

CHAPTER - I : INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT :

1. Introduction
2. Emergence of Welfare Officer
3. Impact of Social Work
4. Training Welfare Officers
5. Qualifications :
 - a) Minimum qualification
 - b) Language Knowledge
 - c) Recruitment
 - d) Filling up of vacancy
6. Duties
7. Conditions of Service
8. Professional Organizations
9. Protected Welfare Officer
10. Discharge or Dismissal
11. Neutral Positions of Welfare Officer
12. Three fold combination of Duties
13. Controversy
14. Seperation of Functions Suggested
15. Trends :
 - a) Industrial Social Services
 - b) Industrial Social Work
16. Concluding

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

1) INTRODUCTION :

The position of Labour Welfare Officer in Indian Industry is one of the most controversial of subjects in the areas of Welfare of Industrial Relation and personnel management¹. In past the entrepreneur was carrying all posts like director, labour officer, accountant, cashier etc., etc., managing by himself and perhaps by the help of a few assistants. As industry developed into complex system of large scale production reaching the World markets, the early owner or manager couldnot alone attend to the growing and multiplying functions of industry. Moreover, legislative regulations and also advances in social sciences emphasised the need to appoint specialists to deal with all the complex and delicate human problems arising from day to day in industries. Sociology, Psychology, law and allied subjects gradually moderated the excesses of purely engineering bias and outlook in planning for production. Even purely economic emphasis has been greatly controlled by psychology and sociology in industry.

1. Moorthy; M.V.: - Principles of Labour Welfare : p.159

- 2 -

Thus industrialists in the West gradually recognized social engineering as an important factor. They appointed personnel officers who could bring to bear on human problems in industry, a sociological and psychological approach. Some industries in the U.S.A. - notably, employ their own Psychologists in addition to Economists. Yet others have their own staff, consellers and even social workers. Equal importance in industries is now given to humanities and to social research as well as to other sciences.

2) EMERGENCE OF WELFARE OFFICER :

The emergence of the labour and welfare officer in the industry is a similar story in India². In the 1850's when modern factory system was introduced into India, the management had to face keen foreign competition. Moreover the factory system of production mechanized on a large scale was entirely new to employers as well as to labour. Lack of technical know-how combined with indifference to human element, naturally resulted in low wages, poor working and living conditions, in accidents and universal discontent amongst labour. Labour slowly emerged as a unionised pressure group. The then British Government due to pressure from England, as well as on its account and also on account of protests from unions, passed some legislation compelling

2) Report of Royal Commission on Labour in India :
(Chairman : Whetly, John Henry) p.11

- 3 -

management to pay more attention to the human element in industry. Slowly and steadily more and more legislations in various fields of work life were passed, enlarging the responsibilities of the employers towards their workers and making working conditions for workers safer and more convenient.

Inspectorates were appointed to periodically supervise what was required of the management with regard to safe and convenient conditions of work and other such matters were properly observed and attended to. Still employers largely tried to shirk responsibilities. Labour, on the other hand, became more and more united and conscious of its rights. This awakening was assisted by the wave of nationalism surging through the country, particularly after the war of 1914. Discontent was becoming universal. The Inspectorate was inadequate and legislation too was found to be no cure for the ills of labour. In 1929 the "Royal Commission on Labour was appointed, this commission was headed by Lord J. H. Whitley."

The commission investigated intensively and extensively and made several very relevant, constructive and far reaching recommendations in the fields of working and living conditions and labour management relations amongst many others. Of these recommendations of the Royal Commission on labour the one touching the usefulness and

- 4 -

the need to extend welfare amenities is important.

This doesnot mean that there were no welfare officers in Indian Industries before the recommendations of the Royal Commission on labour. Along with the technological knowledge, knowledge about human technology also grew in India, but at a much slower pace than in the West. It is acknowledged in the West also, material technology has always far out-stripped human technology. It is a problem in cultural history that human engineering is lagging behind material engineering.

As in the West, industrial organizations in India, too became complex systems affecting and involving community life. Industry touched society in its various phases of life. i.e. economic, political, legal, cultural, hygienic etc. etc., Also as in the West, the development of social sciences had its impact on industrial management, forcing or helping such management, to revise their ideas, broaden their outlook and humanize their policies in regard to labour matters. This doesnot mean that such was the universal trend; but some progressive employers were influenced by these factors. Also, legislation imposed obligations on managements. Workers became increasingly unionised and hence required to be dealt with collectively. All these forces necessitated the appointment of an officer who knew some law, some social sciences and some public

..5

- 5 -

relations^{3*}. Thus progressive industrial organizations appointed Labour Officers. Wherever welfare works of a statutory and non-statutory nature were introduced the labour officer generally functioned also as a welfare officer. The early Labour Officer could be designated as a sort of replica of the personnel officer in Western Industries.

