

121

**REPORT ON
BOMBAY MOTOR TRANSPORT
WORKERS**

93

by

MADHUBHAI B. BUCH

*General Secretary,
Bombay State Transport Employees' Union, Nadiad
(Bombay State)*

ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

REPORT ON BOMBAY MOTOR TRANSPORT WORKERS

DURING the last five years, great changes have taken place in the matter of Road Transport throughout the length and breadth of India. All over the country Road Transport was formerly operated by private transport companies, many of which possessed not more than three or four buses each. Driver-proprietors operated a large proportion of Road Transport.

Since 1948, Government began to take over control and ownership of Road Transport. The Bombay Government began its State Transport Service in 1948 with thirty-six buses. Initially the service was run by Government itself. Later, a statutory corporation—The Bombay State Road Transport Corporation—was established. The State Transport Corporation Act was passed by the Central Government in 1950. But even so, in most States, Road Transport is run directly by a Transport Department of the State Government.

The position at present is as follows:

- (a) In Bengal, Government State Transport is operating,
- (b) Since April 1952, Government State Transport has been in operation in Assam.
- (c) Since January 1953, a Government transport service has started in Bihar.
- (d) Government Transport Services are now functioning in Punjab, Orissa, U.P., Hyderabad, Travancore, Mysore, Madras and Madhya Bharat.

Thus, with the elimination of small private bus operators, workers in all the States in India have been brought together either under State Government Transport Department or under Road Transport Corporations, established by Governments.

In Bombay, about 75% of passenger traffic is being handled by the State Transport Corporation. The Corporation has a capital of about Rs. 12 Crores of which Rs. 4 Crores have been raised through public loan. The Central Government and the Bombay State Government have contributed the rest in the ratio of 1 : 3.

Canadian aid of 5 million dollars has been made available to the Corporation through the Central Government.

GOODS TRAFFIC

The State Transport Corporation has started a branch for goods traffic also. At present, it has not obtained a monopoly in this field but is running in competition with private goods traffic companies.

WORKERS

On May 31, 1953, the total number of workers in State Transport throughout Bombay State was 4,767 Drivers, Conductors and Controllers; 4,333 Workshop Staff; 4,076 Administrative Staff, totalling 13,176 in all.

Since then more and more routes have been taken over by State Transport, goods traffic is also been undertaken. Today, including goods lorries, the total number of vehicles is 2,400 and total staff about 17,000.

CONDITION OF WORKERS

Drivers — There are about 2,000 drivers in the State Transport Service. The wages of the drivers are Rs. 50—3—80. The D.A. is Rs. 35 per month. Thus a new driver in State Transport gets Rs. 85 per month.

Allowances — If a driver is actually at the steering wheel for four hours or more he gets a line allowance of 12 as. per day. Practically 90% of the drivers on passenger traffic get this allowance. Moreover, if a driver is on "Night Out" duty he gets Re. 1 per night in those places where there is no watchman to guard the bus by night and 8 as. per night where a watchman takes charge of the bus by night.

Thus, normally, if he is not on "Night Out" duty, a driver gets Rs. 50|- pay; Rs. 35|- D.A.; Rs. 19|8|- Line Allowance which comes upto Rs. 104|8|-.

If his duty takes him out of his Depot for the night he gets Rs. 13|- more or, in a few cases, Rs. 26 more.

CONDUCTORS

The pay-scale of a conductor is Rs. 40—3—70. Like a driver he gets Rs. 35|- as D.A. and 12 as. per day as line allowance if his active duty exceeds 4 hours a day. He also gets night allowance on the same scales as a driver. At the start of his employment, the monthly earnings of a conductor are Rs. 40|- Pay; Rs. 35|- D.A.; Rs. 19|8|- Line Allowance (26 days at the rate of 12 as. per day), that is Rs. 94|8|- per month.

And Rs. 13/- (in few cases Rs. 26/-) per month as night allowances if his duty involves spending his night away from his Depot.

TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

The pay-scale of Traffic Controllers is Rs. 50—3—80 plus Rs. 35/- as D.A. per month, i.e. Rs. 85/- total earnings per month at the start of service. There are no allowances.

