

Excerpts from Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Reply Speech on
No Confidence Motion on 10th May 1974

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Statements on Wage Rationalisation:

We know that the wage structure in the country is not what it should be. We know that there is a great deal of injustice in this. It is riddled with anomalies and contradictions and, in the olden days, there was a bias against labourer and worker. We have done a great deal to correct this. It does not mean that we have got rid of this contradiction or that we have come to a satisfactory stage. I do realise that it is absolutely necessary to bring about some rationality. But this is a tremendous task in a matter which cannot be done overnight. Because, it has to be done without causing too much dislocation. At the same time, the matter is under the earnest consideration of the Government and I shall certainly welcome any constructive suggestions which the Hon. Members from here or anybody from outside would like to give.

Negative Statements:

I do think that this (wage rationalisation) is one of the most urgent problems which we face. But, as I said, this cannot be settled unless we stop, in the meantime, adding to the wage bill. The real difficulties are that we must do our utmost to try and solve them. We have to keep in view the repercussions to each action. As I said already, we have agreed to other demands. Whether those demands were right or wrong, because we have agreed to something that has led to something else. Everybody says that you have given to so and so; why should you not give that to us? This is a continuing process. We have come to a stage. In fact, firstly, we do not have the wherewithal; even if we have it, I do not think that this would be a right thing to do at this stage of our development, which is extremely critical and delicate.....

Today, we are not considering just what is to be given to the Railways. We are considering whether we go along this road of giving more and more at a time when we have less and less. This is the question. It is not a question of just the Railways. If we have made a mistake before, that is no reason to continue to make the mistake or not to acknowledge it.....

And we cannot even say that 'No, we agree on principle' because then it opens the door to doing this for many other sections. We have always negotiated, we have always spoken, and in many cases, we have given what was asked.

Did that create an atmosphere of cooperation?
Did that create an atmosphere of greater production?
Not at all. It led to the next demand immediately.

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Labour Union)HISTORIC CONVENTION

The National Convention of Rly. Workers held at Delhi on 27.2.74 under the auspices of AIRF was historic in many senses.

It was record gathering in the history of Rly. movement. Hundreds of Rly. workers from all corner of the country assembled there.

Perhaps this was the first occasion when almost all Rly. Trade Unions having different affiliations and all the leading categorical Associations assembled in one platform and forged unity amongst themselves to fight for long outstanding demands. No villifications and adverse criticism against each other were heard; instead, a sense of purpose and determination prevailed all along.

The deliberations of the convention were also business minded. A common charter of demands were formulated. National Co-ordination Committee for Rly. Mens Struggle was formed with George Fernandes as ~~convenor~~ convenor to ~~launch~~ launch struggle, if negotiations fail to reach any settlement by 10th of April '74.

We expect ~~that~~ that the unity and understanding as achieved through this historic convention will be preserved by every section of Rly. Workers as we think this is the main weapon of our success in the ensuing struggle.

-Jai Hind -

GEORGE FARNANDES' SPEECH AT CALCUTTA

George Farnandes, President, All India Rlymen's Federation and convenor, National Co-ordination Committee for Rly. men's struggle addressed several meetings in and around Calcutta in connection with organising the ensuing struggle of the Rly. Workers.

At the mammoth gathering of Rly. Workers at Subodh Mullick Square organised by Eastern Rly. men's Union on 21.3.74 George Farnandes stressed the need of unity amongst the Rly. Workers and said that this time there had been a fundamental change so far the struggle of Rlymen is concerned. In the year of 1968 Strike call was given by AIRF alone. But this time a National Co-ordination Committee has been formed with the representatives of different Rly. Trade Unions irrespective of the fact whether they are affiliated to the AIRF or not along with all the leading categorical Associations to conduct the movement. This change, he warned the Govt to take ~~note~~ note of and urged them to concede the demands by 10th of April '74. Otherwise, the Rlymen will be forced to go on strike.

He said that it was untenable a position when a worker in the Modern India Bakery, a Central Govt. Undertaking, will get a minimum salary of Rs. 350/- per month whereas a Railway worker will be asked to remain satisfied at a minimum salary of Rs. 196/- .

He further point out that the issue was not the quantum of money that will be required to meet the demands of Railway men but the real issue was whether ~~these~~ these demands were ~~legitimate~~ legitimate or not. To our opinion, George said that at best Rs. 300/- Crores would be necessary to meet the salary of Rly. workers at par with the same of other Central Govt. undertakings like H.M.T, Hindusthan Aeronautics, Hindusthan Steel etc. and Bonus to the extent of one month's salary and this should be provided when it is told that National economy will be in danger if Rly. men resort to ~~cease~~ cease work.