

Social Work in Industrial Sector

* *Ranjana Sehgal*

Introduction

We live in an industrial age. The machine-processed articles supply most of our daily necessities and have contributed enormously to the material wealth of the world. Today, the worker finds it possible to enjoy more leisure and comfort than many of his counterparts a century ago. Today, if the industrial society has placed at his disposal many comforts, it has also created a new threat to his economic, social and emotional security. The everchanging economic and technological conditions require workers to keep rethinking about their social situation, to go on making new adaptations, and to create a network of new relationships. For many people, job consumes most of their time. More than that, personal aspirations, interests, fears, joys, family and community problems are tied up with the job. Since workers give most of their working hours and productive ability to the jobs and are left with little time and energy for other matters, it is not only an ethical responsibility of the employers, but it is also very important from the production and efficiency point of view that conditions be created wherein the operatives could develop satisfying work relationships. The groups and individuals should be able to live and work together in greater harmony and with greater satisfaction to all concerned.

In recent years, the social work profession has extended its purview to include many new and exciting areas of

* *Dr. Ranjana Sehgal, ISSW, Indore*

practice. Though the service delivery differs in different settings, a common ideal, namely 'help', uniformly binds them all. One such field that is receiving increasing attention is social work practice in business and industry. Today, the business community in its bid to improve the overall functioning of its human resource is seriously examining and using some of the services that professional social workers can offer by virtue of their specialized training. The emerging field of social work in industry refers to the reciprocity of objectives of business and social work.

Concept

Even though social work in industry started nearly eighty years ago, it is still a relatively new concept. Though still in the process of growth, progress has clearly been made towards the clarification of the particular aspects arising from the integration of the industrial social work function with the overall organisational structure of an enterprise.

The inspiration for this new activity came from the European seminar on Personnel Social work held in Brussels in September 1960. The report of the seminar emphasized that the term 'personnel social work' was preferred to the term 'Industrial Social Work' because the scope of the profession extends beyond the industry. Various definitions and interpretations have been given to the term industrial social work. However, the field is still in the process of defining itself.

According to Saini (1975), industrial social work has come to be defined as a systematic way of helping individuals and groups towards a better adaptation to work situation.

For any discussion on the concept of industrial social work, one has to revert to the report of European

Seminar on Personnel Social Work that accepted the following definition.

'Personnel Social Work is a systematic way of helping individual and groups towards a better adaptation to the working situation. Social problems in an enterprise arise whenever an individual employee or a group and the work situation cannot adapt to each other.'

These days, the term occupational social work is being increasingly used in the West for the reason that the scope of social work can be extended to include all kinds and variety of occupations.

The latest interpretation goes as follows:

'Occupational social work can be broadly defined as a specialized field of social work practice, which addresses the human and social needs of the work community through a variety of interventions, which aim to foster optimal adaptation between individual and their environments. In this context, occupational social worker may address a wide range of individual and family needs, relationships within organisations and the broader issues of the relationship of the world of work to the community at large (NASW 1987).

From the definition, it is clear that no matter by what name we call it, social work, when applied to business and industry, is a utilization of social work knowledge, skills and values to bring about goodness of fit between man and his work environment.

According to the Dortmund report, social work in industry has a threefold aim, namely:

- a) to help any individual or group to adapt to the work situation and to meet the work requirements; it may here be pointed out that the problems arising for these individuals or groups may :

- 1) be caused by, or occur in the work environment;
 - 2) have unfavourable effects on the work situation, although not arising therefrom.
- b) to stimulate management to adapt the work situation to the social needs of the employees.
 - c) to assist the work “community” as a whole to function in a better way.

Historical Perspective

In Europe, scientific social work had its roots in the early 20th century. The Industrial Revolution, which first began in England, had transformed the pace and direction of the industrial production. Increasing use of machine power was far from being an unmixed blessing. The radical changes in the organisation and operation of industry ushered in by the Industrial Revolution were doubtlessly responsible for many of the economic and social problems that developed at that time with far reaching consequences.

Sensitive minded reformers soon perceived the incongruity of the rapid accumulation of wealth and the simultaneous decadence of human well-being and happiness among the masses. Some employers did act on a humanitarian impulse in response to the appalling conditions of the industrial workers. However, their concept of welfare was paternalistic.

