



The Role of Works Committee in Government Industrial Establishments of Defence Sector for Building Harmonious Working Environment

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ABSTRACT

Worker's participation in management in the defence sector government industrial establishment is one of the most significant modes of preventing industrial disputes and encouraging workers' sense of belongingness in the establishment they work. It provides recognition to the workers and enables them to contribute their best in all round development and prosperity of the establishment. Works committee is an important forum of defence sector government industrial establishment which seeks to promote measures for securing and preserving amity and good relations between the employer and the workman and to discuss day-to-day problems of the industry. Accordingly, the study has been undertaken on how far the purpose has been achieved by the works committee for the creation of a harmonious working environment in the establishment and issues involved/ impediments to the effective functioning of this forum with regard to the content, process, utility and other element aspects of participation.

Keywords: Worker's participation in management, defence sector government industrial establishment, industrial disputes, works committee, harmonious working environment

Workplace negotiations are very important for any Industrial establishment as they permit the employees and employers to regulate their work-related relationships, protect their interests, agree on terms and conditions of wages and salaries, and the different obligations and responsibilities of the parties to have an atmosphere of peace and mutual harmonious relationship regarding work and the functions that are involved and thereby reducing conflict between them. Kwan *et al.* (1997) defined relationship harmony as the balanced achieved in relationships. Conflicts among group members may impair performance by foregrounding maintenance concerns at the expense of task accomplishment (Levine & Moreland, 1990).

De Drek *et al.* (2007) explain that when a high-quality agreement is created which meets the needs of the parties involved in the negotiation, it will create order and stability, foster social harmony, increase the feeling of self-efficacy, reduce the probability of future conflict and stimulate economic prosperity. They conclude that when individuals create a poor agreement or fail to agree, they leave dissatisfied, create frustration and annoyance, and face continued conflict and disharmony.

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The points raised by these scholars bolster the importance of negotiations in the workplace and that high-quality agreement is important for harmonious organizational relationships. As per the pluralist perspective of industrial relations, both the employer and employees have different interests and expectations, but the unitary perspective of Industrial relations is against this fact; there needs to be negotiations between the individuals or representatives of the different parties to have amicable work relationship (Anyim & Danesi, 2018).

In Government Industrial establishments of the defence sector, there are a large number of civil employees and combatant staff working together to achieve organizational objectives. Each defence sector organization is unique, having its values, objectives, culture, policies, customs, and practices. also, these organizations are very important for national interests. Therefore, not all the demands of workmen and unions are tackled due to the sensitivity of installations; hence, harmonious relations are very important in these organizations. However, provision of Industrial Dispute acts 1947, factory act 1948 and other relevant Labour Law are applicable to these establishments.

Works committee is also statutory form of participative forum which plays a key role for promotion of industrial harmony.

As per section 3 (1) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, in the case of any industrial establishment in which one hundred or more workmen are employed or have been employed on any day in the preceding 12 months, the appropriate government may by general or special order required the employer to constitute in the prescribed manner a works committee consisting of representatives of employer and workman engaged in the establishments so however that the number of representatives of workmen on the committee shall not be less than the number of representatives of employer. The representative of the workmen shall be chosen in the prescribed manner from among the workmen engaged in the establishment and in consultation with their trade union, if any, registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act 1926. As per section 3(2) of

the act. It shall be the duty of the works committee to promote measures for securing and preserving amity and good relations between the employer and workmen and, in order to achieve the end, to comment upon methods of common interest or concern and endeavor to compose any material differences of opinion in respect of some matters.

In the backdrop of the discussions on the necessity of promoting and encouraging a harmonious work environment in all the defence sector establishments. It would be pertinent to look at the benefits of building a harmonious working environment in these organizations, and the same can be summarized as under:-

1. To foster a positive working environment.
2. To increase output and productivity.
3. Improves employee's growth and engagement
4. Promotes teamwork.
5. Supports better well-being.
6. Promotes positive culture in the establishment.
7. Honest communication.
8. Recognition and appreciation.
9. Improves morale and enhances job satisfaction.
10. Employees empowerment.

This paper will look at how the work committee contributes to a harmonious working environment. Based on a study involving 100 employee representatives of the workmen, trade union Leaders, management officials, members of the works committee, and in-depth interviews of these stakeholders, the paper will look at how, over the years, the committee has played a pivotal role in building trust and harmony amongst employees and employers.

Functions of the Works Committee

Before we explore the role of the works committee in furthering a harmonious working environment, we look at its functioning. The Indian Labor Conference, a tripartite body endorsed in 1961 underlined the issues dealt with by the works committee. These include:

1. Conditions of work such as ventilation, temperature, lighting, sanitation etc.
2. Committees such as drinking water, canteen, crèches, medical and health services.
3. Safety and accident prevention, occupational diseases and protective equipment.
4. Adjustment of festivals and national holidays.
5. Administration of welfare and fire funds.
6. Educational and recreational activities such as libraries, reading rooms, sports, games, community welfare and celebration.
7. Promotion of thrifts and saving.
8. Implementation and review of decision arrived at meetings of works committee.

