

Tika Ram Sharma, Hospital Technicians Unions, Independent, Delhi

Name	Tika Ram Sharma, Hospital Technicians Unions, Independent, Delhi.
Date of Interview	19th September 2002.
Time	3.00 p.m. onwards till evening.
Place	Ajoy Bhawan, Kotla Road, Delhi.
Context	Tika Ram Sharma seemed to be an honest man, not corrupt, pro-worker and pro-poor. He showed newspaper reports with his photos in various papers of the 1970s and 1980s of his Lab Technicians struggles. He was no doubt a good activist.
Interviewers	Anil Rajimwale, Krishna Jha and Bobby Poulouse

Biographical Sketches

He belongs to Almora in present day Uttarakhand. He came from a religious family. Through his uncle's help he lived in Delhi and did some education in Okala Polytechnic where he organized a strike in 1959-1960. He got a job as a lab technician in Maulana Azad Medical College in Delhi. There he came in contact with B.D. Joshi and joined the Delhi Technicians Union of which Joshiji was President. In 1973 Tika Ramji became branch secretary of the MAMC Technicians Association. He participated as a supporter in the 1974 railway strike. Then in 1978 as he was one of the leaders of the union he launched the first strike of the MAMC Technical Staff Association. It was the first strike in the institution by this section. In 1974 he was part of those who launched a strike in Kasturba Hospital against Jagson Pal industries. In those days he was the branch secretary of the union. In 1978 he made his union give solidary support to the Delhi Textile Mills workers strike. The union at MAMC and at Delhi level of which Tika Ramji was a leader was called Delhi Medical Employees Technicians Association (DMETA). They wanted to form a national level body for lab technicians. He was in the leadership of unions in Safdarjung, AIIMS, New TB Center, G.B. Pant and JP Bara Hindu Rao, and MAMC lab technicians unions.

Transcript Summary

Tika Ram Sharma began his interview by stating that he belongs to Almora and he is from present day Uttarakhand. His father and grandfather were religious. Tika Ramji came to Delhi in 1959-60 with his uncle who was in railways. He felt his father had done injustice to his thus a feeling of fighting injustice grew in him and he always resisted any kind of domination. This got reflected in his student days in those early days in Delhi when he started his studies in an Okhla Polytechnic where they were particularly strict about the wearing of clothes and Tika Ramji defied it and ended up with a fine of Rs. 50/- and led a 10 days strike against the misbehaviour against students. Finally he couldn't finish his studies at the polytechnic and he left. Then the question came as what to do. That was the time when communism was growing and he had heard a lot of these leaders like Dange, Bhupesh Gupta, Inderjit Gupta, Maniben Kara, Nathpai at Chandni Chowk Ghanta Ghar. Then he joined New TB Lab and little later he got a government job in Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC). Tika Ramji lived in the walled city with his uncle.

In 1971 Tika Ramji joined the Delhi Technicians Union under the influence of B.D. Joshi who was its President. In 1973 Tika Ramji became the branch secretary of the MAMC Technicians Association. In those days the 1974 railway strike was on. Tika Ramji says that it was a total strike and Mrs. Gandhi to divert peoples mind from it exploded the nuclear device in Pokhran in 1974. B.D. Joshi and Parvati Krishnan were arrested in that strike. The Emergency was really a dark period. But once the Janta party came to power the strikes continued. In 1978 the MAMC Technical Staff Association launched a strike. It was the first such strike in the institute by the lab technicians. There was also strike in Kasturba Hospital in 1974 because of the expose that Jagson Pal a private medical company was smuggling medicines. MAMC Technicians observed a one day strike. Tika Ramji said that the branch secretary of the union in those days in MAMC was one Mr. Rahi who was suspended and later due to struggles reinstated. In 1978 there was the Delhi Textile workers struggle and for the first time the lab technicians had given support to the struggle. Nearly 25,000 textile workers were in this struggle. As regards the main demands of the lab technicians Tika Ramji said was one of recognition as he does all the lab work and the Pathologist or Doctor simply comes sees the report prepared by the Lab Technician and signs it. Now the job of the L.T. has become more important as no doctor starts his diagnosis without first obtaining the basic lab reports. However in the pay commission the doctors have managed to get a higher scale. The Lab Technicians basic pay is Rs. 4000/- while the Doctor's basic pay is Rs. 18,000/-. The workload is also too much. Before they

used to get automatic promotion now it is not so. Their work conditions are bad in the sense that there is not any promotion avenues nor any accommodation. Tika Ramji said that till today they are fighting for the recognition for technicians and he wants a Para Medical Council should be established for it. As far as joint struggles is concerned Tika Ramji said they are involved with karamchaies, nurses and doctors against privatization of hospitals. The union which Tika Ramji used to run is called Delhi Medical Employees Technicians Associations (DMETA). Tika Ramji says that they are permanent invitees in the Delhi Govt. committees for Govt. run hospitals and CGHS. Now there is an attempt to form an all-India medical lab assistants association called Indian Medical Lab Technicians Association (IMALTA).

Tika Ramji says with the coming of new diseases the job of the lab technicians has only increased and there is need for higher level upgradation courses when in service. Today an effort is on to sell of and privatize the public government hospitals in the name of some Jan Samiti. He and all govt. employees of hospitals are opposing it. He said the Lab Technicians movement started in 1968. As regards the unions Tika Ramji controlled he said at one time he was in the AIIMS, Safdarjung, some private hospitals, New Delhi TB Center unions and G.B. Pant and JP Bara Hindu Rao hospitals. Now of course he has lost in many places but still is in the leadership of unions in MAMC, JP Hindu Rao hospitals. Currently he is fighting privatization of health services.