The second phase of the industrial era in Europe falls in the period between the World Wars (1918-1939). It was a significant period in relation to employee's welfare. The phase was marked by increasing recognition of the human factor in industry, as was evident from the fact that the worker became a subject for studies in the industry.

A major breakthrough was achieved with the series of experiments conducted by the Hawthorne Works in Chicago from 1926 onwards. The experiments believed that if the employees were satisfied with their 'work situation', they were likely to reciprocate by being more productive. Consequently, the facilities relating to housing, work holidays, employment of apprentices, wages, etc. became increasingly important. To this was added the social legislation in the area of health and safety, industrial relations, works committees, social insurances, etc. Thus, in Europe, the concept of industrial social services began to be gradually integrated into the national social policy.

In the early 20th century, in addition to the changes in the political systems emphasising workers' welfare, the advances in social sciences, such as industrial psychology, industrial sociology, etc. added new dimensions to the understanding of the workers as a psycho-social entity rather than a mechanical robot.

In Britain, the concept of social work in industry has been virtually non-existent. It was only during the Industrial Welfare Movement between 1890-1913 that there was a brief spell of welfare activities undertaken by enlightened employers. The after-effects of the Industrial Revolution on the social conditions of industrial workers called for immediate action. Consequently, enlightened managements employed female welfare workers on their staff to look after the problems of the women and children working in the factory. The Quaker Firms of Rowntress and Cadbury's took the lead in this movement (U.N.1961).

World War II brought in its wake dislocation in industries and consequent problems of unemployment. The need for a social worker was greatly felt at this point. But with the ensuing stability in the socio-economic

condition, the social workers in industry were left with no relevant functions. In Germany, the trained social workers were in great majority. but their position experienced basic shocks and disapproval shortly after World War II because industrial social work came to be wrongly identified with the ideology of National Socialism.

There were only a few practising industrial social workers after World War II, as there was a federal cut back in their services. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that the profession and the schools of social work began to take a more serious look at industry and business as an arena of social work practice.

The Industrial Social Welfare centre at Columbia University's School of Social Work was developed in the early 1960s, which gave field placement opportunities for students in Union settings. In the late 1960s, the trend was followed by the Boston College, Wayne State and Hunter College of Social Work and the University of Utah.

In view of the increasing complexity in the field of personnel social work, the International Federation of social workers undertook the responsibility to explore the different directions in which personnel social work was developing and, at the same time, examined the basic concepts underlying its practice. Consequently, with collaboration of the Technical Assistance Office of the United Nations, Geneva, International Federation organised two International Study Groups on the functions and working methods of the personnel social worker. The study groups met in September 1967 at Zurich (Switzerland) and in March 1959 at Dortmund (West Germany). The report of these study groups form the basis for the development of the concept of industrial social work as formulated in the Report of the European

Seminar on Personnel Social Work, held under the European Social Welfare Programme (1961). The Seminar reviewed the earlier report and reiterated the need for personnel social work and highlighted its place by emphasizing that, "the concept of personnel social work should be embodied in the personnel policy of the enterprise, regardless of whether the function is part of the organisational structure of the enterprise or is carried out by an outside agency."(U.N. 1961)

Industrial psychology and psychiatry had found favour in the U.S.A., in so far as the whole field of personnel counselling, covering all levels in the enterprise, was involved with mental health issues. Programmes were aimed towards the treatment of alcoholics, preparation for retirement or the handling of individual, supervisor-worker relationship and referrals of workers to specialized services, organised mainly through state and local mental health associations. Social workers were also used to train counsellors who helped union members to deal with their personal problems by way of consultation. Social work maintained a link between the management, labour and the community resources such as community councils, boards and national fund raising drives (Dsai and Dole 1979).

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in May 1976 sponsored a meeting with social work practitioners, educators, representatives of organised labour and industry to discuss curriculum implications for future development in the field of social work in industry.

On June 7, 1978, 100 industrial social work practitioners from across the U.S. and Canada met in New York City to explore the nature of industrial social work practice and came to the conclusion that social work in industry had a very promising future and was uniquely suited to the labour and industrial setting, given the profession's

commitment to a 'social functioning' perspective as opposed to a health versus illness approach common to other helping professions.

