

## Let Us Do Our Home Work

It is heartening to note that the entire leadership of prime Trade unions is resting on their wisdom that a strike struggle is inevitable in BSNL to face the onslaughts and to safeguard the rights won. The difference is on the form of struggle whether one day on Oct 15<sup>th</sup> or indefinite strike during the walk of parliamentary session.

NFTE leadership is suggesting that indefinite strike during the time of parliamentary session would be more fruitful. We can gain public opinion thro parliamentary voices and that may push thro GOVT/ BSNL to the negotiating table in a responsible way. The idea is to strengthen our cause and not to avoid any strike. NFTE is having strong opinion that policy issues cannot be settled by mere touch and go protest struggles.

Com Namboodri, JAC Convener has expressed his opinion that after one day strike, if need be, we can think about indefinite strike. BSNLEU website reports that it is firm on one day strike on Oct 15<sup>th</sup>.

Though it is unfortunate that we indulge in debates during strike environment, it is pertinent to address the issue of purpose. We all know our elementary lesson about strike that we never organize strike for strike sake but to settle long pending demands and to arrive at measures to safeguard employees' Interest. This strike is mainly to guard ourselves from the onslaughts of govt policies and to settle some long pending legitimate demands like 78.2 etc.

Preparing ourselves for the negotiation is as important as preparing employees for the strike. We should be humble to understand that we need a lot of home work to make the strike successful. Simply giving a call without caring negotiation and claiming the strike a historic one would not serve. Policy issues are beyond the level of BSNL. Our demands are their (BSNL) demands also. BSNL management may stand with us but they cannot on their own settle those issues.

BWA Refund of 8300 crores: The question of surrendering unviable area license is gaining momentum. But we should discuss the matter with DOT/MOF level only. We should press BSNL to arrange some tripartite meeting to thrash out issues like Refund of 7500crore loan, Reimbursement of LF etc as all having stakes with DOT/MOF. Regarding pensionary contribution, we should seek the authority empowered to interpret FR 116. Our 37A speaks 'Govt will specify the quantum of contribution'. Whether that 2006- 60% order stands as specification- this should be clarified

Concrete understanding can be reached only if negotiation at the level of DOT/MOF is possible. Otherwise BSNL may say that they have raised the issues to the authorities concerned and may show us the copy of the letters to satisfy us without any solution to the policy issues. It may be difficult to get an appointment with Secy DOT or Secy DOE of MOF level but it is not an impossible task. We should make every effort to convince them that there are some genuine grievances that we have, to pass on to them for consideration.

78.2 is our legitimate demand. It comes out of merger of 50% DA with basic. Fresh 50% DA merger resolution was also passed by NFTE at Coimbatore. Unfortunately when all the CG Employees and PSU Employees are enjoying the benefit of 50% merger in their new pay revision from 2006 and 2007onwards, we are unable to settle the demand of 78.2, though DPE guidelines are there. We have lost the effect of 50% DA merger during our pay revision and thereby loosing 12% of our basic every month. BSNL board has not disposed of or negated the demand but deferred to take any decision. BSNL management has sought fresh inputs from staff side for restoring the agenda at board meeting. We do not know whether JAC has submitted the same. Why don't we use this time to prepare a common fresh note demanding settlement of 78.2 with immediate effect and frankly telling some via media for the question of arrears.. BSNL may need 80 crores (approximately) every month additionally to settle the demand.

For Bonus, festival has already gone. Airport Authority has issued some new type of order calling Festival allowance. If bonus is not possible on the ground of no profit, we

can change our demand like Non-PLB/PLI exgratia as given to central govt employees (barring PLB areas) or some festival allowance. The idea is restoring our right of getting something during the time of festival instead of nothing for the years of no profit.

MRS Cut should also be viewed in the same way. Instead of 'complete no' we should restore our right to get something (may not be twelve and half days may be 10 days or 8 days at present ... can be restored after profit).

VRS, if Govt and BSNL jointly decided to implement the same then it is difficult to stop VRS even after indefinite strike. They may assure us no coercion. We can say our 'big no'. If they find money, they will implement and employees will decide as per their wisdom. Where is the meeting point? TUs will be put into some irksome position. We need serious internal discussion on this issue. Whether we feel negotiation is permissible on that issue.. if so on what grounds that should be discussed internally amongst ourselves. Voluntary Replacement Scheme as that of Railways to match some skill set and enriching 55ii c are some mooted points. How we are going to give confidence to the Post VRS employees. Are we going to take up the issues of VRS Optees? Though all questions need not be discussed publicly and we may feel premature to discuss, but leadership should ponder these aspects at least internally when they meet in some joint forum.

So, Homework is must to prepare ourselves to face any eventuality whether one day or indefinite strike.

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