

## CHANGING ROLES OF TRADE UNION IN BSNL

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### Abstract

Research examines have secured various degrees of position fulfillment for different gatherings of workers. These examinations use fulfillment reviews, stress demonstrative studies and need factor studies to survey present inclination of workers about the activity. Fulfillment is a positive individual result, which adds to gather fulfillment. Other than fulfillment with pay and advancement openings, worker's guilds work for representative fulfillment with the work itself, fulfillment with the administration, fulfillment with associates, gatherings and associations and fulfillment with work conditions. All the above variables are firmly identified with inspiration hypotheses. Stress produces execution or non- execution as for the degrees of stress experienced. This thusly influences the activity substance and duty to authoritative objectives. Need factors and stress influence the inspiration of the workers and is viewed as a basic factor in assembling the endeavors of the representatives. Accordingly, when a part is affected by a worker's organization to which he/she has a place with, the duty to persuade him/her rests with the worker's guild and it will be in itself upsetting to it. The activity qualities model of work inspiration of a worker depends on the help and authority appeared by the worker's guild. The figure No. 2 shows, importance,

experienced obligation and information on genuine outcomes are straightforwardly identified with interior work inspiration, nature of work, lower non-attendance and improved occupation content. Thus it is critical to talk about those focuses which add to comprehend the impact of the worker's organizations in the activity substance of the representatives and the other way around.

### Paper Identification



### Introduction

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, d/b/a BSNL is an Indian state-possessed broadcast communications organization, headquartered in New Delhi, Delhi, India. It was fused by Government of India on 1 October 2000. It gives portable voice and an internet provider through it's across the nation media communications arrange across India. It is the biggest wire line broadcast communications organize organization in India with over 60% piece of the

overall industry and fourth biggest remote media communications Operator.

The term wages has different connotations to the workers, union leaders and the management. The worker is concerned with his take home pay, its purchasing power and savings potential. The union leader thinks of wages as that which can be bargained with the employer to the highest extent he can. To the management, wage means cost, which in turn depends on the amount produced by the workers in the plant as well as how much they are paid. Unfortunately, all the three participants of the wage theory are not in a position to form an easy acceptable and coherent opinion about the wages for disbursement to the workers. The government is a model employer who tries to run a welfare state through employees. DOT/BSNL are not an exception to this and the services of BSNL is shared both by rich and poor. There is no wage concept adopted by the government on the lines of the industries or companies that produce goods or services to the benefit of the public. Instead the government adopts a 'salary' concept for all employees in a uniform manner without creating appreciable wage differentials among equal cadres of different organizations functioning under it. In fact, it is found that economic theories are seldom followed in wage determination of the government organizations. The determinants in fixing the salaries of the employees of the government organizations are the half yearly consumer price index, the paying capacity of the government and its fiscal policies, the political patronage that is enjoyed by the government employees, the pressure offered by the trade unions in the fixation of pay and the advice of the pay commissions appointed from time to time by the government to fix the pay of the employees. From the past history, it is found that the pay fixation was only an exercise with some numerical jugglery or interpretation of rules without any application of mind by the parties concerned. Every pay commission

merged some portions of allowances with basic pay and tried to evolve a fundamental pay structure. The pay commissions and the government showed more concern regarding equal pay for equally placed employees instead of work based or performance based pay structure. Some senior trade union leaders from the central and state governments and economists feel that this procedure killed the initiative of the employees as no real effort is needed to get a pay hike. In general, most of the trade unions functioning in the central and state governments are after uniform policy of pay to their members. If any cadre in an organisation or department gets more pay due to the service importance it owes to the public, compared to other similar cadres of other departments, the unions consider it an anomaly and they protest against the award. The central government has enacted several laws such as

- (a) The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965,
- (b) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976,
- (c) Payment of Wages Act, 1936,
- (d) The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 etc. But these are not directly applicable to the government employees.