The joint project of the CSWE and NASW on social work in industrial settings (March 1977- Oct.1979) was a commitment by the profession to further the development of industrial social work education and practice and a hallmark in the development of Industrial Social Work. The practice of social work in the industry in the West has since been on a steady rise.

Developments in India

It is not an easy task to examine the developments in the area of social work in industry, especially in India because of the uneven development and the shifting nature of the field itself. Nevertheless, some important landmarks and major trends that affect the present and the future have been briefly touched here.

Industrial Growth

Fully sharing the impact and consequences of international events, such as World War I, the subsequent recovery and boom upto 1929, the great depression of 1930-34, the recovery of 1935-39 and the Second World War, the industrial growth in the country during the period from 1914-1939 had its ups and downs. The Royal Commission on Labour, which submitted its report in 1931, had given a coherent picture of the pattern and problems of industrial development in India. The two World Wars had greatly helped India achieve a more accelerated tempo of industrial development, deriving substantial support from the fiscal and industrial policy of the Government of India. Looking back over the last five decades, the area of industrial development really started after the Indian

Independence and with the beginning of the planning era in the early 1950s. Along with the industrial growth in India in keeping with the demands of the industry, there was simultaneous development of the personnel function in industry.

Growth of Personnel Function

The concept of industrial social work in India has been the by product of the evolving field of personnel management over the years. While it was the special circumstances accompanying the period of the First World War that led to the development of the personnel function in the West, in India, it took another decade for the first personnel functionary known as labour officer to be appointed in sizeable numbers.

The first official administrator joined the ranks of the industrial management cadre in the year 1931 through the good offices of the Royal Commission on Labour was under the chairmanship of J.H. Whitley. This commission was appointed to inquire into and report on the conditions of labour in the industrial undertakings and plantations in British India on health, efficiency and standard of living of the workers. It was discovered that, specially in the area of recruitment, corruption was rampant. On the recommendation of the Commission, the labour officer was appointed with the specific duty of eliminating corruption by taking over the recruitment function.

However, the exploitation of the labour continued. Statutory welfare provisions were not implemented by the employers. At this stage, the State felt it necessary to intervene and make statutory the appointment of an officer whose sole duty would be to look after the health, safety and welfare of the workers. Thus, in 1948, the welfare officer was statutorily born in section 49 of the

Factories Act, 1948. This welfare officer, though his nomenclature may be misleading, was in fact a personnel practitioner. The range of his administration covered not only the welfare function, but also the functions of personnel administration and industrial relations.

The expansion of the field of personnel management has been greatly affected by the statutory support given by the government. In fact, this was the only statutory officer at that time and, perhaps India was the only country in the world to create this statutory position against the background of the social reform, social service and social movement during the 19th century. In the West, the nomenclature 'Personnel function' emerged in 1950s and in India, we accepted it in the 1960s.

Modern industry in India has grown by leaps and bounds after independence, both in size and in organisation. Its primary concern, therefore, became to correspondingly improve the efficiency of its personnel. Since the efficiency of an enterprise is dependent, among others, on industrial peace, the physical environment and a satisfying atmosphere prevalent therein, it was but natural that labour and welfare officers were asked to assume personnel functions and to evolve functionally as well as status wise into personnel officers.

The personnel officer has to a great extent, come to be accepted as a member of the modern management team in Indian industry. But his duties remain a "hotch potch of the legacies of the labour officer and the welfare officer."

The labour officer of yesterday evolved into the personnel officer. The growth actually began with the paternalistic

welfare approach in the 1930s. Since then, its emphasis shifted to the field of industrial relations and labour management of the 1940s and 1950s. It has finally developed as a comprehensive function in the 1960s, a function, which has come to be integrated with the management function in an organisation. And, in the 1980s, it emerged as an H.R.D. (Human Resource Development) function with still wider implications. This has resulted in the recognition of human resources as a great asset to the organisation. This is evident from the fact that the concept of labour has itself undergone an evolution; referred to as 'labour' in the beginning and then 'employee'.

The term 'personnel' came to be widely used to denote the work force of an organisation in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, they are collectively referred to as the 'human resource' of the organisation.

