

Untruths, half truths and blatant lies of FNTO

The 15th December, 2011 One day strike will be written in golden letters, in the history of telecom trade union movement of our country. The Non-Executives and Executives rose as one man to oppose the VRS and to safe guard the BSNL. But the FNTO betrayed this strike. They did not join the strike and vigorously campaigned against it. To cover up their betrayal, FNTO released an article on it's website, maligning the unions which organized the strike, especially the BSNLEU. At the time of the strike, we avoided a controversy by giving a reply to that article. But the same article, "A strike with Hidden Agenda", is published in the December'11 issue of the 'FNO News' also. Hence, clarifying certain issues has become necessary.

When the JAC convenor approached FNTO for joining the strike, they put only two conditions. One is that the date of the strike should be changed and the second is that some of the demands of the workers should also be included in the charter of demands. As far as the demands are concerned, all the important demands of BSNL workers are already there in the charter of demands. As far as their demand to defer the strike, the same was not accepted because the strike was already deferred twice. Further, they were told that, other unions / associations have already issued strike notice, giving 14 days' notice. Hence, FNTO can very well join the strike, by issuing a strike notice, even though 14 days are not there, and no legal problem was there. Still, FNTO did not join the strike.

The article says that VRS is the right of the workers. We can only laugh at such statements. The scheme proposed by BSNL management is not a VRS but a CRS. If it is a voluntary scheme, where the target of 'One lakh' has come from? Moreover, management has already created a panic among the workers, by curtailing facilities like medical allowance, LTC and Leave encashment. There is a veiled threat, that more facilities can be curtailed in future. It is in this back ground that BSNL is proposing the VRS. So the management is compelling the workers to take whatever is given and go home. Is it not a compulsory retirement scheme?

The article states that workers have no faith in the unions and are paying subscription only because of the fear physco of the 'BSNL Mafia'. It is true that workers have no faith on FNTO. This is well known from the results of the verifications held so far. But workers have real faith on BSNLEU. This is also proved from the results of the verifications. In the system of secret ballot, no worker will cast his vote to a union, out of fear. FNTO should understand this simple fact.

The article says that BSNLEU signed agreements against the interests of the workers and should have apologized to them. The workers have accepted that the wage revision agreement and promotion agreement signed by BSNLEU are the best possible agreements. BSNLEU continues to struggle to improve the condition of the workers. It is only FNTO that should apologise to workers for betraying the struggles that took place for wage revision and New Promotion Policy.

In the article, FNTO has exposed it's true colour, by making an anti-communist tirade. It has told that the retirement age is only 55 in the communist ruled states of Tripura, Kerala and Bengal. FNTO should have tried to know the facts, before telling blatant lies. In Bengal the retirement age of State Government employees is 60. The same is 58 in Tripura.

In Kerala, the retirement age is 55. At the same time the Left and Democratic Front which ruled Kerala during the last 5 years did not implement the 'Ban on recruitment' brought by the Congress ruled Central Government. Rather, it has filled up 1.75 lakh vacancies during its 5 year rule, including the creation of 35,000 new vacancies. This is a great achievement by the LDF government and still FNTO does not hesitate to attack that government. Need of the hour is that all unions / associations in BSNL should unite to defeat the anti-BSNL policies of the govt. Atleast hereafter FNTO should realize this and should come forward to join the united struggles.