

UNIT-IV

TOPIC NAME- FUNCTIONS, ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF LABOUR WELFARE OFFICER

Labour Welfare – Qualifications and Functions of Labour Welfare Officer

A welfare officer to be appointed should possess- (i) a university degree; (ii) degree or diploma in social sciences, social work or social welfare from any recognised institution; and (iii) adequate knowledge of the language spoken by the majority of the workers in the area where the factories, mines and plantations are situated.

The National Commission on Labour has stated that, “laws were made to ensure that the managements appointed a person exclusively to look after the welfare of their workers and help them in discharging their statutory obligations in respect of welfare measures. Welfare Officers should form part of the administration in order to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Therefore, the eligibility of a Welfare Officer must be ensured before his appointment. The Welfare Officer should not be called upon to handle labour dispute on behalf of the management.”

The Committee on Labour Welfare, after going through the views expressed by the State Governments, public sector undertakings, private employers’ organisations, workers’ organisations and eminent persons in the field of relations and on the role and status of welfare officer, recommended that-

“The management should designate one of the existing officers to their personnel department as welfare officer to fulfill the purpose of the law. The management should ensure that only such officers of the personnel department are designated to look after the welfare activities as are properly qualified to hold these posts and have aptitude for welfare work.”

Functions of Labour Welfare Officers:

In actual practice, the welfare officer has been entrusted with the following functions:

(a) Supervision of:

- (i) Safety, health and welfare programmes; housing, recreation, and sanitation services;
- (ii) Looking after the working of the joint committee;
- (iii) Grant of leave with wages; and
- (iv) Redressal of workers’ grievances.

(b) Counselling Workers on:

- (i) Personal and family problems;
- (ii) Adjusting to work environment; and
- (iii) Understanding rights and privileges.

(c) Advising the Management on Matters of:

- (i) Formulating welfare policies;
- (ii) Apprenticeship training programmes;
- (iii) Meeting statutory obligations to workers;
- (iv) Developing fringe benefits; and
- (v) Workers' education and use of communication media.

(d) Establishing Liaison with Workers to:

- (i) Understand the various limitations under which they work;
- (ii) Appreciate the need of harmonious industrial relations in the plant;
- (iii) Interpret company policies to workers; and
- (iv) Persuade workers to come to a settlement in the event of a dispute.

(e) Establishing Liaison with the Management to:

- (i) Appreciate the workers' viewpoint on various matters;
- (ii) Intervene on behalf of the workers in matters under the consideration of the management;
- (iii) Help different department heads to meet their obligations;
- (iv) Maintain harmonious industrial relations in the plant; and
- (v) Suggest measures for the promotion of the general well-being of workers.

(f) Working with the Management and Workers to:

- (i) Maintain harmonious industrial relations in the plant;
- (ii) Arrange a prompt redressal of grievances and speedy settlement; and
- (iii) Improve the productivity and productive efficiency of the enterprise.

(g) Working with the Public to:

Secure a proper enforcement of the various provisions of the Acts as applicable to the plant by establishing contact with factory inspectors, medical officers and other inspectors;

- I. To help workers to make use of community services.

- II. It is obvious that the duties and functions entrusted to a Welfare Officer range from assisting the management in policy formulation and implementation to supervising welfare programme, establishing contacts with workers and the public, solving workers' problems and grievances.
- III. The National Commission on Labour has stated, "the care of workers in all matters affecting their well-being, both at the place of work and outside, puts a special responsibility on the welfare officer. He should be a 'maintenance engineer on human side.' In many cases, he also handles grievances and complaints of workers relating to terms and conditions of service and domestic and other matters which lie in the domain of personnel management. There is, thus, virtually, no demarcation between personnel management functions and welfare functions."
- IV. The Commission recommended that "in order to reduce the hierarchical hiatus in the status of these two officers, there should be an interchange to encourage professional functional mobility and to eliminate the functional monopoly as well the hierarchical status problems."
- V. A Welfare Officer in India is a "multi-purpose personnel officer." He is a mainly concerned with welfare of the staff with a role of staff adviser or specialist. He is expected to act as an adviser counsellor, mediator and a liaison-man between the management and labour, i.e., to act as a "maintenance engineer on the human side."

Role & Responsibility of Welfare Officer under Factory Act Rules

- to encourage provision of amenities such as canteens, shelters for rest, creches, adequate latrine facilities, drinking water, sickness and benevolent scheme payments, pension and superannuation funds, gratuity payments, granting of loans and legal advice to workers;
- 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;
- to advise on provision of welfare facilities, such as housing facilities, foodstuffs, social and recreational facilities, sanitation, advice on individual personnel problems and education of children;
- to bring to the notice of the factory management the grievances of workers, individual as well as collective, with a view of securing their expeditious redress and to act as a liaison officer between the management and labour;
- to establish contacts and hold consultations with a view to maintaining harmonious relations between the factory management and workers;
- to study and understand the point of view of labour in order to help the factory management to shape and formulate labour policies and to interpret these policies to the workers in a language they can understand;
- to watch industrial relations with a view of using his influence in the event of a dispute between the factory management and workers and to help to bring about a settlement by persuasive effort;
- to advise on fulfillment by the management and the concerned departments of the factory of obligations, statutory or otherwise, concerning regulation of working hours, maternity

benefit, medical care, compensation for injuries and sickness and other welfare and social benefit measures;

- to promote relations between the concerned departments of the factory and workers which will bring about productive efficiency as well as amelioration in the working conditions and to help workers to adjust and adapt themselves to these working environments;
- to encourage the formation of Works and Joint Production Committees, Cooperative Societies and Welfare Committee, and to supervise their work;
- to advise the factory management on questions relating to training of new starters, apprentices, 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.