, shortage of staff, inadequate training etc., The Minister for Railways heard the participants throughout and took note of various suggestions and made announcement as given hereunder in brief: -

- i. With a view to effect improvement in Safety related training, the training facilities at all training centres including Basic Training Schools will be suitably upgraded. Works in this regard will be sanctioned out of turn.
- ii. Condition of running rooms and crew lobbies will be improved on urgency basis. A Committee will be set up to recommend the details of work to be done in this regard and the same will be sanctioned out of turn.
- iii. With a view to ensure reasonable quality of items procured by the Railways, concept of "Life Cycle Cost" will be adopted wherever possible.
- iv. All Safety Category vacancies will be filled on urgency basis.
- v. Posts required for maintenance of rakes in Coaching Complex, in context of introduction of new trains (year 2003-04 and onwards), will be created on the lines as done for the crews by way of periodic review.
- vi. Immediate action will be taken to provide protective gears and implements viz. boots, barsaati, torch, retro reflective garments, etc. as per need to Railway employees working on or near the track.

- vii. Gang men and Drivers with age between 50 to 57 years will be given option to seek voluntary retirement in which case one of his wards will be given appointment on Compassionate Ground.

CORPORATE SAFETY PLAN

The Corporate Safety Plan of Indian Railways (2003-2004) was brought out by Ministry during August, 2003, duly taking into consideration the recommendations of the Railway Safety Review Committee (1998) and various other factors like technological inputs, work culture, managerial focus and required investments, etc., and also the suggestions made in the National Workshop and placed before the Parliament by the Railway Minister. This document encompasses the priorities of the safety related works and indicates a broad time frame to complete them along with assessed approximate requirement of financial investments. While the endeavour is to minimize fatalities in accidents, the plan objectives can be treated as an intermediate stage in our efforts to realize a vision of accident free and casualty-free IR system. The document also envisages safety action plan directed towards continuous reduction in risk level to its customers, implementation of suggested system reforms, imbibing better safety culture, enhancement of asset reliability etc. This covers continuous rehabilitation and modernisation of assets, qualitative changes in men and machines, induction of appropriate technologies in support of human efforts. Funds requirement for safety enhancement works outlined in the Corporate Safety Plan is Rs. 31,835 crores, which includes funds already available under Special Railway Safety Fund (SRSF) and Railway Safety Fund (RSF).

RAIL SAFETY SAMVADS

In addition to the above, the Railway Ministry launched Rail Safety Samvads at various centres in Zonal Railways in three phases with a team consisting representatives of the recognised Federations of Employees, Officers and RPF and the Board Members led by Minister himself with a view to interacting with the grass root level employees belonging to safety categories down the line.

From the above exercises, the Railway Ministry, no doubt, got sufficient inputs particularly with regard to shortcomings and deficiencies in the system in particular and human element in general, from the grass root level workers related to safety

categories.

AKHIL BHARATIYA RAIL SANRAKSHA MAHA SAMMELAN
ORGANISED BY NFIR

The aim and purpose of the event was one of self-introspections on accident front and to respond to disasters. NFIR took matchless initiative for the first time in its history to reach thousands of the grass root workers bringing out the deficiencies and shortcomings in the Railway System through them as an eye opener to the Railway Administration, who should spontaneously provide remedial steps, with a view to rendering accident-free services by Railwaymen through the Akhil Bharatiya Rail Sanraksha Maha Sammelan at Secunderabad on 20th October, 2003 in coordination with its affiliate viz South Central Railway Employees Sangh. Over 11000 delegates belonging to safety categories at a field and grass root level from all the Zonal Railways and Production Units have participated in the Akhil Bharatiya Rail Sanraksha Maha Sammelan. NFIR pledged in the Sammelan to continue to make ceaseless efforts for motivating all Railway employees to discharge their functions with greater vigil and concentration, so that Rail accidents due to human error are prevented and at the same time the Federation wanted the Ministry of Railways to give serious consideration over the points brought in the Maha Sammelan for effective redressal. Railway Minister, CRB, Board Members, etc., have participated in the Maha Sammelan.

From the above Sammelan, the Railway Ministry, no doubt, got sufficient inputs with regard to shortcomings and deficiencies in the system in particular and human element in general, from the grass root level workers related to safety categories.

Consequent upon having interactions with all the grass root level workers related to rail safety and train running duties, the NFIR analysed the basic ingredients required for safe running and listed out the following for implementation:

1. The Rail failures/fractures are on the increase, causing 'Safety Hazards'. In spite of upgradation of technology, the failures have not come down. This needs to be investigated, as otherwise, safety standards may deteriorate.
2. Rail welds are being done between trains leading to permanent defects on account

of trains being passed on hot welds. (In CITU welding of rails needs 75 minutes line block).