According to the recommendations of the pay commissions established by the central government, the central government workers are controlled by orders issued by their respective departments on a regular basis about their salaries. Consequently, trade unions' negotiating strength in relation to their pay structure has been significantly diminished as a result of this process. The sole recourse available to the trade unions is to petition the pay commissions to propose favorably to the government an increase in salary and benefits for their members. The employee's ability to exert influence on the pay commission seems to be more essential than his or her ability to perform well on the job in order to have his or her salary set. An essential component of the salary of a central government employee is the basic pay that has been set

by the government for a specific cadre or position, among other things. The government fixes annual increments in advance, and other benefits include: dearness allowance based on the consumer price index, house rent allowance based on the location of employment and basic pay (generally a percentage of basic pay is paid as house rent allowance), city compensatory allowance paid for select cities, special allowances such as hill compensatory allowance, difficult area allowance, bad climate compensation allowance, deputation allowance for other departments, and other benefits. The majority of the overall emoluments are obtained from basic pay, dearness allowance, home rent allowance, and city compensatory allowance, with the remainder coming from a small number of additional allowances. The base salary and dearness allowances are taken into account when calculating retirement benefits, while other allowances are not taken into account. As a result, labour unions are extremely interested in increasing their basic salary in order to obtain greater retirement benefits, such as gratuity and pension, for its members. This was the fourth pay commission, which was presided over by Justice P.N.Singhal and began operating on September 1, 1983. On 9<sup>th</sup> April 1994, the Fifth Pay Commission was established under the chairmanship of Justice Rathnavel Pandian, and it began operations. The pay commissions' procedure was not particularly seamless, and there was a significant lag between the filing of their reports and the execution of their recommendations. This has resulted in widespread dissatisfaction across all levels of the workforce. In the study, it was discovered that every pay commission process time was a tumultuous period, during which numerous aggressive actions organised by the trade unions took place both during and after the conclusion of the pay commission process. The Fourth Pay Commission proposed that the Members of the Telecom Board, Senior Administrative Grade Officials, and senior officers of the Telecom

Research Centre, New Delhi, be paid more than they were before. Telecommunication Engineering Services Association (Group B Officers Association) filed an appeal with the commission, claiming that their cadre has been placed under the pay scale of Rs.650-1200 (i.e. in the grade of Sub Divisional Engineers), despite the fact that they have held charge as Divisional Engineers for a long period of time on an officiating basis. Their salaries were fixed at Rs.2200 – 4000 per month on the Junior Time Range (JTS), which was lower than the Divisional Engineers' pay scale of Rs.2200 – 4000 per month (Senior Time Scale of pay Rs.3000 - 4500). While the junior officers sought immediate regularisation of their salary commensurate with their level of responsibility, their requests were turned down by the commission. There was also an inconsistency in the pay schedules of comparable cadres, such as Junior Engineers (now known as Junior Telecom Officers) against Junior Accounts officers (JAO) and Sub Divisional Engineers versus Accounts officers (now known as Accounts Officers). The accounting wing received more pay than the engineering wing, and the fourth pay commission did not resolve this disparity in compensation. It deferred to the government's decision on the issue, which remained undetermined for a period of 12 years. In 1996, the Fifth Pay Commission resolved this discrepancy between the two pay scales. In order to be on level with the other comparable cadres in the accounting arm of the P&T Department, junior engineers requested a pay scale of Rs.1640 2300; however, this was denied by the fourth pay commission. It urged the department in question to take the anomaly into consideration and pass instructions. The administration said that the issue had been examined and was ultimately rejected. In response to this, the Junior Telecom Officers Association embarked on a campaign of agitation in 1986, threatening an indefinite strike if the situation continued. The government appeased the protesting

