

REPORT

**national seminar
on n. m. joshi
and the
trade union
movement**

bombay, 10-12 april 1980

organised by central board for workers education
at indian institute of workers education, bombay

central board for workers education

as on 31-3-1980

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PREFACE

Shri V. B. Karnik, a veteran trade union leader and contemporary of Late Narayan Malhar Joshi in October, 1979 suggested that this being the birth centenary year of late N. M. Joshi, the founder of the Indian Trade Union Movement, it would be in the fitness of things to bring to the notice of workers and general public the life and work of late N. M. Joshi and the Central Board for Workers Education would be the appropriate agency to take steps in this direction. The Board considered the suggestion of Shri V. B. Karnik and decided to organise a National Seminar on 'N. M. Joshi and Trade Union Movement' at the Indian Institute of Workers Education, Bombay.

The detailed proposals regarding the planning, organisation, objectives, schedule of programme, the participants and the facilities to be offered etc., were considered in details by the Standing Advisory Committee for Indian Institute of Workers Education, Bombay, consisting of Sarvashri K. H. Kulkarni (INTUC), A. B. Bardhan (AITUC), P. M. Mantri (EFI), Prof. V. B. Kamath (AIMO) and Dr. M. A. Chansarkar, Director, under the guidance of Shri R. K. A. Subrahmanya, Additional Secretary to the Government of India and Chairman, of the Board in a special meeting held in February, 1980.

The top level trade union leaders of the Central Trade Union and Employers Organisations, International Labour Organisation, Educational Institutions, contemporaries of N. M. Joshi, Social Service League, Bombay, members of the Central Board for Workers Education and Government officials were invited to participate in the Seminar.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Hon'ble Shri J. B. Patnaik, Union Minister for Labour while the valedictory address was delivered by Justice Mr. C. S. Dharmadhikari of Bombay High Court.

Shri R. K. A. Subrahmanya, Additional Secretary to the Government of India and Chairman, Central Board for Workers Education was the Chairman of the Seminar and Dr. M. A. Chansarkar, Director, Central Board for Workers Education was the Director of the Seminar.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Seminar on N. M. Joshi and the Trade Union Movement was organised by the Central Board for Workers Education with a view to celebrate the birth centenary of N. M. Joshi, father of the Indian Trade Union Movement, on 10-12 April, 1980 at Bombay.

Objective

One of the objectives of the CBWE is to strengthen democratic process and traditions in the trade union movement. The Board also aims to develop strong united and responsible trade unions through enlightened members and trained officials. Late Narayan Malhar Joshi also cherished these objectives in his life time. It was in this context that the Board decided to organise this national seminar to study the growth and development of trade unionism in India, and its future in the context of the ideals set by N. M. Joshi and other founders of the movement.

The inaugural function of the Seminar was held on 10th April 80 at the auditorium of the Central Labour Institute, Sion, Bombay while the discussion sessions on 11th and 12th April, 1980 were held in the premises of Indian Institute of Workers Education (IIWE), Kurla, Bombay.

Inauguration

The Seminar was inaugurated by Hon'ble Shri J. B. Patnaik, Union Minister for Labour at 4 p. m. on 10th April, 80 at the Central Labour Institute, Bombay. In his inaugural speech Shri Patnaik said that "Late N. M. Joshi's contribution to the Indian Trade Union Movement was not only valuable but so varied that it embraced all aspects of workers life..... He made valuable contribution to the cause of labour as a Member of the Royal Commission on Labour, as a Member of the National Planning Committee set up by Indian National Congress and a Member of the

Legislative Assembly. His views are still relevant and every student of social and political history of India should study them in depth”.

Shri R. K. A. Subrahmanya, Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Chairman, CBWE in his welcome address observed that “The Seminar will discuss the contribution of Late N. M. Joshi to the Indian Trade Union Movement, the position of trade unions today, the trends for tomorrow, the need for trade union unity and the steps to be taken towards that end. The Seminar is designed to focus attention on the present situation as well as the future trends so that participants may consider whether they are conducive to healthy growth, whether they are in the larger interests of the working class, and if not how to change or improve the situation.”

The opening session was also addressed by Shri D. S. Raj, Director, International Labour Office for Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Republic of Maldives, New Delhi. Shri Raj congratulated the Board for taking the initiative to revive the memories of Narayan Malhar Joshi, the social reformer and trade union leader whose contribution to the cause of workers in India and elsewhere put him in a class by himself.

The inaugural session was also addressed by eminent leaders like S/Shri G. Ramanujam (INTUC), K. G. Srivastava (AITUC), Dr. Shanti Patel (HMS), Shri V. B. Karnik and Shri Naval H. Tata (EFI).

The speeches delivered at the inaugural function are reproduced in the following pages.

Programme

On 11th April 1980, discussion session was held in the morning at the IIWE, Bombay on ‘Contribution of Late N. M. Joshi to the Indian Trade Union Movement and So-

cial Welfare'. Dr. M. A. Chansarkar, Director, CBWE was the Chairman for this session. Dr. M. S. Gore, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay presented the paper on the above subject. Shri V. K. Pitkar, Dy. Director (Edn.), CBWE was the rapporteur.

S/Shri Rajani Mukherjee, J. C. Dixit, V. B. Karnik, A. B. Bardhan, S. A. Dange, A. N. Buch, Prof. V. B. Kamath, Shri G. Ramanujam and Dr. M. K. Pandhe took part in the discussions. Dr. M. S. Gore in his concluding remarks summarised the discussions.

The second session which started in the afternoon on 11th April 1980, was chaired by Prof. V. B. Kamath. All India Manufacturers' Organisation, Bombay and member, CBWE. Shri V. B. Karnik, a contemporary of N. M. Joshi presented a paper on 'Trade Union Movement—Today'. Shri V. K. Pitkar, Dy. Director (Edn.), CBWE acted as the rapporteur. S/Shri Vitthal Choudhary, P. Ramamurthy, M.P., J. C. Dixit, Naren Sen, Dr. S. L. Kashikar, Dr. (Mrs.) Maitrayee Bose participated in the discussions. Shri V. B. Karnik summarised the discussions in his concluding remarks.

The third session began on the morning of 12th April, 1980 and was chaired by Shri B. N. Datar, Director, Ambedkar Institute of Labour Studies, Bombay. Shri A. B. Bardhan, Member of the General Council of AITUC and Member of CBWE presented the paper on 'Towards Trade Union Unity. Shri V. K. Pitkar, Dy. Director (Edn.), CBWE acted as the rapporteur. Dr. Shanti Patel, Dr. (Mrs.) Maitrayee Bose, Dr. V. G. Mhetras, Dr. M. K. Pandhe, Prof. V. B. Kamath and S/Shri Rajani Mukherjee, J. C. Dixit, Anil Das Choudhary, Manhar Mehta, A. B. Bardhan, V. B. Karnik, Ashok Narayan, P. M. Mantri and Naren Sen participated actively in the discussions on the subject.

In the afternoon of 12th April 1980, Shri Raja Kulkarni, President, National Federation of Petroleum Workers (INTUC), Bombay presented the paper on 'Trade Union Movement—Tomorrow'. Shri B. N. Datar was the Chair-

man of this session. Dr. S. L. Kashikar, Dr. (Mrs.) Mai-trayee Bose, Dr. V. G. Mhetras, S/Shri V. B. Karnik and Vitthal Choudhary participated in the discussions. Shri B. N. Datar gave his concluding remarks on the discussions.

Justice Mr. C. S. Dharmadhikari was the Chief Guest at the concluding function of the seminar on 12th April 1980. Shri Dharmadhikari pleaded for a tripartite dialogue among the worker, employer and the consumer for safeguarding the interest of all and for healthy growth of harmonious industrial relations for the benefit of the society as a whole. He complimented the Central Board for Workers Education for having taken the initiative in bringing distinguished trade union leaders belonging to all shades of opinion on one common platform in this Seminar and suggested that the Board may continue to organise similar seminars at important industrial centres and in State capitals.

Some participants suggested that the Central Board for Workers Education could act as a catalytic agent in bringing together various unions and providing a platform for useful dialogue on matters affecting the trade union movement and the industrial relations in the country.

Dr. M. A. Chansarkar, Director, CBWE reviewed the salient points of the address delivered by Justice Mr. C. S. Dharmadhikari and thanked all the participants for making the Seminar a success.

Participants

There were 38 participants in the Seminar. Presidents and General Secretaries of Indian National Trade Union Congress, All India Trade Union Congress, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, National Labour Organisation, National Front of Indian Trade Unions, United Trade Union Congress, United Trade Union Congress (Lenin Sarani), were invited to participate in the Seminar.

The representatives of Employers Federation of India and All India Manufacturers Organisation participated in the Seminar.

One representative each of National Labour Institute, New Delhi, Ambekar Institute for Labour Studies, Bombay, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay and Maharashtra Institute of Labour Studies, Bombay participated.

The Secretary of the Social Service League, Bombay, the organisation which was founded by N. M. Joshi, also participated in the Seminar.

The Seminar had the benefit of participation of Shri D. S. Raj, Director ILO Area Office for Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Republic of Maldives, New Delhi.

Shri Rajani Mukherjee, Calcutta, Shri V. B. Karnik, Bombay and Dr. (Mrs.) Maitrayee Bose, Calcutta participated as contemporaries of N. M. Joshi.

Members of the CBWE and Chairmen of Regional Advisory Committees of Workers Education Centre, Bombay and Thane also participated in the Seminar.

Shri Ashok Narayan, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Labour, New Delhi, and Shri P. J. Ovid, Additional Commissioner of Labour, Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay were Government representatives.

Prof. G. S. Pohekar, United Asia Publications (Pvt.) Limited, Bombay who had published a book on N. M. Joshi by Shri V. B. Karnik, also attended the Seminar as an observer.

WELCOME ADDRESS BY SHRI R. K. A. SUBRAHMANYA

CHAIRMAN, CENTRAL BOARD FOR WORKERS EDUCATION
AND ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF LABOUR,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen :

On behalf of the Central Board for Workers Education and the Indian Institute of Workers Education I have great pleasure to welcome you all to this function.

We have assembled here today for the inauguration of a Seminar on Trade Union Movement to commemorate the Birth Centenary of Late Shri N. M. Joshi.

Late Shri Joshi was born on the 5th June 1879. His birth centenary was celebrated on the 5th June, 1979 and we are now in the centenary year. Shri Joshi was a man of many parts. In the words of his biographer Shri V. B. Karnik, he was well known "as a prominent statesman, the founder of the trade union movement, an ardent co-operator, an active social reformer, a convinced rationalist and a champion of all good causes". Although Shri Joshi was engaged during his life time in many types of activities, he is best known for his contribution to the labour movement in India. We have therefore proposed to commemorate the occasion by holding a seminar on trade union movement.

The suggestion to hold the seminar during the birth centenary year of Shri Joshi was made first by Shri V. B. Karnik historian of the trade union movement. The Central Board for Workers Education accepted the suggestion as it would provide an opportunity not only to recall the meritorious service rendered by the founders of the movement but also to take stock of the present situation and the outlook for the future.

The objective of the seminar is to study the growth and development of trade unionism in India and its future in the context of the ideals set by Shri N. M. Joshi and other founders of the movement. In pursuance of this objective, the seminar will discuss the contribution of Shri Joshi to the Indian trade union movement, the position of trade unions today, the trends for tomorrow, the need for trade union unity and the steps to be taken towards that end.

Trade Union Movement started in India during the early decades of the 20th century. It has since made significant progress in securing to the workers political and economic rights as well as a dignified status in society. It has grown in size and strength; more so in power and influence. But its coverage is limited. There are still a large number of workers in the un-organised sector who are not yet unionised. The general standard of life of the workers is still low. The movement is at present characterised by multiplicity of unions and union organisations and the Industrial Relations situation in this country is marked by acute inter-union rivalry. The movement has therefore a long way yet to go to achieve its objectives. There are also many hurdles in its way.

The Seminar is designed to focus attention on the present situation as well as the future trends so that participants may consider whether they are conducive to healthy growth, whether they are in the larger interests of the working class, and if not, how to change or improve the situation.

The Central Board for Workers Education is a society set up by the Government with the object of educating the workers so as to equip them for their intelligent participation in the socio economic development of the country. It is one of the functions of the Board to develop strong, united and more responsible Trade Unions, by helping them to understand better the problems of their socio-economic environment. The Board with a vast net work of organisa-

tion provides training to worker teachers who in turn educate the workers in the organisation and management of trade unions and allied matters. The Board also holds separate classes and seminars for the office bearers of trade unions.

The Indian Institute of Workers Education, a limb of the Central Board for Workers Education provides training to Education Officers of the Board. It also functions as a clearing house of knowledge for the trade union movement and for this purpose conducts seminars and specialised training programmes. It is also required to conduct research to provide a theoretical frame-work for workers education and to develop training methods and materials. It has an ambitious programme to conduct studies on the problems of labour generally and those of trade union movement in particular. It is in this context that the Institute has ventured to organise this seminar. This is a national seminar first of the kind to be organised by the Institute. It is intended to provide a forum to the labour leaders of national stature to meet and to discuss the problems of the trade union movement in the hope that the discussions in the seminar will pave the way for trade union unity which has so far been a mirage.

One of the main reasons for our undertaking this seminar is that Late Shri Joshi was a strong advocate of workers education. He considered that imparting education to the workers was a national duty. Shri Karnik has said that his desire for spreading education among workers was very intense "He was a passionate advocate of free and compulsory education. He also stood for vocational and technical education. Apart from this, he also wanted workers to be trade union conscious and to be equipped and trained to conduct the affairs of their Unions. He was for the growth and internal leadership and for the disappearance of outsiders. With this object in view Joshibua paid special attention to trade union education. He persuaded many unions to develop their own educational programmes and activi-

ties. Any union developing such a programme would receive from him all assistance and encouragement. He inaugurated at the instance of the organisers many trade union classes and distributed certificates to the participants of the classes. In the speeches that he delivered at trade union and other meetings, he always made it a point to emphasize trade union education which would enable more and more workers to develop as trade union leaders."

Shri Joshi was also an advocate of trade union unity. His biographer says "Joshi was pained by the disunity in the ranks of labour. He was of the opinion that all sections of labour should come together and work under the banner of one United Central Organisation irrespective of their political differences. He made several efforts for bringing about trade union unity." We therefore considered it fitting that the Central Board for Workers Education should organise this Seminar in memory of Shri Joshi.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to us that our Minister of Labour Shri J. B. Patnaik has agreed to inaugurate this Seminar inspite of his various other pre-occupations. As you all know Shri Patnaik is currently in-charge of two major Ministries and has also a special responsibility for the administration of his home State—Orissa, which is now under President Rule. There was some uncertainty whether he would be able to attend this function. We are very glad that he has been able to do so. We are grateful to him and we extend to him a very very hearty welcome.

We are also very happy that the leaders of the major trade union organisations as well as the organisations of employers have responded to our invitation and have graced this occasion with their presence. The importance of the seminar has been heightened by the august presence of the distinguished personalities like S/Shri Naval Tata, G. Ramamujam, S. A. Dange, P. Ramamurthy, Dr. Shanti Patel, A. N. Buch and others.

We have in our midst the distinguished representative of the International Labour Organisation Shri D. S. Raj. You would all be aware that we in this country derive inspiration from the ILO in many respects and his presence here today provides necessary perspective for the discussions to follow.

Some of the contemporaries of Shri Joshi like S/Shri V. B. Karnik, Rajani Mukherjee and Smt. Maitrayee Bose, are also with us today. No one can speak with greater knowledge and authority than these persons about the development of trade unionism in the country and the role played by Shri Joshi and others in it.

We are also very much heartened and encouraged at the response we have received from the other numerous participants as well as numerous other invitees. I hope they will find their participation in this function and in the seminar to follow worthwhile.

As I said earlier this is a maiden attempt on the part of the Indian Institute of Workers Education in organising a national seminar of this kind. Considering the response to our invitations it is obvious that it has generated great expectations. It is possible that there may be short-comings in the arrangements made for the seminar. I request you all kindly to take the intention for the deed and bear with us for any deficiencies in the arrangements.

Once again I extend to you all a hearty welcome.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY SHRI J. B. PATNAIK

UNION MINISTER FOR LABOUR, TOURISM AND CIVIL
AVIATION, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

It is a matter of pleasure and privilege for me to address this distinguished gathering of trade union leaders, educationists and social workers.

This is an occasion when we can recall with pride the contribution of late Sri N. M. Joshi and other founders of the trade union movement in establishing and building up the movement in its early years. Let us recall the time when the industrial worker in this country was left at the mercy of the employer. He was reconciled to his fate and surroundings of injustice, ignorance and squalor. Today that picture has changed. The industrial worker has realised that his strength lies in the strength of his trade union, and in concerted action along with his fellow workers.

Today with the growth of the country's industrialisation, the trade union movement has grown in strength and stature. Through a period of struggle, the working class in this country has won respectability and recognition in the life of the nation. The trade union movement of India, therefore, owes a debt of gratitude to late Sri N. M. Joshi and pioneers like him for its present status.

Sri N. M. Joshi believed that it was not enough to organise the workers into a trade union. It was necessary to educate them on their rights and responsibilities. A staunch trade unionist, he believed that a climate of industrial peace can be generated by cordial relationship between the employers and the employees and both should work in the

interest of the community. That was the same end which guided Mahatma Gandhi to organise the Mazdoor Mahajan in Ahmedabad. Sri N. M. Joshi like Mahatma Gandhi laid great stress on workers' education. The employee, he felt, should be sufficiently educated, to meet his employer face to face and explain and argue his case.

I am sure, you are aware of the pamphlet written by him on "Wanted—a Workers Education Association for Bombay" in which he had made an impassioned plea for developing a systematic programme of workers education.

Late N. M. Joshi's ideas of Workers Education were reflected in the thinking of the Planning Commission and a beginning in this direction was made soon after his death in 1955 by introducing a pilot scheme of Workers Education in the Second Five Year Plan. Since then the Board's activities have grown considerably and today we have a network of 41 Regional Workers Education Centres spread all over the country through which 54,000 Worker-teachers have been trained. The Indian Institute of Workers Education, where you will be having your deliberations during the next two days, was established in 1970 and is serving as an apex national institute in the field of Workers Education.

Late N. M. Joshi's contribution to the Indian trade union movement was not only valuable but was so varied that it embraced all aspects of workers life. He was a life-member of the Servants of India Society and one of the founders of the Social Service League. He adorned with distinction several important positions both in the trade union movement, social institutions and the Central Legislature. His contribution as a Member of the I.L.O. Governing Body is well-known. His struggle for achieving the rights of workers was matched with his efforts to train them to fulfil their duties. He made valuable contribution to the cause of labour as a Member of the Royal Commission on Labour, as a Member of the National Planning Committee

set up by Indian National Congress and a Member of the Legislative Assembly. His views are still relevant and every student of Social and Political History of India should study them in depth.

The Seminar has been organised with the object to study the growth and development of trade unionism in India and its future in the context of the ideals set by late N. M. Joshi and other founders of the movement. Personally I feel that a strong and united trade union movement is essential in the interest of industrial productivity in particular and socio-economic growth of the community in general. A trade union movement, conscious of its own strength can protect its own right and discharge its responsibility to the community. The efforts of the Government in the Ministry of Labour are to create conditions where healthy trade unionism can grow. Having this end in view I have discussed problems of urgent importance like bonus and industrial relations with all important national labour organisations, the organisations of employers and Members of Parliament who evince keen interest in the matter. I have been carrying out this exercise to reach areas of agreement between various conflicting interests and also to know the reasons exactly as to why and where they differ. In a democracy it is through discussions and debates one arrives at solutions to difficult problems.

The interest of the community as I have said should reign supreme over everything else. This Government inherited a difficult economic situation of negative industrial growth, of steep rise in prices of essential commodities and a runaway inflation. The challenge has to be met and the country's economy should be nourished back to health. The panacea, therefore, lies in a high rate of production and a better system to ensure equitable distribution. The country needs a climate of industrial peace as never before, to which the employees, the employers and the Government should contribute their shares. The Government's share in this respect is to resolve the controversial bonus issue once

for all by a comprehensive Act of Parliament and by necessary amendments to the present Industrial Relations Act, which can ensure quick justice to the aggrieved worker, a right type of bargaining agent and joint machinery to resolve industrial disputes. My whole exercise in this respect, therefore, has been to come out with a comprehensive bonus bill and a bill to amend the present Industrial Relations Act, before the next festival season.

The Government has already notified the revision of the minimum wages of workers in key sectors. The Government is waiting for the recommendations of the Tribunal for the wage revision of the working journalists and non-working journalists. Well there are hordes of other matters in which the Government is expected to play its part, like supply and procurement of raw materials, removal of transport bottlenecks, generation of more power etc. There was practically no Government worth the name for three years. Today the Government under dynamic leadership of Mrs. Gandhi is working with a quiet determination to restore the health of the country's economy.

I sincerely hope that the employers and the employees should also play their parts so that a healthy and a rapid economic growth of the country is possible in the ensuing decade.

There is a demand from certain trade union organisations that they should be associated in a larger measure in the management of the various welfare and social security schemes e.g. the Workers Education Review Committee have recommended reconstitution of the Board with large representation for the workers. I am glad to say that the Government have accepted this recommendation and steps have been taken to implement it; the Central Board for Workers Education is being reconstituted shortly giving the representation in it to all the Central Trade Union Organisations, as well as the organisations of employers, all the major trade union organisations will be represented on the

Governing Body of the Board. Similarly, reconstitution of the other bodies, like the Central Board of Trustees, Provident Fund Organisation and Employees State Insurance Corporation, are also under consideration. But under the existing legislative framework, unless there is an agreement between trade union organisations as to the basis of the representation, it has become difficult to make much progress on it. If this can be settled at the forthcoming tripartite conference, which the government wants to call there will be no further delay in the reconstitution of these bodies.

Now while I have always a word of praise for the growth of trade union movement in this country, I cannot help observe that there is a vast multitude of workers in the unorganised sector who have to be brought under the scope of the trade union movement. Millions of agricultural workers in this country today are in the same deplorable state as industrial workers were fifty years ago.

What are we going to do to improve their position? The law alone cannot help them. The law in this regard in fact, has remained a paper law. Here is a challenge to the trade union movement of this country. I hope the Seminar will discuss this problem and offer a satisfactory solution. The female and child labour again pose another challenge. A lot remains to be done in this field by all concerned.

Government is deeply committed to upliftment of the unorganised poor including agricultural labour, female labour and the child labour etc. The 20-point programme reiterated by the Prime Minister has made provision for the amelioration of the conditions of weaker sections of the society and in particular the Indian working class. For the organised sector, the 20-point programme envisages new schemes for workers association in industry. For the unorganised sector, provision has been made for a number of measures :—

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1. Stepping up of provision for house site for landless and weaker section.
 2. Bonded labour wherever it exists will be declared illegal.
 3. Plan for liquidation of rural indebtedness.
 4. Legislation for moratorium on recovery of debt from landless labourers.
 5. Improvement of the lot of small farmers and artisans.
 6. Review of laws on minimum agricultural wages.
 7. New development plan for handloom sector.

The trade union movement of tomorrow must include welfare functions as an integral part of future trade union activity. I, therefore, look forward to any positive suggestions resulting out of your deliberations on these aspects of trade union work and other matters concerning the movement.

Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore in his play on car festival has drawn a beautiful simile between the present day society and the car of Mahakal or of eternity. The car of Mahakal was first attempted to be drawn by Brahmans the elite, but it did not move. It was drawn by the Kshatriyas or the traditional rulers; the rope gave way, but the car did not move an inch. Then came the Vaisyas or the business community. They wanted to pull the car with all their skill and acumen, but it did not produce any result. At long last came the Shudras or the labouring class. They came in a great horde with their enthusiasm and strength bursting forth all around. With a roar they pulled the ropes of the car of the Mahakal. The car gave a jerk and then it moved with great ferocity, levelling the ground underneath. It is needless for me to explain its meaning. It is the age of the common man, the labouring class, the proletariat of Marx

and Lenin, the lowest and the lowliest of Mahatma Gandhi. It is their ultimate triumph that would shape the society of the 20th century India and of the world as well.

With these words ladies and gentlemen I inaugurate this seminar.

SPEECH BY SHRI V. B. KARNIK

CONTEMPORARY OF LATE N. M. JOSHI

I am very happy that this Seminar has been organised by the Central Board for Workers Education. A number of trade union leaders of national standing are going to participate in the Seminar and a number of distinguished citizens of Bombay have made it a point to attend this inaugural function.

I am reminded now that when we came to realise that this year was N. M. Joshi's Birth Centenary Year, we started a committee with a few people in Bombay and we wanted to extend its work, but we did not get much response. At that time, I wrote to Dr. Chansarkar suggesting that a National Seminar on the contribution of N. M. Joshi to the trade union movement might be organised. He liked the idea and took it up with the CBWE and various authorities and in the end it was decided to have the Seminar for three days in Bombay beginning in April. I must thank Dr. Chansarkar for taking the initiative in organising the Seminar. I must also thank the CBWE for accepting the idea and I am particularly grateful to the National Trade Union Centres for taking it up kindly and sending their representatives to participate in the Seminar.