The Labour Officer was mainly concerned with general recruitment, discipline maintenance, grievance settlements, industrial relations and welfare services. He had an office of his own and was provided with a small staff to assist him. In companies where any considerable welfare work was done, the work was entrusted to welfare Supriintendents. Thus even before the Royal Commission on labour made recommendations for the appointment of Labour Welfare officers, the functions of the welfare officer were to some extent, combined with the functions of the Labour officer, who was really a Personnel Officer.

3) IMPACT OF SOCIAL WORK :

Due to development of social sciences, suggestions and facilitations the appointment of Labour and Welfare officers in every industry wherein 500 or more workers are ordinarily employed came into existence.

3)* Report of Labour Investigation Committee
(Chairman - Rege, D.V.) p18

- 6 -

No discipline has so much contributed to enhance the prestige and value of Labour and Welfare officer as the discipline of social work. The concept and practice of social work as framing the equipment of a profession was new to India. In 1936 the Dorab Tata trust, Bombay started a post graduate school for training of social workers. Dr. J.M. Kumarappa - the second Director of the school saw the need to introduce and practise techniques of social work consistently and steadily in our industries. He observed the workers were poor and worked in masses under difficult working conditions. The workers also lived crowded in dismal slums under sub-human conditions⁴. So Dr. Kumarappa felt the need to train Labour and Welfare officers along modern lines, so that these could function effectively in industrial organisations as well as in labour communities. The school itself was organised to train social workers to function in general as well as in particular fields such as labour welfare, Family welfare, Child care, delinquents, disabled groups etc. etc.

In the institute (now known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences) a carefully planned training programme for Labour and Welfare officers was gradually developed.⁵

4) Giri, (Dr.) V.V. : "Labour Problems in India". p.538

5) Moorthy, M.V. : Principles of Labour Welfare. p.163

- 7 -

As graduates got trained they had to be placed in suitable positions of employment. Alongside with the training programme, Dr. Kumarappa, embarked on a consistent, constant and convincing drive for employing only trained persons as welfare officers. This was done both at the Government level and at the level of private industrial organisations. In fairness to Dr. Kumarappa we have to record that the zeal he showed in this regard was due both to his desire to promote the interest of his own students equally with the interests of the poor working classes. Further he felt that properly trained personnel in industries would promote better industrial relations. If any untrained people were already working as Labour and Welfare officers, it was proposed to provide a short term advanced training for them. Running through all these developments was the idea of introducing Social Work and Social Sciences in industries. The efforts of Dr. Kumarappa succeeded to some extent when the Factories Act of 1948 statutorily required factories employing 500 or more workers to appoint Labour Welfare Officers.

4) TRAINING WELFARE OFFICERS :

The concept and techniques of social work entered work places and industries, they also spread into the community life of the workers. Qualified personnel were appointed to initiate and organise welfare work in factories,

..8

- 8 -

similarly qualified personnel were appointed in the community centers. This intensified the need for a greater number of social workers. To meet the increasing demand for trained personnel for welfare work in factories as well as in communities, schools of social work were instituted in Delhi, in Madras, in Bangalore, in Baroda, Udaipur, Waltair, Varanasi and in other places. Institutes like the "Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management, Calcutta" and the "Bombay Labour Institute, Bombay" were started exclusively for the training of Labour or Personnel and welfare officers. The others gave generic courses in Welfare, also including a training programme for personnel and welfare officers. Some of these were independent institutes, while some were sections or departments of universities. Institutes of Business Management were also started with foreign collaboration. Specialized training institutes for Management studies also came into existence, notably in Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Bombay; periodical personnel training programmes, conferences and seminars at which papers were read and problems were discussed and experiences exchanged were conducted⁶.

6) Personnel Management in India : Practical Approach to Human Relations - Indian Institute of Personnel Management; p.77

- 9 -

The above developments are described as one will come to know the impact of social sciences particularly of social work on the art and science of management, on business administration and particularly on Labour Welfare. It is true that the Factories Act provision making the appointment of Welfare Officers obligatory on industries has also given a stimulus to the training programme offered by several institutes in this regard. Management have also accepted the need for such training for such personnel.