engineers by paying them the wages they had requested, and the strike was brought to a successful conclusion. The National Federation of Telecom Employees (NFTE) and the Federation of National Telecom Organizations (FNTO) were successful in obtaining pay scales for Linemen/Wiremen that were comparable to those of postmen employed by the Indian Postal Service (Rs. 825 - 1200), but they were unsuccessful in obtaining a higher pay scale for Telephone Operators. There was some misunderstanding about the personnel that was divided into two categories: Test Category employees and Non-Test Category workers. The non-test category employees were paid less than the test category employees, despite the fact that both of them were working in a comparable position as the test category employees. The fourth pay commission eliminated the non-test category and consolidated all of its subcategories under a single administrative head. All of the labour unions applauded this decision. As a consequence, a significant anomaly in pay fixation for non-test category employees was created, with their salaries being fixed at a lower level. Additionally, the commission eliminated the outstation payment, which was given to employees who performed their responsibilities at a location other than their own company's headquarters and was formerly known as the outstation allowance. The trade unions didn't make a big deal out of it at all. The Productivity Linked Bonus (PLB) system, which was first used in the railways between 1979 - 1980, was authorised by the Fourth Pay Commission. The trade unions could accomplish this not via the pay commission, but rather through the legal fight they fought against the Department of Transportation. 7 pay commissions have taken efforts to decrease the number of pay scales in order to lessen the amount of complexities associated with pay structure. The commission employed a highly complex system of determining the salaries of government workers, which created a lot of angst

among those who worked for them. Due to the formulas suggested by the Fourth Salary Commission, senior workers were either brought closer to the pay of their younger employees or were paid less than their junior employees, depending on their position. Hundreds of lawsuits were filed in different courts across India in an attempt to get their complaints resolved. When compared to other groups of officers, medium level officers were in a worse situation as a result of the pay discrepancy. A periodic pay commission should be held once every ten years, or if the dearness allowance reaches 100 percent of the base salary, according to the panel's recommendations. The officers' organisations said that the IV - Pay Commission shamefully failed to do right to their emoluments by failing to propose a 100 percent neutralisation of dearness allowance for them on par with Group C and Group D workers, as recommended by the previous pay commission. After 12 years, the V - Pay Commission advised that they be treated on an equal footing with the rest of the central movement's workers, and this was implemented. The most significant accomplishment of the trade unions during the implementation of the Fifth Wage Commission was the establishment of a minimum beginning basic pay of Rs.2440/- for the lowest grade of employees. It was possible to reduce the burden of the pay-disbursing officials because of the reduction in the number of pay grades. Unfortunately, certain pay systems for chosen senior or specialised officers or staff members were automatically combined with the pay structure that was the closest in rank and experience. By combining their pay scales into a more similar one, they forfeited the advantages that had been provided to them as a result of their work in specialised sectors, which included job enrichment and/or expansion opportunities. In certain instances, they were also set at a lower pay tier than they otherwise would have been. Because they were so few in number, the trade unions were unable to do much to assist them in this situation. When the

Telecom Engineering Services Association (TESA) filed an appeal with the Fifth Pay Panel, it requested that Group B (Category 2) engineering services be eliminated. The pay commission denied the petition.

Additionally, it declined to advise the government on whether or not to advance the Group B officers encased in Group A services to the Junior Time Scale (JTS). It was a major defeat for the association since it was unable to obtain salary promotion from Group B (to Senior Time Scale of Group A services, despite the fact that they were promoted from Group B to Senior Time Scale of Group A Engineering Services in actual functional elements (as Divisional Engineers). Similarly, it could not violate the principle of restricting the inter se seniority ratio between directly recruited officers and departmentally promoted officers to a maximum of one-to-one. As a consequence, promoted officers are retiring in the Senior Time Scales without any concrete career progression related to compensation, even after serving for 12 to 15 years and earning a good salary. After 8 and 12 years of service, TESA has another beef with the pay commission since it suggested a lateral development programme known as Assured Career Progression (ACP) that was vaguely defined. As an advice for consideration, the fifth pay commission sent it to the government with no specific definitions; nevertheless, the government subsequently notified the panel that it had taken the recommendation into account and rejected it. The suggestion has not been followed as of today, and the promoted Group B officers have received just one lateral promotion after 12 years of service, with a small pay benefit to go along with it. The pay commission's findings reveal that the senior officers' forum, the Indian Telecom Services Association (ITSA), was successful in securing certain advantages for its members via the pay commission's findings. In addition, it was granted ACP after 8, 13, and 18 years of service and was given the benefit of double pay increments for every year that an officer

did not get his promotion in the senior time scale after completion of eight years of service. All officers in the Junior Administrative Grade (JAG), with a pay scale ranging from 12000 to 15300, were promoted to the Senior Administrative Grade (SAG), with a pay scale ranging from 14300 to 18300, if they had served in the military for a total of 13 years in continuous duty. Other stall attendants or promoted officers were not eligible for such rewards.