The Seminar will continue for the next two days and I hope we shall be able to discuss some of the burning problems of the movement, as it is today. I need not say at this moment much about N. M. Joshi's work and more particularly his achievements and contributions to the Trade Union Movement. As you all know, he was the Father of the Trade Union Movement. It is acknowledged by a large number of foreign and Indian observers. Joshi was very

keen on the development of a healthy trade union movement. He wanted the Trade Union Movement to be independent of the government, independent of the capitalists and also independent of political parties and he tried his best to develop the movement on those lines. One cannot say that he succeeded, but one must note the efforts that he made and for that Indian Unions will always be grateful to him.

Another common point between N. M. Joshi and the CWBE is, Joshi had a fervent faith in Workers Education. Since he started working and building up trade unions, he came to realise that without education, workers will not be able to manage their unions, be conscious of their rights and responsibilities and therefore, he paid a good deal of attention to Workers Education. In those days, the Government was not sympathetic and it was not possible to expect any contribution from the Government. The employers also were not particularly sympathetic, though some of them extended some help. But now things have changed and CBWE is organising Workers Education all over the country with the support and sympathy of the Government of India. Joshi would have been very happy, if he had witnessed this Seminar where a large number of Trade Union leaders are coming from various parts of the country and the Union Labour Minister is inaugurating it. I am glad that in this Centenary Year, this Seminar is being organised and I hope that the deliberations in the Seminar will lead to fruitful discussions as well as positive action.

Joshi used to always say that keep on sitting together and discuss. As long as you sit together and discuss there is a possibility that some compromise may be reached. A number of national leaders will be discussing today, tomorrow and thereafter the major problems in the movement in the light of Joshi's teachings. I hope I will not be far from wrong, if I express the hope on this occasion that by sitting together we shall at least learn to sit together and discuss amicably the important problems of the Trade

Union Movement. Out of these discussions it is likely that some common course of action may suggest itself and then it will be possible for us to get together to work for the realisation of that common programme.

I am not sure that trade union unity will be achieved. There is going to be a paper on that topic to be discussed tomorrow and day after. But the important thing is you should at least learn to sit together and discuss things in a quiet manner. If that happens, I think the Seminar will have served some useful purpose and it will contribute to the healthy growth of the Trade Union Movement.

I thank you all for coming here and I also thank CBWE for having given us the opportunity to sit together and discuss about the Trade Union Movement.

SPEECH BY SHRI NAVAL H. TATA

PRESIDENT, EMPLOYERS FEDERATION OF INDIA

I am very happy to be associated with this function. I think the Central Board for Workers Education deserves our congratulations for linking this Seminar with the Centenary of N. M. Joshi. There is an old precept, which I recall viz. "The dead are the monitors of the living". It has a bearing on themes that this seminar is going to discuss tomorrow viz., 'Labour Unity', 'Trade Union Unity', 'Trade Unions Today', & 'Trade Unions Tomorrow'. There is a lot to learn from what trade union was yesterday, in Mr. Joshi's days.

I was glancing through Mr. V. B. Karnik's biography of Mr. Joshi, two days ago. Reading it, was so revealing. Here was a man so active in Trade Union Movement and yet he had an accent on social welfare. As a union leader his approach seemed far more conciliatory than the prevalent tone of confrontation. May be in those days, despite the fact that employers were socially less conscious than those of today, they responded far more favourably to conciliatory approach. It appears that he was one of the early ones amongst the trade union leaders who won the hearts of those type of employers and thereby achieved far more than what one can get through a process of confrontation.

I had the good fortune of working with N. M. Joshi at an ILO Conference in Geneva in 1947. For 26 days, we were sitting together. With Jagjivan Babu, Gulzarilal Nanda as Government delegates, myself as employer and N. M. Joshi was the workers' delegate to that Conference. Talking about Mr. Joshi, my thoughts go back to the Servants of India Society with which Tata's were very closely associated and did quite a lot in their own way for propagation of the

philosophy of Servants of India Society. The knowledge that Mr. Joshi was intimately involved in the activities of the Servants of India Society, gave me an excellent opportunity to have heart to heart talks with him on the subject of labour as well as social welfare.

Another reason why I am happy to be here today is because, by allowing me to deviate a while, I could perhaps say a few words on one of the themes you have associated with this national seminar dedicated to Mr. Joshi, viz. to Trade Union Unity. I am sure, some of the trade union leaders present here may legitimately ask me what right have I of talking about Trade Union Unity as an employer? I will have to explain that in the process of Collective Bargaining, the task of both labour and management is rendered easy, if labour presents a united front, speaks with one voice and can deliver the goods through implementing the agreement. In that case, the discussion is merely confined to the subjects which really matter and there is no need to drift aimlessly into subjects which are not pertinent to the dispute necessitating Collective Bargaining. In other words, you do not have to go into areas distinctly unrelated to the industrial dispute concerned.

There can be no difference of opinion that inter-union rivalry is an extremely difficult subject. I am well aware of how such rivalry is generated and how it affects trade union unity. In analysing the cause for it, one finds that it is essentially linked with a very important subject, viz. identification of bargaining agent. Now there are three possible methods for identifying a bargaining agent, viz. 1) Secret ballot 2) process of verification or a secret ballot-cum-verification, which the employers suggested as a compromise or 3) union check-off. Unfortunately, for reasons I do not appreciate, but could well understand there are some trade unions who do not like secret ballot. They claim that secret ballot would be injecting politics into trade union movement. This viewpoint is difficult to understand, in the light of the use of the secret ballot for our parliamen-

tary election. I reluctantly accept the viewpoint. But then, let us opt for union check-off which is in vogue in so many countries. If I have been insistent on secret ballot for years, it is because there is no occasion for the worker to accuse the employer of manipulation in a union check-off, nor the government in the case of verification.

Today, I am taking this opportunity to make a further suggestion on this subject. I hope you will forgive me for doing so, since I may not get another opportunity of having so many distinguished Trade Union leaders present on the scene.

I venture to suggest another alternative which could put the ball back in the court of the trade union. As you are aware, employers have a very loosely-constituted council of employers. There are three employers' organisations. I happen to be Chairman of one. On all important issues these three separate bodies speak with one voice, through what we call "Council of Employers" which exists on paper alone for purposes of co-ordination. My suggestion is that before it gets too late, the trade unions should likewise get together and form an apex body like a Council of Trade Unions. You may have your own Charter and your own code of conduct. Don't let anyone else interfere in the process of identification. When it comes to recognition of the bargaining agent, let there be a three or four men committee, representing the major national organisations who can themselves decide the rightful bargaining agent. In such a situation, there will not be a Mr. Tata there to be accused for manipulation or tinkering with the process, if the process happens to be the union check-off. There would not be accusations against the Labour Commissioner for manipulating, if it happens to be a process of verification. I do realise, that there may be difficulties in forming such an organisation but we have gone on for so many years. I appeal to you that by this method, through your own efforts, you become the arbitrator. Unless you do that, the Trade Union Unity and Inter-Union rivalry will remain unsolved

indefinitely. How long could you decry Secret Ballot and reject union check-off and at the same time you question the bona-fides of the process of verification? Then how are you going to solve this crucial question? In the meanwhile, unfortunately, the trade unions suffer, the management suffers and the country suffers. If at this Seminar instead of an academic discussion you can make up your mind and decide how best you can solve this issue atleast you will stop putting the blame on others. Employers do not claim to be all angles. There may have been some who may have indulged in manipulations. Similarly, there may have been isolated cases of some Labour Commissioner who may have manipulated or may have been technically at fault. However, the bulk of the blame rests on the trade union for not having solved the issue through indecision.

Let this Seminar, which is in commemoration of N. M. Joshi, a renowned pioneer of trade union movement, inspire you to evolve a process of identifying the bargaining agent which will go a great way in eradicating trade union rivalry. May the spirit of late N. M. Joshi inspire you to usher an era of trade union unity.

I would like to wish this Seminar a great success. I do hope that it will atleast pave the way for trade union unity and show the trade union leaders how they should conduct themselves tomorrow. Please forgive me if I have trespassed and spoken from my heart on a subject which is very dear to me.

SPEECH BY SHRI K. G. SRIVASTAVA

GENERAL SECRETARY, ALL INDIA NATIONAL TRADE UNION
CONGRESS

Mr. Chairman. We are late in celebrating N. M. Joshi's 100th Birth year as we all know that this fell on 5th June, 1979. Let us go on, though we are late in this respect. It is always better late than never. We also wanted and moved that a postage stamp in commemoration of a Trade Unionist be brought out. I am glad to say here that the Government has agreed to bring out a commemoration postage stamp in honour of N. M. Joshi on 5th June, 1980 and this will be the first postage in commemoration of a Trade Unionist! On N. M. Joshi, a number of books have been written, a number of speeches have been made and are going to be made. It will not be possible in the short time available that we are able to enumerate all the qualities of head and heart that he had.

Here I will mention only two of them, in connection with Trade Union movement. Joshi was not as we call a very militant trade unionist. He was a mild-mannered person, but nonetheless, it had been our experience, whenever workers have gone on strike or on any agitation N. M. Joshi always fully supported them till the last. This question is coming up today in many forms. In fact they are legal, illegal, essential, non-essential and what not type of strikes/agitations. These will happen and he knew it all very well. Workers are the weaker section. Weaker section has to and is prepared to sacrifice and suffer anything. But these sacrifices is not just for fun. Circumstances force them and then there is no way out for them. That is why they have to take these extreme steps. Therefore, irrespective of other considerations, irrespective of sometimes personal

views also, he said workers are struggling, and my job is to support them. There are hundreds of instances where Joshi fully supported the struggles upto the end. Sometimes after the struggle has been over, he sat down with the Trade Union people and then said 'you have done this thing and you could have done otherwise'. 'Also, if you had tried other available method or not, if you have found out that the results could have not been achieved otherwise and this could not be avoided ! But his unflinching loyalty to the working class and their struggles has been proved by innumerable instances.

The other thing is about working class unity. As long as he was alive and even when he had left AITUC, he was committed to trade union unity. He was always trying for the unity of Trade Union Movement. He was prepared to sacrifice everything for it. He had been insisting on it, that if the workers are not united, they will not be able to achieve their demands. But if we do unite then the working class can play effective role in national policies and economy and also in changing the society. We may sometimes achieve the demands even without unity but unless this overall unity is achieved, working class is unable to play its due role in national policies. He has always been for it. I hope that when we are remembering him today, paying tributes to him, we remember this and we shall try our level best that these qualities of N. M. Joshi are imbibed by Trade Unions and workers.

SPEECH BY DR. SHANTI PATEL

GENERAL SECRETARY, HIND MAZDOOR SABHA

We have gathered here today to celebrate the centenary of N. M. Joshi. If we have a look at the long life of 76 years of Joshi and particularly latter half of it, 38 years were devoted to Trade Union Movement. We find the person singularly devoted to the cause of the labour and in whatever manner he could help the labour in those days in whatever sphere he was working, we find in his particular life, the saga of service. We also find him fully, unflinchingly committed to the principle of Collective Bargaining. It was he who initiated in this country for the first time, the principle of Collective Bargaining which also meant that there has to be a right to strike. But he also explained that this is some-thing which is to be used with care and caution and as a last weapon.

Many people feel that he was a man of conciliatory and compromising nature. What I found in him is that he was very particular about what he wanted, what the workers wanted, what the trade union wanted before he indulged into action. He always used to say that we must be clear as to what we want and then take the next step. If we are clear about this then many steps are spelt out automatically. We are able to get the success ultimately and we find that whenever strikes were organised, as we find in those days, 1925 or later, on he was always with those workers who sought the help that was necessary, even to feed those striking workers who were starving. But his sympathy was deep for the working class, whether he was functioning at Round Table Conference or on the Central Legislative Assembly or in ILO, we find him campaigning the cause of workers that is why we say he is the Father of the Trade Union Movement.

This was not the only facet of his life. Liberal, as he was, believing, as he believed in moderate views, he always advocated that we should go step by step but we must reach the goal, that destination he always viewed and always liked to march towards it, may be in his own typical way. Again in another important field of social service, he founded a great Institution in Social Service, which has been doing a constructive job and changing life styles of many families.

In another place, in the Legislature also, he made a mark and I believe the whole Trade Union Movement is indebted to him for that monumental Act, viz. Trade Union Act, 1926. That was his first work. So let us take inspiration from the life of this, one of the greatest sons of India trying to build up the Trade Union Movement of his dreams, for which he worked. I know there has been a very important subject for the Seminar, a very appropriate subject, but equally illusive 'trade union unity'. But all the same, we have to strive for it indeed, 'let us not forget the goal, may be step by step but let us move towards the goal' was his ideal. If there is determination, I am sure that the day is not far off whatever may be the difficulties or hurdles that we may be seeing just now may be overcome and there may be a united Trade Union Movement.

Let us not be afraid of Trade Union rivalry, I think it is a part of democratic life. Let us concentrate as to how we can eliminate this rivalry and provide a correct Collective Bargaining agent or a representative union, which Mr Naval Tata certainly would like to have in his own right, as a representative of employers or as a man who understands industrial relations. But it is not easy in our country. There are differences, but as said little earlier, I think we can find the solution with the most vexing problem and we can move a step further in strengthening the Trade Union Movement in this country.

May I only ask all those who are concerned with the trade union movement, all those who believe in his leadership to understand his life, in its proper perspective and see that his ideals are translated into reality as early as possible.

ADDRESS BY SHRI D. S. RAJ

DIRECTOR, ILO OFFICE FOR BHUTAN, INDIA, NEPAL,
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES AND SRILANKA

It is a great privilege for me to be associated with this National Seminar on N. M. Joshi and the Trade Union Movement. Let me, at the outset, congratulate the Central Board for Workers Education for taking the initiative to revive memories of Narayan Malhar Joshi, the social reformer and trade union leader whose contribution to the cause of workers in India and elsewhere puts him in a class by himself.

It was not surprising therefore that such a man should have become associated with the ILO and should have inspired many of its policies and programmes over the years. There are many here who, I am sure, are better able than myself to speak about his immense contributions to the Indian and International trade union movements. Let me, therefore, confine my observations to Joshi's role in shaping the policies and programmes of the ILO. At the same time, I am conscious that Joshi's contribution to the work of the ILO cannot be separated from his contribution to the cause of trade unionism in India. For he advocated, among other things, shorter working hours, medical care, welfare and better housing facilities, workers' education and training in all areas in which the ILO had adopted international labour standards and has been providing technical assistance.

When the International Labour Organisation was established in 1919, the Government of India chose Joshi to represent the Indian workers at the very first International Labour Conference held in Washington from 29 October to 29 November 1919. Since Joshi had not till then actively

participated in workers' struggles nor had he belonged to the working class, there were some voices of protest against his selection as workers' delegate to the ILO Conference. Similar protests were made in 1920 when the Government again nominated Joshi to represent Indian workers at the ILO Maritime Conference. The Government of the day argued that in the absence of any organisation truly representative of workers, it was justified in nominating the workers' delegate. In a way, this argument of the Government led to the establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress and in a sense therefore the ILO served as a catalyst in the establishment of the organised trade union movement in India.

Joshi's connections with the ILO which were established in 1919 lasted till 1948, nearly 30 long years. He represented the Indian workers at numerous ILO conferences. From 1922 to 1934 Joshi was a Deputy Member of the Governing Body of the ILO and from 1934 to 1944 a full Member of the Governing Body. He was elected a Member again in 1946 and remained so until 1948.

At the International Labour Conferences, Joshi's interventions were skillful and he was able to drive home his arguments forcefully and convincingly. At the first International Labour Conference when the question of the application of the provisions of the Convention on Minimum Age in Industry was under discussion, Joshi spoke out against making any concessions to child labour.

Two years later, at the third session of the International Labour Conference Joshi took up the cause of agricultural workers, especially those working in plantations.

At the same session, Joshi made a strong plea for the appointment of Indian nationals on the staff of the International Labour Office. "We, in Asia and especially in India", he said, "want some of our men to be interested in the international labour movement and we want some of our officers

to catch the international spirit. This advantage could not be secured he said, until some members on the staff of the office were from India."

Opposing a proposal to hold the International Labour Conference every two years instead of annually, Joshi argued that these conferences had done the workers of India a great deal of good which would not have been otherwise possible. It would be a tragedy, he said, if these conferences are not held annually and urged that the system of annual conference should not be abandoned. It was not abandoned and the Conference has been meeting annually.

During the twentyseventh session of the Conference Joshi took the opportunity to review the achievements, the successes and the failures of the ILO. He naturally used the situation in India on the basis of judgement and concluded that not much progress had been made in regard to improving real wages, working hours, housing and social insurance. In this connection he blamed the Government for the very slow improvement in the working conditions. He objected to the procedure adopted by the Government of not placing the conventions and recommendations for discussion before the legislature. He suggested that when a government does not ratify a convention it should state the reason for its refusal. This suggestion was accepted and the Constitution of the ILO was amended to provide for the appointment of a committee to look into the progress of the ratification of conventions. As you know, every government is now required to submit each year a report to the committee specifying the reasons for the non-ratification of Conventions.

Joshi was a member of the Governing Body of the ILO for a quarter of a century. It was Joshi who put forward the idea of holding regional conferences in 1925 and he succeeded in its acceptance in 1946. As a result, the Asian Preparatory Conference was held in New Delhi in 1947. As

the seniormost member of the ILO Governing Body, Joshi inaugurated this Conference.

Instances of Joshi's bold interventions in the Conference and in the Governing Body can be quoted endlessly. All these interventions go to show Joshi as an able, ever-alert and an ardent spokesman of workers within the policy-making organs of the ILO. Year after year he spoke for the betterment of working conditions of all workers and especially for the workers in Asia, Africa and the colonial territories. His contributions will remain a lasting testimony to a man wholly dedicated to the cause of human dignity and **welfare**.

With these words I pay my respectful homage to the memory of N. M. Joshi and hope that this Seminar will be guided by the principles for which he stood all through his life.

SPEECH BY SHRI G. RAMANUJAM

GENERAL SECRETARY, INDIAN NATIONAL TRADE UNION
CONGRESS

We have a Central Board for Workers Education functioning for over 20 years now for the whole country. It is therefore, befitting that this organisation remembers and takes advantage of the birth centenary of N. M. Joshi for a discussion in-depth of the several problems facing the workers.

Multiple trade unions exist today and they are likely to continue to exist in the future too. Shri Naval Tata was rightly concerned over the inter-union rivalry and he tried to offer a prescription for solving the problems of inter-union rivalry. He was advocating the ballot system for choosing the representative union. This is over simplifying the solution. He must have known that quite recently the secret ballot system was tried in one of the companies in Bombay, which, apart from other things resulted in considerable damage to the company's property.

I should say the workers education programmes that we have launched upon in our country are yet to realise the basic objectives. 'Unity' is the basic objective to be achieved and it still remains a far cry.

The Elementary Lesson

We have in Mahabharata the story about education of the princes there. All the 106 princes i.e. the Pandavas and the Kauravas— were educated by the same Guru. They were made to sit in the order of their birth, and the Guru started teaching. Yudhishtir was seated first as the eldest,

followed by Duryodhana, Bhima etc. The first lesson the Guru gave was "Satyam Vad Dharmam Char", i.e. "speak the truth and do your duty". This is the basic lesson of life. The teacher asked Yudhishtir, who was seated first, to repeat this first lesson. Yudhishtir stood up in deep thought, but could not repeat the first lesson. Next to him was Duryodhana, and when he was asked, he promptly repeated: "Satyam Vad Dharmam Char". The teacher reprimanded Yudhishtira and praised Duryodhana and asked Yudhishtira to repeat the first lesson at least the next day. He thus gave him another day. On the next day, the same question was put to him but he could not repeat the first lesson. Many more days followed without his being able to repeat that first lesson. He later said "My whole life has been an endeavour to master that first lesson".

Similarly, the trade union movement is yet to master its first lesson, the basic lesson, the lesson of unity. There may be Duryodhanas in Trade Union Movement who could parrot the cry of trade union unity, but that cry means nothing. It is a fact that inter-union rivalry exists. But how to solve it ? Shri Tata said, why not resolve the problem by the ballot box. I repeat it is over simplifying the problem and the solution will be ineffective.

Secret Ballot — No Solution

The problem is not how to identify the bargaining agent, whether by means of membership or check-off or the ballot box. We should know how the defeated union is going to behave. If one union succeeds in ballot and even secures 70% of the votes, the other union, may be 2 or 3 of them which together account for the remaining 30%, are not going to keep quiet. Is Shri Tata suggesting that the unions, which covered the remaining 30% would fade out ? They will combine and see that the efforts of the union with 70% support are made meaningless. It is as much the behaviour of the recognised union that is going to decide the quality of industrial relations as the behaviour of the un-

recognised unions. Therefore, whether it is the ballot box or whether it is a membership or the check-off system, the real issue ultimately is how all the unions are going to behave.

Let me illustrate the position. We have on the Indian Railways two 'Federations recognised at the national levels and their affiliates at the zonal levels'. On the railway station platform an area of 6' x 4' is allotted to each of these two recognised unions. Whenever they have to exhibit any notices, they will have to fix it at the allotted space. But the unrecognised unions post their notices all over the platform and even on trains. Recognised unions have got only these two places. But the unrecognised unions seem to have an advantage, greater freedom, as they have nothing to lose. The recognised unions have to dance in shackles, and therefore, is not spectacular or attractive. The unrecognised unions are resorting to free style and, therefore, more spectacular. That is why the behaviour of the unrecognised union is more important. How are you going to regulate that behaviour ?

My only fear is that the ballot box will only add to our problems.

Shri Tata was referring to our country being ruled by the ballot box, and he asked if so why not industrial relations too be regulated by the same method ? I think the comparison is not proper. While, in industrial relations, we want one-union-for-one-industry, in a parliamentary democracy we do not want one party for one country, for that would be negation of democracy. Therefore, the two are not really comparable. If we have our industrial relations also riddled with writ petitions, stay orders, defections, every day, then what would happen ? There will not be any production atmosphere in any plant, there will be only election atmosphere in all plants. Do we want that ? Already the productivity of our industry leaves much to be desired, and if we inject this election also into it, even the

little productivity that we manage to get out of our industries will further dwindle down.

I would, therefore, suggest let us find out which unions can deliver the goods, and the best way to do it is to remember that payment of subscription is also a vote, a sure, solid vote. And if we are afraid that the present method of membership verification is liable to manipulation, the ballot system also will not be free from such complaints, in a country where even booth-capturing is not unheard of. The introduction of "check-off system" provides a golden mean—a means of instant verification. There need not be any difficulties in adopting this system. Therefore, I would suggest that while we decide on the manner of choosing the representative union, let us also lay down code of conduct both for the recognised and unrecognised unions and choose the most representative union through check-off system.

Payment of Bonus Act

The Labour Minister in his inaugural address invited positive suggestions from us, and also referred to the proposal to amend the Payment of Bonus Act as well as the amendment to the Industrial Relations Act. It would be, therefore, only fitting if I offer a few suggestions in that regard.

In regard to bonus, the law was expected to settle the dispute on bonus, but unfortunately the law has failed to do that, because we have got diverse conditions under which the single act formula has to be applied. We have labour-intensive, capital-intensive, large industries, medium and small scale, proprietary concerns, public limited companies, private limited companies, partnership, public sector, co-operatives, boards, commission, trust, as well as competitive and non-competitive, controlled and uncontrolled. Now for all these situations we have only one formula under the Act. The Act attempted to prescribe one solution to diverse con-

ditions of employer-employee relations or the profit-making capacity or nature or structure of the undertaking. Therefore, the law has not been able to satisfy all of them, and frequently employers and workers have been compelled to circumvent the Act by agreement. And now even the minimum bonus of 8.33% has ceased to be minimum. Also 20% has ceased to be the maximum.

We have in our every day experience found that when an employer tells us "I have suffered a loss, or earned only a nominal profit, and, therefore, only 8.33% is payable, that too because the law requires me to pay that." The trade union leader goes back to the workers and tells the same thing to the workers, advises them to take the 8.33% and settle the dispute at that. The workers turn round and tell the trade union leader "for this, why do we want a union? If the law gives 8.33%, an employer is giving just that, why do we want a union and you as our leader? Even without you we will get that. Therefore, what are you getting for us?"

The trade union leader then goes back to the employer and says that the 8.33% is what the law gives, but "what are you giving?" The employer says, "Well, I am giving the 8.33%. The union leader replies, "8.33% is what the law gives and anything over and above that is alone to be taken as given by you." This applies even where 20% is payable under the Act, for here again, it is the Act which gives the 20%. So negotiation starts at how much more than Bonus Act? So whatever the law gives has not been taken as Bonus. Whatever is secured by collective bargaining over and above than what the law gives is alone taken as bonus.

Then why have a law? I think the law is like the railway time table. Somebody asked "if every train is coming late, why have a time table at all? The answer given was if only we have a time table we will know how late the trains are? Similarly, when everybody is trying to get something more than Bonus Act, why have that Act? The

answer is the same, for only then we will know how much more bonus we have got than under the Act.

