

## “The Railway Strike of 1974 and Its Long Lasting Effects”

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### ***Abstract:***

*The conflict in human life is a common, general and regular issue. There are conflicts and crisis in individual's life- which starts from family to professional level as well as social level. During 1974, such a historical, long lasting, effective strike was the part of individual conflict. This strike was made by Indian Workers Union under the guidance of George Ferdinand. It was strike by Indian Railway Employees. This was the huge strike in the History of Indian Railway Department. The common life was also disturbed due to this strike and Worker Union had shown their power during the strike. The misuse was also taken against Government of this strike. The former Prime Minister of India on the said period was Hon. Late Indira Gandhi. Using the political power, and Army department's support, she got success to divert the strike but it has shown its long lasting impact on India.*

*The current paper focuses on the long lasting impact of the Railway Worker Union strike 1974 in India.*

**Keywords:** Crisis, Government, Indian Railway Workers Union, Railway Department, etc.

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## **Introduction:**

As far as Indian economy is concerned, the greatest business and money earning resource is Indian Railway. In the year 1974, there were 14 Lac railway employee which was 10% of other common business/working sectors of India. It is not wrong to say that Indian Railway was Indian Railway was the backbone of Indian National Finance Department. Therefore, the impact of Indian Railway Union Strike, on Indian economy was very high, notable and long lasting. “From 1973 to 1974, during this one year, there were total 75 different Railway Departments that preferred to go for the strike. The most popular strikes were by Low workers, driver union, few things of these teams were accepted, but the contrast impact is that due to this strike, the base of huge level strikes was founded1”

We can say that these 75 strikes were the mock trail of strike 1974, which had covered National Level Strike. There were strikes by Railway employees from several departments, but they were not constituted in any specific manner or formal way. Already due to draught on 1972- the period of 1973-74 was worst time period in which survival of life was major question due to lack of Basic needs of day-to-day life. In that time the ‘Sukadi’ was distributed as food to poor labour, even the mixture and as a part of corruption.

## **Hypothesis:**

- a. The Railway strike of 1975 was an outcome of violent workers.
- b. Due to this strike, the people of the Nation opposed directly to the government of India.

## **Methodology of the Study:**

The current study is totally descriptive based study in which only secondary course as the printed in the form of books, journals, periodicals; newspapers were used to collect the data.

## **Two Parties of Railway Workers:**

The coalitions in political parties were started after 1967, and this political competition is entered into workers field, too.

All India Railway man's Federation (AIRF) was introduced by communist party National Federation of Indian Railway man (N.F.I.R) was introduced and it was having the influence of congress party over the Federation. Apart from these two main parties, there were around 200 different parties as communist, Marxism communist and Jansangh came forward.

To dominate the Railway workers, different railway department started to establish their own communities to fight with strong competition.

### **The Revolutionary period of Indian Railway Department:**

This period can be called as the Revolutionary period of Indian Railway Department. As per "Go Slow" slogan, sudden issues of strike arose in the Railway Department of India.

There were violent action and reaction of these Railway Unions with the Government of India. The Railway Minister of the time Mr. L.N. Mishra didn't want any kind of conflict; on the contrary, Employee Minister Mr. Raghunath Reddy wanted his dominant leadership with the support and collaboration of opposition political party. Because of him the demands of loco-employee were accepted. But there was a different and unexpected result of Government surrendering to Railway Worker Union as the leadership pattern of both railway worker union parties changed. George Farnandis was selected as the President of AIRF against the Peter Alwaris. George declared that Railway strike might change the History of the Nation. To him there were two major aspects which could work to change the History of Nation i.e. financial crises versus 20L Railway employees on strike. So he constituted a National Level Railway Worker Union. All small, large union joined it, except National Federation of Indian Railway man. The aim of this union was to convert the Railway strike as a National Level Railway Strike, develop a new History in Indian Railway Strike, and develop a new History in Indian Railway Department. And with this huge, historical strike, anytime, they could bid adieu to congress/Indira Gandhi's Government Ruling party.<sup>3</sup> On the other side, the Government had also tried to provide news through Radio Broadcasting for the misinterpretation to common citizen. Because if this strike will spread across the nation, then it was very hard to cover the economical financial crises faced by India.<sup>4</sup>

Government was trying and showing that they were compromising with Union and on the other side, they were working to damage the strike of Railway employee union. They were planning to

attack the weaponless strike union people. Rather than accepting and thinking on the demands of union, Government was planning to end the strike by violence method.

The employee union was well aware about this dual policy of Government. They sent a notice on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Emergency Indian Security Act was declared and the strike was illegal- it was proved by government. The compromising meeting was decided to held on 27<sup>th</sup> April, before that the government had cancelled passenger railways and started strike by government; displayed large banners and news to take support of common people. The deadline for railway union was the month or May, while Government started before it.

The strike was for the implementation of same laws for railway employee which was for the other employees, temporary staffs should be converted into permanent staff, railway employees should get rights of trade union etc demands were these of the union. Government was very strictly against these all demands.

The government was trying to teach all kinds of strike through Railway strike, so they were firm on their opinion. George was travelling across the Nation and making people aware about the policy of government. He challenged all workers, “Be aware of your strength. If the railway continues the strike for seven days, all

“He was the leader who can be called as the Kedar who has the vision how Nehru Gandhi family are playing with the emotions of common people. He can be a part of social political party leader as the opposition strong party leader.”