During February, 2012 the government announced its final decision to go in for a corporate body for the telecom industry that was controlled by DOT and register it under the Indian Companies Act, 1956. Several agitations followed this announcement since the trade unions belonging to the Group C and Group D employees demanded a clear agreement with the government for the safety of the BSNL and security of job and retirement benefits for the existing employees. The major trade unions such as National Federation of Telecom Employees (NFTE), Federation of National Telecom Organisation (FNTO), Telecom Engineering Services Association (TESA) and Posts & Telegraphs Finance Officers Association (P&TFOA) agreed for the absorption of employees of DOT in BSNL subject to the condition that the central government will take the responsibility of paying the pension fits to its employees even after absorption to BSNL. They also demanded that the basic pension and accrued benefits should be based on the emoluments that will be earned by the employee in BSNL on retirement. This was agreed to by the government and it issued a gazette notification to regularize the pension of the employees of DOT transferred to BSNL under the provisions of Rule 37 A of the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1966. It also agreed that all pending issues with the DOT would be settled by the BSNL on mutual terms after the employees are absorbed by it.

Based on this, agreement, the government proposed the conversion process on 1.10.2000, which was scheduled to take effect on 1.4.2001. Initially, all the

Group C and the Group - D employees were absorbed at their option. They were also paid an interim relief of Rs. 1000/- per month subject to the fixation of pay scales in the Industrial Development Allowance (IDA) pattern of PSUs. However, National Federation of Telecom Employees Union (Nambodri) opposed the move, but was not successful in getting the support of life fellow unions and ultimately surrendered when it found that its own members opted for BSNL against its wishes. The Junior Telecom Officers Association (JTOA), MTNL, Mumbai and Delhi assisted by their All India Forum filed an application in the Central Administrative Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi against the absorption of the officers in BSNL and other PSUs floated by DOT vide. OA No. 1252/ 2000. Indian Telecommunications Services Association (ITSA) represented by one of its members as a co-litigant assisted the association. The application challenged the order of absorption of the officers on the grounds that (a) the impugned letter dated 8.5.2000 of DOT to absorb the employees to BSNL, MTNL or other PSUs alters the strength of the services without undertaking consultations with Union Public Service Commission (India) as in enjoined by the recruitment rules for senior posts of the Government of India, (b) applicants are required to be consulted before the aforesaid decision is implemented in the light of the doctrine of legitimate expectations and (c) pertinent information such as pension benefits and its appurtenant commutation has not been furnished to the affected members. The Central Administrative Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi, refused to interfere in this matter and dismissed the application. It observed that (a) the decisions of the employees are taken care of in the absorption proceedings as the decision of an individual employee either to stay in the government as a deputed servant to BSNL or shift to BSNL as its absorbed employee is solely decided by him and as such his/ her privileges or service conditions are not affected, (b) the petitioner has full

liberty to challenge the future decisions or orders of the government or BSNL that may affect the employment inadvertently and (c) the officers are fully aware of life conditions that prevail in the PSUs floated by the central government. Whereas the Telecom Engineering Services Association (TESA), an association, which represents promoted Group - B and Group - A officers, welcomed the decision of absorption and sent several reminders to the government insisting upon early implementation. Ultimately, Government of India agreed to absorb the officers in BSNL and pay Rs.2000/- as interim relief from the month of October 2001, but the association opposed this. The government then agreed to pay the amount retrospectively IV October 2000 till the Industrial development Allowance (IDA) pattern of pay scales that would be fixed by the BSNL in February 2002. The pension benefits and all other pecuniary benefits enjoyed by the officers and employees were assured by BSNL till the DOT transferred employee' retires from service. It is to be noted that BSNL has so far framed no policy with regard to the payment of wages and other benefits to its employees and it is presumed that it may follow the lines of other existing PSUs. About 70% of the existing PSUs in India are reeling under loss and were subsidized from the funds of the central government. The government of India categorically announced that the sick PSUs will be disinvested, as the government cannot provide budgetary support for them. Now a question arises that whether the DOT, which was a monopoly organization so far earning profits, would continue to earn profit under the new corporate system as BSNL since it has a lot of constraints such as direct and indirect taxes due to the central and state governments, shortage of capital, reduction in revenue, increasing costs, technology changes, over staff burdens and stiff competitions from the India based Multi National Telecom Companies.

