

# Confederation Of Central Government Employees & Workers

Organisation unifying the entirety of Indian Central Government Employees and Workers on a single platform of struggle and advance.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2020

## THE TASK BEFORE THE POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND CENTRAL GOVT. EMPLOYEES

### EITHER FIGHT OR PERISH.

**M. Krishnan**

**Ex- Secretary General, NFPE & Confederation**

- Central Government employees, particularly postal employees have a history of one and a half century of struggle spanning from pre-independence period to post-independence era. I am not venturing to explain the history of that period of sacrifice, brutal repression, severe punishments, and martyrdom in this article. That can be, on another occasion. I am trying to explain the common character of the struggles conducted by the Central Government employees and postal employees in pre and post independence era and their future task based on this experience.
- If one analyse the struggles organised during seventy years period prior to 1947, it can be seen that majority of those struggles were mainly for achieving defined wage structure and service conditions which was not in existence at that period. Thus, through several big and small agitations and strikes, fixed working hours, wage structure based on the nature of duty performed, annual increments, leave entitlement, allowance to compensate price rise, pensionary benefits, right to organise and collective bargaining were achieved by employees from the most oppressive and unwilling British Government.
- None of the benefits were granted as a gratis by the British Government. Each benefit was obtained through heroic struggle. The strike organised by Postmen of Pune Head Post Office under the guidance of great freedom fighter Late Balagangadhara Tilak in the year 1880, the indefinite strike of Telegraph workers in 1908 under the leadership of Henry Barton, the indefinite strike of 1918 by Postmen of Mumbai under the leadership of V.G.Dalvi, the struggle organised by Potal Clerks in the years 1920-21 against the retrograde recommendations of Postal Enquiry Committee Report under the inspiring leadership of late Tarapada Mukherjee, the founder father of Postal Trade Union movement, the historic speech and clarion call for struggle by Tarpada Mukherjee in the 1921 Lahore speech and his consequent dismissal from service, the non-cooperation agitation in 1931 of Postal employees under the leadership of Dada Ghosh, the 25 days strike of 1946 which is written in golden letters in the history of Indian Independence struggle, commenced by Postmen of Mumbai and then joined by entire P & T employees and finally converted into a biggest working class strike, inspired and guided by the revolutionary leader Late K.G.Bose, who electrified the entire Central Government employees movement --- all these struggles were organised for achieving new benefits which were not available to Central Government employees till then. Most of the benefits which are now enjoyed by the Central Government employees are the result of the prolonged struggles conducted in pre-independent India, during British regime. Thousands of known and unknown leaders and workers had sacrificed their entire life for the cause of posterity during those period.
- After independence (1947) upto 1990's the struggle conducted by Central Government employees and Postal employees was mainly for improving or betterment of the benefits earned during the pre-independence period and to some extent for realizing some left out benefits like Bonus. The main cause of the struggles were for betterment of wages and other service conditions mainly through

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various pay commission mechanisms and also through various ED committees in the case of Gramin Dak Sevaks formerly called as Extra-Departmental Agents. The indefinite strike notice of 1957 demanding appointment of second Central Pay Commission and nationwide preparations thereof, indefinite strike of 1960 which lasted for five days demanding modifications and improvement of second pay commission recommendations, the historic one day strike of 1968 September 19th demanding Need Based Minimum Wage, 1974 Bonus strike of Railway Employees in which other Central Government employees also joined as solidarity strike for few days, the struggle against the attack on wages, DA and other service conditions during the 1975 Emergency period, the historic 1984 one day strike solely for realization of GDS demands, many other agitational programmes other than strikes -- all were conducted for improvement of wages and other service conditions. These struggles were organised at national level under the leadership of legendary leaders like Dada Ghosh, K.G.Bose, N.J.Iyer, K.Adinarayana, Om Prakash Gupta, S.K.Vyas, and N.P.Padmanabhan and many other leaders in various states.