These training programme include courses in social Economics, Sociology, Techniques of Social Work, Social Research, Labour legislation, Industrial Relations and Personnel Management. It is assumed that a graduate going through the discipline of this training will acquire the intellectual knowledge, emotional balance and human yet scientific approach required for comprehending and handling the manifold, complex and delicate problems which arise in factories and industrial undertakings.

The rules made under the Factories Act require that the Labour Welfare officer to be eligible for the job should be a graduate in any of the social sciences. Though the Factories Act makes statutory provision for the appointment of Labour Welfare Officers, it has left it to the discretion of State Government to frame their own rules

- 10 -

as regards qualifications and procedures for employment of Labour Welfare Officers. Though there is no strict uniformity in the qualifications required for the Labour Welfare officer, the rules generally agree that the officer should possess a degree in social sciences. Now Social Sciences are assumed to include, Psychology, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology, History and also social work. Law could also be treated as a social science.

State Governments like Maharashtra also add in the rules that, "an applicant for a Labour Welfare officers post should also have studied as one of his subjects Industrial Relations and Personnel Management". Some other states add that, "a degree or diploma in social work is a preferential qualification - assuming that the candidate will have taken Labour Welfare and Industrial Relations in his Social Work studies".

The occupier of every factory with 500 or more workers is obliged to employ the prescribed number of Welfare Officers⁷. The State Government is authorised to prescribe the duties, qualifications and conditions of service of such officers⁸.

7) The Factories Act - Section - 49(i)

8) Ibid - Section - 49(2)

- 11 -

The Welfare Officer (Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules 1952 have been framed by the Bombay Government in exercise of this power⁹.

9) Welfare officer (Recruitment & C) Rules 1952 :
These Rules provide, inter alia : Number : In a Factory wherein 500 or more workers are ordinarily employed, at least a Welfare Officer must be appointed. The following schedule shows the number of Assistant and/or Additional Welfare Officers required to be appointed to assist the Welfare Officer, where the number of workers is in excess of 2500.

Where the number of workers exceed	But doesnot exceed	Number of Assistant or Additional Welfare Officer
2500	3500	One Assistant Welfare Officer.
3500	4500	One Additional Welfare Officer.
4500	6500	One Additional & one Assistant Welfare Officer.
6500	8500	Two Additional Welfare Officers.
8500	10500	Two Additional Welfare Officers & one Assitant Welfare Officer.
10500	-	Three Additional Welfare Officers.

..12

- 12 -

5) QUALIFICATIONS :

In order to to be eligible for appointment as a Welfare Officer, a person must¹⁰ :-

- a) Obtain a degree or diploma recognised by the State Government in this behalf; and
- b) have adequate knowledge of Hindi or Of the language spoken by the majority of the workers in factory to which he is to be attached (Rule 4)

A person holding a degree of a University recognized by the State Government in this behalf is to receive preference over other candidates possessing the aforesaid qualifications. However the State Government may, subject to such conditions as it may specify, relax all or any of the aforesaid qualifications in the case of a person performing the duties of or similar to these prescribed for a Welfare Officer in Rule 7 of Welfare Officers (R & C) Rules (Rule 4)

10) Kothari, (Dr.) G.M. : A Study of Industrial Law :

p.p. 53-55

- 13 -

c) RECRUITMENT :

All posts of Welfare Officers must be advertised in atleast two newspapers having circulation in the region in which the factory is situated and one of them must be an English paper. A candidate from amongst those applying for the post must be selected by a committee appointed by the occupier of the factory. Such appointment must be notified by the occupier of the factory either to the State Government or to the Chief Inspector of Factories, detailing the qualifications of the officer appointed and the conditions of his service. A list of approved candidates with prescribed qualifications shall also be mentioned by the Labour Commissioner for Appointment as Welfare Officers. Such list will be open for inspection to any occupier of the factory (Rule 5).

d) FILLING UP OF VACANCY :

A vacancy caused by the death, dismissal, discharge or resignation of a Welfare Officer or for any other reason, shall be filled in within 3 months of the arising of the vacancy (Rule 5A).