If the BSNL becomes sick, it will be very doubtful whether it would be in a position to honor commitment to its employees. Some senior leaders such as Mr. Bass of TESA, Mr. O.

P. Gupta of NFTE and Mr. Vallinayagam of FNTTO opine that nothing has changed in BSNL so far except its name and the administration continues to be that of DOT. It may not be possible to continue the benefits to the employees if a radical change in the functioning of the BSNL is brought in immediately supported by corporate culture. A similar, but a small unit of DOT, Hindustan Teleprinters Limited (HTL), Chennai, which was manufacturing teleprinter machines incurred heavy losses, as it did not diversify its operations in time. It was also plagued by over staffing and competitions from major multi-national companies producing telecom products and became sick. During October 2001, the company was disinvested and transferred to a multinational namely Hindustan Futuristic Communications Limited (HFCL). It is an eye opener for both the trade unions and the management that a similar situation may arise for BSNL and other telecom based PSUs. This situation will definitely affect the wages, pension benefits and pecuniary benefits that are enjoyed by the employees of the organizations. From the discussions made, it may be concluded that the contribution of the trade unions and the associations in determining the pay structure of the employees is very highly pronounced. They fought continuous battle for pay and allowances with the central government starved for funds. The promotional policy that was propounded by them is only to have a pay hike. Unfortunately, the pay benefits were linked purely with the seniority or the number of years of service rendered by an employee. The trade unions did not aspire for a higher pay for improvement in qualifications or performance. They did not demand performance-based increments periodically. This has reduced the spirit of the employees who could perform better than their colleagues. Perhaps the trade unions fear that the above

policy may either bring a split in the community of workers or their policy could not be implemented in a bureaucratic organization. After the Fifth Pay Commission, the benefits reaped by the central government employees and the subsequent bargaining made with BSNL are meaningful. In fact, the trade unions and the associations are highly successful in their bargaining. However, multiplicity of trade unions hamper the process and causes delay in finalizing the benefits to the employees. In a nutshell, the contribution of the trade unions and associations in improving the financial benefits to their members is highly commendable.

### **Conclusion**

This research work studied the impact of the trade unions and associations of DOT/ BSNL on the organization and the member - employees. Since the labour market and telecom industry are highly dynamic, it becomes necessary to make a study on the behavior of the trade unions and the industrial relations they maintain with the management of DOT/ BSNL. A study on the inter and intra relationships of the trade unions within and outside the organization yielded good results that could be used to improve the system of trade unions and the functioning of BSNL. A study on the multiplicity of the trade unions, changing social and political scenario, fast growing technology, etc. put forth challenges before the employees, trade unions and the management. The complexity with which DOT/ BSNL developed in the past compelled the trade unions to solve various issues that confront their members. As such, a study was taken up with the objectives of examining the effect of trade unions on job enrichment, career growth and job analysis. An analysis was made to study the contributions made by the trade unions on pay and perks of their members. This study included the contributions made by the trade unions in the areas of discipline, leadership; motivation and team work in BSNL so that some constructive suggestions for improving industrial

