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Sevagram*

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3.12. Disturbing developments

Two events deeply affected and touched the emotional chords of

NTI. The first was the untimely demise of Dr James O'Rourke in 1965. Dr O'Rourke joined NTI in October 1961 and was actively associated with the development of DTP in India. A pleasing and amiable personality, he donned the mantle of leadership of the WHO participation in NTI, from Mr Andersen in 1963. Till the day he died he worked for better deals for NTI under WHO and more effective functioning of DTCs. He died suddenly due to cardiac arrest. Dr D Savic took over from him as SMO. The second was a disturbing decision of a high powered, three member work study team under Mr TR Tiwari in September 1968. The work study team was instituted to review the functioning of NTI. Its recommendations on the technical functioning did not force major changes, but its administrative recommendations, especially with regard to cutting the staff strength of different technical cadres, had adverse consequences. The government which was eager on reducing costs did not comprehend the implications. There was also a ban on filling up posts falling vacant. Situated in the south, NTI

had no clout at all with Delhi. With proper persuasion, this could have been avoided. Retrenchment affected almost all technical sections. It was especially severe on EPS, transport and X-ray. Considering that promotions were non-existent in any cadre, the committee also recommended for a few promotional posts but these were too few.

There was also an additional problem. Recruitment rules for the technical cadres were ad-hoc and continued to be so. Perhaps when the NTI was established, the founders were in a hurry to start work and recruited the cadres on the basis of their earlier experience in TB work in UMTS or NDTC, as at that time qualified people were hard to get. The incumbents were chosen mostly on merit or experience and not on formal qualification required. This resulted in ad-hoc recruitment rules. As action was not initiated later to formalise or upgrade them to suit either job requirement or all India cadres, the staff continued to suffer despite excellent work in both research

and training.

In 1976, when the work study team's recommendations were implemented, neither the NTI nor the staff was satisfied. The NTI suffered additionally when posts of senior officers were also not filled up with the urgency warranted to fulfill the needs of the Institute. The staff discontentment rose with the result that the government had to send an expert committee headed by Mr Sharat Kumar to evaluate the situation and make suitable recommendations. But due to bureaucratic delays the committee's recommendations in upgrading the majority of technical posts were not implemented till 1986. When it was finally implemented, it again became a half-hearted affair. Only a few posts were created after abolishing some. Some posts could not be filled up because the recruitment rules continued to be ad-hoc. Many posts are still on temporary basis receiving annual renewal. This proved to be a major irritant resulting in loss of interest and commitment by the concerned staff in the coming years.