WORKSHOP STAFF

The lowest wages for Class IV employees, viz. Helpers, Washers, Cleaners etc. are Rs. 30 per month and Rs. 35/- D.A.

Fitters get Rs. 60—4—84 plus Rs. 45/- D.A. per month.

Mechanics get Rs. 75—5—100 plus Rs. 45/- per month as D.A.

Head Artisans get Rs. 100—6—130 plus Rs. 50/- as D.A.

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, is applicable to State Transport (Public Motor Transport).

The wages for workers fixed by the Committee under this Act are lower than what the workers get at present though even then these wages are not fair wages. The wages fixed under the Minimum Wages Act are:—

Skilled Rs. 95/- to Rs. 75/- (Rs. 95/- in Bombay. Rs. 75/- in villages): Drivers, Mechanics, Fitters, Turners, Electricians, Checkers, Supervisors, Tinsmiths, Batterymen, Vulcanisers, Carpenters, Blacksmiths, Welders, Painters.

Semi-Skilled Rs. 75/- to 55/- (Rs. 75/- in Bombay. Rs. 55/- in villages): Assistants or Junior Skilled Workers, Conductors, Machine-mates, Fitter-mates, Greasers, Oilers, Booking-Clerks, Hammermen.

Unskilled Rs. 60/- to Rs. 40/- (Rs. 60/- for Bombay. Rs. 40/- for villages): Helpers, Washers, Cleaners, Watchmen, Mazdoors, Sweepers, Peons, other miscellaneous workers.

HOURS OF WORK

The drivers and conductors are required to work for twelve hours spread-over duty. The Minimum Wages Rules prescribe eight hours continuous duty and a spread-over duty of ten and a half hours. But before the Minimum Wages Act was made applicable to State Transport, the rules were amended and the duty fixed was nine hours continuous duty with twelve hours spread-over. In workshops and garages as per the Factory Act, eight hours duty has been fixed.

PAYMENT OF WAGES ACT, 1936

This Act is applied to workshop staff only. The Act has not been made applicable to Traffic Staff.

The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1951, is applied to workshop staff. *No amenities have been given to workers as yet.*

WORKERS' DEMANDS

Recently the All-Gujarat State Transport Workers' Conference met at Baroda where the wages given in the Appendix were demanded.

RATIONALISATION IN THE STATE TRANSPORT SERVICE

Rationalisation in the State Transport Service is to be viewed from the angle from which the State Ministers regard nationalisation of transport.

Lala Jagat Narayan, Punjab Minister for Transport has said, "If the entire transport were nationalised they would be able to add a few crores of rupees to the State Exchequer". The Transport Minister of Bihar has said, "Nationalisation of transport was a paying proposition." The Mysore Government built a total reserve of Rs. 25,00,000 on investment of Rs. 36,90,437. The Orissa Government made 18% profit on its investment. The Punjab Government plies 270 buses on 300 routes and made a net profit of Rs. 12,00,000 in 1952-53. The Madras Government made a profit of 16% on the invested capital. The Travancore-Cochin State Transport Service is notorious for overloading buses. It made a profit of Rs. 17,64,430 during 1951-52.

Profit has been the main aim in many of the States in taking over public motor transport. To enhance profits, rationalisation has been the chief means resorted to. How was this rationalisation implemented?

The total number of passenger buses that previously operated in Bombay State was 3,500, with an average seating capacity of twenty per bus. The State Transport Service carries the entire present traffic which has increased considerably during the last six years, with a fleet of only 2,500 buses. This was made possible by increasing the seating capacity to thirty. Later, it was further increased to thirty-four and then to forty-two per bus. And now, a new "Janata Bus" has been introduced that has a seating capacity of sixty-five. And these are single deckers. From twenty passengers a bus, the number has gone to thirty, passengers a bus. The work of the conductor has increased

twofold. The load the driver has to manage is also increased.

Over and above the legal overloading of 25%, all State Transport buses are overloaded to the extent of 35 to 40%.