relations could be made. The entire analysis was made in general terms. The study included workers, executives and trade union leaders. The study was made within Tamilnadu comprising Chennai Telephones and Tamilnadu Telecommunications Circle. Both primary and secondary data were extensively used throughout the research. The secondary data were collected from many published sources especially from trade union journals, souvenirs, ILO publications, DOT/ BSNL publications, etc. Primary data were collected through survey method. Standard questionnaires were used to study the motivation factors, need factors, stress level and leader behaviour characteristics of the trade unions. This analysis was based on the opinions of the members, leaders and officers who belong to different unions. Statistical analysis was made using standard software package by grouping the data into several categories. Inferential analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis and step regression analysis were made to investigate inter and intra relations between various groups of population. Review of literature was made, with respect to trade union movements in India and abroad, to support the findings. Rules and regulations published by the Government of India, DOT/ BSNL, and DOP etc. were consulted for better understanding of the subject. Various pay commission reports and labour commission reports were also consulted to study the depth of participation of the trade unions in the functioning of BSNL. Based on the above analysis, conclusions and constructive suggestions were made for the use of all trade unions and associations, members of the trade unions/ associations and the management of BSNL. This study indicates that the emerging labour market is more complex and serious in which the trade unions are expected to play their role cautiously and tactfully. The BSNL, MTNL, VSNL etc. would no longer enjoy monopoly in the communication industry and the challenges before

them will be very severe. The modern technology is very highly dynamic which has significant repercussions on the existing labour force. A very high competitive environment is expected for BSNL in the near future in all areas such as Basic Telecom Services, Data/ Internet Services, Long Distance Telecom Services (NSD/ ISD/ STD) and Intelligent Network Services, Integrated Services Digital Networks (ISDN) etc. The trade unions have an orthodox approach derived from the DOT experiences and this will hamper their future as a social leader of the working community. There is a fear that the opportunities in the industry are highly deteriorating. Casual work became the order of the day in the telecom industry and the sustenance of BSNL and its employees may undergo a severe assault. Trade unions and management are not fully prepared to face this threat at present. Due to the changes in the functioning of BSNL, a transformed corporate body from the government controlled DOT, the entire functioning procedures, both administrative and technical, got changed. The staff and officers have become obsolete and are not in a position to cope up with this transformation. The trade unions and associations are fully aware of this, but are unable to contribute much with the same speed the changes take place.

In the government owned DOT, the trade unions/ associations did not have any social base. They did not mingle with the public, especially with the customers, and they were ignorant about the public response towards their activities. The public considered them as 'demanding' and not 'contributing to social causes'. So it may be concluded that the trade unions / associations did not enjoy a good reputation from the common man. So far, the trade unions were adopting a non-professional and hide and seek attitude in bargaining their demands with the management of DOT. This is being continued even now and no new approach was found out and practiced. The management of BSNL is nothing but an old wine in the new bottle and did not



bother to adopt new and useful bargaining techniques with professional acumen. The managers to the issue are existing bureaucrats of the government of India and their knowledge in professional management is limited to government service. Hence the trade unions/associations and BSNL management could not form new frames of collective agreements and old systems continue. The result is that even after the formation of BSNL on 1st October 2000, (i.e. for the past one and a half year) no tangible settlement was reached between the parties and even after two years they stand at the starting point. It is found that multinational companies (MNC) have a very high thrust over the telecom industry compared to BSNL. In November 2001, an Indian company supported by a multinational organisation acquired Hindustan Teleprinters Ltd., a PSU owned by the government of India. During February 2002, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL), another PSU owned by Government of India, sold out 25% of shares to TATA Telecom Ltd. Such a trend shows that the multi nationals are willing to acquire government owned PSUs as early as possible. In addition, value added services (VAS) such as mobile / cellular telephones, pager services, Internet Service Providers and Routers etc. are already under the control of MNCs and their Indian partners. BSNL is trying hard to enter into this area but the entry is abnormally delayed due to several reasons. The trade unions/ associations did not pay any attention on these issues and they keep themselves away from the process. From the staff rolls of DOT, it is found that the staff strength is reduced very fast compared to the increase in the number of telephone connections and services increased. The present staff strength is 5 Per 1000 lines compared to 74 per 1000 lines ten years before. There is a decline of 11.4% on an average in the staff strength for the year 2000-01 alone. There is a complete ban on recruitment and a fear of retrenchment of the existing employees through Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) threatening