3. On the aspect of human failure, impartial assessment is necessary to be done in order to know whether the human failure was on account of poor track standards, inadequate brake power, defective maintenance of rolling stock or failure of equipment or on account of bona fide error. It is easy to say about human failure overlooking lack of other ingredients which may cause or force human failure, mainly in the case of safety categories. There is also need for identifying the causes which lead to the lapses on the part of workforce, instead putting blame on human element and forgetting the causes.
4. Accident statistics are doctored. This manipulation of accident statistics is with a sole purpose to show better performance than their predecessors.
5. The heart of the safety system is the human being and unless railway management focuses on creating a climate of safety based on the knowledge, competence, discipline and ethical conduct, there can be little sustained improvement in safety.
6. Keeping thousands of vacancies in 'Safety categories', is it really possible to ensure Rail Safety? Why at the level crossings which have been classified or converted as manned ones are not provided sanctioned posts? How long the present ad hoc-ism continues? The management should have self-introspection on these vital factors and take quick corrective measures.
7. It is important for the health and safety of the system that the running staff is provided with the best in terms of emoluments, working conditions, uniforms and basic amenities, etc.
8. The need of the hour is to provide qualitative training to all workforce not only at induction stage but also at every stage of promotion without exception and re-introduction of viva-voce test as part of recruitment process through Railway Recruitment Boards for selecting talented skilful candidates is necessary.
9. Training to be effective – the minimum grade of the instructor should be

Rs.6500-10500 and the tenure should be 10 years to lure services of experienced personnel.

10. Trainees should be provided with good accommodation and free food in the Training Centres.
11. Model Rooms in the Training Centres are not up to the standard. Model Room concerning Electric Traction are not available in Training Centres. These are needed to be taken care of.
12. Training Centres should be upgraded and simulators also are to be provided.
13. The safety cannot be achieved by just teaching rule position. Psychological change must come. The vision must change, level of commitment must undergo change.
14. The present policy of creation of posts needs review, facilitating creation of new posts in safety categories for the maintenance of new services/assets without matching surrender.
15. Motivation of Railway staff is very important.
16. Duty hours of Gatemen are to be reduced from 12 hours to 8 hours.
17. Safety related Voluntary Retirement Scheme should be extended to other safety categories.
18. Advance Action Plan for filling up of vacancies related to safety categories is to be drawn up on priority and implemented on a time bound manner. G.Ms should be empowered for inducting the candidates against Group 'D' Safety Category vacancies up to the extent of 20% particularly in those categories where the vacancies are very high in number causing safety hazard. Course completed Act Apprentices be inducted as substitutes of Gp 'D' in Technical Departments as and when heavy shortage is found in those Departments.
19. Promotion of staff, their increments, night duty allowance, overtime allowance, etc.,

should be granted without loss of time. Personnel Department should be made accountable for any failure.

20. Officers should be given special training, so as to see that they operate as facilitators and their ACRs should reflect their behavioural approach towards staff.
21. Loco Cabs should be made driver friendly.
22. Infrastructure facilities for maintenance of Coaching Stock existing at present are totally inadequate. Even the lighting facilities provided for undergear examination are insufficient. Rolling stock examination in the face of these inadequacies contributes for unsafe situation.
23. Many rake links are so drawn that their primary maintenance is always during night time. The rake links are to be so revised that every such rake should have Day time Primary maintenance at least once in 3 trips.
24. Running Rooms should be brought to the standard of THREE STAR HOTEL.
25. Adequate facilities should be ensured in Crew Lobbies.
26. Staff should not be forced to adopt short-cut methods during abnormal situations.
27. Existing rules should be reviewed and those, which are not practical for implementation should be done away with.
28. Joint patrolling of track by Trackmen and RPF personnel should be organized regularly.
29. Running staff should be treated as 'Intensive' category and six hours duty be prescribed, preferably to those working on high speed trains.
30. Essential Intermittent duty roster to SMs/ASMs/Pointsmen, etc., should be abolished.
31. Better communication facilities should be provided at Stations, Level Crossing,

Tracks.

32. Accident enquiry reports should be in the nature of fact finding and not fault finding. The reports should be published and discussed with the organised labour.
33. Panel inter-locking, solid state interlocking, etc., to be provided with computer based information at stations where man-machine expertise is used.
34. Safety gadgets like track circuit/axle counter, panel inter-locking/RRI, block providing axle counter are to be extensively used for safety.
35. Where centralised Panel inter-locking system is provided in the Stations, the second ASM Post is a dire necessity and should be provided forthwith.
36. Mini-Operation theatre facility should be provided in the AMBULANCES.
37. Seven days' continuous night duty to Safety Staff be stopped forthwith.
38. All required equipment should be in-built in the Brake vans/SLRS.
39. Four-wheeler brake vans be weeded out.
40. Drivers are not made to carry their personal equipment and Line Boxes hitherto in use by Drivers should not be discontinued.
41. Cannibalisation of fittings should be discouraged under any circumstances.
42. Trains should not be worked without valid brake power certificate.
43. Welding of rails by the contractors should be dispensed with and experienced, technically qualified and retired Railway employees may be entrusted with this job.
44. Gatemen are working under difficult conditions. Minimum facilities of drinking water, electricity are not provided. These facilities should be provided.
45. Departmentalism in Railway is causing set back to efficiency. This should be got

eradicated by taking appropriate measures at higher level.

46. Mail/Express Drivers and Guards Links are drawn arbitrarily without consultations with the staff concerned. This unhealthy trend is causing disappointment among Running Staff and needs rectification.
47. Leave reserve and rest giving SMs/ASMs are put to much hardship when they go to small stations for catering leave/rest to the staff. At small stations one rest room with toilet facilities should be constructed.

The quotation "The great advantage of telling the truth is that, one is so much more likely to sound convincing" is more relevant to all Officers. If Officers do not speak truth, they are only sanctifying lies. If truth is spoken, rules will be followed, tested in practice and amended/modified suitably, wherever necessary. All Railway Officers to remember is "Ends, however noble, will never justify means; means must be as pure as, if not purer than, ends".