Industrial Social Work: Emerging Trend

During the 1960s, industrial social work, as distinct yet part of the labour welfare and personnel management, emerged. This new direction was greatly influenced by the concept emphasised in the European Seminar on 'Personnel Social Work' held in Brussels in 1960. It was at that time that a clear demarcation in the functions of a personnel officer and social worker in industry appeared and social work in industry began to be differentiated from the concept of statutory welfare.

Industrial social work is a new phenomena and affords wide scope for specialised services in industry, at work place, in the employee's family and the community. However, it must be admitted that the duties covered under labour welfare form the genesis of the modern concept of industrial social work in India.

Industrial social work may be regarded as a specialisation coming within the field of Personnel Management. It means that the personnel man hands over part of his function to the social worker, namely, looking after the personal well-being of individuals and groups within the undertaking. Of late, there is a growing incidence of social work activities being undertaken by respected organisations, who have felt the need to call upon the skills of the professionally trained social worker in handling personnel problems of their employees, in so far as they seriously interfere with their work life and affect productivity.

Though the phenomena of industrial social workers has come to be accepted in Indian industries, it is still confined to Metro cities of India where full time social workers are appointed, but in small numbers. Till the industry widely opens its arms to full time social workers, this function may have to be carried out by personnel/welfare officers.

Social Responsibility of Industry

“None of our institutions exists by itself and is an end in itself”. Every institution is an organ of society. Business is no exception. The business role has traditionally focused on economic performance in the production of goods and services, but this role is gradually evolving towards a more social orientation. In the early 1950s, there was a sharp shift in public mood toward more social concern, which was reflected in extensive social conscience, concern and social responsibility.

The idea of social responsibility denotes that decision makers in industry are obligated to take actions, which protect and improve the welfare of the society as a whole,

along with their own interests. The net effect is to enhance the quality of life in the broadest possible way. Society expects business to show much more concern for social effects, which arise directly from performance of business' economic functions and also expects business to help solve a number of general social problems, that only indirectly relate to business activities. Social responsibility is concerned with the public interest. The substance of social responsibility arises from the concern for the consequence of one's acts, as they might affect the interest of others.

There are a number of ways in which business and industry may respond to social demands being made on it. One approach is withdrawal by which business recedes further into its own shell, reducing its interface with society and trying to mind its own business, it passes its social costs on to society, and generally leaves the problem for society to solve.

Business could also use the public relations approach. It offers public, through the press and public speeches, a multitude of stories about its accomplishments in social areas, all the while making no changes in existing practices.

Another option is the legal approach. Business depends upon law to protect it from changes because it knows that laws are amended very slowly in a large social system. Meanwhile, business does only the minimum required by law.

An additional approach is bargaining by which business negotiates with pressure groups, which make claims upon it. In this manner, it attempts to resolve disputes with negotiated settlements, which often produce change.

Problem solving is another approach in which business makes a genuine study of society's and business's values and needs and then it attempts to reconcile them in constructive ways. The problem solving role is an ideal one for business. Business is known as an efficient problem solver, and people look to it for leadership in this area. Problem solving will also help business retain its position as a major social institution. If it can, by its own merits, contribute to social solutions, it will improve goodwill and acceptance of its role. (Davis and Blomstrom, 1975)

In order to discharge their social responsibilities, to promote employee satisfaction, to achieve efficiency of operation and to ensure orderly conduct of plant affairs, most companies work in three directions. Firstly, they participate in and contribute to public programmes of social security and national health service. Secondly, they cooperate with the state and local authorities and other agencies whose services are made use of by the workers. Thirdly, they organise personnel departments in their plants to perform the tasks, such as employment service, industrial relations, wage administration, compliance of statutory obligations, welfare management and social work.

All these services constitute the personnel services in industry. It falls to the management to see that the multiple social responsibilities of business are fulfilled.

Scope of Social Work in Industry

If we accept that business and industry are not merely profit oriented institutions but have social obligations as well, then social work does have plenty of scope in industry, as it can help it to achieve its social goals. Today, it is not only the production or sale of goods and services that is the managements' concern, but the

social climate inside the organisation, the work structure and the mental health of the employees is of equal concern.

Industrial social work can go a long way in improving the social climate and quality of human relations in an organisation. Human relations propose in general that productivity should be achieved by means of building and maintaining employee dignity and satisfaction rather than at the cost of these values. In social work, human dignity is always upheld and man is helped to integrate and adapt to his social environment.