Let me now make a positive suggestion. I suggest the government may legislate for only the minimum bonus (8.33%), rather provide for 13 months pay for 12 months work, and leave the rest above this minimum for collective bargaining. Legislation can be very simple then. We have got a cumbersome legislation on bonus and a very complicated formula under it and we could not achieve the objective. Anything above minimum can be bargained between the parties and settled on the basis of collective bargaining. Where collective bargaining fails for any reason, we can create a special machinery for resolving bonus disputes. Bonus is an annual recurring dispute in every plant. And, therefore, let there be a new culture developed that wherever collective bargaining fails, it will go for arbitration by a Bipartite Board, and where they too fail to reach an agreement to leave it to the decision of an Umpire. There should be a Standing Board of Arbitration for bonus alone, at Central, State and industry's level, so that these disputes are not allowed to be mixed up with other disputes and thus drag on for years.

We have heard that government wants to link bonus to productivity. We are not against that idea, provided productivity can be correctly measured. Otherwise, we will be starting another dispute on productivity in addition to the one on bonus. The original dispute on bonus would be forgotten and we will be getting into difficult and complicated situations. Where we can measure productivity with reasonable degree of satisfaction of both the parties, there is no objection to link bonus to productivity. Also there are some industries where government controls the prices. When government fixes the prices, the prices will be fixed at such a level that workmen will not get anything more than 8.33%. In such cases, linking bonus to productivity will be an advantage. Or, if we want the total performance, not only productivity-for productivity is only one fac-

tor, then sales, profits, capital investment and other factors too can be taken into account while deciding the quantum of bonus.

A new Law on Industrial Relations

As for the Industrial Relations Bill also about which the Labour Minister has spoken, we have all been unanimous that the old Act of 1947 has outlived its utility and it is no longer effective in maintaining industrial peace. The new Bill which was brought forward sometime last year by the previous government earned the unanimous condemnation of all trade unions, notwithstanding the inter-union rivalry. Therefore, some really new legislation is called-for something new and not just tinkering with old one. Just combining the Trade Union Act, Bonus Act, Industrial Disputes Act will not make them comprehensive, only they will all be bound in one volume. That will satisfy nobody.

It is now conceded that labour should have the right to participate in the management of industries. The "directive principles of State policy" have now been amended to include "labour participation in management of industries". Why not attempt a really new industrial relations Law to govern relations between the two partners in industries, rather than the perpetuation and regulation of employer-employee and master-servant relations. That might be a new direction and will make labour learn a new approach to industrial relations. This will revolutionise our Industrial Relations system.

Labour Welfare

The Labour Minister also indicated in his speech about the labour welfare activities being manned by trade unions themselves. I think this should have been taken up by trade unions themselves without being left to the Minister to mention about it. But we know the trade union situation in our country. Even Workers' Education has to be

done by Government. It is not a happy state of affairs. And when government wants to educate workers you know what results the education will produce.

It should be the trade unions role to run the welfare schemes. A trade union is not intended to merely for fighting for higher wages. It should be the trade union's duty also to see that the workers lead a better quality of life within their current earnings while fighting for higher wages. How best they use the money they earned should also be the concern of trade unions. Unions must also concentrate on improving the quality of life of the workmen.

If the progress of our country is not all that we desired, it is not only the failure of the employer or of government but also of trade union movement. There has been a tripartite contribution for the failure. There will, therefore, have to be a tripartite rethinking and initiative on the subject.

I am happy that the Labour Minister mentioned about the revival of the tripartite consultative system, which has gone on purposefully for a number of years. And let us hope through a tripartite effort we will be able to pull this country towards achieving its economic and social goals.

It will be a fitting tribute to the memory of N. M. Joshi if the trade union movement does some real heart-searching and acts as a positive factor for building up the economy of the country, simultaneously ensuring social justice to all, including the unorganised and the poorest in the remotest parts of our country.

contribution of n. m. joshi to indian trade union movement and social welfare

FIRST SESSION 10th APRIL 1980

- Chairman : Dr. M. A. Chansarkar,
Director, CBWE.
- Paper on : Contribution of N. M. Joshi
to Indian Trade Union
Movement and Social
Welfare
- Presented by : Dr. M. S. Gore,
Director, Tata Institute of
Social Sciences, Bombay.
- Rapporteur : Shri V. K. Pitkar,
Dy. Director (Edn.) CBWE.

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The presentation of paper on 'Contribution of N. M. Joshi to Indian Trade Union movement (Annexure) by Dr. M. S. Gore, was followed by discussions. Following is the gist of speeches by different participants.

Rajni Mukerjee

I don't know whether I should say this that I was a close associate of Joshi because I was one of the militant leaders of the movement at the time. Late N. M. Joshi had already been a very matured figure in the social activity of the country. I entered into Trade Union Movement in the middle of 1931, when All India Trade Union Congress session took place at Calcutta under the Presidentship of Shri Subhash Chandra Bose. I was then a communist. There

was another split, N. M. Joshi had already left. The AITUC (Red) was formed and I was the organiser and also a member of Red AITUC. I met N. M. Joshi, on the platform of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. It was a question of confrontation between young and old. But, it was a new confrontation because we could understand each others' point of view. Our struggle in the All India Railwaymen's Federation continued to give the objective views of the movement instead of personal egoism. We literally listened to Com. Giri, but we tolerated Com. Joshi for sometime. He saw, he had been opposed but he did not obstruct us. He was agitating for the better deal for the workers.

When this subject (contribution of N. M. Joshi to trade union movement) came to my attention that it was going to be discussed, I was thinking of the time, the period when he was born and the period of time of his maturity. It has been pointed out that his early work was in the Social Service League. It was a period in which the British agency was thinking whether India needed industrial development. The Industrial Commission had been appointed to assess industrial requirements of the country that was much before Second World War. Wages of the workers as reported by the Industrial Commission were hardly Rs. 9/- per month in Bombay. The Jute workers were getting the same in Calcutta. The highest wage in Bombay was Rs. 35/-. In Calcutta it was Rs. 33/-. This was the background when Com. N. M. Joshi started work.

Similarly in the Eastern Zone of India, the Labour Movement took start from of Social Service in the early nineteenth century in Calcutta. Mohamedan Association had been formed with Maulana Azad. This was in regard to the amelioration of the conditions of Seamen. Goans and Portuguese were recruited in large number as seamen in Calcutta and they started a new unit of Trade Union, a sort of Portuguese club to ameliorate their conditions. I am comparing the similarity between the social service side of the work in earlier days of the Trade Union Movement

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brought him in contact with the concept of trade unionism of the West. Another very interesting thing is found in the record at the time when Ahmedabad Labour Association was formed, N. M. Joshi wrote a letter to Mahatma Gandhi requesting that the Mazdoor Mahajan, Ahmedabad be affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress. Mahatmaji replied that the time was not yet ripe to do so. Of course, Shri N. M. Joshi did not enter into the controversy with Mahatmaji on the relevance of his decision. After the split in 1929 National Federation of Trade Union continued to exist separately although we know the efforts were made to bring about an understanding, partly at the discussions in All India Trade Union Congress session in 1932 at Madras, when I became its Organising Secretary. I had a occasion to visit Kanpur during the next session of the AITUC in the year, 1933. Then I met Mr. Hariharnath Shastri and others who were members of National Federation of Trade Unions. They joined the AITUC. Hariharnath Shastri organised the session of trade union congress at Kanpur. So I don't think that he could join the AITUC without some sort of understanding with Shri N. M. Joshi, that they would like to come back in the fold of AITUC the Central Labour Organisation sooner or later.

Comrade Joshi's behaviour and approach to us would be found in the way he conducted the Railwaymen's Federation. It was a very effective platform at that time. The minimum wage that was fixed in the First Pay commission was Rs. 30/-, but the demand was for Rs. 60/- and it had not been agreed to. I know Comrade Joshi was of the same view for the fixation of the minimum wage at Rs. 60/-. We know that between the world war First and the Second, conditions had changed greatly and except for a few Commissions, which were appointed during this period to improve the conditions of employees of the Central Government and bring a change in remuneration, there was very little effort made to compensate the loss in the income of the workers between 1940 and 1947 (second world war). The report which was submitted to the government was

accepted but Rs. 60/- was not accepted as a minimum wage, (but only Rs. 30/-). That gap of Rs. 30/- which was made in the report and the proportionate gap in the scale of semi-skilled and skilled workers has been perpetuated even today. The work of Pay Commission I could not forget. The discussions which we had with him in the Pay Commission meetings. He was behaving as if he was not a member of the Pay Commission. He was prompting me to say proper things, that as a young radical at that time I should demand more on behalf of the workers. This I can't forget. His concern for workers was the same even though he was a member of the Commission.

Later on, when there were several Organisations of labour in the country, I remember I wrote a letter to him and suggested that there should be some sort of confederation to be formed. I remember, when we met later he mentioned of my letter. He said "your letter is still before me on the table." I am thinking of it. He never forgot a little suggestion that came from any of his co-workers. I never found in his behaviour that because we had differences in approach on trade union movement, he looked down us. As a matter of fact, he was very sympathetic, he appreciated our position, but you must understand that he was part of an era which preceded us, was the product of the different times undergoing different changes in nation. The struggle that was going on from 1879 to 1947 marked the period of a rise of extremism in the Indian politics.

When Independence came in 1947, Joshi was about 67 years old. The best part of his life was gone. But Comrade Joshi continued encouraging trade union organisations in the public sector. There was growth of public sector organisations like Post & Telegraphs, Defence and other sectors. They were organising and there was an improvement. There was a encouragement, but they were away from the main stream of the Trade Union Congress and the Trade Union congress appeared to be at that time, the main

centre. When we were speaking the voice of labour from that organisation and for the entire period of time, Mr. N. M. Joshi was there representing that voice. He was always thinking about the labour movement and the working class. Today, how many people think about the trade union movement. So many people were there at that time who were thinking about the trade union movement and toiling people but here was a man who had devoted himself to its cause and sufferings. He was devoting all attention on how they could be organised and how they could go forward inspite of all political differences. He never

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But he was very cautious, as his attitude shows in 1927, when the resolution against Simon Commission was passed. It shows the type of nationalist he was. He was against it. The resolution of the trade union congress session, demanded the withdrawal of the British Labour Parliamentary men, who were members of Simon Commission. Now you see his ideal. He was a nationalist but he never mixed his political views with that of a trade union work. This was a very important distinguishing factor in the life of a man who voiced on Indian Labour.

This single minded devotion to the cause of labour distinguishes him from any other personality of that period and from that point of view I think he was a great man of his time. With these few words I pay my tribute to a man for whom I still have great regard. As young man I fought with him but I still respect him today.

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J. C. Dixit.

Indeed the contribution of Shri N. M. Joshi to the Indian Labour Movement was great and unique. He knew the art of galvanising myriad strains and make them move. This was the one contribution that N. M. Joshi has made.

N. M. Joshi was the first person to realise that legislature or say Parliament could usefully be used as a tool of improving the conditions of labour.

I would wish my colleagues to take note of some facts. Prior to Joshi there was a union of railway employees of BB and CI which came into existence some time in 1887. It was founded by Shri C. P. Tewari who was 21 years elder than Joshi.

I have not been able to ascertain the date of its origin, but I have come across a document which shows that it was affiliated to the Indian National Congress in 1888. In 1898 a Hindi Daily was published from Allahabad by Madan Mohan Malviyaji and this Mazdoor (C. P. Tewari), who was working in a railway workshop contributed five articles in Hindi to that paper. They were on economics of railways. Shri Tewari's articles in Hindi were published almost at the same time, when articles of Ranade had appeared in some of India's economic journals and Times of India of Bombay highlighting various aspects of Indian economics.

The Royal Commission appointed in 1912 has taken note of Tewari's work. Very few people know that he published a book in English in 1916 on Agricultural Cooperatives. He also wrote a book in 1919 on the Economics of Indian Railways. May I know, which of the presidents of Indian Central Organisations of Labour have produced a book on pure economics of the industry in which they had organised labour ?

In 1916 when the foundation of BHU was laid Malviyaji invited this worker to inaugurate the foundation ceremony of the University. He was a person who was to have convened the Railwaymen's Conference in October, 1920, but because it had been decided to convene the first session of the AITUC, at the same place and almost at the same time, it was postponed. Therefore, the first session of Railway-

men's Conference could take place only in February, 1921. He was elected as President of AITUC at Madras in 1926. He retired from the AITUC in 1929.

It is generally said that N. M. Joshi did not belong to any political party. Historically it is not true. In 1919 when there was a split in the Congress, he oscillated towards Indian Liberal Federation, and became its secretary. In the proceedings of the Indian Liberal Federation as recorded in December, 1920, one will find a mention of a resolution demanding legislation of the Indian Trade Union Act. The text of the resolution placed in the Central Assembly by Shri N. M. Joshi in 1921 corresponds to the text of the resolution adopted by the Indian Liberal Federation. Therefore, to believe that Shri N. M. Joshi in his trade union work had no political motivation is not correct. He was a convinced liberal belonging to the Indian Liberal Federation. I must however underline that inspite of all that, his contributions are distinct in two fields.

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Prof. V. B. Kamath

When Board decided to have this seminar on the initiative of Shri V. B. Karnik, we were very clear in our minds, that we will be examining more about the contribution of N. M. Joshi, but simultaneously contributions of other founder of the Trade Union Movement also will be considered.

It was my great fortune to be associated in some manner personally with N. M. Joshi because I was a very young man when I came first in contact with him in 1951. It was the very late aspect of his life. I was very much impressed by the sincerity and devotion of a seminar person who used to come in the evening to the Servants of India Society Building where the Social Service League

Office is still located and sit for two or three hours, to meet the people who came to give lectures.

There were two types of courses, one was for Social Workers Training and the other course on Trade Union Movement. It is very interesting to know how he introduced these courses. I do not know what, I would call this Social Welfare aspect of the Trade Union Movement. He was the first man in my opinion to speak in terms of social approach to the problems of labour. I want to place before you one interesting circular signed by N. M. Joshi himself; this is dated 27-12-1924, when the Social Service League introduced a course, the Social Workers Training Class. The wording of the circular is very stimulating and interesting. "The need for the some kind of arrangement for training of social workers has been felt for some time and a meeting of the persons interested in this problem, was, therefore called by the Social Service League to outline the Scheme for such a training class." In other words, he did not just introduce it himself.

The proper way of introducing the course was through democratic approach. First we must have a discussion with the people who are likely to take advantage of the Scheme. He first convened a meeting of such people and then approached Social Service League to outline the Scheme for such a training class. "The Sub-Committee appointed at the meeting to make the necessary arrangements for the training class has decided to arrange lectures." It was a democratic technique that was introduced at that phase of our movement and I would mention a few subjects included in the course. Principles of Social Work, Organisation of Charity, Relief of Poverty, Directed games, and Public Recreation (what we now call Group work) Community Centres, Adult Education, Public Health, child welfare, Social Hygiene and Welfare work in Factories. All this information was given in the documents brought out by N. M. Joshi. He has pointed out that the main drawback of the labour class in India is a universal illiteracy.

He therefore, gave utmost importance to welfare work in factories.

I would just like to mention the names of people who lectured in 1924, Prof. P. A. Wadia, (one of the very progressive among the academic people), Dr. G. S. Ghurye, Principal, M. J. Anita, Mr. W. E. D. Ward, Dr. Miss Jerbanoo Mistri, Mr. L. B. Nayak, Principal, H. R. Hamley, Mr. H. D. Chhatrapati and Mr. S. B. Kulkarni. The circular dated 17-1-1925 indicates this was the first course undertaken by the Social Service League.

I want to spend just a few minutes on the other course, which came into existence specially on his initiative but under the direction of Shri V. B. Karnik, who is here with us today. That is mentioned in the circular in February, 1951 issued by N. M. Joshi who was general secretary of Social Service League then. That was my first point of contact with Mr. Joshi. "The Social Service League is contemplating to organise during the year four sessions of Trade Union Training Class." Now the contents of this course is useful, because wherever we have to use different techniques he associated appropriate people for different types of courses.

One of the interesting features seen here is that it was not a continuous course. It was spread over four or five different months: one week, at a time; that is a sort of sandwich type. Two of these sessions would be of a general character, intended to make Trade Union workers familiar with general information about the principles and practice of the Trade Union Movement. "It is proposed to organise the two sessions in May and November for about a fortnight on each occasion.

The other two sessions proposed to be organised in March and August will be of a specialised type. It is intended to devote the March Session to a discussion on the problems of production and productivity and the other session to negotiation and Collective Bargaining. Each session will last for a week or ten days. Mr. V. B. Karnik

as before will be incharge of the Class. He is drawing up the syllabus of studies for all the courses and arranging to secure the services of competent lecturers. He has suggested, however, it would be better to finalise the programme and fix a day only after consultation with the representative of the Trade Unions. It has therefore, been decided to hold the meeting of the trade unions and other interested persons at the office of the Social Service League on Monday, the 3rd March, at 6.00 p.m."

Lastly I want to mention that among the contemporaries of N. M. Joshi, I would like to mention the contribution made by Mr. B. P. Wadia. Very rightly mention was made by Mr. Dixit regarding the veteran railway worker Mr. C. P. Tewari's contribution to the Labour movement. I would say one of the first labour unions organised in the early part of this century was started by B. P. Wadia at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, Madras, in 1921, apart from his role relating to tramway workers of Madras. The first strike took place in January, 1921 and on 1st March, 1921 the Central Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution moved by Mr. N. M. Joshi calling upon the Government to frame a law for the regulation and protection of trade unions. Eventually the Indian Trade Unions Act was passed in 1926 and it was brought into force on 1st May, 1927.

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V. B. Karnik

I would like to suggest a couple of changes in the thesis put forward by Dr. M. S. Gore who stated that N. M. Joshi did not belong to any political party. It has been made clear by Mr. Dixit and others that he was a staunch liberal and was attached to the Liberal Federations and continued to be so through-out his life. So I would say as a matter of fact he began his life in politics, continued his life in politics and died when he was in association with various political movements and through out his life he was a member of a legislature.

Then he was a prominent participant at the ILO Conferences. He attended all those conferences as a leader of the Indian Workers movement. And no doubt he was a Liberal and the merit of his politics was that because of his liberalism, political differences never came in the way of his trade union work and he was able to work along with a number of people even though they differed from his political views.

As Mr. Dixit has pointed out, he worked with Communists, he worked with Socialists, he worked with a large number of other elements. His merit was that he did not allow political differences to come in the way of his trade union work. You will therefore find nothing wrong in Joshi being a Liberal and continuing to be a Liberal and as such working with all elements in the trade union field.

Another change that I would suggest is that the sharp differentiation that Dr. Gore has made between welfare work and trade union work or the various stages to which he has pointed attention should, I think be modified. The trade union movement includes within itself social welfare movement and collective bargaining and agitation and strikes and various other things. As a matter of fact when Joshi started working in trade unions in 1919-20 he started building trade unions and even at that time he was carrying on social welfare work. There is no sharp distinction between Joshi's welfare work and trade union work and he was doing both simultaneously. So instead of regarding them as successive phases, we should regard them as a continuous phase and, according to N. M. Joshi trade union work should cover all these phases and that, I believe, would be a proper way of looking at N. M. Joshi's trade union work. He started the union work in 1920 and not in 1930 and even after 1948 he was connected with welfare work because of his association with the Social Service League continued throughout his life. As a member of the Social Service League where he was a dominant figure he participated in a number of social welfare activities.

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S. A. Dange

I was first acquainted with Shri N. M. Joshi in 1924. He was the member of the Servants of India Society. Shri N. M. Joshi was a very good liberal and also a person interested in labour welfare. That was his reputation in 1924 and 25.

In 1928 textiles strike took place in Bombay. Joshi was not in favour of strike. He said 'I do not want that strike should take place and if it will take place, whether it will be successful'. During this strike the largest number of mandays were lost. Joshi headed the strike committee which consisted of union leaders belonging to different ideologies and Joshi carried all of them with him till successful end of the strike.

Joshi successfully pleaded with the then Police Commissioner Mr. Kelly and persuaded him to release the financial aid received by the Strike Committee from the International Organisation at Moscow. When the Police Commissioner objected to it, Joshi said, 'It is from the Trade Unions and you cannot stop the money being delivered to me'. It was delivered. He said 'I will use it as I like in accordance with the instructions of the Strike Committee, in which I said before, the Communists are members'. He did stick to it. He never neglected his principles and politics whatever they were.

Prior to 1928, picketing at the gates of mills during strike or at any other time was considered illegal and union leaders were arrested for this purpose.

Then Joshi went to the Police Commissioner and said this right is exercised by the British Trade Unions. And the Commissioner said "Mr. N. M. Joshi— I am still the card-holder of my Union in London." N. M. Joshi said "Then use that card here, what is the use of holding it in London? Here you are holding only the position of the Police Commissioner and your obstruction in strike acti-

vities and picketing is wrong. Is picketing allowed in London or not?" The Police Commissioner said 'Yes, picketing is allowed in London'. 'Then why could it not be allowed here?' 'Mr. Joshi you know Indian Workers are illiterate and may become violent". Joshi said 'When they become violent your police are there. Two pickets of Government of India, Government of Bombay, and the side". So first time legal picketing was admitted by the Government of India, Government of Bombay, and the Police in the general strike of 1928 and they then started laying down rules for it. You must ensure that you are not within 10 feet of distance from the main gate. Such humorous things were there. Then we raised one question. If the mill has four gates then what to do. After two months they thought of it that if a mill has got four gates then how many pickets should be allowed? So I am telling you through what circumstances he had to go and along with him we also, and how he developed in the way we developed. So the man was capable of change and the change in the norms in the reverse gear.

Some people start only one gear that is the reverse gear. They have no forward gear. But N. M. Joshi was not that kind of car or tank. He had all the gears that were necessary to go forward.

The main thing I can say about N. M. Joshi in the trade union field is that he felt the unions should not be afraid of a general strike and also of masses going into action. He said if there was a common action we join it. Some times eyebrows are raised in AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC and all they have joined the common action of Bombay Bandh. Joshi had said, trade unions are cutting each other's throat.

The trade union movement has got various currents, it has got various elements, the point is : Are you with the masses or against the masses? As a liberal he was immediately against the strike but not when he saw the masses on the streets.

Some of you might remember the row created on a voting on the currency exchange rate in 1927, and whole of the nationalist group in India went against N. M. Joshi voting for the thing which at that time the Congress lobby in the Assembly did not like. But then the thing expected from the liberal is gigantic and slogan of the strike that was not his characteristic. He is thought of a liberal politician—a very mild man.

In the later days N. M. Joshi would not change even with regard to Servants of India Society. They said Mr. Joshi you better enter deal with Communists or with us', and the tragedy was he picked up his luggage and walked out of Servants of India Society. Ultimately he was thrown out by his old colleagues in the Servants of India Society and the Social Service League because he stuck to his one principle to be with the masses, with trade unionism and with communists. They then said, please be part and they parted.

In the company of two other junior members he left that place and went to live somewhere near Kennedy Bridge and where he breathed his last. He finished his lunch and sat in his usual easy chair with his cigarette. That was the way peacefully he passed. With great hatred he was kicked out of the Servants of India Society who formed the Society and with absolute determination he went out with principles. Loyal to his comrades and his companions and so left the name in such a way that ultimately we are holding a National Seminar on N. M. Joshi here.

Joshi was throughout consistent in his thinking about the betterment of workers and was faithful to the trade union movement till last. Joshi was independent in his views and stuck to his principles under any circumstances. Joshi's greatness lies in his capabilities to change with times. He was neither afraid of strike nor afraid of action by the masses. He was a man of masses and remained with them till his death.

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Arvind Buch

I will not be able to speak about my association with N. M. Joshi as our brother Dange. When I thought about the participation in this Seminar, I thought whether, there was any correspondence between Textile Labour Association and N. M. Joshi. I found two letters and all the three issues about Trade Union—Tomorrow, Trade Union Unity and N. M. Joshi all are woven in these letters between Textile Labour Association and N. M. Joshi. I will read out the letter written by N. M. Joshi from the AITUC, Proctor Road, Girgaum, Bombay-4 on 22nd June, 1944 to Shri G. L. Nanda—

“You know that since the AITUC was established, on several occasions, efforts were made to persuade the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association and other unions associated with it to join the All India Organisation. I feel that on behalf of the AITUC I should make another effort and hence this letter. In requesting you again to join the AITUC, I would like to place before you some special considerations.

In the first place, while effecting a merger between the AITUC and the National Trade Union Federation, the constitution has been changed. A provision has been made making 3/4 majority necessary for the passing of political resolutions for declaration of strikes by the AITUC, and for affiliation to any foreign organisation. This is a safeguard to prevent decisions being taken on some of the most important and controversial questions by bare majority.

Secondly, I may also bring to your notice a resolution passed by the General Council giving freedom to affiliated Trade Unions as regards their attitude towards the present war. Although this resolution refers only to a particular questions, it has now practically become the general policy of the AITUC to allow full freedom to affiliated Unions on controversial matters.

Thirdly, there is now a general desire on the part of the Trade Union leaders to put the Unions on sound basis. I strongly feel that if the Ahmedabad Union and the associated Unions, whose work is being done so efficiently, join the AITUC, they will be of great assistance to bring about improvement in this matter.