ALL INDIA TICKET CHECKING STAFF CONFERENCE

In view of introduction of hundreds of new trains like Shatabdi/Inter-City/Superfast Express, etc., and growing awareness among commuters in respect of travel facility, security and punctuality, the responsibilities on public inter-face categories in general and Ticket Checking category in particular, are increased manifold. Added to these, the working conditions of the staff continued to be very hard, causing tension and disappointment among them. The Vth Central Pay Commission have done grave injustice to this category by not providing the pay scales commensurate with their duties and responsibilities.

In the light of the above situation, the NFIR felt that holding All India Ticket Checking Staff Conference was necessary to facilitate the staff of this important category to ventilate various issues agitating them and reach conclusions for the purpose of taking further course of action. Accordingly, the conference was held at Vadodara on 9-10 August,

2003. This Conference had a special significance, as the celebrations of “FIFTY YEARS OF GLORIOUS SERVICES OF NFIR” also became part of the Conference. One of the important topics of two-day Conference was “CUSTOMER SATISFACTION – ROLE OF PUBLIC INTER-FACE CATEGORIES”. The Delegates made their presentations.

In the Conference, NFIR’s achievements notably, provision of allotment of berths in ACII Tier, ACIII Tier and Sleeper Class for the TTEs manning the coaches, modified uniforms to TTEs/TCs, construction of 200 bed capacity of TTE Rest Room at New Delhi, Improved Rest House facilities and creation of additional posts, etc., were highlighted.

The Railway Minister, CRB, Member (Staff), Railway Board besides GM/Western Railway and number of Officers participated.

Having heard the presentation made by delegates, the Railway Minister made announcement for constituting a committee to look into the problems of Ticket checking Staff, notably revision of designation, Rest and cooking facilities, provision of Apex pay Scale, creation of additional posts. The committee gave its report to Railway Board. The Federation is pursuing the matter.

COURT CASES IN THE DECADE

CREATION OF NEW ZONAL RAILWAYS

The very concept of creation of New Zonal Railways by Ministry of Railways was opposed by NFIR as the said step was more of political in nature than a necessity to the common man.

However, NFIR and other Federations, in spite of projecting its opposition against formation of New Railway Zones through SLP at the Apex Court, the Supreme Court upheld the Government decision and seven new Zones came into operation over the Indian Railways.

RECOGNITION OF THIRD FEDERATION ON INDIAN RAILWAYS

Bharatiya Railway Mazdoor Sangh (BRMS), a labour wing of BJP went to Supreme Court seeking recognition, vide Writ Petition No.1586 of 1986. On 25-1-1989 the Supreme Court directed the Union of India to consider the petitioner's application for recognition in accordance with relevant Rules. As the BRMS Unions failed to furnish list of members and other details, the Railway Administration had not granted recognition. BRMS filed contempt petition before Supreme Court, which was finally closed on 25-9-1995.

The Government had, however, issued orders on 26th June, 2002 to consider grant of recognition to BRMS Unions.

Railway Ministry's letter dated 26th June, 2002 was challenged before the High Court at Madras. Railway Board and NFIR made submission before the High Court at Madras not agreeing either to 'Secret Ballot' or 'Check-off System'. NFIR pleaded that the present system of two Federations is working well and there is industrial peace and such as there is no merit in considering grant of recognition of 3rd Federation.

Madras High Court Quashed the Order of Railway Ministry

The High Court at Madras quashed the Railway Ministry's letter dated 26-6-2002 and thus upheld the submission made by NFIR.

SLPs filed by Railway Ministry and BRMS

Subsequently, the Railway Ministry filed SLP against Madras High Court's judgement, which was also dismissed by the Supreme Court on 8th March, 2004. BRMS filed SLP before Supreme Court against Madras High Court's order which was dismissed by the Apex Court.

In the light of dismissal of SLPs by the Supreme Court, the issue with regard to recognition of any other Federation should have been treated as a closed chapter. But unfortunately, the Railway Ministry has again initiated action for changing the existing policy.

Railway Board's meeting with Both Federations (NFIR & AIRF)

In the joint meeting held by the Railway Board on 21-6-2004 the NFIR stated that while referring to the case of FCI Staff Union Vs. FCI, the Supreme Court had clearly stated that all parties had given consent for "Secret Ballot" and had prayed the Apex Court to decide the method. However, in Railways the situation is different as while Railway Board and NFIR did not agree for 'Secret Ballot', the other Federation agreed to that. Therefore, the Supreme Court's judgement in FCI Staff Union vz. FCI is not relevant to be relied upon in the case of Railways, the Federation said. Moreover, Food Corporation is of non-essential Character of an organisation, whereas Indian Railways is an important operational system of essential character, the federation further added.

NFIR also explained that under the provisions of Article 144 of Constitution of India, the matters once reached finality by the decision of Supreme Court should not be reopened by Civil and Judicial Authorities. NFIR contended that the BRMS case is a settled issue by the Supreme Court and need not be reopened.