There is plenty of scope for social work practice in industry. This is because the larger the organisation, the more complex are the problems faced by human beings. In small organisations, employees have direct access to the managers and so many of their problems get sorted out early. In larger organisations, there is no such opportunity for the employees, as everything has to go through proper channels and, thus, they have access only to the supervisors and junior managers, who are not decision makers. Relationships between employees and management are more formalized and availability of the management to the employees is reduced. Paternalistic attitudes towards employees and authoritarian kind of approach seem more prevalent in organisations. A social worker can help the employees to overcome their problems and continue to function as productive workers. According to M.M. Desai, the professionally trained social worker can develop his/her programmes at the following levels:

- Preventive and developmental
- Curative

Preventive and Developmental

- 1) Informal educational programmes aimed at enlightening the workers on issues pertaining to work life like industrial safety, functional literacy, saving habits, social security, etc.
- 2) Promoting the use of health and medical programmes for workers and their families (health check-ups, inoculation campaigns, family planning, informative sessions on nutrition, low cost diets, childcare, etc.
- 3) Personal and environmental hygiene, etc.
- 4) Developing recreational programmes like library services, prime sports gatherings, various skill competitions, exhibitions, film shows, etc. celebration of cultural festivals, supplementary income programmes, hobby classes, vocational guidance programmes, etc.

Curative

Curative programmes are aimed at handling problem situations faced by the individual worker by helping him to make maximum use of his own potentials and the resources offered by the industry and the community. Counselling to the individual employees and their families can be given for problems, such as alcoholism, indebtedness, and absenteeism, etc. The counselling services can be coupled with concrete assistance by the way of:

- 1) Securing medical help within or outside industry.
- 2) Planning the family budgets.
- 3) Helping employee family members in obtaining funds.

- 4) Seeking employment for worker's dependents.
- 5) Referring the worker/his dependents to welfare agencies in the community like child guidance clinic, marriage counselling bureaus, alcoholic anonymous groups and the like, wherever there is a need.

Thus, social work skill can be actively used for preventing problems from happening, as also for enriching the life of the workers and their families. Early detection and prompt treatments may prevent some workers from becoming serious casualties.

Social work intervention in industrial sector can be at micro and macro level. At micro level, the social worker can provide treatment to the worker and his family, employer and union members. Help may be given in relation to problems related to work, self and others around them, such as job performance, job satisfaction, absenteeism, conflict situations, etc. Further problems, such as anxiety, depression, phobia, mental disturbance, substance abuse, marital and family conflict, may also be attended to.

At the macro level, it can be organisational intervention where the social worker can provide individual and group consultation to supervisors and managers at all levels regarding understanding of human behaviour. The intervention may be in the form of proposing a new job design. Organising and planning of the services at the preventive, developmental and curative levels requires a basic study of the organisation. It is through an open and sensitive approach, rather than a predetermined blue print that the intuitive social worker can positively integrate the social work objectives with the management objectives. However, the scope of social work in business and industry would, in real terms, depend upon:

- 1) the attitude of the management;
- 2) the quality of the goodness of bet between needs of business and the extent to which these needs can be addressed by social work;
- 3) cost effectiveness of the services provided.

Applicability of Social Work Methods

The relevance and suitability of social work methods can be justified on the basis of the contribution, these methods can make towards the realization of the objectives of the business organisation. Divergent views have been expressed on this issue; some experts feel that these methods have little contribution to make in profit oriented setting of business and industry. According to them, "In industry, we essentially pursue the commercial activities, economic propositions, hard accounting business and complicated machines, then how does social work figure here?"

To this, we can say that social work today extends to all strata of society. It is a science having a body of knowledge and an art having specialized techniques and skills of practice that are relevant to any problem situation at any level. It is an enabling process and any area, where it can fulfill its role, is relevant to it. The working class cannot be excluded from its purview.

There may be limitations for its practice in industry, but similar limitations exist for the practice of these methods in some of the primary settings in India. The three primary methods of social work, namely, social casework, social group work and community organisation can be fruitfully used in business and industry. Social worker can, apart from economic causes, study the socio-cultural and psychological

causes of personal problems in industry. Their role will be of bringing about adjustment between men and women in business and their work situations.