Moreover, I feel that in the times through which we are passing and in the immediate future if the interests of the working classes in India are to be effectively protected, the All-India organisation must be made as strong as we can make it. Your Unions which are strong and enjoy good status in the country, will greatly add to the strength of the AITUC if you join it.

Lastly, I would like to state that among the various groups which form the AITUC there is a general desire for the maintenance of unity and with that object in view they generally show themselves ready for mutual adjustment and compromise.

I hope the considerations which I have placed before you will enable you to decide to join the AITUC and thus help the working class movement in the country. I need hardly assure you that if you decide to join, all sections in the AITUC will welcome you warmly.

I hope you and your associates will give earnest consideration to this letter and let me know early what you propose to do"

Then, this letter was replied by Shri G. Nanda on 29th January, 1945, as under.

"With deep regret I conveyed to you in Bombay through our friends of the Kamgar Seva Sangh, our conclusion that the Textile Labour Association, Ahmedabad, was not in a position to apply for affiliation to the All India Trade Union Congress at the time. I learnt subsequently

that the oral message was not communicated to you immediately. For this I am sorry. I gave the facts to Mr. Khedgikar who must have explained to you the reasons for the delay.

A reply, in writing, to your letter of the 22nd June 1944 had to be postponed further because our Advisory Committee could meet formally in Ahmedabad only very recently. The delay occurred owing to unavoidable reasons, my long period of illness being one of them.

It was very kind of you to address us for the purpose of securing our participation in the work of the Trade Union Congress. You have made mention of the previous efforts to persuade us to join the Trade Union Congress. I may say we need no persuasion at all to do what in normal circumstances would be a simple duty. In fact, it should be a positive attraction. If we have held back so far, it is because of our sense of duty to the working class, in relation to our own conception of their true interests. It gives me some satisfaction, however, to let you know that during the last few years, our contact with various friends in the Trade Union Congress has brought us much closer to one another, and led to a much better understanding of our respective points of view.

We appreciate very much the considerations set out in your letter to overcome the reluctance we have felt so far in joining the Trade Union Congress.

It has given us real pleasure to know that very earnest efforts are being made to place the affiliated unions on a sound footing, the foremost need being to bring the membership returns of each Union into close correspondence with the number of workers paying their dues regularly at each wage payment. We all know that the practice of putting up bloated figures of membership is a formidable obstacle in the way of developing strong Unions and those who indulge in it are enemies of the working class, and

should be treated as such. You are of course doing your very best to tackle the problem. It was my intention to go round and see the conditions in the various parts of the country for myself. I would have felt very happy if I could have made a favourable report to my Committee. Unfortunately my health broke down, and it was not found possible to pursue the matter in the desired direction. I believe if the process to which you have referred progresses far and fast enough, early attainment of the end we have in view would be very much facilitated. We have also been considering whether we would find in the Trade Union Congress a large enough element which would share our view of our duties and obligations and with which we could cooperate in a spirit of mutual trust and comradeship unaffected by personal intrigue or partisan manoeuvre. It is my hope that in this respect, too, the situation would improve as time passes. I have to thank you very much for your personal exertion, to make things as smooth and favourable as you could".

The situation in 1948 has changed little. The very fact that the Trade Union Movement Seminar is being associated with N. M. Joshi's name and the subject is also Trade Union Unity, shows that the difficult situation which was existing before 40 years, is existing even now and I may only say that during these four decades we have not improved. However, I wish that whatever may be the political differences between the Trade Union leaders as far as the handling of the labour issue at the top level and by the bureaucracy about the implementation of various legislation in the country, it is high time, when the Trade Union may evolve simple procedure of referring these things without creating any obstacles which may not be necessary.

I should like to mention, that if such a scheme is being proposed to the Government for this purpose and if Government do not heed to it, we can again consider as to what can be done further. But I do not think that in the

present day situation the Government will be in a position to suppress the voice of the United Trade Union, if it is purely on the industrial issue and in the implementation of the whatever defective law at the hands of bureaucracy in this country. This will assist workers to solve their grievances arising out of defective implementation of labour laws.

We still hold N. M. Joshi in high respect because in those days, he worked for the Trade Unions when it was very difficult to get the services of such devoted persons.

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Dr. M. K. Pandhe

There is a special characteristic of N. M. Joshi who was prepared to work in the trade union movement along with persons owing allegiance to various political trends. Prior to independence all political trends in the country were working with communists in AITUC. Even persons like Jawaharlal Nehru, Hariharnath Shastri and so many other congressmen and even the Socialists were also working in the AITUC. So, the union functionaries were in a position to cooperate in a single organisation eventhough there were various political trends in the trade union movement who also played an important role in AITUC. They may not be a member of the political party for a longer period, but still they were working with politicians. That one aspect of Joshi's life has a special significance in today's circumstances.

Today, there are many divisions in the trade union movement. Government says that one of the causes of disunity in the trade union movement is multiplicity of the trade unions. It is considered to be due to the role of the political parties and the politicians in the trade union

movement. Joshi was always prepared to work with political leaders holding different political ideologies. This aspect of the N. M. Joshi's life proves that despite political differences we can work together.

Unfortunately, he disassociated himself from the AITUC in 1949 but still he was always feeling the urge for unity in the trade union movement. At the end of his life, he wanted to propose some formula for trade union unity. He had a desire to see that all the trade unions come together and work unitedly because it alone would increase the collective bargaining strength of the trade union movement. Therefore he made efforts to bring together all the sections in the trade union movement. But he could not succeed in this mission during his life time.

Another aspect of N. M. Joshi's thinking was that he was not only sympathetic to the cause of the workers but he was prepared to join hands with militants in the trade union movement to protect the T.U. rights of the workers. We have to take into account the type of the trade union movement prevailing in those days and the repressive measures of the imperialist Govt. the trade union movement had to bear during twenties. The association of N. M. Joshi with the trade union movement is to be seen in the real perspective. Because in those days, trade union movement was always considered as a conspiracy against government, and at that time, N. M. Joshi associated himself with that type of movement and helped the working class in its struggle for trade union rights.

The communists were working with N. M. Joshi on many issues, they would seek his advise and opinion and consult him from time to time. I therefore do not agree with Dr. Gore when he says that he tolerated persons like Com. S. V. Parulekar and Com. Godavari Parulekar who worked with him in Servants of India Society and later on turned to Communism. Com. Joshi's relations with both of them were very cordial despite differences. The proper

assessment will be that he was prepared to work with others inspite of opposition in the political field.

Another aspect is what Mr. Dixit has pointed out in respect of Mr. Tewari. I agree with him that persons like Tewari who arose from the rank of workers are forgotten in the history of the trade union movement. But still, why people call N. M. Joshi as father of the Trade Union Movement? Because he played an important role in building the all-India perspective of the trade union movement. This aspect of N. M. Joshi's life has got a special relevance and he played important role in bringing together several persons of different political views and brought them together on common platform. So, he is popularly called "Father of the Trade Union Movement." Many a time, people say Gandhiji is the Father of the Nation that doesn't mean that no nation existed before Gandhiji.

He was liberal of a different type. He was also a fighter against injustice. As Bertrand Russel despite being a liberal fought against nuclear weapons and for world peace in the last days of his life and worked with communists though he was not a communist. N. M. Joshi also fought till the end of his life for protecting the interests of the working class. He sided with the workers and played an important role in building the trade union movement in early days. In the papers regarding foundation of the AITUC, you will find that even Lala Lajpat Rai in his first presidential address observed the impact of the Soviet Revolution on the Indian working class movement. The international and national political developments of our country also had impact on the thinking of N. M. Joshi. His reactions to these developments were positive in many respects and that is why he could work with radicals. In this respect his liberalism was different from several other contemporary liberals.

G. Ramanujam

I feel I am not qualified to assess the contribution of N. M. Joshi to the trade union movement, because I had no direct contact with him in his trade union or other activities. Whether he was a conservative, a liberal or a revolutionary, whether he can be labelled in one manner or the other, one thing is prominent that the trade union leaders are not forgotten in this country. Even long after passing away of Shri Joshi, we have a seminar in his name and his work. In the assessment of his work, it is natural that some degree of subjective element gets introduced and therefore there may be differences in the assessment. But one thing is obvious from the letter Shri Buch read from Shri Joshi to Shri Nandaji, that Shri Joshi wanted a united strong trade union movement. Are we having that even now? The answer is obvious because so many trade union centres are represented here. Their very presence shows that the desire of Shri N. M. Joshi is yet to be fulfilled. And any discussion we have had in trying to evaluate him is only academic.

It is time that we also have an assessment of current Trade Union situation in the country and its projection into future, which might be more purposive and this seminar itself perhaps may throw some light in this direction. We have distinguished leaders in the Trade Union Movement in the country. It is a tribute to the memory of Shri N. M. Joshi that the Central Board for Workers Education has thought it necessary to bring us all together on this occasion.

I would rather prefer that we take this opportunity to go heart-searching and try to find out if we as trade union leaders have really served this country effectively. By multiplying the number of trade union centres what is the contribution we are making to this country's progress. I think labour has ceased to be an effective factor in determining the economic, political and social policies and pro-

grammes of this country. Because we are divided, we cancel each other and labour has been left behind. Labour which represents the productive section of the population, has allowed itself to be ignored in shaping the economic and political policies of this country.

There was a discussion whether N. M. Joshi was belonging to any political party or not. It is not that the politicians only belong to one or the other any particular party. The man who says I do not belong to any other political party is also in politics. That is different kind of politics. He is not satisfied with any of the existing parties. He could not start his own. He still has his politics. An idealist is defined as one who tries to keep politics out of politics !

Therefore, my suggestion to this seminar would be let us project ourselves into the future and decide whether we are going to continue in this country with 10 trade union centres or more and thereby can we ever hope to serve properly either the working class or the industrial progress or the interest of the country itself ? Why cannot we come together? If we all are really for the workers' interest why we should have 10 centres. If there are differences in emphasis, methods, means, approach, can we not have say some consensus and have a single, strong trade union movement which can effectively serve the workers, the industry and the people.

I think alongwith Shri N. M. Joshi's centenary seminar you should have made the theme of the seminar as 'The Trade Union Movement in 80s'. What are you going to be in 1980? Are we going to continue as we have been doing? Or are we going to turn a new chapter? Are we going to confine our activities to the relatively better placed sections of the working class, and try to settle our mutual rivalries among those people or are we going to open a new door for the unorganised labour, agricultural labour, unemployed, under employed and branch off into a wider field of opera-

tion ? Such a discussion, I think, would be more useful and purposeful. Many of us have not expressed ourselves on that because the subject before us is limited. But it is quite relevant. We ought to do some serious and free thinking. But having met here and the Central Board for Workers Education also having spent considerable sum of money and made available all types of inputs, let us have an output which should serve as a guideline for the trade union movement of this country for atleast the next decade.

I don't think it is a credit to any of us assembled here to find that the trade union movement of this country is divided into ten or more rival trade union centres. We must also partly share the blame for that. And having accepted the responsibility, or the blame, for the situation that we find ourselves in, what is the lead that we give to the working class of this country? How do you want the working class to behave in the next ten years to come?

I find the national situation is extremely difficult. There are many other problems which are expanding into unmanageable dimensions. There is first the problem of the energy i.e. electricity, coal, diesel, kerosene. This is posing a big problem which will even reduce the volume of employment already available, let alone increasing employment opportunities. And unemployment is the other major problem, and if this is not tackled on a war-footing, it will soon turn over our society to anarchy. The price situation and the inflationary situation is getting more and more difficult.

Whatever government comes to power, howsoever strong it might be, it is very difficult to tackle these problems unless the trade union movement in the country stands united and works with determination to pull this country out of the economic and other difficulties.

What is the programme the trade union movement has got to come out of this situation? It would be too much to

assume that we can prescribe the solution for the all of these ills, but still labour is such an important factor, it cannot ignore these basic issues. I would, therefore, suggest that as a part of this discussion here, having done some research into the history of the Trade Union Movement, the character and contribution of Shri N. M. Joshi, let us take a look into the future and see how best we can serve the working class—not those sections of working class who have already benefitted by the Trade Union Movement—but also the other sections of the working class which the Trade Union Movement is still to touch. There is an untouched area. How long it will continue to be untouchable? What is the programme that we are going to adopt for serving them? And how we are going to implement it ?

I find the seminar papers deal with the Trade Union situation today, and the Trade Unions of tomorrow and towards Trade Union Unity. Now if this meeting, where such eminent trade unionists who have dedicated their entire life to the cause of working class are assembled, cannot make any worthwhile contribution in finding effective answers to the problems—present and perspective—I don't think there is ever any hope of finding a solution. I hope the participants will be really benefitted by the discussions, deliberations and the decisions this seminar may be able to produce.

* * *

P. Ramamurthy

I am happy to be associated with this Seminar, which is being held in commemoration of the centenary of late N. M. Joshi, I would like to speak something about the man, his contribution to the trade union movement. Those were the days when integrity in public life was valued and N. M. Joshi's integrity in public life was personified. We know that in his early youth he was attract-

ed towards Gokhale and joined the Servants of India Society. While the Servants of India Society was devoting itself mainly to political question and some sorts of social work, it was given to Joshi to carve out for the Servants of India Society a new type of activity namely the trade union movement. I don't think in the Servants of India Society before that anybody had thought of organising a working class in this country which was completely down trodden.

Joshi was later on nominated as a member of the Central Legislative Assembly. I would like to point out that his integrity was such that even when he was nominated as a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, he spoke fearlessly not only on trade union questions and problems affecting the working class but the entire gamut of the political and economic problems that faced the country. As a member of Central Legislative Assembly often he was under great pressure from Government. The Government threatened that if he did not go with the Government views which he often did not, he would cease to be nominee on the Assembly, but N. M. Joshi said "I do not bother about your nomination and I will go according to my views. I will speak according to my consciousness. If the Government does not like my views, it need not nominate me".

In this country, before 1926 when the Indian Trade Union Act was enacted the working class's right to strike was itself in question. In 1920 the B and C Mill Workers went on strike, a historic strike which resulted in number of police firings. It was led by a philanthropist by name Mr. B. P. Wadia. The strike was ultimately broken, but nonetheless the employers filed a civil suit against the people and leaders of the organisation in a civil court and the argument of the employer was that by this strike he had lost what he could have got if the mill had worked without strike. That is not actual loss but the profit that the mill would have made if there would not have been strike. On that question employers sued union leaders for damages.

The Madras High Court awarded the damages of Rs. 3½ lakhs. This was the position in 1920.

After that historic decision of the Madras High Court, N. M. Joshi, year after year in the Legislative Assembly demanded that the workers' right to lead the struggle should be protected under law. As a result of these efforts in the Legislature that the Indian Trade Unions Act was enacted in 1926. This is a biggest contribution I consider in those days.

The second point that I would like to mention about N. M. Joshi is about his firm loyalty to his friends, to his colleagues, about whose integrity he had no doubt and those people working along with him, he would not sacrifice them because he had different views. Gandhiji had certain personal relationship with N. M. Joshi. Gandhiji wrote to Joshi that this kind of radicalism inside the trade union movement by members of the Servants of India Society does harm to the society. You will have to put an end to it or you see that these persons are no longer associated with the trade union movement but N. M. Joshi said "I have got immense faith in their integrity. I will not take any action against them". This shows the quality of the man.

I would like to point out that in those days he was far ahead of our national leaders in regard to social reform. He was a person who had given up belief in God. He and Mr. Chintaman D. Deshmukh both came from the same village and forty years he did not visit his village. It was only after 40 years when the villagers wanted to honour both Mr. N. M. Joshi and Mr. C. D. Deshmukh they visited the village. I asked him why he did not visit the village during the last 40 years. He told me that his elder brother was extremely orthodox Brahmin. But he had ceased to believe in God. He had ceased to believe all the religious rites and if he went to his village he would have to obey his elder brother and wear the sacred thread. He was not

believing in that, therefore, he had been avoiding going to village. Now his brother died, his villagers wanted him to be back so he was going.

He was a man of principles—a man who had conviction and had courage to act accordingly, through out his life.

Another thing that strikes me today is that his advise to his colleagues was always practical. I remember in 1945 when I was not more than 35 years I was participating in the Planning Committee of the Madras Government. The transfer of power had not actually taken place. I had made good impression even on the British. So they were offering me to appoint on a certain committee. Mr. N. M. Joshi was there at that time during the AITUC Conference at Madras in 1945. He called me aside and said “young man be careful about these things. Don’t get tempted. Be careful in your public life. You see, temptation is very great in the society. Temptation will come in many forms, in the form of some job or some positions in life. All these things are likely to come in the way of people who are connected in public life and trade union movement and young men desire all these things. As an experienced man, I am warning about the dangers that are there in the public life”. I am extremely grateful for the great advice that N. M. Joshi gave me at that time. And I think that advice has put me well in all my public activities from that day.

Then in regard to the trade union movement itself you know it was this particular characteristics that he respected different views but at the same he was full-blown democrat respecting the principles of others and tried to back the majority or that made him cooperate with people having extremely fundamentally different views.

In 1927-28 the general strike of Bombay Textile Mills lasted for nearly 8 months. In 1928, N. M. Joshi and the majority of the leaders of the strike committee had different political views but nonetheless he respected the inte-

grity of these people. As a result when the decision was taken to go on strike, every time the decision that is taken by the strike committee was put before the mass of workers, to express themselves for and against and ultimately the workers voice counted.

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Dr. M. S. Gore

I express my sincere gratitude to all the participants for having responded to the various ideas presented in the paper. Naturally, they have not agreed with all of them but I am still grateful for the response.

The Chairman wants me to sum up the entire discussion so far. I will not limit myself only to the two or three speakers who specifically talked about my paper. I will generally cover the areas referred to by all the speakers and list the points made by them.

The first to speak was Mr. Mukherjee and based upon his own association with Mr. Joshi he underlined two or three contributions of Mr. Joshi which were not sufficiently brought out in my paper. He pointed out the very important role that Joshi played as a member of the First Pay Commission. Even though Joshi was constrained by his role as a member of the Commission, he still put forth strongly the case for workers. He also pointed out that in all his trade union work, Joshi scrupulously kept his own political views out of the picture.

Mr. Dixit spoke next. He said that Mr. Joshi had the skill of bringing together different points of view and enabled him to work with people with different opinions. Joshi was the first person to realise that in developing countries, conditions of labour cannot improve without the legislative tools being used effectively and the role that he played as a member of the Central Legislature. Mr. Dixit

questioned the validity of regarding N. M. Joshi as the Father of the Indian Trade Union Movement. Now let me say quite frankly that personally I do not attach much importance to anyone being called Father of a social movement. I just happened to note that Mr. Joshi has been referred to in literature on Trade Unionism as the Father of the Indian Trade Union Movement. I do not necessarily imply either that he was the only person to have made a significant contribution to Trade Union movement. I think his contribution stands on its own merits. I am grateful to Mr. Dixit for bringing to my notice the great contribution made by Mr. C. P. Tewari to the development of the trade union movement in India. I must say that in writing the paper, my focus was primarily on Mr. Joshi. I have taken cognisance of the fact that other people before Joshi had worked in the trade union movement. I did not refer to them by name. I only referred in one sentence to the fact that there were other people who worked before him, because my paper is not a historical one. The third point that Mr. Dixit made was also an important one. Mr. Joshi, I have said, did not belong to a political party and Mr. Dixit pointed out that he was a member of the Indian Liberal Federation. This point was again made later by Mr. Karnik. I have no doubt in my mind that Joshi had a political philosophy of his own. So if someone described him as a liberal, I would entirely agree with him. I think that he was liberal and Mr. Dange and others have pointed this out. When I said that Mr. Joshi did not belong to a political party, what I had in my mind was that he was not a member of a party actively involved in electoral politics.

Prof. Kamath brought out the fact that apart from his contribution to trade unionism, Joshi was also an educator and had contributed to the development of trade union education as well as education in social work. Mr. Joshi was a person who emphasised facts, the need to collect facts and in this way he introduced a more rational perspective in the organisation of the trade union movement itself.

Mr. Bardhan again made a pointed reference to my paper and made the very important point that in my paper I had failed to underline the socio-political context in which Joshi worked and the way in which they influenced his work. I accept the criticism.

Mr. Dange spoke on the basis of his own personal associations with Mr. Joshi and brought out how, though a liberal by conviction, Joshi was not a liberal in the sense of a person who ran away from facing issues. In fact he was a person who responded to the demands of the situation and never left anyone in doubt of his identification with interest of the workers. So that, he was a liberal probably in the sense that Mahatma Gandhi was also a liberal. No one can say that Mahatma Gandhi was afraid of fights or ran away from them.

Mr. Buch of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association read out an exchange of correspondence between Mr. Gulzarilal Nanda and Mr. Joshi which brought out the maturity with which both Mr. Nanda and Joshi tried to approach the question of bringing together the workers of the country in a common trade union movement. Unfortunately, their efforts did not succeed. Shri Buch and Shri G. Ramanujam emphasised the need for trade union leaders approaching and facing this particular problem again of how to achieve the unity of the workers movement in the country.

Dr. Pandhe, referred to my paper and said that I had made no mention of the AITUC and the role that Joshi had played in building and strengthening of the AITUC. This is true. I have scrupulously avoided mentioning any names either of organisations or of persons. I had not intended to write a historically complete paper. I was concerned more with the core of Joshi's ideas and their place in the development of the workers movement in India. Dr. Pandhe also objected to my use of the word 'tolerate' with reference to Joshi's attitude to the agitation by workers. My reference

to Joshi's "toleration" of the agitational approach on the part of his younger colleagues was only intended to bring out the attitude of the members of the Servants of India Society which Joshi had to leave. It is not a judgement on my part.

Mr. Karnik again referred to my statement that Joshi was not a member of a political party. I stand corrected. I accept the fact that Joshi was a member of the Indian Liberal Federation, he had a political philosophy. About the differentiation between welfare and trade union work I agree and I have stated in my paper that it is also possible to look at the two as different aspects which are always present though with differing emphasis at different times.

Mr. Ramanujam rather than commenting on Joshi's life and work raised the broader question of bringing about the trade union unity. He also raised the question as to what role trade unions can play in national life.

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trade union movement—today

SECOND SESSION 11th April 1980

- Chairman : Prof. V. B. Kamath,
All India Manufacturers
Organisation, Bombay and
Member, CBWE.
- Paper on : Trade Union Movement—
Today
- Presented by : Shri V. B. Karnik
- Rapporteur : Shri V. K. Pitkar,
Dy. Director (Edn.) CBWE.

The paper 'Trade Union Movement—Today' presented by Shri V. B. Karnik is given in Annexure.

V. B. Karnik

The topic which I have discussed in the paper is Trade Unions Today and that is going to be the basis for our discussion tomorrow, both on how to make our trade unions strong and healthy and also how to bring about trade union unity.

In the first place I have tried to show the salient points of the trade unions as they exist today. The first that I have made is that during the last 30 years or so after Joshibua died, the trade union movement has made big progress. That, one can find out, from figures given in the Indian Labour Year Book as well as many other publications. The number of our unions has grown, the number of members has grown, the amount that is collected as income

has grown, the amount that they spend has also grown. Now that is a very encouraging fact. But I would qualify it by saying that this development is only quantitative. I don't know whether there has been any qualitative development.

Joshihua was interested mainly in qualitative development. Therefore, I have also invited your attention to some of the qualitative deficiency of trade unions as they exist today. One particular deficiency which we can easily remove, if we decide to make an attempt in that direction, is that many of our trade unions do not submit their annual returns and the number is as high as about 50%. The annual returns do not require much accounting or any such professional skill. Any ordinary trade union worker can easily prepare the annual return, but 50% of our unions do not submit the annual return as a result of which all our facts and figures with regard to the trade union movement become distorted. The Government gives us these figures of only those unions which submit their returns and they make an honest effort to secure figures from all unions but I am afraid that the unions do not respond. As a result of which 50% of the figures of membership as well as other matters are lost to us. So I would make a definite suggestion that we should take upon ourselves to persue all unions to submit their annual returns in time. Central organisations can send out circulars and put pressure on their affiliated unions to see that annual returns are submitted in time.

I would suggest the first place the trade unions and more particularly all the central trade unions should exert pressure upon their affiliates to submit the annual return. I will also suggest that membership figures of those unions which have not submitted annual returns should not be taken into consideration when the Government tries to verify the membership of various organisations. That can be easily done provided trade unions agree and they can easily agree because it will affect each one of

them. It will not affect any one particular organisation. It is a widespread disease; it affects all unions whatever their central organisation may be. And if this is done I believe there will be a greater pressure on the central trade union organisation and also on local unions who submit their annual returns.

I am worried by the indifference with which the Registrars of Trade Unions deal with this particular default. I would suggest that the Registrars of Trade Unions should be more active. They should give one chance or two chances but beyond that they should not ignore this default on the part of trade unions. The Trade Unions Act says that those unions who fail to submit the annual returns will lose their registration. So if these two steps are taken there is a chance that we shall be able to get from Government a real picture of the trade union movement. We shall know how many members are there, what amounts are collected and spent by the unions.