them. On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2002, the central cabinet of ministers passed a resolution to administer VRS scheme to the central government employees who are rendered surplus under the new norms of employment. The resolution provides compulsory retirement for those who have completed 33 years of service and are unwilling to quit provided the government has no vacancy to accommodate them in other departments. This added to the stress level of the trade unions/associations of the government of India. They have no plans to discuss with the management to offset the threat. The public image of the trade unions/associations is not appreciable. During November 1990, the DOT's trade unions underwent a total strike for 23 days demanding an increase in pay by Rs.100. The customers and the general public organizations vehemently opposed this. The unions withdrew the agitation later following a complete defeat. Surveys conducted by BSNL/ DOT revealed that the employees are not customer friendly as demanded by the public. The trade unions did not take any step to educate their members formally or informally in this regard. Majority of the members of the trade unions or associations are apolitical theoretically. But the leaders support one or other political parties. Political patronage is found to be important for the leaders to pressurize the government on certain issues but it has also caused a lot of divisions in the trade union set up resulting in inter union and intra union rivalries. Multiplicity of the trade unionism in DOT/ BSNL is due to the political affinity of the leaders of the trade unions / associations which played havoc in the bargaining process. The past history of the trade unions/ associations proved that there had been vertical splits owing to different political ideologies. The two different groups functioning in the major and oldest union NFTE is a classic example for political rivalry. Thus the bargaining strength of BSNL's trade unions is highly reduced. Multiplicity of trade unions eroded the moral values of the employees. The government of

India permitted several unions to operate in the past including cadre based and caste based unions. Instead of promoting harmony in the working class, multiplicity of trade unions divided them and the quality of the general service was degraded. In addition, there was an increased confusion among the employees about their role as members. The rights and privileges of the trade unions were at stake and the bargaining strength of the individual unions was reduced to the minimum. Multiplicity of trade unions also reduced the strength of the union leaders and they were forced to act to satisfy individuals or groups instead of matters pertaining to common interest.

The large population of workers totaling about 4.21 lakhs (including the temporary workers) added to the problems of the organisation. A considerable section of the employees are obsolete and least qualified. The average age group of the employees is above 40 years and their future use in advanced technologies is very highly limited. The BSNL has to cough up a very huge sum in maintaining the burden without making an optimum use. Thousands of employees employed as telephone operators, wireless operators, clerks, telegraphists, linemen etc. became surplus and the BSNL is not in position to find profitable ways for utilization of their services. They could not be retrenched as it involves legal problems and the fear of inviting the wrath of the working employees and their unions. As such about 30% of the employees are paid wages without sufficient work. There is also a fear among the trade unions/ associations about the privatization of BSNL in the course of time. The question is that what would be the fate of the employees if privatization takes place. There is a doubt as to what would be the fate of the employees, trade unions and associations representing these employees if the organization is privatized. Agreements were entered with the government of India by the trade unions and associations with regard to the services of the employees and it was assured that there would be

no retrenchment if DOT were transformed into a corporate body. This agreement is binding on BSNL if it continues as a PSU. The question that arises is that whether the agreement is binding on a private management after privatization. Neither the government nor the trade unions have any answer for this.

Deunionisation started in USA during 1980. It spread into some American and European countries. This culture is being introduced in the blue chip companies in India. Performance based incentives, compensation, increments and wage structure through this formula will destroy trade unionism and trade union spirits in the organization. Moreover, the moral values of trade unions and associations were eroded in the past and whether such organizations will benefit the future generations is a hundred dollar question. However, the present generation of trade union members has faith in their leaders even though there is some dissatisfaction regarding the bargaining structure of the trade unions.

The economic conditions of the trade unions / associations are very poor. Generation of money is possible through subscriptions and donations from the members of the trade unions.