Let us take a look at the specific contributions of some of the social work methods can make to industry.

Social Casework

Social casework can be effectively used in situations of individual problems, such as alcoholism, depression, drug abuse, anxiety, marital and family difficulties, etc. Further in induction, grievance situations, transfer cases, leave needs, absentee situations, problems due to job loss, retirement, etc., it can find much use. In accident cases, cases of indiscipline, it is also very useful.

This primary method of social work can be effectively applied at two levels:

- 1) Difficulties and problems arising due to adjustment to family life due to any psychological, economic and cultural factors.
- 2) Difficulties arising out of adjustment to work life due to environment, personality problems, organisation structure and programs, etc.

Social Group Work

Group interaction can be used as an effective tool for helping employees to understand themselves and improve their relations with those around. Group work techniques can be used in certain group situations to help the group to attain their efficiency and objectives through a harmonious development of the group work process. It can be used in point consultation situations, such as labour management council, various committees, meetings, collective bargaining contexts,

development implementations of several welfare programs inside and outside the workplace, building of group morale, etc. It can be used in educational programs and workshops for at risk employees related to areas, such as coping with job related stress, family and marital stress, anxiety, drug abuse, etc.

Community Organisation

Here the social worker can help business to understand the total community in which they live and utilize its resources to benefit the community on one hand and the organisation on the other.

The problems, such as lack of educational facilities, proper recreation, medical facilities within the workers community, can be attended to by the social worker. Community consciousness and development are being given importance by the management where the skills of the professional social worker can be effectively used.

Social Action

Social action method would be useful when the social worker gives services to the unions. Unions can today use the social worker's knowledge and specialized skills in putting forth demands, negotiating peaceful strikes, serving and enforcing labour legislations etc.

Research

Social research is being used in industrial settings. The purpose is to collect and ascertain facts pertaining to a variety of issues and problems in industry. It will help business to understand the realities in management-employee relation. Many a times, management takes piecemeal measures to counteract the inefficiency of the workers and may fail. But an integrated approach of social work may produce better

results. The effort should be to just locate the factors that have created and contributed to the problem and, after a careful analysis, offer plausible solutions. A professional social worker, by using his research skills, can help the management solve many problems.

It is not one method alone, but a fusion of all the above methods that truly help the business and industry, for a problem may not be a result of any one factor. It has to be studied in its totality. In such situations, a holistic approach of social work is very much needed. While handling specific problems, the casework help may be more effective, but some cases respond better when handled on a group or community level. A trained social worker, by using an integrated approach dwelling on his knowledge of human behaviour and human relationships and applying the various social work skills and techniques, can tackle human problems successfully. He has to consider every worker as a whole—at the shop floor, at home, in the community.

Place of Social Work in Industry

According to the study group organised by the Netherlands Government, a qualified social worker is necessary in an enterprise for the following reasons:

- 1) their specialised training in the understanding of human problems, ability to consider the human personality as a whole;
- 2) their knowledge of the conditions of work;
- 3) their knowledge of the worker's life;
- 4) their knowledge of the resources of the community;
- 5) their professional secrecy; and
- 6) their capacity for co-operation.

The role of Social Worker has traditionally been assigned to the Personnel/ Welfare functionaries in India. In fact, the social work profession, to a great extent, owes its popularity and growth to the acceptance of social work training as a necessary preparation for personnel and welfare work in India. A comparison with other countries reveals that the importance attached to the social worker's role in the personnel field is much higher in India than elsewhere. There are a number of trained social workers in our country who have been absorbed into industry, mainly in the personnel and labour welfare departments. In the West, Industrial Social Work has developed along different lines, where full time Social Workers are appointed in Industries to carry out the social work role and they are not burdened with other duties of Industrial relations and personnel administration, as is the case in India.

India is the only country in the world where there is a statutory requirement that certain specified types of industry must employ trained social workers for labour welfare. The posts of welfare officers in industry were created by the government under the Factories Act 1947. These functionaries are paid by the individual managements, but their qualifications, method of recruitment, duties are prescribed by the government through rules framed for the purpose. Nearly all states require that the welfare officer should be a graduate of an approved University recognized by State Government for their training. Most of these institutions are schools of social work. The field of labour welfare and personnel management has found its place on the curriculum of the schools of social work as one of the specialization and a large number of students opt for it. For their training, the students are sent to various factories where they are expected

to learn about the working and functions of the labour/personnel department. They are also expected to apply their social work knowledge and skills, while tackling the labour problems.