- 14 -

6) DUTIES :

The usual Duties of a Welfare Officer¹¹ are :-

(We may take as our model the rules framed in this regard by the Maharashtra Government)**

- 1) To establish contacts and hold consultations with a view to maintaining harmonious relations between the factory management and the workers.
- 2) To bring to the notice of the management the grievances of workers, individual as well as collective, with a view to securing their expeditious redress.
- 3) To study and understand the point of view of labour in order to help the factory management to shape and formulate labour policies and interpret these policies to the workers in a language they can understand.
- 4) To watch industrial relations with a view to using his influence to prevent industrial disputes arising between the factory management & workers ; and in the event of a dispute having arisen, to help to bring about a settlement by persuasive efforts.

11) See Maharashtra Rules, Ibid :-

** : Moorthy; M.V : Principles of Labour Welfare, p.p.168-69

- 15 -

- 5) To advise workers against going on illegal strikes and the management against declaring illegal lockouts, and to help in preventing antisocial activities.
- 6) To maintain an impartial attitude during legal strikes, lockouts and help to bring about a peaceful settlement.
- 7) To advice and assist the factory management in the fulfillment of obligations, statutory or otherwise, concerning the application of provisions of the Factories Act 1948 and the rules made thereunder and to establish liasion with the factory Inspector and the medical service concerning medical examinations of the employees, health records, supervision of hazardous jobs, sick visiting and convalescence, accident prevention and supervision of the safety committees, systematic plant inspection, safety education, investigation of accidents, matornity benefits and workmen's compensation.
- 8) To promote relations between factory management and workers which will ensure productive efficiency as well as amelioration in the working conditions, and to help the workers to adjust and to adopt themselves to their working environments.

..16

- 16 -

- 9) To encourage the formation of works and joint production committees, co-operative societies and safety first and welfare committees and superwise their work.
- 10) To advise and assist factory management in the provision of amenities, such as canteens, shelters for rest, creches, adequate latrine facilities, drinking water, sickness and benevolent scheme payments, pension and superannuation funds and gratuity payments.
- 11) To help the factory management in regulating the grant of leave with wages and explain to the workers the provisions relating to leave with wages and other leave privileges and to guide the workers in the matter of submission of application for grant of leave for regulating authorised absence.
- 12) To advise and assist factory management in providing welfare facilities such as housing facilities, food stuffs, social and recreational facilities, sanitation, education of children and advise on individual personal problems.
- 13) To advise the factory management on questions relating to training of new starters, apprentices,

..17

- 17 -

workers on transfer and promotion, instructors and supervisors, supervision and control of notice board and information bulletins, to further education of workers and to encourage their attendance at technical institutes.

14) To suggest measures which will serve to raise the standard of living of workers and in general promote their well-being.

15) To bring to the notice of the workers their rights and liabilities under the standing order of the factory and other rules which grant rights to and define the duties of workers or which are directed to the discipline, safety and protection of workers and the factory.

7) CONDITIONS OF SERVICE :

The Welfare Officer and Additional Welfare Officer must be given status corresponding to the status of other departmental heads serving under the chief head of the factory.¹²

12) Ibid : r : 6(1) : The Assistant Welfare Officer is required to be given a status corresponding to the status of other Assistants to the Departmental Heads in the factory.

The conditions of the service of a Welfare Officer, Additional Welfare officer shall respectively be the same as of other members of the staff of corresponding status in the factory.

..18

- 18 -

8) PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS :

The principal professional organisation to which a large number of Labour Welfare Officers subscribe are the, "Indian Institute of Personnel Management, Calcutta," "National Labour Management Institute, Bombay" and "All India Conference of Labour and Welfare Officers, Bombay". The Indian Institute of Personnel Management is the oldest, biggest and the most active of 3 bodies. In order to become the member of these organisations, an applicant must be employed as a Labour Welfare Officer in an undertaking. No educational or professional training conditions are called for. The Indian Institute of Personnel Management is discussing the need of laying down educational and training qualifications as eligibility condition of membership. This organisation has branches all over the country. Besides an annual conference, its central office and the branches organizes lectures, seminars and symposia at regular intervals for members. It brings out a quarterly journal "Industrial Relations". The National Labour Management Institute holds an annual conference. All India conference of Labour and Welfare Officers used to hold annual meetings, but the same appear to have been since discontinued. More recently, all professional bodies to which a Labour Welfare Officer subscribe concentrate more on personnel management in general and Welfare function receive very little attention. The

..19

- 19 -

procedure and methods of promoting the service conditions of members alongwith improving the standards of professional service are yet to be crystallize. Public relations work for the profession needs to be done on scientific basis. There is hardly any communication between these professional bodies and the training institutes. Very recently, the Association of schools of Social Work has taken initiative in this matter and efforts are being made to make a beginning by bringing leading personnel managers, labour welfare officers and teachers in Labour Welfare and personnel management to a meeting.