Re-visiting of a proposal from Railway Board

Adviser (IR), Railway Board sent a communication on 17th August, 2005 proposing modalities that can be adopted in the event of the Secret Ballot being implemented for purposes of granting recognition to Unions on Railways. NFIR affiliates have adequately prepared themselves to meet any eventuality on this issue.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS/ACHIEVEMENTS

On the Occasion of completion of 50 years' glorious service by NFIR, which period fell in this decade, it was decided that the history of NFIR should be written and published for the benefit of not only common worker but also people of different walks of life. Accordingly, the book titled "BIRTH AND RISE OF NFIR" was released on the eve of 51st Birth Anniversary of NFIR. This Book contains various events from the days of formation of Federation, besides its consistent efforts during the last 50 years for the cause of working people of Indian Railways. Substantial gains for Railway employees secured by NFIR by its intelligent and efficient handling of various issues are also mentioned in this book.

In addition to the achievements already printed in the book further more important achievements secured by NFIR to the Railway employees w.e.f. March, 2003 are given hereunder:-

- 1) Public Image Categories viz., Station Master, Assistant Station Master, etc., are provided uniform with quality and standard cloth and payment of stitching charges.
- 2) Pursuant to the NFIR's demand, upgradation of Lecturers of Railway Degree College, Secunderabad for Group 'C' to Group 'A' (Class-I) has been agreed to by the Railway Board.
- 3) Cadre restructuring and upgradation of several categories of Railway employees.
- 4) Absorption of quasi-administrative units staff against group 'D' vacancies.
- 5) Extension of Health care facilities to retired Railway employees under modified Health Scheme.
- 6) Engagement of Act Apprentices as Substitutes in Group 'D'.
- 7) Relaxation of upper age limit for recruitment to group 'C' and 'D' categories.

PERFORMANCE OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

Indian Railways is now in a position for hopping up for a significant double digit

improvement in its performance during the current year i.e., 2005-06, having witnessed a growth of about 8% in freight, 6% in passenger traffic and 10% in earnings during the year 2004-05. The performance of IR during the first quarter of the current year reflects a growth of about 13% in the freight traffic, 10% in passenger traffic and 17% in earnings vis-à-vis previous year. This 'turnaround' is attributable to the efforts, devotion and dedication of the Railwaymen, who stretched out beyond their parameters to fulfil the targets.

**NFIR SUCCESSFULLY ORGANISED SEMINAR ON
"GOOD GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL DIALOGUE"
(RAILWAY SECTOR)**

III

NFIR has organized successfully the Seminar on “Good Governance and Social Dialogue (Railway Sector) under leadership Development Project (VERBA) in collaboration with Indian Confederation of Labour (ICL), World Solidarity Movement (WSM), World Confederation of Labour (WCL), Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions (BATU) and International Federation of Trade Unions Transport Workers (IFTUTW-FIOST) for three days from 13th to 15th September, 2005 at the Central Office of NFIR.

While welcoming the Guests from Indian Confederation of Labour and participants in the Seminar Shri M. Raghavaiah, General Secretary of NFIR highlighted the importance of conducting the Seminar on Good Governance and Social Dialogue and asked the 23 participants drawn from various Zonal Railways to place their presentation papers for discussion for framing a comprehensive subject paper and involving the Railway administration to have introspection on governance and social dialogue. On behalf of NFIR Shri Raghavaiah also distributed a comprehensive paper, which describes NFIR’s ideal social dialogue with the management all these years brought various achievements and benefits to the Railwaymen.

Shri Ashoke Bhattacharjee, President, ICL, in his inaugural address stated that it has become necessary to bring all the Trade Unions in the country together for good of the working class, save each Trade Union’s identity, since the impact of the globalisation on the working class has become dearer. This is only the way to combat globalisation and reap benefits to the working class. He felt very sad about the living conditions of unorganized labour in the country, particularly the lakhs of fishermen of the coastal areas. The Trade Unions should stretch their activities to those unorganized labour and uplift them, he said.

Shri Bhattacharjee further stated that NFIR should be given an international status in the Transport Sector. He informed that being himself a Member of FIOST i.e., International Federation of Trade Unions Transport Workers (IFTUTW) would be merged with International Transport Federation (ITF) shortly and he would try to ensure Affiliation to NFIR in the ensuing World Congress being held on 10 and 11 October, 2005 in France.

Shri Bhattacharjee further expressed that multiplicity of Trade Unions should, in fact, strengthen democracy, but in India it is just quite opposite. He believes, an ideal

social dialogue would ensure an ideal governance in any organization and the same is applicable to Trade Unions and the Governments too.

Other prominent dignitaries addressed the seminar are S/Shri Guman Singh, President, NFIR, C.S. Mehra, Secretary General (Orgn), ICL and Nirmal Chandra Roy, Dy. Secretary General, ICL (HD QTR).

The following participants presented their papers and reiterated on main tools viz., transparency, accountability, effective participation, rule of law, responsiveness, consensus oriented decisions and efficiency are necessary for good governance and social dialogue:

S/Shri Rahuf, SCRES, Secunderabad; K. Srinivasa Prasad, SCRES, Vijayawada; V.M. Murahari Rao, SCRES, Guntur; K. Jogendra Reddy, SCRES, Secunderabad; P.S. Chaturvedi, ECRMC, Dhanbad; C.M. Upadhyay, WCRMS, Kota; K.M. Johari, NCRES, Mathura; Chandra Kant Chaturvedi, NCRES, Jhansi; Praveen C. Bajpai, CRMS, Mumbai; V.C. Tripathi, CRMS, Bhusawal; Chandramoulee R. Iyer, WRMS, Mumbai; S.B. Kulkarni, WRMS, Baroda; Ramesh Kumar, UPRMS, Jaipur; Rajesh Kumar Sharma, UPRMS, Jaipur; B. Ramesh, SRES, Tiruchirapalli; P.S. Suriyaprakasam, SRES, Chennai; P.K. Srivastava, ERMCM, Howrah; and R.K. Saha, ERMCM, Howrah.

