

Emerging Trends in Industrial Relations in State Level Public Enterprises

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The article is an empirical verification of several factors closely associated with industrial disputes scene in Kerala. Each of the nine industrial sectors was included in the study to analyze the causes of the disputes, political affiliation of the workers, different forms of the workers' participation in management and grievance redressal arrangements. Two important issues namely why in general workers prefer multiplicity of unions and outside leadership have been adequately addressed. One Important factor for the successful running of labour management participation schemes like works committees, canteen committees etc. is attributed to the attitude of the management and the article establishes that in a conclusive manner.

I Introduction

In the post-reform India, Industrial relation, owing to the changing pattern of industrial techniques, markets and ideological values, has assumed a complex character. Industrial relation in the public sector is also becoming more complex owing to changes in industrial policy, fiscal policy and trade policy. The public sector firms can cope with the new environment only if harmonious and cooperative industrial relations exist. The workers are the dominant partners in the industrial undertakings and without their co-operation and good work, discipline, integrity and character, the industry will not be able to yield effective results. A study on the emerging trends in industrial relations in state level public enterprises is necessary to answer whether or not the industrial relations climate is congenial to the development of these organisations and whether these undertakings face labour related problems unique to them.

Kerala state leads other states in the number of state level public enterprises in a single state. Hence a study on the emerging trends in industrial relations in these enterprises could throw light on the ability of public sector enterprises to create peaceful labour-management relations. For this purpose, primary data were collected from the sample workers, trade union leaders and managerial personnel with the help of interview schedules.

II Objectives and Methodology

The study raises four questions:

1. What are the dispute forms and their causes?
2. How do workers, trade union leaders and managerial personnel get involved in industrial disputes?
3. What are the nature and extent of workers' participation in management?
4. What are the procedures for the settlement of grievances?

There were 65 manufacturing units in the state level public enterprises in Kerala as on 31.3.2004. These units were classified as belonging to nine industrial sectors, such as, electronics, chemical industries, plantation and agro-based units, engineering, traditional

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