9) PROTECTED WELFARE OFFICER :

The duties of the Labour Welfare officer listed by the Maharashtra State Government could be taken as typical and these duties are alongwith the lines indicated by the Central Government. The Welfare Officer is required to be given appropriate status corresponding to the status of other departmental heads serving under the chief head of the factory. His conditions of service, it is stated, should be the same as of other members of the staff of corresponding status in the factory.

The Labour Welfare officer cannot be redily dismissed or discharged by the employer. But when a dismissal or discharge becomes necessary the employer is required to explain the Commissioner of Labour of the grounds of the

..20

- 20 -

proposed action; and the Commissioner after making such enquiry as he deems fit will advise the employer on the proposed action.

The question will naturally arise why the rules under the Act contemplate a situation wherein the Labour Welfare Officer is exposed to the risk of his being discharged or dismissed by his employer? Granting that such circumstances could arise, still many other questions could be put: why amongst all other heads of the departments in the factory, the Labour Welfare officer should be favoured or singled out for such protection as is mentioned above? Can this protection be effective and conducive to his dignity and status in the factory generally and in the eyes of his colleagues in other departments? How will the employer take to a Labour Welfare Officer, who is legally protected and whom the employer is not free to discharge or dismiss when he is convinced of the need to take such a step? Suppose a Labour Welfare Officer deserves his services to be terminated, according to employer the reasons are properly stated and sent to Commissioner of Labour. It is possible that due to honest difference of opinion the "Commissioner" does not approve of the action of the management. This will create a very curious situation of the persons i.e. employer and Labour Welfare officer who dislike each other, but are forced to work together. The tenseness of the context is further enhanced by the fact that the employer pays for the

..21

- 21 -

services of the unwanted officer whom he hates or dislikes. What employer can look with equanimity on his own position where his money is spent on the work of a person whose very presence is distasteful to him? Its easy to imagine that such a manager will continuously find fault with the Welfare officer perpetually raising grounds for his dismissal. Neither can such protected Welfare Officer spend peaceful days in the factory. His position is not only, "too deep for tears, but too ludicrous for laughter."

10) DISCHARGE OR DISMISSAL :

Where it is proposed to discharge or dismiss a Welfare Officer, Additional Welfare Officer or Assistant Welfare officer, the employer must place before the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay, prior to taking such action, the nature of the proposed action and grounds therefor. The Commissioner is empowered to advise the employer on the proposed action after making such enquiry as he deems fit¹³.

11) NEUTRAL POSITION OF WELFARE OFFICER :

One can notice that the list of duties mentioned a quite impressive as well as comprehensive. The duties abound in such cautious phrases, "hold consultation, bring to the notice of the factory management, study and understand, watch industrial relations, advise workers and management, maintain an impartial attitude, help workers to adjust to

- 22 -

working environments, encourage formation of committees bring to the notice of the workers their rights and duties" etc. etc.

These phrases clearly indicates that the welfare officer has very limited executive functions. His role is to advise, counsel, suggest, watch, study, interpret, bring to the notice, but never to take sides. His position is "neutral". While the position of all other heads is "committed" in one way or other in several contexts of work and production, the Labour Welfare Officer definitely belongs to the category of service personnel. While most of his duties are recommendatory, it depends upon the management what measure of initiative, resources and authority they give him. The duties suggested by the rules appear to endow the Labour Welfare officer with no authority whatsoever authority understood in the sense of taking decisions involving action. He can perhaps assist the executive officer in taking decisions. But nowhere is it indicated how? In what respect? To what extent? he can influence such decisions.

For instance : In case of an act of indiscipline by a worker, can he according to the duties listed, recommend a course of action say dismissal? If he does the union could accuse him of taking sides and being partizan, while he is expected to be neutral. On the hand,

..23

- 23 -

if he recommends a mere warning in cases where management want to dismiss a worker, the management may look on him as a union man in disguise. The poor Labour Welfare Officer is expected to please and satisfy, and to promote harmonious relations between Labour and management in the factory. Harmonious relations depend upon efficient work and adequate wages, proper grievance settlement machinery, human approach on the part both of union officials and workers on the one hand, and of management and of supervisory personnel on the other. Harmonious relations is a balance of human relations resulting from give and take policies, it needs tolerance, equable temper, if not charity at least a liberal outlook. "Peaceful industrial relations depend on thousand forces and the Act says nothing, when it says that the Labour Welfare Officer should promote peaceful industrial relations".