Seminar concluded with presentation of mementos to all the dignitaries and the participants.

WORKSHOP ON "INDIAN RAILWAYS AND ROLE OF RUNNING STAFF"

NFIR organized yet another workshop on "Indian Railways and Role of Running Staff" at New Delhi on 30th September and 1st October, 2005 inviting 23 experienced delegates pertaining exclusively to Running Staff, from various Zonal Railways. These grass root level delegates explained their working and service conditions, shortcomings and deficiencies in the system and also proposed remedial measures to be undertaken by the management to overcome the shortcomings.

Particularly in the context of Report of the Committee on Running Allowances – 2002, the running staff of Indian Railways, who is the vibrant force, has been completely ignored. Therefore, they expressed their collective resentment over the report and are agitated so much so that if the report is not shelved they are forced to go on indefinite strike.

NFIR being a responsible organization, seriously looking into the interests of the Running Staff, conveyed their feelings to the Ministry of Railways/Railway Board and urged upon to shelve the Report of the Committee on Running Allowances – 2002 and have a social dialogue with the recognized Federations immediately, so that the agitational path decided by the Running Staff of Indian Railways is avoided.

PARTICIPATION OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES IN MANAGEMENT (PREM) ROLE OF NFIR

In a decade's time, NFIR utilized effectively PREM at apex level by highlighting various issues numbering 600 related to safety, efficiency and increase of productivity. Majority of issues were fruitfully discussed and finalized. However, there are a few outstanding issues yet to be finalized satisfactorily.

NEGOTIATING MACHINERY

During one decade's time, 20 PNM meetings consisting of 600 issues and 17 DC/JCM meetings consisting of 510 issues were discussed effectively. While majority of issues were fruitfully finalized, there are a few outstanding issues yet to be finalized in both the fora.

During the decade's time, very few NC JCM meetings were held. The JCM is not effective due to Government's insensitive approach. Many issues are either not agreed or pending unsettled.

NFIR AS MEMBER OF IRWO'S GOVERNING BODY

NFIR being the Governing Body Member of Indian Railway Welfare Organisation (IRWO) has assisted the organization looking into the interests of Railwaymen.

IRWO has been set up under the patronage of Ministry of Railways to look after the

housing needs of the serving and retired Railway Employees as a Social Welfare Measure on 'NO-PROFIT NO-LOSS' basis. The Registrar of Societies has registered IRWO under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. The aim of IRWO is to provide housing to the serving Railway personnel, retired Railway personnel, spouses of deceased Railway personnel of Public Sector Undertakings under Ministry of Railways and personnel of IRWO.

IRWO is engaged in acquiring land from Government Organisations like Local Development Authorities, Housing Boards etc., and private parties in case the Government Organisations do not allot the land. IRWO undertakes construction of houses/flats at reasonable costs for its primary members. IRWO raises funds as subscription from the primary members and loans from financial institutions.

NFIR as a Member of the Governing Body, advises IRWO from time to time and resolves the shortcomings and deficiencies in the process of acquiring land and construction of dwelling units at reasonable costs to its primary members, who are Railway employees. NFIR played an important role in securing refund of money to the allottees of Faridabad Project.

FOUNDATION DAY AND CELEBRATIONS OF 50 YEARS' GLORIOUS SERVICE OF NFIR

Foundation Day and 50 years' glorious service of NFIR enriched this decade, as on the day of 16th May, 1953, the NFIR took birth and treaded through the travesty of Railway Labour Movement and consolidated the unity among Railwaymen. This was possible only through the sacrifices and relentless efforts put forth during those times by the legendary stalwarts and leaders, who believed in Gandhian ideals of constructive Trade Unionism.

The NFIR and its affiliated Unions have celebrated NFIR's Foundation Day on 16th May, 2003 by organising mass meetings, Blood Donation Camps, cultural programmes, HIV Aids awareness campaigns, Distribution of fruits to patients in Railway Hospitals and various other important activities. In the course of celebrations the old stalwarts who served for the cause of Railwaymen were also honoured.

The Unions have also drawn various programmes for organising 51st anniversary of

NFIR at different levels. On this Fifty First Birth Day of NFIR, the rank and file of NFIR took pledge to strictly follow the ideals and path set out by our legendary leaders of yester years, make all out efforts to consolidate the workforce and march ahead under the flag of NFIR for not only safeguarding the interests of working class, but also ensuring efficient services to the customer who is our real master.

BIRTH AND RISE OF NFIR

On the occasion of completion of 50 years' glorious service by NFIR, a book titled 'BIRTH AND RISE OF NFIR' authored by the General Secretary, NFIR was released by the President, NFIR on 21st July, 2003 at New Delhi. This book contains various events from the days of formation of Federation, besides its consistent efforts during the last 50 years for the cause of working people of Indian Railways. The contents of the book would facilitate the reader to know the glorious history of NFIR and feel proud of the fact that the Federation, by its intelligent and efficient handling of various issues, had secured substantial gains for Railway employees.

