

Abstract

The research "Technical Problems of the Bilateral System of the State Railway of Thailand (SRT)" aims to explore the labour strikes of members of the State Railway Workers' Union of Thailand (SRUT) and the technical problems of the SRT's bilateral system that has led to the strikes. It is a literary review of issues including SRT's policy, technicalities and weaknesses of the SRT's bilateral system, attitude held by the administration and staff, outside interference, and ways to enhance proper bilateral system.

It was found from the study that the state has been keen to pursue privatization at the opposition of the SRT employees. A series of strike have been conducted, lately during 16-28 October 2009. Reportedly, the employees stopped to work claiming the derailment accident at Ban Khao Tao station, Suratthani which caused several casualties. After the accident, SRT set up an inquiry committee and at the committee's recommendations, several employees were fired or had their salaries cut whereas the executive officials were found not guilty. This has drawn out outcries from the employees and members of SRUT. They deem that the accident was attributed to major reasons including the poorly-maintained locomotive and equipment which could cause risks to the passengers. As a result, they have organized a strike bringing part of the services to a halt. Meanwhile, the administration explained that the broken parts of the locomotive would not compromise its safety and the employees were obliged to perform their duties. Reasons put out publicly by both parties reflect the deep down conflicts between the administration and SRUT.

SRT operates on a bilateral system as provided for by the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act B.E. 2543 (2000) including 1) the committee of relations affairs and 2) worker union. It was found that the committee of relations affairs had failed to hold a monthly meeting as required by Section 22 of the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act B.E. 2543 (2000). It shows how the meeting was not given any importance and the failure to act in compliance with legal requirements. SRUT has attempted to mobilize

support from general public and participated in political demonstration to pressurize the administration. They have been accused of working for their own vested interest, rather than public interest.

Both the administration and employees hold grudges against each other and see their chasms so entrenched. Many sudden and impromptu verbal attacks have been waged by both sides. It was found that interference from outside has been made by political groups and mass media. It is thus extremely important that SRT provides for proper bilateral system including encouraging the employees to participate in consultation and decision making process.

The researcher's recommendations to improve technical relations through the bilateral system of SRT include (1) the committee of relations affairs has to abide by the legal procedure and SRUT has to principally hold on to public interest, (2) the administration should encourage the employees to participate in consultation and decision making process, (3) should the strike be performed illegally, the administration has to pursue measures including the halt of remuneration during the unlawful strike, (4) SRUT should be careful not to have their move be used as political leverage and (5) all concerned parties should respect the rules and help to resolve technical problems of the SRT's bilateral system.