Moreover the Labour Welfare Officer is a paid employee in the service of the management. Psychologically the employer, who is superior in position and powerful too, cannot easily welcome and accept "advice" from the welfare officer. Another factor which makes the position of the Welfare Officer difficult is the fact that the employers have not yet unreservedly accepted Labour Welfare as a function of management. At least there is a feeling amongst them that too much is required of them in the field of welfare and that welfare is misused by the workers;

..24

- 24 -

There is same argument in this position of the employers, our workers are mostly drawn from rural areas, they have been poor and largely ignorant and illiterate, perhaps they lack initiative and co-operative spriti. For several reasons they donot respond satisfactorily by participating in welfare activities. Thus the employer rightly feels that much of welfare work doesnot produce results. Hence he may be feeling that its superfluous waste of resources which can be profitable invested elsewhere.

In Western countries, notably in U.S.A., the workers utilize welfare amenities properly. They possess leadership and initiative so much so that they are quite capable of managing their own welfare. In India we are in a period of transition. We are witnessing a change over from the old older to the new. In some fields this change over is rapid, in someother fields its slow, as we know human engineering in industry has not kept pace with technological engineering. Hence the experience of frustration and disappointment felt by the labour as well as by the management. As the nation progress in all walks of life the situation may improve.

...25

- 25 -

12) THREE FOLD COMBINATION OF DUTIES :

The duties of Labour Welfare Officer as given in the list could be classified under 3 heads - i) Labour Welfare, ii) Industrial Relations, iii) Personnel Management. The 3 categories of functions are closely related, but are here separated for analysis only :

i) Welfare	ii) Industrial Relations	iii) Personnel Management	iv) Labour Welfare Industrial Relations Personnel Management
7	1	11	8
10	2	13	9
12	4	15	3
14	5		
	6		

Note : Please refer the "Para Number (6)" Duties of Welfare Officer."

From the chart we can say that the Welfare Officer is not exclusively Labour Welfare Officer, but also somewhat of personnel officer an Industrial Relations Officer too. There is a grave defect in this position.

..26

- 26 -

The personnel officer as well as the Industrial Relations officer assuming that these officers exist are employers men, though they are expected to be faithful to the principles of their respective disciplines or sciences. But the Labour Welfare officer is expected to maintain a neutral position, and further, his job is protected to some extent, while those of Industrial Relations and Personnel Officer are not so protected. Thus one can understand that an unintelligent combination of personnel and Industrial Relations functions with the functions of the welfare officer with protected position and purely advisory duties, easily leads to making the job of the welfare officer controversial. The workers look upon him as a management man. The employer thinks he is not such, but wants him to be such. Thus the Labour Welfare Officer is pitifully plunged into the personnel vortex of conflicting duties.

It should also be stated here that, though the welfare functions assigned to the Welfare Officer are fairly comprehensive, though general, the industrial relations and personnel management functions assigned to him are of very limited extent. Thus recruitment, with its manifold duties of man-power estimation, testing, selection, work-assignment, do not figure in the duties listed. Similarly wage-payments and incentive plans, transfers, merit rating are also not stated. Again though some Industrial Relations functions are indicated, no

- 27 -

mention is made of duties arising out of contexts such as conciliation, adjudication and arbitration, nor is it clear that part of Labour Welfare officer - where he is the only officer - should play in collective bargaining process. Since his position is thus magnificiently vague, some management use him to represent them at conciliation, adjudication, arbitration and collective bargaining proceedings. This is another factor which identifies the Welfare Officer with the interests of the employer as against those of the employees. There are several instances where workers have unfortunately felt that the Welfare Officer worked against employee's interests and consequently have physically injured him and sometimes fatally. On the contrary, there are not wanting illustrations of employers getting rid of the Labour Welfare Officer on the plea that he has not working in the interests of the management, but only promoting Labour's interests.

13) CONTROVERSY :

Ever since its inception the institution of Labour Welfare officer has been a subject of controversy¹⁴. It has been argued that it is unrealistic to expect a Labour Welfare Officer to discharge his assigned duties properly.