Today many institutions have sprung up, which offer degree diploma in labour welfare and personnel management, still, we find that those having social work training are preferred over others, which indicates that the benefits of social work training are recognised by the employers.

There is still not a clear-cut and well-defined role for the social worker in the industrial sector. The present scenario throws up a confused picture where the role of the social worker varies according to the size of the industry and the perception of social worker's contribution by the owners of the enterprise. In most undertakings, social workers are seen as performing tasks assigned to a personnel manager or officer, such as recruitment, selection, wage and salary administration, etc. Here the social worker has become more of a personnel man. In smaller undertakings, it is usually a one man show where he is partly a personnel man, partly a social worker, partly a timekeeper and, at other times, a public relations officer, trying to juggle with the wide ranging responsibilities.

As of today, it is only in handful of organisations that the social workers perform a pure social work role, wherein they are appointed as industrial social workers. Their role here, irrespective of their designation, is to assist the individual and groups in their adaptation to the organisation in particular and society in general, by removing, as far as possible, the inner and outer obstacles to this adaptation. They help the employees to develop within an organisation in a healthy manner,

paving way for an effective organization. However, today, a trained social worker is an asset to an organization.

Problems and Prospects

Practice of social work in business and industry is not without its share of hurdles and problems, some of which are enumerated below:

- 1) A social worker in industry has to accept the fact that her/his job would be limited by various factors. The limits could be professional by virtue of the job assignment, the organisational structure and by additional assignments.
- 2) Industry has not always defined its needs where a social worker can fit in as the logical resource person and the social workers have also not identified tangible areas of service that are significant to industry. Further, there is still not a proper understanding of the type of social work skills and knowledge, which are specifically transferable to Industry. A service becomes meaningful when there is a defined need and a defined service.
- 3) Many a time, the social workers may find themselves in a business that does not cherish the same values that social work stands for. The value orientation of social work is that the resources of the society must be used to bring about maximum opportunities for the individual, whereas that of business is profit.
- 4) Social workers today are appointed in large numbers as welfare/personnel functionaries in industry. As such, they are more busy carrying out their legal and administrative tasks rather than pure social work tasks, hence they are not very much identified with social workers working in other fields. Many a

times, they find themselves in a business, which does not value the same concerns that social work stands for. The varied duties specified for the welfare officers in Indian Industries, ranging from welfare and personnel to legal and conciliation responsibilities, indicate lack of uniformity and consistency. It also reflects the lack of clarity regarding social work in industry and the true role of a social worker in that environment.

- 5) The alignment of social work and personnel management, which was considered as a good combination once, as it gave a big boost to the growth of social work profession, is now considered a bane of the profession by many social work educators. The multiplicity of the tasks carried out by the personnel/welfare functionary does not allow him to carry out his social work role.
- 6) There are practical difficulties faced in the practice of the various social work methods and they may have to be adapted and defined to the peculiar needs of industry. Since the practice of these methods demands a lot of time and skill, the personnel functionaries, burdened with numerous responsibilities, do not always give adequate time and emphasis to them. The management will ultimately judge the value of these methods to the extent they contribute to organisational objectives.

Prospects

In spite of obstacles and seeming hindrances, there are bright prospects for social work practice in business and industry. With the increasing realization on the part of the employers of their social responsibility and obligations, the value of social work and the contribution it can make is bound to grow. In the Indian context, the

social work welfare/personnel officers, who are also professional social workers, are largely carrying out the social worker's role in industry. However, increasingly, the need for full time social workers is being felt and in big and progressive units, they have already found a place for themselves. Once full time social workers come to be accepted in Indian industries, the social work role, which is being presently carried out by welfare/personnel officers with social work training, will be given its legitimate place in industry.

Further, social work is no longer only confined to industry, but is seen as extending its expertise to all occupations and work situations; hence the term occupational social work is finding favour with the experts. This is so because today, employees, irrespective of the setting, are beset with many problems, which can interfere with their personal effectiveness and overall productivity. It is a challenge to the social work profession to apply its skill and knowledge to these non-conventional fields in new and innovative ways to increase productivity and organisational effectiveness and, thereby, create a niche for itself.

