

Ranvir Singh Yadav, Railways, AITUC, Delhi

Name	Ranvir Singh Yadav, Railways, AITUC, Delhi.
Date of Interview	17th September, 2002.
Time	Afternoon.
Place	Ajoy Bhawan, Kotla Road Delhi.
Context	R.S. Yadav is a quiet low profile man who does his work mainly. He currently works with Mukti Sangharh the Hindi weekly of the CPI. He seems to be hard worker who seems to listen more and acts rather than the talking type and listening less and acting even much less.
Interviewers	Anil Rajimwale, Krishna Jha and Bobby Poulouse

Biographical Sketches

R.S. Yadav as he is popularly called joined TU movement with as an office bearer at Bikaner Workshop of railways. This was before the 1960 railway strike and Bikaner was a big center and the union there was very strong. He had joined AIRF's affiliated union i.e. NRMU. He did not participate. But in the 1967 there was a strike in which he participated and was removed for seven months. R.S. Yadav was in the post of Chageman i.e. equal to a junior engineer. The 1968 strike had to be withdrawn and the image of Umraomal Purohit and Maniben Kara plummeted. Thus there was rise of category-wise unions throughout late 60s and early 70s. R.S. Yadav left the AIRF union and joined the AITUC affiliated unions. He participated in the 1974 strike and was removed from service and got it back only in 1977 when the Janta party came to power. After that AITUC affiliated unions and other category-wise unions died and he went back to AIRF. Now with the 5th Pay Commission there is no need for any strike.

Transcript Summary

R.S. Yadav narrated his trade union experiences and said that he joined as office bearer of the Bikaner Workshop railways. In those days before the 1960 railway strike Bikaner was a big center of rail workers and the union there was effective. R.S. Yadav was at that time in AIRF/HMS union i.e. NRMU. R.S. Yadav said that as his job was that of an apprentice he was not allowed to join the 1960 railway strike. He says there were two types of apprentices (a) apprentice mechanic- they did not go on strike & (b) artisan apprentice- also three and a half years training by railways.

R.S. Yadav informed that from the Loco Workshop 500 apprentices participated although they were not allowed to participate. All those 500 were removed. The 1960 strike was perceived by Nehru as a civil rebellion or a war. And it was crushed brutally. Yadavji said that in the 1960 strike both the railways and the central government employees were involved. As far as the strike in Bikaner is concerned it was very well organized and people tried to save other people.

R.S. Yadav then said that there was the 1967 strike on July 1967 and it was withdrawn before the actual date of the strike. The main demand was need-based-minimum-wage. However nothing happened. Then in 1968 again there was a strike i.e. a one day token strike at the all-India level in the railways. The repression was very strong. In Bikaner one man died and 20 to 30 were injured. Then Maniben Kara and Umraomal Purohit withdrew the strike. R.S. Yadav said that he was removed in the 1967 railway strike and was taken back after six months. At that time he was in AIRF and working in its union i.e. NRMU. R.S. Yadav was at that time a Chargeman i.e. equal to the post of a junior engineer (J.E.). After the strike sometime in 1969 there was a convention of AIRF in Agra where the workers virtually manhandled and hooted out Maniben Kara and Umraomal Purohit who arrived at the convention with some Americans.

R.S. Yadav further said that after the 1968 strike there was general disillusionment with the recognized railway unions and thus one saw the rise of numerous category-wise unions. And it was also the time when the Railway Board conveniently used the issue of granting recognition to unions effectively to control the recognized unions and not give recognition to the category-wise unions thereby putting one against the other and in the process trying to crush the workers as a whole. This phenomenon led to a series of local category-wise strikes in the 1970s and particularly strong emerged the Loco Running Staff Association and the Confederation of various unions. The NFIR was totally with the government while

the fighting union like the AIRF also became soft. This crisis and conflict between the recognized unions and category-wise unions reached its peak in the 1974 railway strike which was historic and marked the end of category-wise union. R.S. Yadav had by this time joined the AITUC organized railway federation. George Fernandes left the railway workers in the lurch after the end of the 1974 railway strike and it was left to the Janta Party government and its railway minister Mr. Madhu Dandavate who really brought back all the workers who went on strike in 1974 and 1960 strikes and others. However he still did not take back those leftists who had striked in 1947 and of the category-wise unions. After the 1974 strike R.S. Yadav was also thrown out and got his job back only with the 1977 Janta Party government. The AITUC federation also collapsed and so R.S. Yadav returned to NRMU and the AIRF like most other AITUC affiliated members. From 1974 now for almost 20 years there has been no railway strike though there have been a few threats. Now with the 5th Pay Commission R.S. Yadav feels there is no need for any strike at all.