There is another fact which people should also take into consideration. It is that average membership of unions has gone down. It is not going down as rapidly as it used to some years back, but that weakens the trade union movement. More and more small unions are coming up. Now in a country like our's it may be difficult to build-up national unions. But building up big unions in a city like Bombay or Calcutta or Madras should not be difficult. Instead of having say 10,000 unions it will be alright if we are having 1000 or 2000 unions with a solid membership. The fact that there are so many unions with such small membership means that those unions are weak unions. If a union is strong then instead of forming a new union very likely workers would have thought of building-up the same union. This is more particularly the reason of fragmentation of our unions as in Joshibia's time.

We have already AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC. These are 4 central organisations which are recognised by the

Government and which have some place in our national life. But now five more organisations have come up and this trend has continued. We may be shortly presented with 15 to 20 Central Trade Unions.

One must admit as Dr. Gore has pointed out in his paper that the trade union movement has expanded. It has expanded to all professions and industries, we find now trade unions practically in every industry and more particularly in big industrial towns we have several unions; but it is only in the organised sector. Trade unions have spread among white collar workers also. At one time there was little growth of white-collar workers' unions, now one can say that it is no longer true, particularly in Banks, Life Insurance and various Government Departments and other places white collar workers have started taking part in trade union activity.

Of course we have not yet succeeded in going out in to villages, farm labourers, peasant workers, are still outside the trade unions. Therefore, one should keep in mind that any time when we talk about trade unions, the trade union that we have in mind are only trade unions in organised industry. Agricultural workers or farm workers are not at all unionised. But if we will really take into consideration the fact that they are also workers and they must also be brought into the organisation, we would be able to make our unions strong and effective.

Then another difficulty that I find is that the entire attention of our trade unions is concentrated on a few demands like revision of pay, wages, increase in bonus, increase in dearness allowance and some other demand of that type.

I find now-a-days our trade union leaders are becoming more and more pragmatic in the sense that they will talk to workers only about wages, only about bonus, only about increase in dearness allowance and the workers naturally

are also adopting the same pragmatic attitude. Workers move towards a union which will give them better wages, better bonus, better dearness allowance, because we have not yet succeeded in imbuing among workers a sense of loyalty to an organisation. There may be loyalty to a personality. There may be loyalty to political party. But there is no loyalty to a trade union itself and therefore workers easily change trade unions, easily change trade union leaders. We are surprised from time to time to know a union has moved from AITUC to INTUC, and from INTUC to BMS, from BMS to CITU or some other central organisation. The type of loyalty which will give strength to the union, we have not succeeded in building-up amongst our workers. And here both the leaders as well as workers are responsible for this sorry state of affairs, leaders having made little effort to instil loyalty. And, therefore, we find that workers change their loyalty from union to union and from leader to leader.

We should criticise the tendency and try to instil a feeling of loyalty may be for a particular leader, may be for a particular party or may be for a particular trade union. We shall have to take some steps. There I believe the greatest responsibility lies with the leader. The leader must make some things very definite and very clear to workers. For example, political parties are blamed for giving places to defectors. We could have a similar rule that the union which changes its leadership or changes its central organisation will not immediately be able to come into the working committee or into the higher bodies of the new organisation. Some such things can be evolved but that is a matter of mutual discussion. I will not go into that but suggest another code of conduct.

Now-a-days in Bombay we find that many a time violent actions take place, intimidation takes place and as a result of that there is a change of leadership. Now can we not among ourselves at least agree that we shall not tolerate violence, we shall not tolerate intimidation and there-

fore when we find that some people are taking resort to intimidation or violent activities and as a result workers are compelled to change from one union to another union. We should not give entry to the union which comes in as a result of this type of action. I think a time has come when we should seriously consider this new element of hooliganism and intimidation. That has come into our movement during the last 5-10 years. Earlier there might have been some fights between employers and workers. There might have been some fights with police also. But the type of fights that we come across these days—fight between the workers over which union to join and which leader to follow is really, extremely shameful to the movement as a whole and therefore I think that we should make some effort to stop it, and that could be done through a code of conduct. We are 10 or 11 or 12 and among these 10 or 12 organisations it should not be difficult to arrive at a code of conduct. It will avoid eruption of violence. I believe this is a frightful new event which has grown into the movement and we must check it as early as possible.

Another interesting factor: a new breed of trade union leaders has come-up in the movement. They are independent in the sense that they don't belong to any central organisation. They also don't belong to any political party. So they are free; they are free to the extent of committing any crime that may serve their purpose. They hold out promises to workers of being able to secure 50% more or 10% more; they may be found in all cities. We have a few in Bombay, they indulge in violence; they indulge in intimidation. As a result a stable union may be thrown out. And an entirely new union may come and take its place. Now that also—strikes at the roots of healthy trade unions. We shall have to be particularly strong about the action to be taken against such leaders; I know it is very difficult but unless we put our unions on a sound basis and try to do everything possible in order to secure that aim, we shall not be able to get out of the present situation.

Another change that I would suggest is—our unions concentrate too much attention on economic issues. As a result of which some times we get a pay rise, some times we get a higher bonus, some times we get higher dearness allowance but at the same time prices go up and what the workers gain as producers they lose as consumers.

Can we not find out a better way of directing the energy of our men? I would suggest that our unions should take more and more social responsibilities. For a long time we have neglected everything except wages, everything except economic advantages. We have not paid any attention to social problems. We have not paid any attention to the problems of production. We have not paid any attention to various problems of workers as human beings, conditions of the living of our people. If more attention is given to these problems, the unions will be able to serve our workers much better and therefore I would suggest, at the present movement it is necessary that our unions learn to have a wider outlook, to think of the society. I for one believe that there is no conflict between the two, if the nation lags behind the industries get stagnant. If the economy gets stagnant workers are bound to suffer. Therefore, workers can be easily persuaded to take more interest in the problems of production and in the problems of equitable distribution. They should turn their attention away from merely economic concessions and even in the case of economic concessions think more of issues like the Provident Fund or Housing, rather than of dearness allowance.

I find that these difficulties are growing up in the movement and as a result of it our strength is dissipated and workers are not able to exert any influence on national life, on conditions in the factory, or conditions in the industry. If we want to make our unions more strong and more determined it will be necessary for us to shift our emphasis from increase in dearness allowance or increase in bonus, to other objectives. I think if more and more unions generally follow this course of action then they will be

more effective and there will be more participation of workers. There are some plus points also in the movement, they will easily come to your mind; we have some good unions and those good unions have succeeded in securing many demands.

In some unions they are having the system of check-off and in course of time more and more unions will get strong and may even succeed in getting recognition from employers and also may succeed in getting check-off and union-shop. Our great difficulty, however, is that there is no law in the country except in Maharashtra to provide for union recognition. In Maharashtra we have the Industrial Relations Act. But as a matter of fact even in Maharashtra, where trade unions are governed by the Industrial Disputes Act, we do not have any system of finding out a majority union and granting sole bargaining right to that union. I would suggest that in the next two years if we can concentrate our attention on an Industrial Relations Law, which will enable us to secure sole bargaining rights to a majority union to be established through secret ballot. I am suggesting secret ballot but supposing there are real difficulties in accepting that solution, we could work out some other solution and try to find out which is the majority union. But that majority union must have the rights of sole bargaining agent. Once this happens the disunity, that we find at present in our movement and as a result of which there are violent disputes, will disappear and our trade unions will be able to stand together as one body. If there is a law, according to which the bargaining agent can be found out and once a bargaining agent is identified then there would not be any majority union or minority union trying to replace each other whenever necessary there will be a fresh ballot to determine the bargaining agent. Through that bargaining agent we shall be able to find solutions to the disputes that grow-up and the system of collective bargaining will also come to prevail.

Joshibua put great emphasis upon collective bargaining. He said "sit together across a table and solve disputes."

That can be easily done." I am also a believer in collective bargaining and I think, if collective bargaining is provided to unions through a sole negotiating agent, most of the trade union disputes can be solved without recourse to strikes. So I would suggest that for some time, for the next two years or so the trade union movement, should concentrate its attention on securing this type of legislation. We need not go into all the details in it, what is important is that a bargaining agent must be found out and proper method must be adopted for selecting the bargaining agent. That will be a solution of the inter-union disputes that grow-up from time to time in most places.

I don't have a very bright picture to present of our movement. I have pointed out its weak as well as strong points and have suggested some action on some of the points. As a result of the discussion that will follow we may, I hope, reach some agreement.

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Dr. S. L. Kashikar

Let me congratulate the Central Board for Workers Education for organising the Seminar.

The trade union activity is an important part of social activity and that is why I have been working in the trade union field for more than 35 years.

We started All India Trade Union Congress in 1920. About sixty years have passed and it is time for us to introspect the cause of malaise and exactly where it lies. If you take the whole picture of the trade union activity into consideration you will admit that we are in a stage of movement and not functioning as the Trade Union. The movement is based on emotions, the sentiments and agitational approach. So even after 60 years we have not been able to

develop the constructive line of thinking, much less the approach in resolving the labour problems.

Shri Karnik stated that we have taken care of economic progress, but not all sided development of the workers looking to the role that they have to play in the society, their obligations to the nation, etc. We have never taken the stand, as a union, as it is noticed in the advanced countries. They had decided to formulate an infra-structure for proper functioning of the unions; then alone they took to constructive activities. The number of welfare measures, they could take, as it is noticed in the Western countries and their line of action has been always constructive. Here we find that we are more divided, disintegrated, always going on the wrong track and I do not know exactly who needs whom, whether the workers need us or we need them.

I would say that every political party has its own organisation in trade union field. There is a race going on between the various trade union organisations, not only within the union, but inter union rivalries which are continuously going on for years together; that is a very sorrowful state of affairs, and it is my mental anguish after 35 years as to where we are going?

The Workers Education Scheme has been initiated by Government of India. The scheme is designed to inculcate the spirit of constructive line of thinking, to teach the rights and responsibilities to workmen and to bring awareness among the unions. By and large unions have not yet been able to sustain themselves. I have never noticed anywhere that the unions have been planning the educational activities and see that they have been taking any active part and interest in developing the workers to discharge their obligations to industry and society.

There are very many people changing their affiliations not only on the political scene; but also in the trade

union field. They have forgotten, the very concept, spirit and notion of the union functioning. We may talk about unity, we may talk of coming together for forming action committee and starting agitation, but all these will fail for want of unity. There will be little effect on industry and society and trade union reputation will be at stake. Let the union leadership consider how long this stage of movement is going to be continued? How long these political quibblings are to continue? Can we afford to ignore that political jealousies are dividing the working class.

There is one more thing. There are labour contractors. I am in know of the person controlling near about 1000 unions always carrying on agitational activities, creating unrest in one industry or the other, allowing the production to go down, demanding more wages and increase in dearness allowance, adversely affecting the economic progress of the industries. As against this we know the efforts of Govt. when the nation was in a very precarious condition, workers in Germany did their job two extra hours a day without wages. If our wage earners would put in the efforts to build up a nation in the present economic crisis, that will be an appreciable and commendable job. If we are fighting amongst ourselves, for our own interest I am afraid the situation is not going to improve. We had had number of meetings to discuss trade unions' unity in the past, but as yet no proposal has materialised. In fact there were directives from Central Organisations as they were functioning under the influence of one political party or the other and they went on fighting with a political bias. I am convinced that if the Central Trade Union Organisations function independently, and if the unions are constructive minded many good things can happen. Unless the attitude of agitation is not discontinued and the unions do not run in the form of movement, playing on the workers emotions and hiding their own defects, nothing will happen.

The second thing, which I am painfully surprised to know is that when we entered the unions, there was amongst labour leaders a sense of service and dedication. This meant that they had to take care of all sided development of the workers and put them on the right tracks; make them constructive minded and see that the industry is not jeopardized or it does not come to a standstill. Now the new entrants unfortunately are making the trade Union activities, as a spring board for political activities. I have been working in the field, though not very active for the last few years. I have been giving guidance to the unions. My own experience is that the workers are not guilty, they are not bad at all. Leaders misuse them for political purposes.

I was the chairman of the Regional Advisory Committee of Workers Education Centre, Nagpur. Some of my friends, made it a point not to send best cadre for Workers Education Training Courses because they felt that if workers are properly trained, they will ask the leaders many questions. At the time of N. M. Joshi there was a sense of devotion, developing particularly a sense of responsibility and N. M. Joshi believed very much in the training of trade union workers. I also find that trade unions do not take seriously the Workers Education Scheme, which is essential and very much desirable in the present context of our country.

I may remind you that the present legislation is only a form, a charter. It is the spirit that we want. As a social worker I feel we exactly do not understand the implications of our actions. We started the AITUC in 1920, but in 1980 still we are a movement and not a trade union with a constructive frame of mind. We have to realise the responsibilities at least now before it is too late. Sense of devotion to social obligations is the dire need of the times. I hope this National Seminar will give suitable guide lines that may be well utilised by the trade unions if they have a genuine working class interest

at heart. Workers by and large in India, are industrious, obedient, and have a sense of understanding and an affinity to the industry. It is only the union leadership that has to guide them properly.

I will be very happy when the trade unions will conduct their Workers Education Programmes. I only wish that the spirit of unionism in the real sense of the word with the constructive mood and mind is developed along with the spirit of nationalism.

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Vitthal Chaudhary

I would like to take the thread from Mr. Kashikar's appeal. He has very adequately described the present state of affairs in the trade union movement. Mr. Karnik has of course written a paper also on this topic. The point arises who will create that spirit of dedication to service. In the present atmosphere, anybody who talks of that is ridiculed and considered a fool. The first, to consider him so, is the worker himself. He says you are telling me all kinds of things, I am not concerned with that. Tell me will you give me—more bonus or not and the leaders have got to come forward to cater to his particular ambition, desires or ideas.

The question therefore arises, why the worker has become so? He has really become so, but he is not responsible for it. The trade union organisations are responsible for it, trade union leadership is responsible for it. I will not accept that the politics of the country is responsible for it. Political parties will exist and without political parties there will not be any progress in the country. The Parliament itself talks of democracy. There will be a ruling party, there will be an opposition party, there will be many parties and many things will take place.

It will have its reflection in working class. For a number of days, it was thought that politics should not be brought among the workers. Actually speaking when the AITUC was one, was not the politics there at that time? Mr. Karnik, Mr. Gore, Mr. Bardhan and all those who have spoken in the morning session have talked about political parties. Mr. Dange has spoken a lot about it, the militant politics, the deformed politics, welfare politics and all that. Politics were there, political parties were there. In the Trade Union Congress also there was communist party, there were royalist parties, there were congress individuals, there were unattached politicians. Yet N. M. Joshi could keep the whole AITUC one organisation. There was no break.

The break came in 1945-46 and I am very sorry to say that they formed again a ruling political party at that time. Mr. Buch read out the particular letter of N. M. Joshi. It is such a powerful letter. It indicates Joshi was going to take that step and from there he said that the party and politics will be there, but that does not matter. What matters most is taking the decision with the help of the workers, after convincing the workers, what they should do. The process of convincing them is to talk to them as many times as you like in the meetings, outside the meetings, in their houses, on the grounds in the factories etc. but after having done all the talking come to a conclusion and decide. He has also said that 51% and 55%, I do not agree to say it is a majority decision. 75% is a big percentage, it was not accepted then, it is not accepted till this date.

Yesterday, our one friend in the inaugural session said that what happens to those remaining 25% people or organisations. They can create trouble in that organisation as a minority, but that is not accepted. One organisation AITUC was broken into four at that time and today we have upteen organisations and next time we meet after five years, there will be double the number of what

it is today. Today itself, some ten or eleven central organisations of labour exist. They are all considered to be legitimate organisations. So where is the rot. The rot is that our morality has really gone down because in the country there has been a lot of political and economic polarisation. The disparity has been very great. The polarisation is not only in our country, the polarisation is in the whole world and it's impact is on the trade union organisation, in the leadership, in the workers. Those who say not to have politics, some times talk about only the politicalisation and not party politics.

There was one union which agitated for the demand for the reduction of the price in the Colgate Paste for the super size Rs. 9.50, why not say it should be Rs. 5.00. The union asked them to reduce the profit. Was it anything very big? And it was going to benefit the community at large and not only those 600 workers in the factory. Within 24 hours, the workers leadership of the factory was called and they were threatened that their recognition will be withdrawn and the agitation came to an end. Who is responsible for this politics?

We are talking of unity. Have we not talked about this unity for the last 10-15 years? What progress have we made? The trade unions have grown now. If we have not made any progress, is it not necessary for us to think as to why the same slogan and the same formula does not work. Therefore, let us say what we should be. We are asking for more wages because we consider that living costs advance in India. We are not really hacking for D.A. but we are asking them because there is no other way to live otherwise, our wages are depleted. We are in fact really interested in seeing that the prices come down. For that we have many times agitated, demonstrated, submitted memoranda, we go in processions, but we don't see if other ways are open to us. On the other hand experience shows that by memoranda, demonstrations you do not

see any prices brought down; but by strikes or threat of strike you get D.A. raised. This means Govt. is not able to control prices; while the manufacturers are able to make profits. I can get something more and because of the trade unions efforts. There, I say it is for the government, it is for the employers, to do something, it is for the entire society to do something.

I am therefore, appealing to everybody here today, let us all go to the govt. and say this is the formula for unity, one union, in one industry based upon 75% of the membership, first membership being the ballot majority. Let minority exist but union will remain one. There should not be any minority union, but that will not be accepted and there was a lot of rationalisation for non-acceptance of this in one of the speeches that I heard yesterday. Industrial profits have gone up. Naturally the workers in that industry will ask for more bonus. Then, suppose, if they do not ask, are we not going to question employers. You can use all that money. There are so many workers, so many profiteers, so many hoarders, there are so many stock pilers, there are so many big dividend earners and where is the money coming from and the employers say don't ask. Don't shout, I will give you 20%, what do I loose? I give you 25% ex-gratia. What do I loose? To that extent, I shall pay less tax. I was very unhappy at this kind of position. They should all give tax. I should also have my share because I have produced but not the employer, who wants to do again something because you have organised to avoid tax and take the rest for itself in the form of purse. Is it not something which is very cynical in that situation? To what extent Central Organisation can put all out efforts together.

One individual trade union leader in Bombay just called a meeting, no party, 20,000 people assembled at 8.30 p.m. and appeals for funds were made and at the meeting it is said Rs. 50000/- were collected. Have you ever heard such phenomena. From where this popularity came, who

has given him this strength. Here is something for us to search our hearts. The trade union leaders alone will not be able to do it, and therefore as N. M. Joshi said, he has this formula, which was indicated in that letter to Gulzarilal Nanda, to follow steps of that leader and go ahead for unity, for proper democracy, for proper working and building of the trade union movement. The rest of the individual efforts should not be just recognised. Everybody should join some Central Organisation or other. Just because he has submitted the annual report, no recognition should be given. That will only further disrupt the trade union movement.

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Dr. (Smt.) Maitrayee Bose

Shri Ramamurthi who is a friend of mine has now dealt with the subject which is of fundamental importance. Out of the problems we were discussing very prominent subjects like trade union movement, trade union unity, submitting returns to the Registrar of trade unions etc. He discussed something which was close to his heart, and I will agree with most of the things which he has spoken, only thing is that perhaps I will put it in some other way.

INTUC was formed afterwards. Only because the then communist party thought that they would capture the AITUC and run it as they like. Shri Pandhe was too young at that time. Any way that happened, of the last two sessions of AITUC, one was held at Madras. I am speaking of the Madras session. If anybody was speaking for 5 minutes in Hindi or English Shri Ramamurthi translated the speech for 15 minutes. The communists were doing all these as if they were the bosses. They were 60% and we were 40%. They were trying to dominate us. Had this not taken place, there could not have been a split in the trade union movement.

At that time Shri Gulzarilal Nanda was very active. Gandhiji was guiding him. They were trying their best to keep the unity of the movement. That time I was too young in the movement. At that time I had to go to Sevagram and Gulzarilal Nanda took me to Gandhiji and I said to Gandhiji that "Bapuji AITUC men are so arrogant that I cannot remain there any longer. I will resign from AITUC. So he asked Gulzarilal Nanda about it. Gulzarilal Nanda told him that I must have patience and remain sometime longer in the AITUC. Gandhiji and Nandaji were putting their best efforts for maintaining unity. Later INTUC was formed in certain circumstances and trade union movement was split for which I felt disheartened and I was not in the INTUC for one year. I was persuaded to join INTUC by some of my learned friends when some people from West Bengal entered the trade union movement who were not trade unionists. I myself and my group entered the INTUC one year later.

Ramamurthiji has suggested a loose type of confederation and all that is very good. I have nothing to say about it. But not understanding political and economic structure makes it difficult for common people to understand it. I would suggest, that the particular evolutionary period has to be studied to understand the whole thing. In my opinion social structure and economic structure go together.

Shri Ramamurthy tackled all the evils of the society. He is not correct. There will be a great resistance to such things. I think, he must be expecting it also. He is not a simple man and more than that, he is a very experienced man, understands many things, perhaps much more than anybody. If he thinks, that there should be a loose Federation and if Shri Ramanujam has five members on the Board and Shri Ramamurthy has only one, I feel, even then Ramamurthy will have a better deal rather than Ramanujam.

I remember, when Mr. Nixon went to have a talk with Premier Chou-en-lai in Peking, somebody said that, it will

be a great thing, if Mr. Nixon could come back with all his clothes. If Ramanujam has five representatives and Ramamurthy only one even then such a situation will arise.

What I mean to say is, in short, that if, Ramamurthy is in the arena the person who is confronting him, be he Ramanujam, Dr. Kashikar or myself all are at a disadvantage. The number of representatives on either side is of no importance. In case of a loose confederation being formed Ramamurthy will have the advantage in the present circumstances.

I think this is a question of understanding the evolutionary process of economics and concomitant social change—Socialism vs. Capitalism and so on.

The question arises how are we going to educate ourselves, that is the thing which we must study. We have to create the desire to learn otherwise, there will be no education at all. Earlier in the details Shri Karnik was saying about the functioning of the AITUC. He is thinking of returns being submitted to the Registrar of trade unions in proper time by a Central Trade Union Organisation or their leaders. But does he not know that there are some Central Organisations who make too good returns, send them to the Registrar. The whole thing is too good to be true. I would like to say that even in the olden days, in one case the sum of Rs. 19,000/- was not spent, but was accounted for in the accounts book and was audited and submitted to the Registrar. There is no change at all in this situation. It is the same thing, that is going on. The certificates of registration are packed away. Nobody knows who are the office bearers. Nobody knows who is collecting money and this is not only now, it is from the very beginning. The whole thing has to be studied properly, how we are going to do it and how we are going to change the whole atmosphere and then only something can happen, not otherwise. It is this aspect of understanding the evolutionary changes in the economics and society. There is a

close relationship between economic conditions and social structure of the country and other organisations in society

Lastly I would like to say that Trade Unions are the hard core of a socialistic society. Marxist will not admit that but I believe that trade unions can be the hard core of a Socialist country. It is not the Bonus Act, it is not the Industrial Relations Act which matter most, it is how the trade unions function. First the members should be conscious of how they are going to function and they are going to keep their unity and to change the shape of society. Everybody now-a-days speaks of democratic socialism but if you have to be a democratic socialist, there must be the machinery to change the present structure of economy into a socialistic pattern. The desire as also the machinery must be there, but nobody speaks of that.

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J. C. Dixit

I just want to enumerate a few things so that proper perspective of the evolution of the trade union movement appears before the people. The trade union movement in this country started penetrating the mass of working class only after the Ist. World War as a result of its socio-economic reflex action. There were two problems under which working class was then suffering. One was Breach of Workmen Contract Act and the second was indenture of labour.

The Breach of Workmen Contract Act had its origin in the 7th Bengal Ordinance of East India Company promulgated in 1819. Thereafter that ordinance got merged in Calcutta Police Act of 1854. After East India Company ceased to govern this country and British Government took over the reign of the Government of India in their own hands, Breach of Workmen Contract Act 1858 was legis-

lated. According to this Act any person employed in India whether in Railway or in Factories or in shops or in offices on taking an advance if failed to report on duty, all that employers were to do, was to lodge a report at the police station of his absence. Thereafter the police was obliged by the law to find the worker out and handed him over to the employer. Therefore, in all those strikes that occurred during 1919-1920, the foremost demand of workers was to repeal that Act. Mr. Madan Mohan Malviya launched an attack on that Act in the Central Assembly in 1919 and drew a promise from the Government of India that it will soon be rendered inoperative.

Next was the problem of indentured labour. Indenture labour is comparable to bonded labour.

The battles for labour had therefore to be fought politically. Because of political skirmishes that took place between 1916-1920, the labour movement became politicised. The international forces were also no less responsible than political parties of India for giving a political hue to the labour movement. Foremost of them was the treaty of Versailles. After that treaty a committee was set up by the Allied powers that had won the war, to discover ways and means of removing tension from the industrial field and ensuring social justice. Mr. Gompers the then president of American Federation of Labour, was its Chairman. The Committee decided that the ILO be formed and they drew up its constitution. A study of their proceedings will confirm the point I had been stressing. The primary purpose for which the ILO was formed was to stall the spread of socialism outside Russia. Was I.L.O. not formed to train the labour movement to flow in a pre-determined political direction? The Manzil of the movement was defined as that of social justice to cover the real object that lurked into the hearts of those who founded the I.L.O. The AITUC formed just a year after the ILO was baptised. Was that not to find a place for it in the ILO? Was the formation of the A.I.T.U.C. to enter the ILO so that it could act as

an effective instrument of containing the spread of Communism amongst toiling masses. That is why Gandhiji wanted the Indian Labour to stay out of ILO. Since AITUC was formed only to ensure the entry of Indian Labour in the I.L.O. Gandhiji advised his votaries to stay out of the AITUC. The letter he wrote to C. F. Andrews asking him not to participate in their foundation conference in reply to one through which Mr. Andrews had sought his advice in the matter is an indelible testimony of the same. The article of C. F. Andrews published in B.N.W. Railwaymen Gazette, a working class journal published from Gorakhpur in 1925 narrates the whole incident in inimitable terms. Therefore, it is clear that political ecology of these times obliged Indian Labour Movement to become political from the time of its inception.