14) Saxena, R.C. : Labour problems and Social Welfare, p.518

- 28 -

Since he is employed and paid by the company, its his own interest to stay on the right side of the employer. The only promotion that a Welfare Officer can expect is to become a Personnel Officer, which again is dependent on the employer. On the other hand, the very nature of his recruitment will make him appear as an employers man in the eyes of the union. In any case, he cannot avoid or escape the repurcussions of various management decisions. In short, a Labour Welfare officer will be what his employer wants to be, its therefore held that the legal base of the Welfare Officers job should be abolished.

Arguments in favour of retention of the legal basis of this function are also equally weighty. It has been held that the position of a Labour Welfare officer is very delicate and much depends upon the persnality and the skill of the functionary. Once a Welfare Officer is able to win the confidence of his employer, he can get many concessions for workers and can influence personnel and welfare policies of the company.

These points are made to emphasise the role of proper and adequate training for the job. There is need to improve upon existing training programmes. The welfare officer should form their professional associations to secure improvement in the standard of service and to develop professional ethics. The Government should not exempt

- 29 -

employers to have untrained persons in position of Labour Welfare officers. Finally the employers need to be educated to give a fair deal to the welfare officers and use them for the purpose for which they are supposed to have been employed.

14) SEPERATION OF FUNCTIONS SUGGESTED :

The Labour Welfare officer is saddled with too many duties. The duties assigned to him also fall in the spheres of industrial relations and personnel management. In the performances of his multifarious duties he is sometimes called upon to support managements cause and sometimes promote Labour's interests. The employers generally have not yet unreservedly accepted Labour Welfare as their responsibility to the extent that legislative provisions require of them. The "protection" granted to the Labour Welfare Officer places him in an awkward and unfavourable position vis. a vis the employer. He is required to be "neutral" in several important contexts. His functions are purely "advisory". These tend to make his role ineffective. How can the position of Labour Welfare officer be retrieved or improved?

It is clear that if he continues in his position as it is, he is little likely to make his contribution. The best proposal appears to be to split up and separate the functions of the Labour Welfare Officer of Industrial

..30

- 30 -

Relations officer and of the Personnel Officer. Its not harmful to combine the jobs of the Industrial Relations officer and Personnel Officers, when such combination is found convenient or desirable. But the functions of Labour Welfare officer should not be combined with the duties of any other functionary.

Welfare as well as promotion of Industrial relations are also personnel functions. The personnel officer should be in overall charge of welfare and industrial relations, in addition to any other personnel functions he may have to fulfil. Welfare and Industrial Relations thus become divisions of the personnel department. The personnel officer who is the chief, should be co-ordinating authority. He should let and lead the Welfare Officer to function fully and satisfactorily in the area of welfare without conflicting with or impinging on the domain of Industrial Relations officer. Nor will he be allowed to tread on the toes of the Personnel officer.

But whenever and wherever related and common duties will be discussed or performed, the 3 officers i.e. Personnel, the Welfare and the Industrial Relations officers will meet, exchange views and experiences, outline programmes, evolve policies and implement them, so as no conflict anywhere results. The "protection" given to the "Labour Welfare Officer" should be removed. The personnel officer should assume full responsibility for Welfare and Industrial

- 31 -

relations. The Welfare officer is accountable to the personnel officer. He will no longer be "neutral" person in his "committed and limited" role of "Welfare Officer". He is a management man taking care of the welfare programmees in the factory and if possible outside the workplace too. In his own sphere of welfare he should have executive powers. In conciliation, arbitration, adjudication, collective bargaining proceedings the Welfare officer will not appear and represent anyone. It's the Industrial Relations Officer or Personnel officer who will represent the management at such proceedings.

We are aware of that welfare is a total concept involving a desirable condition of existence of the worker in regard to his physical, emotional and mental health. A hundred factors combine and contribute to bring about such Welfare. The co-operation of all - particularly of the personnel, Industrial Relations and Welfare officer, is necessary to bring about such a completion. The training and qualifications of all the 3 officers will have to be more or less similar.

The job of the Welfare officer though lower in hierarchy the management structure, is yet not a closed one. It should open out stairs and provide stepping stones for the promotion in time into higher levels and duties in the hierarchy. Thus a Welfare officer could become in time a Personnel officer in the organisation he has served.