Today, more and more women are joining the workforce, posing new equations at home and at workplace. In the changing scenario, both men and women have to find new ways of adapting. The stress on them and their children can be tremendous, making mental health at workplace a serious issue. Consequently, many companies will have to develop programmes of childcare, paternity/maternity leave policies, flextime and so on.

According to Berry (1990), the world of work today poses various challenges. For old workers, it means learning and accommodating to new entrants with different styles, concerns and values. For new entrants, it means

growth, learning and developing the persistence needed to achieve full membership.

Today, there are emerging areas of practice for social workers, which have been recognized in the West and are gradually making a conduit to the Indian Business and Industry. To mention a few, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPS), Employee Relations (ER), Organisation Development (OD), Dislocated Worker's Services, Plans and Benefits Management.

A person's self-esteem, sense of well-being and prosperity is, in some way, linked to his job. Today, we are into tumultuous times of job upheavals, economic restructuring, competition downsizing, which have weakened the 'social safety nets' around us. Workers in all settings are faced with multitude of problems, which come in the way of their effective performance and overall productivity. The skills, techniques and knowledge of social work, which has so far been offered to the poor and destitute, can be put to great use in enhancing the ability of human resources to improve the world of work. Counselling, group work, research, policy analysis, program development and planning, need assessment and other such social work techniques can be used by business and industry to increase productivity and overall organisational effectiveness.

Social work integrates into it, knowledge and practice insights from sociology, education, clinical psychology, labour relations, organisational behaviour, etc., which can provide answers to the problems of workplace.

The future of social work in Industry is promising, provided the profession gears itself to the challenges and new demands of the world of business and

industry. Social work educators would need to upgrade their educational program for industrial social work and practice with sound business principles.

Conclusion

Industrial social work is a systematic way of helping individuals and groups towards better adaptation to work situation. This module determines the role of social work in industry as well as examines the role(s), which social workers can perform in industry, which will maximize the application of social work skills, knowledge and training. If we accept that industry is not merely a profit-oriented institution, but has social obligation as well, then social work can play a vital role to help it achieve its social goals. Today, it is not only the production or sales of goods that is management's concern, but the social climate inside the organisation, the work culture and the mental health of the workers is of equal concern. It has been felt increasingly that social work skills and training have not been utilized optimally by either of the two major sections in the industrial complex—viz. labour and management—for solving the multitude of social and emotional problems that inevitably arise for individuals enacting a role in industry.

There is enough scope for social work in industry and certain problems in industry respond better to social work skills and approaches. A social worker can help the employees to overcome their problems and continue to function as productive workers. The professionally trained social workers can develop her/his programmes at preventive developmental and curative levels. This can be on a micro and macro level. Organising and planning of the services at these levels requires a

basic study of the organisation, as it is only through an open and sensitive approach that the social work objectives can be integrated with the management's objectives.

Social work methods, such as social casework, group work, community organisation, etc., can be fruitfully used in business and industry. Although each method has something unique to contribute, it is not one method alone, but a fusion of all the methods that can help the management solve the myriad industrial problems.

The place of social work in industry is still not clear and well defined. India is the only country in the world where there is a statutory requirement that certain specified types of industries must employ trained social workers. In most undertakings, social workers are seen as performing tasks assigned to the personnel man. As of today, only a handful of organisations employ fulltime social workers.

The problem is that industry has not defined its needs where a social worker can fit in as a logical resource person and social workers have also not identified tangible areas of service that are significant to industry.

In spite of obstacles, there is a promising future for social work in industry and business. Today, social work is no longer confined to industry alone, but is seen as extending its expertise to all occupations and work situations. It is a challenge to the social work profession to apply its skills and knowledge to these non-conventional fields in new and innovative ways to increase productivity and organisational effectiveness.

References

Desai, M.M., *Industrial Social Work*, TISS, May 1979.

Jacob, K K. (1965), *Methods and Fields of Social Work in India*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House.

Moorthy, M.V. (1974), *Social Work Methods and Fields*, Dharwar: Karnataka University.