Another factor that has made out labour movement pluralistic is the manner in which polity have evolved during the last 122 years. Indian polity is a federal polity. It is a Centripetal federation, accomplished artificially. The advent of British Rule in this country through its commercial instrument namely the East India Company divided the whole country first into three presidences of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and later when power was assumed by Queen Victoria in 1858, and the East India Company was denuded of the political power that it wielded in this country, the country was parcelled into pieces called the provinces. Different provisions were then woven into one political texture. The last artifice in that direction was the Act of 1935. India become a peculiar type of Federation unknown to the history of the World. The kind of Federation that the Act of 1935 shaped was accepted by the founding Fathers of our Constitution and enshrined in the Constitution that is governing our country today. We have a new Federation of about 22 States. Our political union is, therefore, although Federal in form is unitary in character.

Labour, until the Government of India Act of 1935 came into force was the concern of the Home Department

of the Provinces. Labour problems and agitations were treated as a part of law and order problems. District Magistrates used to deal with them according to their own lights and wisdom. After, the Act of 1935 came into force Labour Departments were established in different provinces. Indeed they had been established during Twenties of this century in old presidencies of British India namely Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. In 1935, the labour was made a concurrent subject.

The inscription of Trade Union Act 1926 on the Statute book of the country has been another factor which has a bearing on the subject of the Trade Union Unity. The Act while providing for the registration of Trade Union enthroned Registrars of Trade Union of the Provinces to be in a way Election Commissioners, Election Tribunals, and Accountant Generals for trade union registered in their respective areas. Since Registrars have to work under Ministers of Labour of their State and the thought and action morphose of the labour department changes with the change of ministers. The nexus and the rapport between the State Government and the Trade Unions changes with the change of ministers rendering the exercise of uniting the labour movement all the more difficult.

The unity amidst the diversity that many in the trade union movement of our country want to achieve, can only be achieved in a federal frame work. That federal form could be made a real union only if the participating organisations have the requisite will arrived at democratically of their own free violation to do so. This is the only way and the only method known to humanity. To think otherwise or to act otherwise will be an exercise in futility.

You will find three important tables in the Freemantle Report of 1907. One table divides the strength of Textile labour of Kanpur on the basis of castes. It tells us how many of them were Chamars, Kurmis, Pasis, Brahman, Banias, Khátris, Kayasthas etc.

Because of the caste diversity of Kanpur Textile Labour and because of the type of labour leadership which was caste ridden, Kanpur Textile Labour could not generate that force that galvanises emotions and hearts.

Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha the first trade union of Uttar Pradesh was formed somewhere in 1919. It could not secure members beyond the figure of 15000 during the period 1945-46 regarded as its Augustan period when the strength of that labour stood around 65000. Caste structure, and ecology have given Kanpur labour a peculiar geo-political mould. This is an universal phenomenon. That is why ergonomy and organisational morphosis of labour differs from locality to locality.

Entry of the Indian Caste System has been another decisive force that has and keeps on dividing the Indian Labour Force. The report of Freemantle published by the Government of U.P. in 1907 on the structure and attitudes of the labour of Kanpur Textile Industry is an admirable essay on the subject. When one recalls, the fact that report was prepared within a period of six months by a man who was the District Magistrate of Lakhimpur Kheri and had to carry out the job in addition to his own duties, one is amazed by the industry and the talent that has gone into its composition.

At this stage I want to add one more on the pluralism in the Indian Trade Union Field. The Indian mind, since history has known it, has been catholic and equivocal. It has never taken a definite stand like Islamic people of the Arab World or Christians of the Western hemisphere. Votaries of monotheism have always been in a microscopic minority in this country. Polytheism distinguishes Indian Society from other nationalists of the world. Most of the Hindus of this country have been smart Vaishnavas. Multiplicity in the Trade Union field is nothing but a reflection of polytheistic and smart vaishnavite bent of mind which our people have inherited from their immemorial past.

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Naren Sen

This is a very good opportunity offered by the Central Board for Workers Education to have a get-together of representatives of all Central Trade Union Organisations for which they deserve sincere thanks. The initiative taken by Mr. V. B. Karnik to persuade the CBWE to organise such a Seminar and to give a forum to all leaders of different Central Trade Union Organisations to have a possibility of exchanging ideas on the problems of Trade Union Unity, which is very much acute at this moment, is also being reckoned with deep appreciation by us.

We also stand guilty, as we started a new Central Trade Union Organisation about twelve years back when there were already so many existing ones in the field; but we have no hesitation to admit that if the circumstances which forced us to bring into being another Trade Union Centre like NFITU, were changed, we would dissolve our organisation and join the unified platform of the workers of India.

It is a period when the trade union field of India is too much surcharged with politics and feelings of antagonism. We find, the politics of murder has been let loose in the Trade Union field. A good Trade Union worker is being killed by another worker or by a group of workers simply because the former is associated with another Union controlled by a political party rival to the latter. Simply because of such irrational ground a very good worker's leader may not enjoy his right to function freely or even to exist in this world.

None of the family of Tatas was killed, nor any of the Birlas nor any one from any of the families of monopolists or big business houses of India were the targets of the ultra revolutionaries operating in the Trade Union field. Poor workers are directed to kill another common poor toiler or leader of workers. In such an unfavourable climate the

spirit of "Solidarity" among the workers, in the real sense of the term, cannot exist.

None of the political parties are now-a-days less vociferous than the others in shouting slogan "workers of the world unite". But surprisingly none of them are allowing the workers of even one factory or of an industrial establishment to remain united; rather they have been leaving no stone unturned to foster disunity among the toiling people of this country and directing one section of the toiling masses against another section of poor workers and initiating the politics of murder among the toiling people themselves. To any sane man this may seem paradoxical but this is the rude reality of these days.

In West Bengal during the period of United Front Rule in 1967-70 the victims were mostly INTUC Workers' Leaders or congress men and/or Workers' leaders who generally did not belong to any of the constituents of the ruling United Front. The scene reversed in 1971-74 when the Congress Govt. was reinstalled in the State. The INTUC people were found feed fat their ancient grudge and taking initiatives to develop the same mechanism followed by the CPI (M) or CITU leaders. The rival Trade Union leaders belonging to the constituents of the United Front Government and more particularly the Workers' leaders of CITU and CPM were murdered or removed from the field. The only reason for such brutal actions was that the political rivalries were brought into play in the Trade Union field and thus the unity of the Working Class was jeopardised. Perhaps no where in this world Trade Union People, in the name of Trade Union Movement, caused such severe damage in the working class movement itself. United actions, if we say that is the urgent Trade Union task of the day, for better collective bargaining or for ensuring better quality of life for the workers or members of the unions, then it could never be achieved in such deplorable situation. The NFITU therefore, feels that the Trade Union Unity could be achieved only if the workers are seriously

taught that they are not the enemies to each other. The Unity of workers must be the first and foremost objective to be achieved to make the Trade Union strength really formidable in this country. But the real unity of workers is not at all achievable so long political parties of India, goaded by their sectoral interests and out of their desperate bid to gain monopoly control over Trade Unions will go on injecting narrow sectarian political rivalries within the workers and their Unions. Individually, any worker may have personal political views. This is quite possible in a democratic society and it cannot be considered a fault or disqualification on his part. A worker may subscribe to the philosophy of Marxism or philosophy based on Gandhian ideals or he may be a cadre or supporter of any other political party of India but that should not be brought into play to cause disruption, division or disintegration in the Trade Union movement. The NFITU therefore rejected violence on Trade Union Workers initiated by political parties who were constituent of the then U.F. Government during period 67-70. The NFITU equally condemned the politics of murder initiated during the Congress rule in 1971-74 as retaliatory measures against the CPM/CITU Workers and/or against those of their allied parties. This was firstly because of the fact that violence on human persons hit the very root of Freedom of Association which is the essence of democracy in a general sense and Trade Union Democracy in particular. Secondly there is no sense in brutally killing a common worker who may be working for the betterment of the lots of his colleagues against the exploitation of Capitalists, simply because he happens to be a Marxist or member of Congress or any other rival political party.

All these unfortunate happenings in the Indian Trade Union scene therefore led us to bring into being a new Trade Union Organisation which from the very inception refused to be controlled by political parties, employers or Government. However we have no closed mind and it is not that we cannot join hands with other Trade Union Or-

ganisations. If that situation comes, for which the great name of Mr. N. M. Joshi can be used as a catalytic agent or here if you all decide that this difference in personal political philosophy or ideological differences of Central Trade Union leaders would not stand as an impediment for the workers unity, then we can dissolve within the shortest possible time, compared to other Trade Union Centres, our own organisation for the cause of workers unity in India. We like to make this point very clear before the participants of this seminar.

The political parties are not alone guilty for the disunity of Indian Workers. The employers, at least a considerable section of them, are equally guilty for such sorrowful affairs prevailing in the Trade Union field of India. I do not personally accuse any one, I do not like to cast aspirations on what Mr. Naval Tata said yesterday at the inaugural ceremony of the seminar; but I have no hesitation to state that they also play a very nasty role in fostering disunity in the Trade Union Movement in India. They want their henchmen. Such people, who are not genuinely Trade Unionists in the real sense of the term are found taking the flags of political parties red, tricolour or some one else to suit their convenience. They identify themselves with the political parties with the sole motive to safeguard the interests of the employers. This type of imposters are found in most part of India now-a-days and infesting the Trade Union field, enjoying the backing or patronage of employers and political parties simultaneously. The role of Government is also there to foster disunity and consequent disintegration in the Trade Union Movement. I used to read with very keen attention the speeches of Mr. V. V. Giri when he was the respected President of India. I used to read also with close attention the speeches of Hon'ble Central and State Ministers of India since the dawn of our independence. They always used to advise that the workers and their Trade Unions should not involve themselves with political parties. But their actions proved that all such speeches were not made seriously. Rather all

Ruling Parties, whether at Central level or at State levels, wanted workers and their Trade Unions to closely align themselves only with the political party in power. What they really want is that the Workers and their Trade Unions should involve in politics which may suit only the purpose of the ruling party. Otherwise, why the Trade Union Organisations which subscribe to the objectives of developing really free and responsible Trade Union Movement do not get the minimum required co-operation from the Governments? It has been very clearly observed that the Ruling Parties, whether at State level or at Central level, always very nakedly and openly patronise the Trade Unions which are identified completely with them. The political parties, when they get the governmental power then only they feel that workers and their unions should play a constructive role. When they are in opposition the same leaders want the workers and their Trade Unions to play a completely opposite role. Leaders of a Central Trade Union Organisation opposed the demands for payment of Bonus to workmen of Indian Railways and they vehemently opposed the railway-strike as well, when the party to which they belonged, was running the Government. The same leaders belonging to the same party and same Trade Union Organisation threatened that there would be a Railway-strike on Bonus issue.

This type of volte-face the workers tolerate only to a certain extent, for some period only, but not for ever. This type of foul game has its natural repercussions in the psychology of the common workers and in fact they are also becoming opportunists now-a-days. They use the politicians of various shades for their own purpose. They flock to the party in power to have some immediate gains. The unions, which through out the past had been connected with Marxists did not hesitate to join the INTUC to get the patronage of the Congress party which was swept to power in 1971. With another change in political power in the State in 1977 most of those Unions and their leaders again changed colour and joined the CITU to enjoy the patronage

of the United Front Government in the State of West Bengal. Same is the trend in other States of India. That means the workers are also now trying to utilise the politicians. This is bound to happen. The political leaders by their actions made the workers feel that their unity and development of strong, responsible and self-reliant Trade Union Movement had no real value. United Workers Movement could not change their conditions; rather the political bosses can change their fortune. As they were being misled for years, they have now hardly any confidence in their own Trade Union strength themselves. They therefore now run after ministers of ruling parties only for patronage and support. This alarming situation has to be given a serious thought by all of us who are here. Whether this game will be allowed to continue or whether we should collectively put a check to it not only in the interest of achieving enormous strength and power for the Indian Trade Union Movement but also in the interest of defending the working class from the ruthless onslaughts of monopolists. The Indian workers are being subjected to increasing exploitation by the Capitalists and monopolists because of disunity and consequent frustration among themselves. Very often we speak of "Joint Actions" keeping separate identity for all Central Trade Union Organisations. But that is not the answer to meet the challenge of the days. Unity of all Central Trade Union Organisation is the urgent need to save the situation.

In the 30-men Committee on Comprehensive Industrial Relations Laws, set up by the Govt. of India in 1977, the representatives of the Central Trade Union Organisations could not even sit together to discuss the amendments they should unanimously propose. This is really unfortunate that the Indian Trade Union could not suggest in one voice, what were their recommendations for inclusion in the proposed Bill. Many of them of course, could be united temporarily to show a negative approach on the issue by raising only the demand "Scrap the Bill". We all know well that present statutes governing Industrial Relations in the

country need radical changes. But the Trade Union Movement failed to make any positive and concrete suggestion unitedly on the subject.

The employers represented through their Chambers of Commerce, however, did not fail to place their view points in the said Committee unitedly and in one voice and could thereby influence the decision of the Government of India to a considerable extent. This should be therefore another good lesson for all of us.

We welcome the idea which has been said just now by Shri Ramamurthy. He suggested, that there should be a loose type of confederation of all the Central Trade Union Organisations. If there be no chance to having one united Central Trade Union Organisation in India at this moment let there be at least one common forum where representatives of all Central Trade Union Organisations could meet time to time and have exchange of ideas on issues relating to labour. May be, we are thinking in a different way. Then what is the problem, what is the difficulty in sitting together from time to time and start meaningful dialogue and try to place our view points to the working people of our country and to the Government as well, unitedly and in one voice. The employers organisations submit their recommendations very much unitedly on all issues concerning labour relations and they fight tooth and nail to impress upon the Government about the justification of their stand on such issues. They also use all their means and machineries to influence the "Bureaucracy" and "Ministers" to bring the decision of Government in their favour. Whatever it may be, we all know about such mechanism and we very often blame them and the Government as well for all such affairs. But had we ever tried sincerely to search our own hearts to ascertain the root causes, why the Indian Trade Union Movement failed to influence the decisions of the Government? Are we not responsible for the sufferings of the Indian toiling people? Why we failed to place the united verdict of the Indian workers and if required to

launch a massive united movement to concede the employers and the government to accept the view points of trade unions? We failed even to sit together because a new type of casteism plays an important part in the Trade Union Movement; yes a new type of casteism. Some of the Central Trade Union Organisations consider themselves belonging to privileged group, as they get preferential treatment from the ruling parties, to which they may belong. They consider the others, who do not get such patronage from Governments as outcast. One claims to be progressive or ultra-progressive and looks down upon others as conservatives or reactionaries. Some think they are big bosses while the others are minors. All these make them averse to sit on the same table with the others. In political fields this type of slogan may pay dividend. But in the Trade Union field such policy is dangerous or suicidal. This policy has to be changed. Casteism has no place in Trade Unionism. Workers unity must be achieved at any cost. In this 20th century, the world has shrunk very much. If we speak of international movement, if we speak the solidarity of the toiling people of the world, at least we should take some positive steps for the unity of workers in one country or try to achieve Unity of workers at least at plant levels. Otherwise mere slogans of "World solidarity" of workers without even slightest practical demonstration in the field, will be considered as hypocrisy on our part and the Indian workers will surely turn a deaf ear to such slogans, raised for the sake of slogans only.

Brother Ramamurthy's suggestions for creating a loose type of confederation may therefore be considered a step forward to come out of this unfortunate situation provided it is made broad based and casteism of which I indicated earlier is not allowed to be played there. On behalf of NFITU I like to, however, put on record very clearly that we do not agree with the analysis given by Mr. Ramamurthy that the capitalists or reactionaries were only to be blamed for bringing out the major split in the AITUC in 1946 which led to the formation of INTUC. The NFITU

feels that desparate bis made by political parties to control Central Trade Union Organisations cuuses such split. If the game of the capitalists were the root cause of split in the Trade Union Movement then why another split in the AITUC gave birth to UTUC ? It was not the reactionaries but the smaller Marxist parties could not work within the AITUC with the dignity and respect they deserved.

Rivalry between R.S.P. and S.U.C. two very small marxist factions caused the split again in the UTUC and thus UTUC (Lelin Sarani) was formed. If the capitalists were instrumental for the splits in the Trade Union Movement at National level then why there was another split in the AITUC in the year 1970 ? Why CITU was formed ? Of the two groups of the Marxists CPI & CPI (M) was any group influenced by the capitalists or Multinational Corporations? Then again the Naxalites came out of CITU and are reported to have formed yet another Central Trade Union Organisation styled as IFTU. So there are five Central Trade Union Organisations AITUC, CITU, UTUC, UTUC (LS) IFTU all carrying red banners. The capitalists should not be always made scapegoats for every thing that is taking place in the Indian Trade Union scene; rather it is because of sectoral political interests of leaders of different political parties, both left & right, that is causing disunity and disruption in the Trade Union field of India.

Thus we find the workers are divided pathetically on political line and even in one factory or industrial establishment we now find, at least half a dozen of unions, some with red flags and some with other flags all of different political parties.

I again thank very much the Central Board for Workers Education on this historic occasion. When the whole trade union movement in India is at cross-roads, the CBWE has provided all of us with a forum to have a clear and frank exchange of ideas, to make an assessment and evaluation where we stand and what should be our role tomorrow.

The NFITU thinks that trade union unity is possible. We sincerely feel it irrational that simply because of differences in the political thinking of some Trade Union leaders there should be split in the Trade Union Movement or it should be divided or fragmented.

There are different "functional groups" in our society. Political parties, Employers Organisations, Bureaucracy, Trade Unions etc. Each has a role to play, whatever may be the type of work performed by them for the community. The political parties, Socialists, Communists, Congress or Janata, whatever may be the names of such political organisations, they broadly belong to one functional group, enunciating their respective economic policies to the masses to get a mandate from them for governing the country. The political parties have therefore a role to play in democracy. We don't foresee that there will be no Government or no administration in our country. The economic policy or style of functioning may differ, but there will be a Government run by some political party or the other. We therefore admit that as one of the functional groups of our society the political parties have an important role to play. Again, whatever may be the political party in power, "The Bureaucrats"—who constitute another strong "functional group" in the society—are the instrument to administer and execute the policy of the Government. Similarly so long the present structure of our society remains the "Chambers of Commerce and Industry" which is also another functional group of this society has an important role to play. We cannot, simply by closing our eyes, claim that they have no role to play. "Trade Union Movement represents another important "functional group" of the society which is supposed to play a vital role in the society. But Trade Unions are not political parties. They are completely separate functional group and have a different role to play in the society. In a democratic society all the workers are not supposed to belong to one particular political party. A particular worker of a whole group of say, 1000 workers of an industrial establishment, may be a member of Congress (I),

Jana Sangh, CPI, CPI (M), Janata and so on and so forth which depends on his personal liking or conviction. He may also not belong to any of the parties of India. In fact vast majority of Indian workers are not members of any of the political parties. If we accept the basic truth that in the democratic structure of our society, a citizen is free to join any particular party he may like and he is also guaranteed "Freedom of Association", "Freedom of Expression" etc., then logically within 1000 workers of a factory or of an industrial establishment there may be different political views of individual workers but very common Trade Union objectives for all such individual workmen.

The membership of any worker with any political party of his own choice cannot be therefore considered as a disqualification for him to become a member of a trade union. But at the same time such members of political parties should not be allowed to foster disunity in the Trade Union on political grounds.

To prevent such tendencies, any outsider holding executive post in the ruling party or in any of the opposition parties should not be allowed to hold simultaneously the executive post of a trade union, because Trade Unions are exclusively organisations of workers. In the statutes or constitution of NFITU it has therefore been very clearly laid down that the members of National Executive or of the General Council of NFITU cannot contest any election for the membership of State Assembly, Parliament or even of Municipal Corporations. We sincerely believe that Trade Unions should not be used as playthings in the hands of politicians nor they should be used as stepping stones for getting membership of Parliament, Assemblies, or Municipal Corporations.

I would like to point out that the Government of India has also been following a very wrong policy in the matter of granting recognition to the Central Trade Union Organisations. Our Government only wants number and not qua-

lity. What is the number? Trade Unions very often submit inflated membership figures to Government of India to raise their status. Dr. Mrs. Maitreyee Bose, a very veteran trade union leader, already explained clearly her past experiences how the Annual Return of Unions were prepared or fabricated and auditor's stamps obtained on those. She is a very reputed leader and had in the past held high offices in the INTUC for long years. So the claimed membership or the verified membership made on that basis, should not be considered as the only criterion for granting recognition by Government of India or for giving membership to any Central Trade Union Organisation on the Indian Labour Conference. Rather, the basis of recognition of a Central Trade Union Organisation at national level should be substantial membership and at the same time the responsible and constructive role which the concerned Central Trade Union Organisation also plays for the economic development plans of the Government aimed at the over all development of the nation.

However, to enable the workers leaders to follow a sound trade union policy, they require sustained education for their formation or development. If the Trade Unions don't have that type of educational programmes, such unfortunate consequences are bound to follow. Workers' will be utilised by politicians and they will also in their turn try to utilise the political leaders.

It is therefore high time that the educational programmes which the CBWE (Central Board for Workers' Education) has been carrying on since long should be intensified manifold and the trade unions, willing to involve themselves in such activities should be granted increasing co-operation and financial assistance by the CBWE. The NFIU seriously feel that the Central Board for Workers' Education should be reconstituted and made more broad based to meet the challenge of the days. Organisations which subscribe to the objectives of CBWE should be given membership in the reconstituted body of the CBWE at all levels.

Many of the workers' leaders do not know even the history of the Indian Trade Union Movement, while a microscopic minority of the worker leaders know the name of Sri N. M. Joshi. It can be honestly stated that hardly 2% of the worker leaders of this country have clear knowledge about the basic principles of trade unionism. The ideology for which great leaders like N. M. Joshi struggled throughout their lives has therefore to percolate to the grass root level. This is possible if the type of ideological approach, the contributions made by those stalwarts are taught to the workers' leaders at the plant levels through various educational and training courses. We, in our modest way, have set up an Institute for Indian Labour, in its own building at Calcutta, with the sole intention to conduct sustained and systematic educational courses on trade union subjects to workers leaders without any discrimination whatsoever. The workers' leaders must have a clear conception of genuine and bonafide trade unionism, of politics, of economics, of the social structure of the country and about the impediments on his way to the development of a strong and self reliant Trade Union Movement. If the worker leaders are well conversant about all these subjects, I feel then and then only the real trade union unity will be achieved. They will force the leaders to build up a unified trade union movement in the country.

We, therefore welcome the approach of the CBWE and we do hope that the Government of India will provide increasing allocations of funds for CBWE to enable the organisation to intensify the workers' education activities all over the country. The CBWE and the Trade Union Organisations and Institutions set up with the same objectives should be given all possible cooperation and assistance by governments at all levels Central or State irrespective of the parties administering such governments —Congress (I), Janata, Communists, DMK, AIDMK, Jana Sangh, Akali or any one else. Government should assist the CBWE, but at the same time the activities of CBWE should not be subjected to undue bureaucratic control.

The type of programmes, as organised by CBWE here, should be supported by all Central Trade Union Organisations as this helps building up trade union cadres, really well enlightened cadres, who can bring about new leadership to make the Trade Union Movement and will thus ultimately contribute to the development of workers' power in the country a very strong and formidable one to meet the onslaughts and oppressive evil design of the Capitalists, Monopolists and the Multinational companies operating in the country. It is needless to point out again that the power and strength of the monopolists and multinationals already assumed menacing proportion.

The disintegrated, much less organised and inherently weak Trade Union Organisations of Indian workers are really no match for such unholy forces.

The NFITU therefore sincerely believes that unity of trade union movement is the only answer to meet the gigantic challenge and not only that, by their unified strength the workers movement in India can contribute much to bring into being a new society where the working people or toiling masses will be in a position to live with peace and dignity.

On behalf of NFITU I once again thank the CBWE and Mr. Karnik for offering a forum to all important leaders of Central Trade Union Organisations to discuss the vital issue "Trade Union Unity" in a nice and congenial atmosphere.