To reach the cadre at the grass root level and also to make aware various sections of people and leaders about the glory of NFIR, the Book has widely been circulated. This book brings about the clear depictions of birth of NFIR and how it is scaling new heights of healthy trade union movement with the sound ideologies founded by our national builders. The book also contains the biography of the illustrious personalities, who generated the true spirit of Gandhiji, the father of the Nation, and gave sturdy and sound foundation to NFIR. One should feel proud of the fact that the Federation, by its intelligent and efficient handling of various issues, had secured substantial gains for Railway employees, those of which are listed in the book chronologically from the days of formation of NFIR, besides its consistent efforts during the last 50 years for the cause of working people of Indian Railways.

Smt. Sonia Gandhi, President, AICC and Chairperson UPA Government, Shri Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Home Minister and Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister of National Capital Territory of Delhi expressed appreciation over the book "BIRTH AND RISE OF NFIR" and wished NFIR all the best for its future endeavours.

CREATION OF NEW ZONES AND FORMATION OF NFIR UNIONS

Consequent upon formation of East Central Railway and North Western Railway with effect from 1st October, 2002 and also South Western Railway, North Central Railway, South East Central Railway, East Coast Railway and West Central Railway becoming operational from 1st April, 2003, the following Unions of NFIR in these new Zonal Railways have been registered and their draft constitutions were ratified by the respective organisational bodies. Consequently, all the seven Unions have been accorded recognition:

1. East Central Railwaymen's Congress (ECRMC), Patna
2. Uttar Paschim Railway Mazdoor Sangh (UPRMS), Jaipur
3. South Western Railway Employees' Sangh (SWRES), Hubli
4. North Central Railway Employees' Sangh (NCRES), Allahabad
5. South East Central Railway Mazdoor Congress (SECRMC), Bilaspur
6. East Coast Railway Shramik Congress (ECORSC), Bhubaneswar
7. West Central Railway Mazdoor Sangh (WCRMS), Jabalpur

PAYMENT OF SALARY THROUGH CHEQUE

Railway Board issued an arbitrary order on 6th July, 2004 introducing the scheme of payment of salaries through cheque covering all Group 'C' and Group 'D' staff on Indian Railways with target dates 30th September, 2004 and 31st December, 2004 respectively. There has been wide spread opposition from employees against the new scheme. Resenting to the Board's order, NFIR Railway Board stating that the issue was discussed in the PREM Meeting more than once and also in GMs' Conference, wherein it was agreed that payment of salary through cheque to the employees be done on their option and not by force. The Federation also informed the Railway Board about great disappointment among the employees all over the Indian Railways and their agitation against the arbitrary decision, as also the Unions of NFIR protested opposing the move.

The General Secretary, NFIR met Member Staff, Railway Board and also spoke to Financial Commissioner and apprised them the discontentment and opposition from the employees to the Scheme of payment of salary through cheque. The General Secretary insisted that staff should not be forced to take payment through cheque and it should be only by option.

Railway Board have modified their decision exempting the staff posted at remote locations, wayside stations, smaller towns etc., where banking facilities are not adequate and Electronic Clearing System/direct credit facility not available and equally sought Federation's proactive role in implementing the new scheme.

COUNTING OF CASUAL LABOUR SERVICE IN FULL FOR ALL PURPOSES

As on date, only half of the service rendered by casual labour is counted in the regular service. Consequently, many employees, particularly, Gangmen, Trackmen, Khalasis, etc., who were engaged as Casual Labour and put up two decades as casual labour on temporary status and subsequently absorbed regularly were retired on superannuation. They are unable to fulfil the minimum service entitling them to get complimentary or privilege pass and equally they are ineligible for pensionary benefits. This has resulted in denial of social security net to the poor Group 'D' employees, who have toiled in their younger days as casual labour and retired.

Repeatedly, NFIR raised this issue through JCM fora, but the Government is adamant and till date there is no favourable decision on counting of casual labour service in full for all purposes.

'THE INDIAN RAIL WORKER'

As all are aware, the monthly journal of the NFIR viz., "THE INDIAN RAIL WORKER", known as mouth piece of NFIR, is published regularly on the 4th of every month from New Delhi. It is the first journal of the Railway Labour Movement to hold the ground so long and with increasing popularity. Besides 'INDIAN RAIL WORKER' in Hindi Edition has also been put on circulation among various subscribers viz., activists, Zonal Unions, interested

individuals, etc., for the last about two years and being posted on 10th of every month. Both Hindi and English publications of THE INDIAN RAIL WORKER have reached seven thousand readers. With its catching of mood of the readers and popularity, the publication may further touch to ten thousand readers in the near future.

In addition to publication of Hindi and English editions of monthly journals, viz., THE INDIAN RAIL WORKER, the Federation has been compiling with care and publishing Railway Board's decisions every year since the year 2000 in a book form for sale to the interested individuals.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS OF NFIR

During the period of this decade (1995 to 2005), NFIR held four National Conventions – (1) at Howrah (Calcutta) the 21st National Convention from 20th to 22nd October, 1997, (2) at Ujjain (M.P.) the 22nd National Convention from 29th to 31st March, 2000, (3) at Visakhapatnam (A.P.) the 23rd National Convention from 19th to 21st August, 2002 and (4) at Mumbai (Maharashtra) the 24th National Convention from 2nd to 4th December, 2004.

CENTRAL OFFICE AND ITS INFRASTRUCTURE

NFIR's Central Office at New Delhi is thrust upon tremendous volume of work during this decade. This is due to the fact that the number of new affiliated Unions has increased consequent upon creation of New Zones. The volume of work dealt by the Central Office has sizeably increased and the staff needed to attend to this voluminous work is proportionately less. However, the Office with its meagre infrastructure has been successful in handling the increased workload with good efforts.