Thus has rationalisation been slowly but steadily introduced in State Transport in the course of three years.

Further rationalisation was achieved by cutting down the timings for trips and taking more trips per driver and conductor.

TRADE UNIONS ON THE STATE TRANSPORT SERVICE

The INTUC, AITUC, HMS—all the three central organisations have units in State Transport Service.

The INTUC has started divisional unions and formed a federation. The HMS have their Bombay State Transport Kamdar Sabha in some parts of Maharashtra. The AITUC unit, viz. the Bombay State Transport Employees' Union, is functioning in Kaira District, Baroda and has influence in Ahmedabad and Surat. Due to lack of co-operation and coordination, the Union's activities could not be spread over to Bombay and further south.

Though there is no provision under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, for the recognition of a trade union, the State Transport Corporation has recognised only the INTUC Union. Other organisations of workers are given step-motherly treatment and their leading workers always stand in danger of victimisation.

IMPORTANCE OF T.U. WORK ON ROAD TRANSPORT

Road Transport coming under State Governments has led to a tremendous concentration of road-transport workers under a single employer—the State. Considering that the Bombay State Transport system alone now employs a total staff of over 16,000 which will soon swell to 20,000, one can well imagine the total number of transport workers in India under State employment.

It is necessary that all functioning unions of road transport workers of all affiliations should unite soon in a central Federation.

Road Transport workers, through such a centralised federation and centralised action and leadership, must struggle to secure uniform conditions of work and service, wages and amenities, just as the Railway Transport Workers have done and the Air Transport Unions are doing.

Road Transport Unions must see to the ideological education of their members in the matter of their approach to the public, with whom they come in contact every minute. Our approach to the service must be such that the transport workers must be able to win the support of the people and unite with them in making the state employer give better and cheaper transport to the public and better wages and conditions to the workers, and protection of their rights and liberties.

APPENDIX

The convention of Gujarat State Transport Workers that met at Baroda, passed among other demands the following:

(a) There should be eight hours' duty for city service and 10-30 hours for "spread over duty".

(b) Drivers on road graders should be given six hours' duty and should be given heavy duty allowances.

(c) The following scales of pay should be introduced:

Drivers: 70—5—120

Conductors: 60—4—100

Controllers: 70—5—120

Clerks, Booking Clerks: 70—5—120

Helpers: 50—3—80

Sweepers, Peons: 40—3—70

Artisans (C): 40—4—60—5—80

" (B): 60—4—80—5—110

" (A): 75—5—100—6—130

Head Artisans: 100—6—130—8—170

The above pay should be for twenty-six days at eight hours a day.

(d) All employees should be given *one calendar day's leave* (not just 24 hours leave) after every forty-eight hours of duty.

(e) Free passes for travel should be given to employees as is being given to Railway Employees.

(f) All workers should be made permanent after two months of service. (Today workers are kept on a daily-wage basis even after three years of service and their services can be terminated without notice at any time.)

(g) Drivers on goods traffic are given work only when there is work. They are treated just like 'badli' workers in the textile industry. There is no steady, continuous employment. These drivers should be made permanent.

(h) House-rent allowance should be given to all employees so long as free quarters are not supplied.

(i) D.A. should be merged with pay when considering Provident Fund contributions.

(j) All those drivers who were in the service of private operators should be absorbed in the State Transport Service.

(k) Woollen uniforms and raincoats should be supplied to Traffic Staff and other workers who work in the open air.

(l) The Payment of Wages Act should be applied to Traffic Staff.

(m) Even after six years of existence, the State Transport has no certified standing orders. Standing orders should immediately be prepared, got certified and supplied to workers in the language they understand.

(n) Porter-cum-Watchmen should be paid the full wages of a watchman (Rs. 65/-) instead of Rs. 10/- per month as is being given to day.

ONE ANNA

Trade Union Publication Series No. 5

Printed by J. S. Bhatt at New Age Printing Press, 190-B, Khetwadi Main Road, Bombay 4, and published by G. V. Chitnis, for the Vishwa Prakashan Ltd., at All-India Trade Union Congress Office, Bombay 4