They may resort to donations from the customers for whom the BSNL serves. The expenditure made by the trade unions / associations is very heavy and they are not in a position to make both ends meet. They have to spend enormous amounts on publications, to fight legal battles in various courts on organizational matters, to organize rallies and meetings etc. They could not collect heavy amount on subscriptions from members, as their paying capacity is very low. Many trade union offices are very badly maintained and the wages paid to their workers is very low. The trade union office bearers consider offering a cup of tea or coffee to a visitor as a luxury affair. Poor economic structure of trade unions makes them weak and less dynamic. Workers' participation in the trade union activities during normal period is minimum. But during the

agitation / strike periods, the workers were found to be united and obeyed the instructions of their leaders. Participation in the union activities and induction of members in the union set up is found to be purely voluntary and there was no compulsion from any quarters. The members imbibe the objectives of the trade union and act accordingly. However in lower ranks, more group dynamism and harmony was noticed compared to officers associations. Many members in Group C" and they were not aware of the developments in their trade unions. Many trade union leaders in the higher hierarchy were found to be lifetime leaders. They were repeatedly elected as leaders and they enjoy a very high reputation and charisma. This had led to different factions in leadership and vertical splits were noticed when one faction wins over the other. The instructions issued by the highest leader are accepted by the members without much hesitation and political bossism is found in the activities of the leaders. The leaders of the Group - C and D enjoy more freedom and referent powers compared to the leaders of the officers associations. Very high union rivalry is prevalent among NFTE, NFTE (N) and FNTO operating in the lower ranks. Similarly among the officers associations, rivalry is found to exist among ITSA, TESA, JTOA and P&TFOA. The inter and intra union rivalries always give vent to the feelings of different groups and if canalized properly, will contribute to constructive criticism. Instead, the rivalries in BSNL turn ugly, spoiling the reputation of the trade unions and their leaders and at times obstruct the routine functioning of the organization. From the history of the trade unions, it is observed that the trade unions took frantic efforts to get recognition from the government of India to operate as a recognized union in DOT. The rules permitting trade unionism are very rigid and indirectly prevent practicing free trade unionism. Every union had fought a very long battle to get recognized and in the process gained bitter experiences. The leaders were

sacked for their trade union activities. The rigid and unfriendly attitude in the past developed severe cracks in the industrial relationships between the trade unions and the management due to which the trade unions became more militant. Professor Clark Kerr observes that a trade union should be a partner in social control and strive for social security mechanism of a worker through its activities. The trade unions were capable of providing organizational security to a worker, but not interested in social security mechanisms. It is found that the trade unions did not involve themselves in social activities such as adult education, running educational institutions, orphanages, destitute widow homes, charitable institutions etc. In addition, it is found that the unions were not interested in civil defense during periods of distress and national calamities. However organizational security measures were taken care of by the trade unions and associations through various programs sincerely. There had been a reasonable democratic set up available in the trade unions. The conduct of elections was regular and office bearers were elected for every two years through ballot. The elections were made compulsory by statutory regulations to avail recognition from the government. The quota of subscription paid to the union head quarters ensured the voting power of every branch. Even though there were some complaints about the conduct of elections, the method adopted is reasonable and fair for almost all trade unions / associations. Sometimes violence is noticed in the electioneering campaign of the trade unions of lower cadres. Frequent floor crossing is found among union members and lower level leaders of the trade unions. This caused a lot of tension in the branches and divisions of the respective units. A lot of infighting is also noticed in submission of their annual accounts. The members shifted their faith to another faction if their individual grievances were not settled by the trade union to which they belong. This often shook the morale of the trade unions at the lower ranks and also

reduced the credibility of their functioning. There is no change in the functioning of BSNL from that of DOT. The rules, procedures, manuals etc. were not changed to suit a corporate body. They did not reflect improved job content. The existing procedures are obsolete and they are followed even in the new set up without much change. The management and the trade unions did not show any interest in the past to change the procedures to suit the modern challenges. In fact, the trade unions opposed vehemently any fresh move for changes and the management was fully satisfied over the old ones. The trade unions were more interested in preserving the old culture instead of creating a new one and tried to take advantage of the rules and procedures. This obstructed smooth progress of BSNL. It had been enormous technological and administrative changes brought in by the dynamic telecommunications industry. These were not properly compensated with more developed job content as the trade unions and associations opposed the move. The proposals made by BSNL were not fully cooked to the requirements of the organization and thus was not greeted by the staff. The trade unions and associations are not interested in creating awareness about the changes in the minds of the members and also to take follow up action over the happenings.

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