During the period of one decade, by and large, all scheduled meetings under PNM and DC/JCM were held regularly, issues for discussion in various meetings were finalised by the Office and organisational meetings viz., Working Committee Meetings and Office Bearers Meetings were also held regularly. During the period, court cases, recognition of new federations, Corporate Safety Plan, White Paper on Railways, Hindi Rail Worker, etc., have taken much of the intellectual efforts and time, but the Central Office has never lagged behind in successful completion of all the tasks.

Although improvement is there from affiliated Unions in their interaction with the Central Office communications, the working of the office can be further geared up if the Affiliated Unions augment their efforts to respond to various letters and proposals speedily, so that the Federation takes speedy action in resolving the issues. It may not be out of place to mention that response from some affiliates is not encouraging. I request them to rise up and activate the working.

It is a matter of gratification that the financial resources of the NFIR have been augmented from time to time as per requirements. During the recent meetings of the Working Committee, it was decided that the rate of NFIR affiliation fee of Rs.1.25P (prevailing during 2002) per member per annum be increased to Rs.1.50P w.e.f. 1st January, 2003 and thereafter the fee of Rs.1.50P per member per annum for the year 2004 was revised to Rs.2/- w.e.f. 1st January, 2004. All the affiliates have been paying their affiliation fees within time and it is soaring. In order to meet the situation and build up financial strength, the affiliated unions may come forward with innovative suggestions.

RUNNING ALLOWANCES COMMITTEE AND ITS REPORT

The Railway Ministry constituted on 11th July, 2002 a Committee on Running Allowances-2002 with the following terms of reference –

- | to review and determine what percentage of the basic pay should be reckoned as pay element in Running Allowance and the purpose for which it should be reckoned.
- | to review the rates of kilometreage allowance and the rules/conditions regulating the same.
- | To review other compensatory allowances etc., admissible to Running Staff.
- | To look into and make recommendations for rationalisation of crew links/beats of Running Staff periodically to achieve better productivity from the staff, by way of better ratio of actual running hours to total hours of duty and also minimum quantum of running hours per person in a month.
- | To examine whether any peculiar conditions exist for special computation of kilometreage allowance to Motormen of Metro Railway/Kolkata.

- | To examine the system of incentives for Loco Inspectors, Crew Controllers and Power Controllers.
- | To review any other specific issues ancillary to the above that may be referred to the Committee by the Ministry of Railways.

Responding to the questionnaire of the Committee the Federation has sent replies highlighting various facts, thereafter evidence was also given before the Committee in December, 2004 suggesting for upward revision of Kilometrage rate (ALK), revision of pay element for the various purposes, reduction of duty hours, provision of more number of hours of rest at Heqdquarters, reduction of detention at outstation and various suggestions for motivating the running staff including improvement of facilities in running rooms. The Committee gave its report after a lapse of 3 years recommending:-

1. Reduction in the kilometrage allowance from Rs.83.80 to Rs.75.05.
2. Retirement benefits reduced from 55% to 20%.
3. Pay element for specified purposes from 30% to 10%.
4. Maintaining the status quo over the present arduous and inhuman HOER provisions.
5. Unrealistic stipulation of beats.

The above retrograde recommendations were strongly condemned by the Federation and as well by running cadre. It is surprising that the Running Allowances Committee has chosen to take away the existing rights and privileges of Running Staff. The Railway Ministry was cautioned by NFIR that any hasty action to consider the retrograde recommendations of the Committee would result in chaotic situation on Indian Railways.

CHALLENGES & TASKS AHEAD

Although this decade witnessed full of challenges to the Railway Trade Union Movement and yet the necessity of putting up united fight on the following issues, has essentially become a continuous struggle ahead:-

1. Non-Setting up of VIth Central Pay Commission.
2. New Contributory Pension Scheme.
3. Denial of Productivity Linked Bonus (PLB) on the basis of actual salary.
4. Large scale surrender of posts, outsourcing of activities, contractorisation, etc.
5. Unrealistic Benchmarking for determining the staff requirements
6. Non-creation of posts for the new assets built and new services introduced.
7. Denial of compassionate appointments to families of deceased/medically unfitted staff on one pretext or other
8. Aberrations in the orders of Cadre Restructuring/Upgradation in various categories.
9. Procrastination towards career improvement of Group 'D' Staff on Indian Railways.
10. Non-rectification of injustice done to Senior Khalasis of Diesel and Electrical Loco Sheds and EMU Car Sheds.
11. Ineffective functioning of NC/JCM.
12. Deliberate attempts for splitting Railway Trade Union Movement.
13. Non-rectification of anomalies emerging out of V CPC recommendations.
14. Non-filling of vacancies.
15. Non-implementation of Board of Arbitration Awards.
16. Denial of Incentive Bonus to Workshop employees in view of D.A. merger.
17. Non-reckoning of casual labour service in full for retirement benefits.

The cadre of NFIR should gird up their loins and work hard to face each and every task

and devising forces ahead with unity, constructive trade unionism and uprightness.