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V. B. Karnik

Mr. Chairman, I shall be very brief. I complement Shri Naren Sen on the announcement that he made namely, that this was a very appropriate atmosphere for trade union unity and that if you all agree to merge and get together in a common organisation he would be prepared to

merge his organisation with it and would be prepared to join in establishing trade union unity. These really are fine sentiments he has expressed and I am sure these would be reciprocated by others. I must also thank him as well as Shri Dixit and Smt. Maitreyee Bose for inviting attention to the various other disabilities to which I had invited attention. Particularly Mr. Dixit has invited our attention to the caste conflict and he has very rightly quoted Dr. Lohia who pointed out how in our country caste conflict made things extremely difficult for us. I will not go into a discussion of that point.

I feel there is quite a lot of substance in what Shri Dixit has pointed out and as a confirmation, may I invite the attention of this group to the fact that untouchable textile workers suffered from many disabilities at one time and some of them continue even today. Still there is a good amount of resistance to untouchables entering the weaving department and that is because they have to take out the thread by making use of their mouth and the others objected to it. This type of communal differences are perennial in our country and many a time our trade unions have to suffer very much for that. Of course I must say all the credit is due to trade unions that they have all along opposed this type of caste discrimination but many a time they are helpless. We have to wait until we succeed in giving education to the worker so that this caste feeling may not come in the way.

Mr. Naren Sen referred to the politics of murder. It may be prevailing in Bengal but so far, I believe, that it has not gone to other parts of the country. But there are politics which are slightly different, the politics of intimidation. We know quite a lot about it in Bombay and other parts of Maharashtra. So our objective should be to abolish this politics of intimidation or violence or if it goes to that of murder, so that things are talked over, discussions take place and as a result of discussions the differences are resolved. That was Joshibia's sovereign remedy suggested

to many of us who had the good fortune of working with him from time to time.

I will not deal with other speeches. Dr. Kashikar as well as Mr. Vitthal Choudhari made very good contributions; particularly they talked about the present conditions of the trade union movement with which I entirely agree. But the point that I would like to make in the end, is that Dr. Mrs. Maitreyee Bose talked about evolution but the difficulty is that many friends do not believe in evolution. They want revolution and revolution as early as possible. Naturally their politics is different from the politics of all those who believe in evolution.

Let me again thank Mr. Naren Sen for inviting our attention to the fact that we can pass over all these difficulties only through education and enlightenment of workers. We have to educate our workers, We have to enlighten them and then only we shall be able to change the present trade union and the political situation. Political situation affects the trade union situation. It acts and reacts. The best thing would be for us to give attention to the education and enlightenment of the workers and at that point I would like to make a suggestion to the Director of CBWE that they have been carrying on this education about how to build-up trade unions and other topics and they teach techniques on organisational matters, as well as try to give them a certain information and knowledge about various problems of trade unions. I would like them to lean more on the side of special education and not really occupy themselves only with trade union education. I am sure that all of you know the difference and I would like the CBWE now to extend its outlook to social education and try to create some social consciousness, social awareness among workers. I know there are problems, there are difficulties, but the time has come now when the Workers Education Board should extend its outlook and try to make workers better citizens.

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towards trade union unity

THIRD SESSION 12th APRIL 1980

- Chairman : Shri B. N. Datar,
Director,
Ambekar Institute of
Labour Studies,
Bombay.
- Paper on : Towards Trade Union Unity
- Paper by : Shri A. B. Bardhan, member,
General Council, of All
India Trade Union Congress
and member CBWE.
- Rapporteur : Shri V. K. Pitkar,
Dy. Director (Edn.), CBWE.

* * *

Shri A. B. Bardhan presented his paper on 'towards trade union unity' (Annexure) and this was followed by speeches by different participants on the subject. The following is the gist of some of the important speeches.

Dr. Shanti Patel

We have heard just now very brilliant sketch of what happened in the past in the arena of trade union movement in this country. We find in it the study of the problem and it could be as objective as possible. As I said in the inaugural conference that the subject chosen for this seminar is very appropriate. But at the same time trade union unity is illusive. I think the more we try to come near it, more we move away from the objective of trade union movement. I would like to deal with some aspects of this

problem. May be there is some repetition in what I say because Mr. A. B. Bardhan has covered almost all the grounds and all the details which are relevant to this seminar. I would like to be clear when we talk of trade union unity, what is our concern? Do we want to have the workers come together at the plant level, the regional level, industry level, at national level, I think we have to be very clear about it. Are we interested in the permanent unity of the working class having one union in one industry or do you want to have occasional unity, whether we come together in the form of joint committee or in some other form and be together to achieve the particular objective and then again part company. This I think is the issue to which we have to address ourselves and come to some decision because then we can take real steps which can lead to success. I would also like to refer to the role of workers in the trade union unity. What is the role of workers in a country like India. I think it is very relevant to the whole concept of unity. Do you believe that there has to be democracy all the time in this country so that we are able to reach our goal? Workers by temperament want an egalitarian approach, egalitarian society. What means they are going to adopt to reach this particular goal? I think it is very relevant. Because as pointed out that there has to be politics, there has to be more politicalisation. I agree with that particular point of view. In a country, where we have developing economy are the workers going to play their role towards economic development and while doing so effectively they must look for social justice. When 60% population leads their life below the poverty level, it is very necessary that we have to lay emphasis all the time on distributive justice and at the same time move fast towards the goal of economic development. Now we have to reconcile this in a manner in which the democracy survives.

As far as workers views are concerned I am not going to differ, they are certainly for unity. The point is that we are not able to achieve it to a considerable extent, the leadership is not able to approach unity and avoid the factors

which lead to this particular disunity. I would say everybody has certain political conviction which guides him either consciously or unconsciously. Whenever he works in trade union movement, he may own he may disown that he has a certain concept of the society which he would like to have established in this country. We have certain long term objectives because ultimately the picture of society goes with a long term objective and short term objective is whether we can get the justice done to the workers. Whether they are in the factories or they are in the fields. This I believe is an immediate objective which we can serve best if we are able to unite, we are able to move together and why not? It is obvious that we are going to have differences. I work on the basis that we are going to have differences. After all even after marriage all of us have got lot experiences that husband and wife also do have differences. The point is to what extent we are going to have disputes and remain in different or depart that is the real issue which we are going to face. Is it not possible for us to live together inspite of differences of approach, of different convictions? Is it not possible for us to work out a common denomination?

I am coming to the point of our experience about unity efforts which has been very ably placed before us by Mr. Bardhan. I would only like to add to it. It is very tragic history when we have come together we have parted company again tried to come together and now we are going more and more for talks. But let us meet the situation where there are more unions than plants in the country. That is the situation which we have reached. Of course our veteran leader Mr. Karnik Saheb has given very clear picture as to where we stand and what is the state of trade union movement. There are three causes in my opinion, which led to splits in the past which kept us apart and if they are not remedied they will also keep us apart for all time to come. The first is political parties, the second is personalities and the third is craft unions. As far as the first is concerned I am not one of those who will say

that no political party should come to our trade union movement. I would concede at the very outset that every political party, the citizen of our country has a right to work in trade union movement. But shall we have certain constraints? Is it possible for us to evolve a certain code of conduct so that we are able to work together? Otherwise we are again going to fall apart. I would like to refer to the most important split in AITUC during the second world war. It was essentially a split which was based on, in my opinion on certain political considerations. I know there are certain philosophical convictions which it is very difficult for us to get rid off so soon but all the same I would certainly clinch that let us consider them as long term objectives. I know the working class is the vanguard of the revolution and we have certain basic convictions but is it possible that for a certain period till we are able to strengthen the trade union movement in this country and give it a place it deserves in the society, keep these controversies outside and in a very determined and dedicated manner try to serve this one cause. Otherwise I am afraid that trade union movement will not be united in this country. If they are going to be a party to subvert them to finishing of democracy in this country and to that extent our trade union movement is going to be casualty. So this is the proposition which I would like to place before you that if we want the democracy to survive, it is important for the trade union movement to move further, it is necessary to serve the working class interest, that workers demands are met not merely in the spheres of economics but general politics and that a strong united trade union movement emerges. That is why I think that all the political parties would have to reassess the role as to how they would like to apply themselves when they work in the trade union movement.

The second cause I referred to is regarding personality. There are number of personalities who are coming up. On political parties at least there is some control but on personalities there is absolutely no control. It depends upon

unions, how he should mould, and how he should move the trade union movement, how he should behave, what means he should adopt, all that depends upon the personality. And this is something which is gaining ground in this country. We cannot shut our eyes, at least in Bombay. We have to seek a solution to this particular problem.

The third cause is that there are persons in the key sections who feel that their bargaining power is more. They must have their own organisation which can help them. May be some time political party encourages them. When there are well established industrial Federations and if they do not find entry to get near the key section, they try to organise and disturb the whole thing. This appeal of craft union is very strong which we have to meet. Again another factor is that there is certain status feeling also among certain employees, that they will not like to mix-up with other section of employees or the workers. When we talk of getting over these causes one thing is that the political parties themselves would have to make up their mind. They should make some distinction between the long term objective and short term objective. Let us realise the democratic functioning and try to strengthen the trade union movement. If we come together and say that we would keep our differences out and for time being this is how we will conduct ourselves. I must say that no solution for trade union unity or any steps towards unity are possible unless the trade union movement itself take a lead. This is headache of the trade union movement. So I was some what pained to hear Mr. Naval Tata to say, of course, with the best of intentions, that he should advise the trade union movement how it should conduct itself. It is our responsibility basically which we must own find the solution to this particular problem, so that no outsider whether employer, government or public is required to tell us what to do.

We must sit together and work-out a formula or a basis for coming and working together. We have all of us our differences. All the same I think we should be able to find the solution. Now whatever the formula or steps may be.

I am one of those who believe that in a country like India, it should also require the making of a law. Merely our good words are not going to help. We have in our own country experience of what is called code of conduct some years back. The Central Trade Unions came together and evolved certain formula but it just remained on shelf and it has not come into reality. The Govt. machinery tries to work in its own way. If I may say so of the craft unions also the tackling the problem of personalities it becomes very necessary to have acceptable law. The law which emerges due to the consensus of trade union movement. Such a law has to be there and not just what comes from very well intentioned people. I don't want to doubt the bonafides of the people. But even well intentioned people can reach conclusions, can take decision, which will come in the way of achieving the objective. So this aspect has to be kept in mind. Now there are certain issues which we have required to face. And my appeal to all those who are concerned to face them voluntarily and in an imaginative manner. Otherwise they will always be illusive. I do not know whether we will be able to reach any consensus. One issue is very important, the representative status. How are you going to determine the representative status? There have been arguments on the advantages and disadvantages of both this. But ultimately we have to make up our mind and go ahead. There has been a system, I don't want to go into all the details of the system of membership verification. I believe that there is lot of scope for manipulation. There are several trade union centres, which honestly feel that secret ballot is the way of determining the correct picture in a particular plant for finding out the views of the worker of that particular plant. I would certainly like to advocate this particular method and I don't think the fears which were expressed earlier will become reality. What we are suffering at present is much more than what is likely or what we imagine would follow.

Along with secret ballot system there should be internal democracy within the union itself. I think these two

things go together. Unless the internal democratic functioning in a particular union is assured this thing cannot succeed.

The another issue which has to be faced is regarding the membership. Some system should be worked out so that the workers become members of the union of their choice, not necessarily a representative union, not a collective bargaining agent union but any union because the basis of democratic functioning is the worker must have a right, to choose his union or form a union, that right has to be preserved. While preserving that right we have to work out a system so that he is a member of one or other union and still we are eager to have a representative union which is able to deliver the goods, hope for the workers and employers.

Then one issue which was referred to is the role of majority and minority unions. What are their rights or what are their obligations all these would have to be worked out and as I said my approach will be to sit together if necessary as they do it in Rome, get locked up in one room and find solution. This is possible if we mean what we say. I am one of those who believe that loose confederation is not going to serve the objective. It can only serve the purpose as far as one particular objective is concerned but if we have other overall objective that now working class must play fruitful role in this country, I think a strong united trade union movement is a necessity.

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Prof. V. B. Kamath

I would like to congratulate Mr. A. B. Bardhan for a very scholarly paper in which he has tried to make out a case for unity. The plea for unity has been going on for a very long time.

I remember, that in 1958 at the valedictory function of the training of the first batch of Education Officers, Professor A. R. Wadia made a very fervent plea on behalf of the teachers and others for a unity among trade unions because even at that point of time union rivalry was a very sad spectacle. I for one at that time expressed the view that this is very wishful thinking that it is impossible that unions at that point of time would be shedding their own leaning towards, different political parties. Are we now prepared to come together on one platform in the larger interest of workers and ultimately the nation ?

I think to-day the situation has changed considerably. The state of things have become much worse than what it was in 1958. I feel that 1975 was a very great opportunity for unity. In my opinion as a student of political science and trade union movement, I thought 1975 was a great opportunity for the trade unions to come together on one platform when democracy itself in which the trade unions are expected to keep the greatest interest was in peril. Unfortunately the trade unions in this country did not seize that opportunity. That was when I would use the old traditional word—God-given opportunity for the trade unions to come together. That opportunity has been lost.

To-day again we have an opportunity for all the trade unions and I assume there is no trade union which does not believe in democracy because freedom of association is the basic theme, so far as the trade unions are concerned. And from that point of view I think the right time has come. I agree with Dr. Shanti Patel entirely that if we want to preserve and protect and may I now add, promote democracy, it is a must that the trade unions come together in the larger interest of the nation and of course incidently the workers as well. Dr. Shanti Patel has made three important points which prevent us from coming together. Let me tell you that everything that Dr. Shanti Patel has said applied to the teachers trade union movement also. He has mentioned about political parties, personalities and craft

appeal and I can tell you that these problems are prevalent in the teachers movement also. There has been strong pulls by the CPI and by the CPM so far as the teachers trade union movement is concerned. Yet we have tried our level best and till now quite successfully to keep ourselves together at the primary teachers level, at the secondary teachers level and believe me also at university teachers level. And the third problem is also present. We had a separate union of demonstrators. We had a separate union of Directors of Physical Education, a separate union for Librarians. In the field of medicine, Doctors have what is called MARD—Maharashtra Association of Residential Doctors which is separate. There is also an Association of Senior Medical College Teachers. Now we have somehow been able to get all these people together to a certain extent. In my opinion BTUC (British Trade Union Congress) in U.K. is a very good example of getting everyone together in spite of difficulties of craft etc. Similarly, even AFL-CIO which faced the problem of the craft unions have been able to get them together. I do not see why in the larger interest, the workmen should not come together? Why we should not make an attempt on the lines more or less that Mr. Bardhan has tried to convey to us through a new system. It is not just a plea in vacuum but is based on a case study. It is a good case for trade union unity.

The whole problem is whether we are prepared to give up our own affinity towards political parties. Is our affinity towards the workers more than political? It is like the dual membership problem. How do we solve this dual membership problem? It is for all of us to come together and put our best foot forward and to work together. It is no use of talking about the unity in distress. What we have been hitherto talking about is we are in distress and, therefore, we want to have unity. We must admit that we have got differences and inspite of the differences we should have unity in diversity. We have got diverse approaches towards the problem. Yet there is a common focus No. 1 interest of the worker and No. 2 interest of in-

dustry and the nation as a whole. And here even the employers have made a fervent appeal, because sufferers are also the employers, as a result of disunity in the trade union movement.

Yesterday, Mr. Naren Sen, talked about politics of murder. But we had also some politics of the same kind, though to a very lesser extent, even in Bombay. And, therefore, the question, is whether we want to have unity in distress or unity in diversity. So far we have been thinking in terms of unity in distress, coming together with specific causes is a unity in distress. For example we all came together; Teachers also participated in the Morcha to Parliament, as also in Bombay, against the Comprehensive Industrial Relations Bill. Someone yesterday very rightly pointed out what are the real changes that should be brought about in the Bill. Because even in that Bill I believe there were some good elements; there were a lot of evil elements undoubtedly even from the point of view of teachers.

Well thanks to Justice Krishna Iyer, he tried to bring all the unions together in an indirect manner. Industry was defined by him and it was applicable even to Educational Institutions as well as Hospitals.

One of the things that Mr. Bardhan has indicated in his own paper is Coordination Committee. We formed the Coordination Committee for Maharashtra of all teachers i.e. Employees in Educational Institutions and Hospitals to oppose this particular bill. Now similarly on various occasions of distress we have come together. That is an inadequate attraction towards unity. Therefore, it is important that in a positive manner, we should be prepared to come together in the interest of workers irrespective of political ideologies. Those political ideologies should be kept only at the background and we should try to have a common denominator and that common denominator will be democracy. Democracy in its multi-dimensions, that is social, economic and political.

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J. C. Dixit

I have no words to thank Shri A. B. Bardhan whose very scholarly and illuminative paper gives me an opportunity of discovering an important aspect of the trade union history of this country, which passage of time had obliterated to public view.

Historians of trade union movement have been placing the blame of dividing the trade union movement on politicians and political parties. In so doing they were always nearer truth. But some of them wanted to exclude late N. M. Joshi from that category of political leaders who in their view were responsible for injecting centrifugal tendencies in the Indian Trade Union Movement. It was a mistaken effort.

Shri Bardhan has in his paper referred to the split that occurred in the A.I.T.U.C. in 1929 and briefly touched upon its causes. Unfortunately he failed to notice two such events that occurred before 1929. First of them goes to the very root of the movement. In 1919, when Gandhiji had entered the congress in a big way, when surges of anti-imperialism started overwhelming the entire Indian sub-continent following the Jallianwala Bagh holocaust, dissidents within the congress who prided in calling themselves liberals, went out of the congress and formed a new organisation in the name of Indian Liberal Federation. Late N. M. Joshi was elected as one of their secretaries. Lokmanya Tilak was the foremost leader of the Congress and an idol of the workers of Bombay. Late N. M. Joshi was chosen by the government to represent workers of India at the I.L.O. Conference held at Washington at the end of October, 1919 against Lokmanya Tilak. What the government did clearly indicated that they wanted the Indian Liberal Federation to enter the trade union field and to establish its hold in such a manner that the entry of Gandhiji and other Congressmen could be effectively stalled. This eventually led a sensitive man like Gandhiji to chart out his own cause of action and conduct his own expe-

vements in the trade union field although in isolation. It provoked the group of Lal Bal Pal and Moti Lal Nehru to take up the gauntlet against the government. They gave birth to the A.I.T.U.C. 'Lal' was the by-word for the Late Lala Lajpat Rai.

The seeds of the birth of the A.I.T.U.C. in fact were laid at the Amritsar session of the Congress in Punjab when under the presidentship of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, they adopted a resolution invoking congressmen to enter the field of labour and to organise their trade unions, so that designs of the Indian Liberal Federation to capture it were frustrated. This is probably responsible for the fact of the first session of the A.I.T.U.C. having been convened by a Punjabi namely Dewan Chaman Lal and its having been presided over by Late Lajpat Rai known to the country as the lion of Punjab.

At Calcutta Session of the A.I.T.U.C. held in March, 1924 again the two groups led by Deshbāndhu C. R. Das and N. M. Joshi clashed leading virtually to a split. With the withdrawal of Deshbāndhu Das from the scheme the disaster was averted. Thereafter the hold of N. M. Joshi over the A.I.T.U.C. was firmly established. Under the liberal leadership the A.I.T.U.C. decided to keep itself equidistant from extremists including Congressmen on the one hand and worker leadership on the other. It was for this reason that an epoch-making worker-leader like C. P. Tewari could not become President of the A.I.T.U.C. until 1926. Even when he became one, he was not considered worthy of being mentioned in the small book on the history of the Trade Union Movement which late N. M. Joshi wrote and published that year. Rank and file of the A.I.T.U.C. had lost confidence in the Congress leadership as a result of consistent campaign of vilification carried against them by the liberal leaders within the A.I.T.U.C. They could also not manage to keep the confidence of the A.I.T.U.C. workers either. All this led to the split in the AITUC in 1929, which Shri Bardhan has referred to in his paper.

The context in which, we are at this moment are reflecting on the contribution made by Late N. M. Joshi to India's Labour Movement and retrospectively over the history of the trade union movement is that of 'Trade Union Unity'. We have, therefore, to assess how could we achieve that, following the footprints of N. M. Joshi. Late N. M. Joshi taught the workers about the utility of legislative instruments in presenting a united picture of labour and in serving their cause. He has been model, and shall remain one for all times to come to these trade union leaders who enter legislative bodies with the cause of labour at their heart.

Prof. Kamath in his discourse has put the thesis that 'Unity' can only be achieved in a situation of distress as was achieved by different political parties who created the Janata Party in 1977. His logic corresponds to that of Hobbes. Led to its conclusion, it will devastate that edifice which Prof. Kamath intends to build to realise his mission of the trade union unity. Dr. Shanti Patel's logic is different. According to him trade union unity requires a particular kind of social ecology which only freedom of association and right of workers to strike, can ensure. His approach is also fallacious. He mistakes social ecology for social biology.

Coming to my own view in the matter, trade union unity, however, laudable that may be, cannot be regarded as an end in itself. It is a means to an end, of serving labour in order to make it a healthy, contended, efficient and articulate instrument of service to the society. Until and unless working classes are not fashioned as instruments of social change and as catalysts for social justice they cannot hope to achieve commanding heights in the society.

How could we achieve a 'Trade Union Unity' which has qualities which I have catalogued a little while ago. Foremost of them is that it should be democratic. To be democratic does not mean to have particular type of constitution

or leadership which Prof. Kamath and Dr. Patel may commend. Right type of democracy requires a mental culture soaked in the spirits of truth and non-violence.

The two terms of truth and non-violence are being used today only as slogans. Very few people understand their implication. Gandhiji used the word truth as an English synonym for Satya which means something which is done without fear or favour or a step taken objectively and not subjectively. Non-violence as a canon of conduct means acting with catholicity and understanding. Approach based on truth and non-violence has, therefore, to be synthetic. It cannot go well either with antithesis or dialectics. Most of our trade unions believe in dialectics and in class struggle. Their whole object, therefore, boils down to collective bargaining. Does not the concept of collective bargaining require the existence of two classes of employers and employees? If the two classes are not different and antagonistic is there any room for the negotiation to play its role. The realisation of this truth should not disturb us. Let us remember the trade unions are creatures of a capitalist society. Their purpose is, therefore, to continue social status-quo. How can those who believe in anti-thesis and dialectics be democratic? When you negotiate collectively with the employers, you may secure economic justice. What you get by that process may be anything but not social justice.

We in India, have been yearning for long for the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society, where social justice pre-dominates. The way to reach that goal has been indicated by Plato, Manu and Gandhi. Each one of them was of opinion that vocations and trades divide people. Instead of widening their gap, efforts should be made to put all of them in one orbit so that they could work in unions and ensure social justice to the people. Once trade unions and workers are educated in the art and science of social justice, trade union unity will come as a natural consequence. We should, therefore, make attempts to ensure trade

union unity in natural way and not through artificial subterfuges. Unity realised in a natural manner will be lasting and will endure. Let us all make efforts in that direction.

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Anil Das Chaudhury

Shri A. B. Bardhan has fairly drafted a discussion paper with some specific proposals. I found Dr. Shanti Patel discussing specifically some items that were actually needed. I felt those were more or less in the same line as I was thinking to place before the Seminar. The discussion paper placed by Shri Bardhan can be divided into three parts. The first part deals with the reasons of the split in the Central Trade Union Organisation, second part deals with trade union unity and the third part deals with how to achieve the same.

From the past history, I found that the reasons of the earlier split was mainly due to political outlook or necessity on the one hand and absence of the same on the other hand. To me those differences were not unwarranted or untenable in the then political atmosphere in the country.

I may state that the first split in AITUC during the period 1927-29 was in a context when there was more or less country wide freedom movement against British imperialism in the form of non-cooperation. In that context when Royal Commission on Labour reached India, the political people in the trade unions deemed it a necessity to boycott the said Commission in consistence with the freedom movement in the country and they thought that would strengthen the political movement in the country. The other trade unionist who could not see eye to eye with the said attitude and wanted to get reform by placing their views before the Commission could not like the said boy-

cot. These two views arose out of difference in the political outlook. In this manner it will be found that the subsequent splits in the trade union movement occurred mainly due to political reasons. The recent splits in the central trade unions, down from the formation of CITU, also arose out of some political considerations. Trade union history will show that there was again unity in AITUC in the past and that was also mainly due to political consideration.

Shri Bardhan in his paper wanted to say that the urge for unity of the rank and file workers led to the unity in AITUC. I do not deny that there was certainly an urge for unity of the workers but without some political necessity or urgency of the trade union leaders, the said final unity in AITUC could not be materialised. It is true that there were eminent trade unionists like late N. M. Joshi and others with whom political outlook could not play the main role. Their deep involvement in the trade union movement and goodwill to give relief to the workers also played a prominent role and acted as a cement in the effort for unity in AITUC.

Shri Bardhan has dealt at length regarding the necessity of trade union unity. I am in full agreement with him, but I want to stress that in the context of the Indian situation whether during the period before 1947 or afterwards, the political necessity in the trade union movement was an important factor and that will not be wiped out. Only difference is this that before 1947, freedom struggle was the main issue and after 1947 there are other political issues and many other thoughts playing important role in the trade union movement.

Considering the aforesaid political aspects, amongst others, I do not think or I am not so optimistic to the extent that in recent future there might be only one central trade union organisation or even one union in one industry. To me it appears that due to political consideration or necessity many of the existing trade union organisations will

not agree to dissolve their organisation and merge into one. This is applicable more prominently in the case of INTUC also.

