

Radhai Mahavidyalaya, Aurangabd

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AN OVERVIEW OF LABOUR WELFARE

Sangapal Prakash Ingle Dr.Department of Commerce, Dr. B.A.M.U. Aurangabad. Mob. 09326324840

Arvind Keshaorao Raut Asst.Prof. Dept. of Commerce, GDM Arts, KRN Comm. & MD Sci.college, Jamner.

Abstract:

Industrial progress depends on satisfied labour force and in this connection the importance of labour welfare measures was accepted long back. Way back in 1931 the Royal Commission on Labour stressed the need of labour welfare primarily because of the harsh treatment meted out to the workers. This need was further emphasized in independent India by the Constitution, (1950). The concept of 'Labour welfare' is flexible and elastic and differs widely with times, regions, industry, country, social values and customs, the degree of industrialization, the general social economic development of people and political ideologies prevailing at particular moments.

Introduction

The Committee on Labour Welfare (1969) defined the phrase to mean, "Such facilities and amenities as adequate canteens, rest and recreation facilities, sanitary and medical facilities arrangements for travel to and from and for accommodation of workers employed at a distance from their homes, and such other services, amenities and facilities including social security measures as contribute to conditions under which workers are employed."The second report of the ILO refers with regard to labour welfare as, "Such services and amenities which may be established in or in the vicinity of undertakings to enable the persons employed in them to perform their work in healthy, congenial surroundings and such amenities conducive to good health, and high morale."On the basis of the above two and other definitions, the chief characteristics of labour welfare work may be summarized to include the work which is usually undertaken within the premises or in the vicinity of the industrial undertakings for the benefit of the employees and the members of their family and this generally includes those items of welfare which are over and above what is provided by statutory provisions and what the employees expect as a result of a contract of employment from the employers. Labour welfare occupies a place of significance in the industrial development and economy. It is an important facet of industrial relations, the extra dimension, giving satisfaction to the worker in a way which even a good wage cannot. With the growth of industrialization and mechanization, it has acquired added importance. A happy and contented work force is an asset for the industrial prosperity of any nation.' Labour welfare is nothing but the maintenance function of personnel in the sense that it is directed specifically to the preservation of employee health and attitudes. In other words, it contributes to the maintenance of employee morale. The welfare services in an industry is to improve the living and working conditions of workers and their families because the workers well-being cannot be achieved in isolation of his family Labour welfare, though it has been proved to contribute to efficiency in production, is expensive. Each employer depending on his priorities gives varying degrees of importance to labour welfare. It is because the government is not sure that all employers are progressive minded and will provide basic welfare measures that it introduces statutory legislation from time to time to bring about some measure of uniformity in the basic amenities available to industrial workers. "Obviously, there is some creation and

stimulation in the maintenance function just as there is some maintenance in all other operative personnel functions. But the primary emphasis in employee service programme has been on maintaining an employee's favorable attitude towards his work and work environment".

Objectives of Labour Welfare

There could be multiple objectives in having a labour welfare programme The concern for improving the lot of the workers, a philosophy of humanitarianism or what is now termed as internal social responsibility, a feeling of concern, a caring by providing some of life's basic amenities, besides the basic pay packet. Such caring is supposed to build a sense of loyalty on the part of the employee towards the organization. The humanitarianism approach has given way to a more practical utilitarian approach. The utilitarian approach views investment in welfare through an economic framework where the possible cost benefit to the organization gains greater concern through improved or quicker services from the employees. "The welfare package by taking care of the basics of living, frees the

worker to devote his time and attention to the organizational task and thus enhance efficiency and output. An attractive package, which provides benefits throughout the course of an employee's career, serves to attract and retain the better workers and simultaneously enhance their morale. The organization is also eligible to certain tax incisions by spending on employee welfare".

Approaches to Labour Welfare

Welfare 1s a dynamic concept and so it needs to be constantly adapted to the changing circumstances. This is a truism in the industrial system as well. For example the first approach was the paternalistic approach. This approach to labour welfare can be traced back to the beginning of the modem industrial system when there was hardly any difference between management and ownership and the owners got first hand information of the living and working conditions of workers. Some of them, motivated by philanthropic, humanitarian and religious considerations, did much to improve the lot of the working masses. Though considerable amount of the so called welfare work was done during the post first world war period; (mainly as a product of the stresses and strains of the war) it was insufficient to result in promoting welfare as is clear from the following observation of the British Trade Union

congress Delegation (1927-28). "We became convinced that under the cover of paternalism and benevolence, many unjust conditions of work obtained and that was not really much, if anything, to be said in favour of employees parsing welfare work as against others who do not Our general conclusion on welfare work as at present carried on is that it is a delusion and a snare."

The latest approach to labour welfare is to conceive it as an integral part of the programme of general welfare. This approach, being a social approach is neither philanthropic nor with any ulterior motive. It is so designed as an end in itself, to serve as an instrument of socio-economic policy. The objective of labour welfare scheme has at last aims "it serves man, to alleviate the burdens of his struggle for existence and to reduce the hardships of life"

Principles of Labour Welfare

Labour welfare is not a substitute for low wages and other allowances, nor can it be used as an argument against raising the earnings of workers. A failure to understand the basic principle will

only make labour welfare measures unpopular.

The cardinal principle of labour welfare programmes is to ensure that it serves the real needs of workers concerned. Special classes of workers require special type of welfare services. Proper assessment of needs of the workers and determination of priorities, thereof, must be done. Workers should be asked to participate in the formulation and administration of welfare programmes. This is necessary because the programmes are meant for them and their participation ensures that the welfare measures correspond to their needs. It also removes the suspicion of workers and the stigma of paternalism. Workers should be free to use or not to use the facilities and inanities provided Any compulsions or pressure is encroachment upon workers' night to have as they please and they will resent it. The cost of welfare schemes must be well estimated and its financing must be established n a sound basis. Ill-conceived welfare scheme without adequate consideration of its financing will mean either its failure or Consequent financial strain to the management. It will also unnecessarily

cause threat to industrial harmony since a service introduced once is difficult to be abandoned by

the management.

Classification of Labour Welfare Work

The classification of labour welfare is based on dividing industrial welfare measures into three categories.

- 1. Statutory
- 2. Voluntary
- 3. Mutual

Statutory welfare is the product of the coercive power of the government. Statutory stipulations compel employers to implement welfare scheme. The government enacts rules in regard to labour welfare in order to enforce the minimum standard of health and safety of the workers. Employers have to observe the rules relating to working conditions, hours of work, hygiene, safety, light, ventilation, sanitation etc. Government have increased the statutory control of labour welfare. Voluntary welfare includes all those activities which employers undertake for their workers on a voluntary basis. There are some social organizations, which also undertake voluntary welfare work. Mutual welfare is undertaken by the workers themselves. Some trade unions also undertake the responsibility of workers welfare. Labour welfare is also classified under intra-mural activities, and extra-mural activities. The former include services provided inside the factory premises, and the latter include services and amenities outside the factory.

Conclusion:

It may be concluded that that the social security is a part of labour welfare, labour walfare secures the workers and his family the fullest life in the comprehensive sense of the term. The concept of labour welfare, has cleared to us that the efficiency of a labour, could increase by welfare measure voluntarily contributed by employers and it could be the driving force for higher productivity and profitability, in an organization.