5. The post independence period upto 1990's was also the period of tremendous growth and leap forward of Central Government services and departments. It was a period of all-round development of Central services. Through the five year plan, the Central Government expanded the Central services to all parts of the nation for catering to various needs of the people like Communications, health, education, industry etc. etc. More and more offices were opened in cities and villages. To cope up with the work load due to opening of new offices and further expansion of services thousands of new posts were created and lakhs of new employees were recruited and appointed. To supervise and coordinate the activities of field offices, Administrative offices at State, Central and Ministry level were also established. Thus there was big increase in the number of offices and number of employees in Central Services during this period. The quality of the services also has improved a lot.
6. This growth trajectory lasted for 42 years from 1947 to 1990. From 1991 onwards very big policy change took place in Central Services. Neo-liberal globalisation policies were implemented in all sectors of the economy. Central services were not an exception. Closure of offices, merger of offices, Ban on recruitment, abolition of vacant posts, Ban on creation of new posts, Largescale outsourcing of the work performed by Central Government employees, introduction of Casual, Contract and daily rated mazdoor system, corporatisation of Government departments as a prelude to eventual privatisation are some of the neo-liberal policies introduced in Central Government services. Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Pay Commissions, Expenditure Reforms Commission and various expert committees gave recommendations to expedite the implementation of neo-liberal policies in all Central Government departments. During this period various types of resistance struggles were organised by Central Government employees in general and in each department. In Postal department struggle and strikes against reorganisation and closure of Post Offices and RMS Offices, outsourcing of speed post booking, non-filling up of vacancies and closure of Branch Post Offices took place during the period from 1991 onwards along with the struggle for improvement of wages and service conditions and also against curtailment of trade union facilities.
7. From 1991 onwards, the struggle of Central Government employees are mainly against the neo-liberal policies of closure, downsizing, outsourcing, corporatisation and casual contract system. Unlike in the pre-independence period upto 1947 and post-independence period upto 1990's, when the struggles were mainly for achieving benefits and for improving the wages and service conditions, the struggles from 1991 onwards in the Central Government departments was mainly for job security of employees. Existence of each department and its employees faced big challenge from the policy of the Government. Consequently, as a corollary to these attacks, attack on wage structure, social security and trade union rights also intensified. The contributory pension system (NPS) was introduced. Instead of struggle for improving the existing benefits, the struggle for protecting the existing benefits became more prominent. Confederation of Central Government Employees & Workers organised strikes in 2012, 2014 and 2016. The historic sixteen days All India strike of Gramin Dak Sevaks took place during this period.
8. The Telecom department, which was a part of Central Government Services with about five lakhs employees and 10000 crore rupees yearly profit was corporatised during the period of neo-liberal reforms. Private telecom companies are given licences to operate. Government privatised VSNL. Ultimate result was that BSNL and MTNL became loss making entities and lakhs of employees were

sent out on Voluntary Retirement scheme (VRS).

9. *After coming to power at Centre in 2014, the BJP-led Modi Government started vigorously implementing the extreme neo-liberal policies of naked privatisation and dismantling of public sector and Government departments. In the defence sector the FDI limit is raised to 74% from 49%. Defence ordinance factories are going to be corporatised and privatised. In postal department India Post Payment Bank (IPPB), a public limited company, started functioning. Proposal for corporatisation of Postal Life Insurance and Rural Postal Life Insurance is pending approval of the cabinet. Conversion of the existing parcel Directorate into a separate company is in the pipeline. Most of the work now done by postal employees such as booking of registered and speed post articles, money orders, acceptance of all savings bank deposits etc are going to be handed over to a public limited company called Common Service Centre (CSC). If all the above reforms are implemented, thousands of postal employees will become surplus and their job security will be in danger. The situation in other Central Government departments is also more or less the same. Govt's decision to close down 12 out of 17 Government of India Printing Presses is an eye-opener to all those who believe that NDA Government will protect their job. During the Covid-19 pandemic period, the Government has declared unbridled privatisation of all strategic sectors including Space Research, Atomic energy, Defence production etc. The refusal of the Central Government to honour the assurance to increase the minimum pay and fitment formula, rejection of the demand to scrap Contributory Pension Scheme (NPS) and restore Old Pension Scheme (OPS), refusal to grant civil servant status and all benefits of regular employees to Gramin Dak Sevaks, increasing attack on the trade union rights are all part of this extreme neo-liberal policies pursued by the Government. Freezing of Dearness Allowance and impounding of arrears till 30-06-2021 in the name of Covid-19 crisis is another blow to the Central Government employees. Stringent measures to implement the provisions of FR 56(j),(l) and Pension Rules 48 is a calculated move by Government to terrorise the employees.*
10. *Central Government employees in general and Postal employees in particular are facing very very serious challenges and crisis, never faced in the past, due to the ruthless policies being implemented by Modi Government. Their job security, wage structure, social security and trade union rights are under severe attack. How to overcome this situation? How to protect the hard-won benefits of the employees which are the fruits of the struggle and sacrifice made by thousands of workers and leaders in the past 150 years? The answer is that the Central Government employees, especially Postal Employees, who have a history of heroic struggles and sacrifice, should be ready for uncompromising struggle and for more sacrifices than the sacrifices of our earlier leaders and workers at grass root level. Benefits, wages and service conditions which are the products of hard-won battles of the past, can be protected through still bigger and more militant struggles only. This is what history teaches us. There is no short-cut. There is no substitute for the struggle for existence. There is only two options left - either fight or perish. Let us not surrender. Let us stand up and fight. **Let us make the 2020 November 26th one day National Strike a resounding success.***

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Posted by Confederation Of Central Government Employees at 4:34 PM

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