What role does the works committee play for building harmonious relationships in government industrial establishments of the defence sector

100 workmen, trade union leaders, management officials, and members of the works committee were interviewed for the purpose of using an unstructured questionnaire convenience sampling method for this study. The works committee is represented by both employers and workers representatives. Workers representatives are mostly from the unions functioning in these establishments. These workers representatives of the works committee directly discuss the issues of welfare and other concerns with the employees. They directly convey the decisions taken by the management side officials or the group officer's- in-charges in matters pertaining to any of the grievances raised for their welfare. They even control the sentiments and actions of the workers of the establishments. Since the decision of the workmen representatives of works committee in any matter is construed as the decision of the whole workmen that is why role of works committee becomes very important in maintenance of harmonious working environment in establishment. There are a number of actions which is undertaken by the works committee in defence sector establishments that enhance the satisfaction level and mutual trust between the employer and employees. In view of the in-depth

interviews of the members of the works committee workers and management officials, the following were the key initiatives that emerged, which can be described as elements of a harmonious work environment in defence sector establishments:

1. Organizing family members' visits to the establishment enhances the sense of belongingness and pride for their husbands/ wives who are working in the establishments, and they feel that they are contributing to essential services to the nation.
2. Organizing games and sports on a regular basis creates a healthy environment since the workman enjoys such activities as they get bored with the same nature of work on a regular basis.
3. Organizing health camps for employees and their family members.
4. Celebration of the annual day of establishment by conducting various programs and events for employees which promotes unity amongst them.
5. Visiting hospitals to meet sick workers/ employees and their family members. This enhances the confidence level of employees that they are not alone and somebody is there to look after them.
6. Raising health, safety, and welfare-related issues/concerns of workers before management for redressal.
7. Placement of cooler, ensuring cold drinking water and Matka in different sections or places of work of the establishment during the summer season.
8. Organizing retirement functions for superannuating workers in the presence of their family members and other co-workers and management officials gives them a sense of satisfaction and motivates other workers to contribute to the betterment of the organization.
9. Collection of medicines from the CGHS dispensary/authorized centers for the old, aged, or seriously sick workers.
10. Celebration of important festivals of different

communities enhances mutual fraternity and harmony amongst them.

11. Ensuring good food qualities, hygiene, and sanitation in workers' canteen set up in the establishment under statutory provisions of the Factory Act.
12. Educating workers for timely completion of retirement formalities so that they get their pensionary benefits in time.
13. Resolution of grievances of workmen pertaining to payment promotion, pension, pay fixation etc. by discussing these issues with the management.
14. Attending funerals in case of the sad demise of serving employees/their family members and providing them all the help and support like vehicle to take the dead body to the cremation site, immediate financial grants as is authorized to the dependent family members after the death of serving employee.
15. Helping dependent family members with an early completion of relevant documentation formalities for timely processing of cases for a compassionate ground appointment.
16. Attending private functions/ceremonies of workers.
17. Educating employees on policy matters.
18. Highlighting safety concerns at the workplace, including training and precautions.
19. Encouraging workmen of the establishments to take part in the voting process of the works committee/other participative forums for the promotion of Industrial democracy.
20. Promotion of industrial peace and harmony amongst the workmen and management.
21. Promotion of mutual co-operation, trust, fraternity amongst the workmen, and sense of pride and belongingness towards the organization.

Impediments/hurdles to the functioning of works committee

The study revealed some hurdles and impediments in the functioning of the work committee. Some

of the most serious impediments in the context of defence sector establishments are:

1. Multiplicity of unions and union rivalry.
2. Lack of knowledge and training among workers and representatives of the works committee.
3. Difference and discrimination between industrial and non-industrial employees of the establishment.
4. There is a lack of mutual trust and coordination between the workers and management.
5. It is a recommended body only. It has no power to influence the decision-making process in the organization.
6. The decisions of the works committee should be honoured in all respect and shall be implemented within a reasonable time.
7. Management officials don't take much interest in the progress of points raised by the workers representatives in the works committee meeting held quarterly.
8. Meetings of the works committee are also not held timely on a quarterly basis, which is mentioned in the policy.
9. Workers representatives are also not being heard by the management officials for day-to-day grievances of workmen.
10. In many of the establishments, the committee is not even constituted, and somewhere, it is constituted but not functional.
11. Workers representatives also don't raise correct and legitimate issues of workmen even though they are only focused on moving themselves out from the establishment before time.
12. Workers' representatives only try to meet their political interests by getting the outgoing slips of the workers from the administration department/security sections before closing hours unauthorisedly for vote bank politics.
13. Appeasement tactics of the management officials towards the unions also compromise the raising of valid issues of workers by them.
14. Workers representatives of the works committee are not given time and due respect by the officers of the management side and the

same attitude disturbs the industrial harmony and leads to dispute.

15. The nature and sensitivity of defence sector establishments also affects the proper functioning of the works committee.

SUGGESTIONS

In the context of the study and the interviews conducted with the employees, workers representatives, and officials of the management side, some of the key suggestions which has emerged are summarized as under:

1. Proper co-ordination and trust amongst employer and works committee members representing workmen shall be promoted for a better working environment.
2. Before taking any decision by the management side solely affecting the interests of large no. of civil employees, workmen representatives shall also be consulted. So that the same can be taken up by them positively.
3. Meetings of the works committee shall be conducted regularly, and points put up by the worker's representatives shall be progressed in time time-bound manner.
4. The officials of the management side shall give workmen representatives due respect and time for redressal of grievances of the employees.
5. Training to the representatives of the works committee and management officials on policy-relevant labour laws and other matters shall be imparted, which is applicable in the industrial establishments.
6. Trade union leaders from different unions shall show solidarity to raise issues of common interest of workers with management for an early settlement of grievances.

CONCLUSION

From this description and evaluation, we conclude that the role of the works committee in the promotion of a harmonious working environment in defence sector industrial establishment is very important. Resolving day-to-day differences arising between the management and the workmen in the industry, which is unsettled, would certainly develop into complicated major industrial disputes that can be easily managed at the initial stage by the works committee. By developing mutual trust, and coordination and by sitting together for discussions of issues of concerns of workers with their representatives, management can be successful in the prevention and proper settlement of industrial disputes in these establishments.

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