CONTRIBUTION OF FORMER LEADERS

During one decade's period, the Federation lost veteran leaders, whose profile is given hereunder:-

KESHAV H. KULKARNI

This decade has also witnessed gloomy and sad incident, when one of the founder leaders of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen Keshav H. Kulkarni, passed away on 27th December, 1997 leaving void in the Railway Trade Union Movement. A dynamic leader of Railwaymen, Kulkarniji was extremely popular, loved and respected by people for his darity, vast knowledge and uprightness in Railway working. During the formative years of NFIR, Kulkarni successfully shaped NFIR and evolved systems for dealing with the affiliated unions and the Railway administration at all levels, which even today forms the basis of the Federation's working with new culture of responsible Trade Unionism settling disputes through negotiations. A champion in undertaking the stupendous task of placing the case of Railwaymen for betterment before successive Central Pay Commissions viz., 2nd, 3rd and 4th Central Pay Commissions, whose acts won applause of the working class and the appreciation of the successive commissions.

Kilkarni's contributions to Anomaly Committees after Pay Commissions, Cadre restructuring Committees, Class IV Staff Promotion Committee, Dearness Allowance Commission for Central Govt employees, National Labour Commission, Bonus Commission, Upgradation of Artisan Staff in Railways bear good weight to his personality and leave an unblemished imprint in the history of constructive trade unionism in the country. NFIR is, indeed, fortunate enough to have such a legendary stalwart and a resourceful leader, who shaped its cadre and rank and file to fight out future challenges deftly.

Keshav Kulkarni's birth and death dates are being remembered and observed by the rank and file of NFIR every year throughout Indian Railways.

T.V. ANANDAN

Another luminous leader of Railway Trade Union Movement, T.V. Anandan breathed his last on 11th June, 1999. He was one of the foremost leaders of the National Labour Movement, who pursued Gandhian ideology for developing constructive Trade Union Movement in the Indian Railways. He rose from ordinary Railway employee to a National level leader as JCM Leader. He was also the President of NFIR from 1972 to 1976, from 1981 to 1985 and 1991 to 1992 (six spells).

Anandanji was also Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) for 12 years from 1964 to 1976. He was fondly remembered by casual labour, licensed porters and Class IV Railway employees (now Group 'D') for getting various benefits and uplifting them with better working conditions and promotional avenues.

Anandanji had taken a bold initiative by declaring the amalgamation of Southern Railway Employees' Union and Southern Railway Employees' Association and thus Southern Railway Employees' Sangh emerged in the Conference held at Hubli in July, 1957. Anandanji was one of the founder leaders of M&SM Railway Employees' Union founded in the year 1919. The foundation stone of the Office building of the SRE Sangh was laid by the Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi in December, 1947 and the office of the Sangh is functioning in the same building at Perambur.

Anandanji never deviated from the path of truth and non-violence during his seven-decade Trade Union Career. His life is an open book from which the present day people have a lot to learn. His birth and death dates are being remembered and observed by the rank and file of NFIR every year.

DASHRATH BHAI TRIVEDI

Trivediji made a mark on Trade Union Movement particularly on Western Railway. His dedicated services to Western Railway Mazdoor Sangh for over four decades under the guidance of Keshav H. Kulkarni, then President had resulted in consolidation of Western Railway Mazdoor Sangh, which became a formidable organisation today.

Trivediji held various positions in the WRMS. He was elected as General Secretary of WRMS in the year 1974 and he continued in the said capacity for nearly 25 years. He had

risen to the position of Working President of NFIR. He was highly skilful in quoting and interpreting the rules for the benefit of workers. He possessed special negotiating skills and his presentation of issues was widely appreciated by Management and workers as well. He was also a Member of National Council (JCM).

Trivediji's demise created an irreparable loss to the Railway Trade Union Movement.

MAHENDRA PRATAP

Yet another sad incident in this decade also was that when Mahendra Pratap, President, NFIR passed away on 19th January, 2005. A popular leader, Mahendra Pratapji was brought up in a nationalistic atmosphere right from his childhood, which influenced him serving the down-trodden, neglected and depressed working class. With this background, he sacrificed his life serving lakhs of Railway employees and held several positions in his career starting his active service in the Eastern Railwaymen's Congress under the leadership of A.P. Sharma. He became the President of ERMCA on 14th June, 1988 and since then onwards he continued to lead the organization. He was elected as Treasurer of NFIR in the National Convention held at Mathura.

When some of the then leaders of NFIR started resorting to undemocratic actions damaging the image of the Federation during the years 1992 and 1993, a vast majority of NFIR's rank and file stoutly opposed those unconstitutional actions and raised their voice demanding the leaders to mend their ways and abide by the constitutional provisions of Federation. The adamant and revengeful attitude of certain top leaders had led to a crisis situation threatening the very existence. At this crucial time, Mahendra Pratap took decision to pledge his support and that of ERMCA to the NFIR cadre. On July 16, 1995 Mahendra Pratapji was elected as President of NFIR with largest margin defeating his rival candidate, the elections being conducted under Supreme Court's directions. Thus NFIR got consolidated and achieved many results benefiting Railwaymen under his leadership. He was also elected as leader of JCM (Staff Side) National Council, a body representing 40 lakhs Central Government employees.

NFIR and its affiliates remember and observe Mahendra Pratapji's birth and death

dates all over Indian Railways every year.

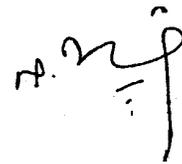
Camp : Bangalore

Date : October 24, 2005

(M. RAGHAVAIAH)

General Secretary

III

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Raghavaiah', located in the bottom right corner of the page.

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A
DECADE

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INDIAN RAILWAYMEN (NFIR)**

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