..32

- 32 -

If opportunity is not forthcoming in the organisation he has served, he could move out honourably into a different one. "Since he has gathered worthwhile experiences and given a good account of himself, he will be an asset to any industry."

15) TRENDS :

In conclusion, we should examine the possible course that the Labour Welfare officer is likely to take in future¹⁵. In the course of its historical development labour welfare has moved from a broad and general area to a narrow and specialized field. The personnel and administrative functions have already become the domain of personnel and labour officers. Labour Welfare practice, as it exists today, comprises of two broad components namely "industrial social service" and "industrial social work". With the increasing tempo of industrialization the work force employed in industry as well as the size and number of undertakings will increase. This will require labour services to be organized more extensively and efficiently. Management of a catering services, health programmes, workers education schemes, housing estates etc. required specialized skills.

15) Vaid, K.N. : Labour Management Relations in India,
p.p. 341-343

..33

- 33 -

Supervision of provident Fund, E.S.I. scheme, gratuity and pension required knowledge of complicated procedures of the schemes. Work with individuals with specific needs and/or problems, handling of complaints and grievances and attempts to improve human relations in the plant community. Further require more intensive training in skills and methods of social work.

The development of Labour Welfare in India owes a great deal to voluntary effort. Labour Welfare, still however leans heavily on the State support for its development. However its expected that the state action will increasingly become less compulsive, less directive and more promotional in nature. As productivity movement spreads and modern techniques of management acquire a great acceptance, it will no longer be necessary for the state to frame extensive instructions on cleanliness, drinking water, canteens, creches, restaurants etc.etc. The employers will undertake such activities in a routine way as a part of Management practices.. In due course of time, the two sets of functions in the field of Labour Welfare are likely to become more distinct. The contents of each of the two functions are likely to be the following :

..34

- 34 -

I) INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL SERVICES :

- a) Compliances of various provisions of basic Acts pertaining to health and welfare of workers, preparation of and submission of required reports, returns and statistical data.
- b) Management of health (industrial) Services like : first-aid, dispensary, ambulance and hospitalization.
- c) Management of company schools and workers education classes.
- d) Management of canteens and midday meals etc.
- e) Administration of housing estates and workers housing schemes etc.
- f) Promotion and management of recreational measures; sports, tournaments, welfare centres, cinema shows etc.
- g) Supervision of provident fund and E.S.I. scheme work and
- h) Administration of financial benefit schemes : loans, grants, etc. and co-operative societies.

..35

- 35 -

II) INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL WORK:

- a) Orientation and induction of new employees.
- b) Communicating company policies to workers individually and providing them with correct interpretation and community workers opinions and feelings to the management.
- c) Exit interviews.
- d) Care of young persons, women and workers nearing superannuation.
- e) helping workers in making use of the grievance procedure, joint committees and other tripartite agencies in the plant.
- f) helping workers for better adjustment to working hours, working conditions and work groups and to help management in evolving suitable working hours, working conditions and work groups.
- g) helping workers in their personal and family difficulties to act as a source of person to community services and become a liaison between the plant and community services, and
- h) doing all works that requires help mainly is Socia-psychological environment of the plant.

- 36 -

16) CONCLUDING :

The success of welfare schemes in our country depends as much as the manner in which they are administered and introduced to the workers as on the nature and quality of facilities offered^{16*}. The role played by welfare officers in this respect is of greatest importance and its becoming more widely recognised. The role of welfare officer is many sided and delicate and requires a good deal of expert knowledge and social understanding, he must be a good administrator and must deal with various problems of a technical character. Moreover, as he is often required to act "a go-between" for management and labour, he should have a good knowledge of psychology and ability to win the confidence of the workers.

A welfare officer possessing self-confidence, faith in his work, correct attitude, skill in working with individuals and groups, prudence, objectivity and genuine liking for people, will make himself a successful practitioner. A welfare officer once remarked, "I have six honest working men, they taught me all I know, their names are, what, where, when, how, why and who".

16)* Bhagoliwal, T.N. :- "Economics of Labour and Social Welfare". p.p. 586-587

- 37 -

A welfare officer in a factory or establishment must function as a technical specialist, as one who is well - equipped to perform skillfully the duties which his position entails. He has to possess a keen sense of leadership, reasoned judgement and human sympathy. He has to face the challenges boldly and tactfully by adopting himself to the situations that really arise in the practical world so as to perform his various functions in a right manner.