Farther George Farnandis was a great public speaker who can keep many eyes towards his speech. His speeches were studies and he had acquired the skill of 10 languages.” Therefore, in worker union he had a specific and notable respect as a good leader.

Indira Gandhi tried to destroy the Railway strike at all level. She tried to keep hungry to all workers with their family; Bombs were dropped on their society. Army & navy force were called to destroy the strike. Saving railway from accidents, controlling the signal, any force in the train activities were done by the government under the title of security of common people.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of strike, the inhuman behavior of the government was denied by all people, yet so called high class society appreciated the handling technique of Indira Gandhi. Few people

were having fear that Indira Gandhi was working against democracy. She was misusing her power against Railway union strike. But those were uncontrolled activities during that period, another option in front of her. Yet she did not accept any demand of railway union workers. There were shocking reactions of people about it and work was distributed. Government got success to end the strike but national Radical and foreign library union criticized government.

All thermal power stations will be closed. Ten days strike may close steel industries and if they are closed it will affect for a year, because steel industries needs nine months to start back. The whole nation may be a part of railway union workers. There was plan to move the train fuel with basic food and needs of human life from train track. Indira Gandhi was well aware about the huge loss of this strike. The strike of Gujrat and Bihar, the opposition by Jaypraksh narayan etc were challenged in front of her who were challenging to the prestige and working capacity. Indian communist party did not supporting to Gujrat and Bihar strike. But they supported George Farnandis Railway strike. George and Dange were continuously conveying that these strikes will be at union level only. This is only in respect to financial support. But Indira Gandhi was spreading her views that it is not limited with Railway union and this is a great plan by leader behind it, was the view of Indira Gandhi. Business, Railway, Fabrication, industries, Banking, Insurance etc all sectors were also suffering because of government harassment. And these are the true wheels of the national development which needs to know about their strength. This was identified by George Farnandis. He was the man who can identify the industries towns, the middle class living in that town, leaders and political leaders and their influence on the life of these people.

The reason behind Radical's criticism was the sympathy for worker union. On 20<sup>th</sup> May, in 'The Times of India', under the title of Ferman's page, it was mentioned. There was no systematic and legal demand by worker union leader, the main aim of strike was financial loss and paralyze the administration of the Government. Therefore, they demanded huge things which could never be accepted. First they increased the expectation of Railway worker, and then united the important department of railway and latter closing all the railway services was their next plan. But suddenly they went on strike under the title 'Go Slow' and violent techniques were used against officers.

There is one more side of Railway strike. Jaiprakash strike could be proved as a supportive strike to railway strike and it could work as the major tool to move Indira Gandhi's party from ruling the nation and all opposition parties could come together and coalition political party would be running party. But except Indian Communist party, other communist party called Jaiprakash strike as 'Fascist strike'. To create political instability America was supporting to Jaiprakash, so he could not receive proper support.

With the reason of strike, in the nation 'chili', the political ruling party was changed and same efforts were made CIA in India- it was the blame by communist party.

During the railway worker union strike, the animally behavior, devil activities of ruling parties were seen. If workers were not found at home to arrest, they would harass the families, wife, children, etc. they were thrown out of their home at midnight, were abused, and cursed. In the prisons of Gujrat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal the worst inhuman activities were seen. Therefore, railway strike created totally distributed environment in the common people's lives.

'On May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1974, the three week, old strike became victim of another high incidence of infant mortality in India. But it was estimated to have cost the country Rs. 500C in twenty days.'

This strike affected the finance department of nation and new force of Indira Gandhi came in front of people. Same thing happened with railway worker union- 'we won, we lost' was the approach of both parties. George after his imprisonment delivered his speech at Mumbai Azad Maidan and 'Unified Union of Railway worker live long' and 'George Live long'- such slogans were used. Around 70 workers were suspended from Kurla carshade. After the strike, when 109 more employees were to be suspended, around 1800 workers from Kurla workshop adapted sitting strike. All shades were rounded by SRP but there was no fear, no anxiety amongst workers.

On the other side, officers, capitalists were openly appreciating the efforts and success of Indira Gandhi, later entrepreneurs also started to speak that workers need to be punished.

After the railway strike, many industrialist accepted strict policies. They started to take help of government police department. Though, the railway worker union lost their strike, and

government won, the opposition party won. All opposition parties came together and they proved the power of unity to ruling government of India.

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**Conclusion:** Thus, these Railway strike had proved that if Railway department is on strike for more than a week, all thermal power stations will be closed. Ten days strike may close steel industries and if they are closed it will affect for a year, because steel industries needs nine months to start back. The whole nation may be a part of railway union workers. There was plan to move the train fuel with basic food and needs of human life from train track. Indira Gandhi was well aware about the huge loss of this strike. The strike of Gujrat and Bihar, the opposition by Jaypraksh narayan etc were challenged in front of her which were challenging to the prestige and working capacity. Indian communist party did not supporting to Gujrat and Bihar strike. But they supported George Farnandis Railway strike. George and Dange were continuously conveying that these strikes will be at union level only. This is only in respect to financial

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