It will remain so as the present economic system is being represented by a Political Power and being opposed by others and both sections are working in the trade union field. If any organisation is devoted to power, that organisation cannot agree to dissolve its trade union wing, as by that they want to protect the political power or maintain status quo. So let us face the reality that political necessity will exist in future also, both in trade union movement and its organisation.

In that perspective, I do support the third formulation made by Shri Bardhan on trade union unity in the form of Confederation of as many Central Trade Union Organisations and Industrial Federations who are willing to come together. Before that, I want to say that we should deal with the question of recognition of bargaining agent, as that is also a necessity for trade union unity, and to have a sober attitude towards it. Each trade union should know its own strength amongst the workmen. This will stop the weaker unions to dictate terms.

For the purpose of ascertaining its following, secret ballot is the appropriate process and in this election all workers employed should be allowed to cast their vote. By this, we may also have proper and wider involvement of workers at large and not only of union members. In this matter, I can refer to our joint formula framed by most of the trade union organisations and submitted before the Government of India during our discussion on Comprehensive Industrial Law, held in New Delhi. Perhaps eight or nine organisations signed the said formula. I am not going to discuss that formula as that you will find it in the proceeding on Comprehensive Industrial Law.

So far as the trade union unity is concerned, I stress on Confederation of Trade Unions. Shri Bardhan has sug-

gested three remedies for trade union unity. First is to have joint action on specific issues. Second is joint meeting, discussions, and dialogue for joint action and for levelling out differences and for developing a joint outlook. To me in the first and second suggestion, there is no material difference.

I shall prefer the third suggestion, as other suggestions are only of ad-hoc nature. Suppose we take up an issue and that issue whether solved or not will lose its importance after a short period and with that the trade unions will again remain away from each other. But if trade union unity is a continuous process, then we cannot remain satisfied with ad-hoc arrangements. Of course, I do not have any objection, if at the beginning, we start joint action on specific issues with a mind to form a Confederation, because in joint actions many others may join immediately but in Confederation they may not do so.

I, however, reiterate that I will prefer Confederation for the reasons stated above, particularly it will be more or less a permanent organ for united trade union movement and trade union unity. Otherwise trade union unity will only be a misnomer.

Dr. M. K. Pandhe

Comrade Bardhan in his paper has discussed at length the historical background on various subjects concerning the life of late N. M. Joshi. Since the time is very short at my disposal I do not want to go into the entire historical background. If various speakers will go on giving interpretation of the developments in the past it may lead to some sort of by passing the main subject of Trade Union Unity in the present context.

Only on one question I would like to speak because it is referring to my own organisation. It is mentioned that the split in the communist movement in India was in 1964. He has also said that at the initiative of CPI (M) a new Centre has been formed. I would like to mention that despite its split in the united communist party in 1964 we did not form any separate organisation. For about six years we remained in the same organisation though we were in a position to form another organisation. We remained in the AITUC mainly because we wanted trade union unity to be maintained. So we did not take initiative for forming another trade union organisation.

In 1970 also we suggested to the majority in the AITUC that we were prepared to remain in the AITUC provided certain norms of democratic functioning were observed. But unfortunate part is that those suggestions were not accepted and hence we had no other alternative but to leave the organisation. So I do not agree with Com. Bardhan that the split in the AITUC was due to the CPI (M).

As I have said I will not go into the whole background of the history because I consider other aspects of Comrade Bardhan's paper more important. He has given the first emphasis on the formation of an All India Confederation of Central Trade Unions. Our General Secretary Com. Ramamurti has already written letters to all the Central Trade Unions that such a confederation is most important prerequisite to strengthen working class unity. So far as the present Indian situation is concerned several central trade unions and industrial federations have welcome the idea and they feel that such a confederation should be attempted to as soon as possible. We are awaiting the reactions from certain other trade union centres.

We are also discussing the issue with our HMS friends and as Dr. Shanti Patel pointed out that there are questions of local rivalries how one will be able to tackle them after

forming a Confederation? It is felt by some that if the question is sorted out properly it may be possible for them also to accept the concept of confederation. Here we do not mean that as soon as the trade unions come together in a Confederation, the local rivalry will immediately go out. We feel that this will be the step to come together by all the Central Trade Union Organisations who will have some sort of exchange of views, assess the common information available with all the Central Trade Unions so that there will be a common forum for all the Central Trade Unions to act on issues where there is unanimity in the trade union movement.

I would be very happy to inform you that even on the question of Industrial Relations, nine central trade union organisations having common outlook on the question of Industrial Relations Bill including those belonging to the ruling party have been able to come together in an All India Convention which took all decisions unanimously. This is the first time in the history of trade union movement that such a thing has happened, when the question was posed by Central Labour Ministry. You have said what you do not want, but you have not said what you want? Then all the central trade unions sat together and they unanimously came to an understanding about what type of industrial relations bill they desire in this country.

We can evolve united views if all central trade union organisations come together on a common platform on issues facing the working class. In our discussions already a consensus has been arrived at. Therefore, what is necessary is that some sort of consultation, regular exchange of views, regular coming to-gether in order to achieve the trade union unity. During the joint conference of affiliates of HMS and HMP in which it was decided to merge both the organisations, Dr. Shanti Patel suggested that there should be one trade union centre. This fact has been emphasised in the resolution adopted by the Conference.

We also welcome the idea of one trade union centre. But we feel, in the present situation this type of single centre is not possible and hence the confederation idea can alone work. Then we may be able to take a step for formulation of single trade union centre at a later stage. I do not think it is impossible. But there are certain prerequisites which must be implemented in order to achieve complete unification of trade union movement. I look to my dear colleagues to find out modalities to achieve this.

On several occasions discussions were held in the trade union movement on the question of recognition of trade unions on the basis of secret ballot. The National Commission on Labour, has already dealt with the subject exhaustively and accepted secret ballot alongwith verification as a method of determining the representative character of a union, but I do not want to go to that aspect. But I feel that the question of recognition of a union should be decided on the principle of secret ballot. Fortunately, in a recent meeting, which was convened by the Labour Ministry, except INTUC, other trade unions agreed that it should be decided by secret ballot. INTUC also agreed to discuss the question of secret ballot with other trade unions. Shri Bardhan had suggested that we want more and more united actions. Already, they are developing all over the country and the need of the hour is compelling the workers and the trade union leaders also to come together.

The second aspect, is that of democratic functioning of the trade unions. I am very sorry to say that a large number of unions today are not functioning democratically, Even some of the Central Trade Unions do not have their own meetings regularly and functioning is not yet democratic. It is the undemocratic functioning of the trade unions that has been the cause of split in some unions. If proper democratic functioning was ensured many splits in the country could have been avoided.

The third aspect that I want to take into account is the question of political issues. I agree that you cannot avoid political controversies because working class is a part of our social system and is keen in achieving social transformation. But we can arrive at some sort of understanding that political controversies will not come in the way of joint action of the working class. A worker can join any political party of his choice and fight on the platform of that party. On the trade union platform whatever understanding is arrived at among various constituents can be a political platform of the trade union movement. If that concept is accepted, then it is possible for us to come together despite political differences. Late N. M. Joshi was always emphasising that the political resolutions in the trade union movement should be passed by three-fourth majority.

The other aspect is the concept of class struggle. Trade unions essentially protect the interest of the workers against the attack of the capitalists. If some Trade Unions give up fight against the class policies of the employers, the trade union movement will be an adjunct of the employers. How can unity be possible with such unions. However, if objective is to protect workers rights and interests then unity should be possible.

If these aspects are properly looked after in the Indian Trade Union Movement, then I do not think there should be any difficulty in coming together by all the Central Trade Unions. At times it is said that the difficulty in coming together of the trade union leaders is the role of the political parties. In Indian context the political parties cannot be kept aloof because they have played a role in building the Trade Union Movement as a part of our national movement. Political controversies may continue in future also but it should not prevent us from coming together on common issues facing the working class. This is what late N. M. Joshi was always emphasising in his life time. I do not consider that this will be possible in to-

day's context. I agree with Comrade Bardhan that Trade Union Unity cannot be brought about by legal measures. It should be a voluntary process. By developing consciousness among the workers we can bring together the trade union movement.

I would like to inform Prof. Kamath that in 1975 when the emergency was there in the country we did make an effort to bring together all the central trade unions and many trade unions did come together. I think HMS, BMS, CITU, UTUC and HMP came together and we opposed emergency and we also criticised the bonus formula. Similar statements were jointly issued and they were circulated in lakhs secretly among the working class. We did make an attempt to come together on such questions. Therefore, I believe that the present split is not inevitable and it can be bridged.

We are coming together in this forum created by Central Board for Workers Education. I would appeal to all the central trade unions—why can't you meet together? Is it necessary that CBWE should call us together? Why we as trade unions should not come together and tell the Government and the country that we are capable of coming together and speak with one voice. Today due to the split and rivalry, the representation of working class on many issues is not being heard by the Government. On about 120 committees of the Government, there is no trade union nominee though earlier there were nominees of the workers on these committees. It is very sorrowful state of affairs for the trade unions. We have told the Government in a meeting of all the central trade unions that we will discuss what should be the modality of nomination of the trade union delegates to various Government tripartite committees. This is also our understanding on the question. So my experience about this, about several united conventions, about 14th September one-day strike of all the public sector employees when about 15 lakhs workers participated for the first time in such a massive national

strike, shows that it is possible that the trade union movement can come together on common issues if sincere efforts are made by trade union movement. It would be possible for us to work out norms of coming together.

Let us have some sort of consultative mechanism within the trade union movement which will lead to unification of the trade union movement. I do not want outside agencies to preach unity to the Trade Unions. So the trade union should themselves work out solutions, which alone will protect the interests of the working class of our country.

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Manhar P. Mehta

We need trade union unity in order to build up strong powerful and well-organised trade unions to fight against exploiting capitalists, to protect our trade union rights and to bring pressure on government to safeguard the legitimate interest of the workers. The subject of unity in the trade union movement is of great importance and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh has incorporated the same in the clause No. 4 (ii) (d) of the constitution as one of its objects and aims. The broad basis of such unity, is also enshrined in clause No. 4 (ii) (a) of B.M.S. constitution. It states that we 'should assist workers in organising themselves in trade unions as a medium of service to the motherland irrespective of faiths and political affinations'.

Now I will straightway go to my learned friend Shri Bardhan's paper (see annexure) which has been given to us. I submit to refer to page No. 5 narrating the history of trade unions. He has stated therein that "the Jana Sangh has set up B.M.S. to fulfill its rising political ambitions". While reading this, Shri Bardhan specifically referred to me and expressed the hope that 'Shri Mehta will have no objection to this'. I shall take this opportunity to clarify our position, and that too from official documents.

The said statement is to say the least, factually wrong and actually baseless. In fact Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (B.M.S.) was established to end political unionism and to bring about trade union unity. While describing the principles and policy of B.M.S. and the circumstances under which B.M.S. was formed, our founder General Secretary, Shri D. B. Thengdi, wrote in his booklet, 'The onward March of B.M.S.' as under :

"Before the rise of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh the Indian labour field was dominated by political unionism. The recognised Central Labour Organisations were the wings of different political parties or groups. This trend was bound to encourage multiplicity of unions and preference to political rather than workers' interests in the actual conduct of trade union affairs. This made workers the pawns in the power-game of different parties. The conscientious workers resented this political exploitation and relegation of their own interest to the background. They were awaiting the advent of national centre based upon genuine trade unionism, i.e., an organisation of the workers, for the workers, and by the workers. They were equally opposed to 'political unionism' as well as sheer 'economism', i.e., 'bread-butter unionism'. They were votaries of Rashtraniti or lokaniti. They sought protection and promotion of workers' interest within the framework of national interest, since they were convinced that there was no incompatibility between the two. In fact, all parties to industrial relations were part and parcel of the national organism and their sectional interests were identical with those of the Nation. They considered society as the third and the more important-party to all industrial relations, and the consumers' interest as the nearest economic equivalent to national interest. To ensure highest measure of democracy in the country, various mass organisations representing different interest groups must be free from the hegemony of political parties, they believed. Some of them met at Bhopal on July, 23, 1955 (The Tilak Jayanti Day) and announced

the formation of a new National Trade Union Centre, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh.

The pioneers of this new movement rejected the 'class' concept. They believed in the vertical arrangement of society, and not in its horizontal division. They, therefore, stood for neither class conflict nor class collaboration. The class-concept which is a fiction, and not a fact would ultimately result in the disintegration of the nation they declared. They, however, refused to identify national interests with those of the privileged few in the economic, political or any other department of national life. The criterion for determining the level of national prosperity was according to them, the living condition of the financially weakest constituent of the nation. To improve the lot of the underdog, they would resort to the process of collective bargaining, so far as possible and to conflict, wherever necessary. Exploitation, injustice and inequality must be put an end to. There must be equitable distribution of the total national product. The ratio between the minimum and the maximum incomes in the land should be 1 : 10. All monopolies must be abolished and economic authority decentralised. The problem of unemployment and underemployment must be tackled on war footing.

The Convention further decided that the entire approach of the new movement should be constructive, and not merely agitational. Industrial peace was the essential prerequisite for industrial progress. As a nationalist organisation, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh should strive to ensure that production is not hampered without adequate justification. It must eschew and oppose violence, sabotage and all other anti-social acts in the labour field. But it was opposed to the undemocratic ban on the workers' right to strike which, according to the Convention, was their fundamental right. Instead, an appropriate mechanism should be devised which would render the right to strike a superfluity".

I have read out the historical background of the first convention and the ideological basis of B.M.S. So I hope my learned friend Shri Bardhan will accept the factual position and will not repeat that the Jana Sangh has set up B.M.S.

The second point which I would like to point out, is regarding the efforts we have made for the trade union unity, especially for the information of Prof. Kamath. As Dr. Pandhe pointed out, we fought unitedly against the emergency and arranged the programme of mass Satyagraha of workers.

We sincerely and seriously endeavoured to bring about the unity amongst B.M.S., H.M.S. and H.M.P. which jointly waged a fierce struggle against the government during the emergency as democratic nationalistic organisations.

And there are minutes of that. I am not narrating the entire history. But one thing I will mention. On 7th July, 1977 there was a meeting between HMS, HMP and BMS and Shri Bal Dandavate of HMP was appointed as the Convener of the Joint Committee for unity.

Our General Secretary Shri Ramnareshji stated in his report to the 4th All India Conference of BMS held at Jaipur on 21st April 1978 that four important issues were considered by the Joint Committee and it was agreed :

1. The new organisation shall be perfectly non-political in character.
2. Instead of class struggle, the words "Struggle against injustice and exploitation" should be used.
3. The new organisation shall celebrate first May as International Labour Day and Vishvakarma Day as National Labour Day.
4. There was no final decision on the issue of the colour of the flag of new organisation.

Though it is true that ultimately merger could not take place, it is very important to note that sincere efforts were made by all the three Central Labour Organisations.

Now, third point, in Shri Bardhan's paper, I will point out that on page No. 10 and 14 and at other places. 'Socialism' has been shown as ultimate goal. It is natural that Shri Bardhan will use that word. But I respectfully submit that the vehement advocacy of 'Socialism' as a goal may prove to be the major obstacle to trade union unity. There are so many varieties of socialism today, that it does not connote any specific socio-economic order. It is said that socialism is a hat put on so many heads, that it has lost its shape. On page 14 Shri Bardhan has said that we should unite the workers on a higher socialist level of consciousness. What is this "socialist level of consciousness"? I can understand 'national political or social consciousness, but I fail to understand 'socialist level of consciousness', which is too vague and devoid of any specific meaning for a common man like me. I will have no objection to Dr. Shanti Patel's suggestion that instead of 'Socialist society', let us say that we want to establish an 'egalitarian society', free from exploitation, poverty, hunger and disease.

The fourth point is regarding politics. We believe that we cannot serve two masters. Either we have to serve the workers or we have to serve the political parties and bosses. As we are pledged to serve the workers, we have to remain free from politics. When we enter into the temple for prayers, we leave our chappels and shoes outside. Similarly, when we come to the trade unions to serve the workers, let us keep politics outside and keep them perfectly non-political. We must decide to promote the workers interests within the frame work of the national interest.

Lastly on the issue of formation of coordination committee, I submit, that it is a good idea. The idea of Shri Ramamurthy of establishing loose Confederation of Cen-

tral Labour Organisations with a condition that all decision must be taken unanimously is worthy of consideration. However, we should not make any attempt for merger without creating a proper atmosphere and inner urge amongst the minds of the active organisers and workers of various central trade unions. Let us not marry in haste and repent at leisure. Instead, let us start courtship first.

* * *

V. B. Karnik

Everybody has expressed in high words his sentiments for unity and desired to see that there is unity. I would like to utter a word of caution. We should not forget the basic characteristics and functions of the trade unions. I would like to speak about the observations made by Shri Ramamurthy yesterday. Unfortunately, neither Shri Ramamurthy nor Dr. Smt. Maytrayee Bose is here. So, I hope I do not misunderstand Shri Ramamurthy. What I understand from Shri Ramamurthy is that we should have trade union unity by urging all Central Trade Union Organisations to come together to form one organisation and in that organisation people will have to see that they get seats according to the membership that they have. So, instead of fighting outside, we shall fight in one organisation. I prefer to have separate organisations rather than all joined in one organisation.

The important thing is that we should not forget that the trade union, after all is the agency for collective bargaining. Apart from other things the main function of trade union is collective bargaining. If collective bargaining is to be carried on, there must be a collective bargaining agent and that collective bargaining agent of the particular workers, where the workers are employed in that particular factory. So, in any case, there will be one collective bargaining agent, whether coming from INTUC, BMS

or from the AITUC, or from HMS, whatever the Central Organisations that there should be one negotiating agent and it is essential for the unity of the trade union movement. We should have this sole bargaining agent that I will say is the best way. The trade union unity for such collective bargaining agent should be attempted in as many cases as possible. Once the collective bargaining agent with support of the workers is determined, it will show that we can come together.

If the union is organised on this basis and becomes sole bargaining agent, I would suggest that it must have other rights and that alone would enable us to have trade union representative bargaining agent in all the factories and that will be a solid basis for the trade union unity.

I am not against the proposal that are being made here, about the proposed Confederation of workers. The important thing is that we should try to build up really socialistic unions in large number of factories and that will be the real trade union unity that would be most desired. You should try to work towards trade union unity, which is essential for the recognised representative in a factory.

* * *

P. M. Mantri

At the outset I am indeed grateful to you Chairman, Sir, for calling a representative of an Employers' Organisation, like me to say a few words if I so like and I would not dishonour your word at all. I was attending to these sessions and listening to the views of very senior and matured trade union leaders for my own benefit. I also feel that employers will have very little to say in this matter as a question of trade union unity is basically for the trade union leaders to think of and come to a general consensus. In fact, Shri Naval Tata in his speech at the inaugural

function emphasised this point and here it is his Federation namely Employers Federation of India which I represent. Shri Naval Tata said that the question of trade union unity is really for the trade unions themselves to decide. But employers would be interested in it, as we should be required to deal with only one sole bargaining agent. How do you select or elect or decide a sole bargaining agent is again a matter for trade unions to decide. I am sure Shri Tata had not earlier read the paper of Shri A. B. Bardhan. All the same, co-incidentally, suggestion made by him about a confederation or something like a centre of trade unions in his speech find reference in this paper.

I do not want to say on the merits or demerits of a confederation or other possible solutions which Shri Bardhan has given in his paper. I would only restrict to the question of a sole bargaining agent because industrial establishments are concerned with that as a major issue. On the question of sole bargaining agent and the method of selecting or electing it there is wide difference of opinion. Even among those who are favouring the method of secret ballot there is a diversion of opinion about the modus operandi to be followed for adopting the secret ballot. So this is one point which I think trade unions will have to decide.

I am seeing that opinions have been changing from both the types of persons. Some of those who were ardent lovers of secret ballot say that they have an open mind. I was very happy to hear Shri V. B. Karnik. He was a member of the Tripartite Committee set up by the State Government and was very strongly favouring secret ballot and still holds the same view. Even then he made an observation that for selecting one union if a secret ballot method is required to be reconsidered he has an open mind. Somebody yesterday observed that even the INTUC which has been supporting verification method has an open mind on the issue. Therefore, it seems to me that the opinion is veering round in regard to the method of deciding a sole

bargaining agent, i.e. either by secret ballot or by verification or a combination of both. The Employers' Federation of India has suggested, as a via media, a combination of both the methods. In any case, that is the most important point as to how to select or elect a sole bargaining agent.

Having done that what is much more important and to which a reference was made by someone here was what will be the obligations or the rights of all those unions which will participate in the process of electing or selecting a sole bargaining agent but will get defeated. And I think this is the crux of the present industrial relations scene as we have been observing because I am a man from personnel field and I have been experiencing it day in and day out. The problem is not merely of electing or selecting a sole bargaining agent but how to tackle all those unions which do not get selected or elected as a sole bargaining agent. And, therefore, this seminar or any seminar of this type must really come out with a positive recommendation as to whether, if at all, a non-recognised union should have any right.

Here again, in the Tripartite Committee there has been no unanimous opinion even among the trade union friends. It is on record that the AITUC and CITU have said that although secret ballot was adopted as a method for electing a sole bargaining agent, the unions which would get defeated in the secret ballot should also have a say in the collective bargaining process. That means we are not talking in terms of a sole bargaining agent at all. And this is the point on which, I think, the Seminar must come out positively with certain conclusions. I would say that so far as unrecognised unions are concerned, there should be something like a code of conduct if it was possible.

The last but not the least important point which I would like to make is a serious problem which an industry faces on account of, what is called independent trade unions, about which we are not talking at all. They are large in

number in this city and all over the country. What are we going to do about them? Probably, all these ten central trade union organisations might come to some general consensus about electing or selecting a sole bargaining agent or negotiating agent, but what about these independent trade unions because they are not bound by any tripartite agreement or tripartite recommendations, or the recommendations of a Seminar or eminent persons like this.

I would suggest to the Central Board for Workers Education to consider whether it can take initiative in calling, if necessary, a separate Seminar of all these independent trade unions to find out as to why they are away from the main stream of the trade union movement because they also claim that they are functioning in the interest of the working class. Whether they will come to the Central Board is of course a matter which may need consideration. The Central Board has already taken a step forward in calling all these gentlemen here. Dr. M. K. Pandhe enquired why such a meeting should be called by the Central Board and not by any union. I am a member of the Central Board and I can claim that I have been taking a lot of interest in the Workers Education Scheme for the last so many years. My very humble answer is if any one of the organisation takes initiative and calls rest of the nine trade unions, probably the nine unions may feel that the initiative is going in the hands of the convener union. In case of the Central Board that sort of doubt may not remain. Therefore, I would request the Central Board to take initiative in that regard.

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A. B. Bardhan

I shall not take more than five minutes. The reason is obvious. I do not consider that the question of trade union unity is a matter of debate or controversy. Everyone wants unity. Therefore I do not propose to reply to many things

put forward by other participants. I am satisfied that a discussion has taken place, views have been expressed, and proposals put forward. As has been stated by Dr. Pandhe and Dr. Shanti Patel, the Central Trade Unions, whether singly or altogether, should take initiative so that we have more joint actions, like those we are already having. Also, to have more dialogue with each other, which too we have initiated. Thirdly, to take initiative to come together and set up a confederation. United actions, fraternal dialogues on common programme, and steps towards the confederation, these I believe are the essential elements for moving towards trade union unity. If this is done, I think a beginning will have been made.

Whatever historical analysis I have made of the past, or what anybody else will write or say, is not the most important thing. History after all is a very controversial subject. Therefore I repeat, the main part of my paper does not lie in the historical details, but in the proposals made as to the present and the future. I would suggest Sir, that you as the Chairman should sum-up the discussion on unity. You have been the Secretary of the National Labour Commission. You are, therefore, aware of the problem, and not a mere observer.

Shri Buch who is not present at the moment, told me during the tea-break, that we can have Seminars on unity. But we will never have unity. I am not such a pessimist. I think that the situation today is ripe for unity. Therefore I believe that such a Seminar on unity, can also contribute to unity.

One last remark and I conclude. Shri Mukherjee has raised a question about recognition and its relevance for unity. Here, I agree with Dr. Pandhe that if recognition by ballot is agreed to, and provided the preliminary steps have already been taken, provided we are already set on the path of unity and provided a confederation has already come into being, then there will be no objection for the

unions getting minority votes to merge in the union which has obtained the highest vote. Of course, it presumes that sufficient guarantees for the democratic functioning of that majority union should also be established. Only in this way can recognition by ballot contribute towards unity.

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trade union movement—tomorrow

FOURTH SESSION 12TH APRIL 1980

- Chairman : Shri B. N. Datar,
Director,
Ambekar Institute of
Labour Studies,
Bombay.
- Paper on : Trade Union Movement—
Tomorrow
- Paper by : Shri Raja Kulkarni.
President, National Federation
of Petroleum Workers, Bombay

Shri Raja Kulkarni expressed his views on Trade Union Movement—Tomorrow'. The paper which was received later is at Annexure. Some of the speeches on the subject are given below.

Dr. S. L. Kashikar

The challenges that are posing us in the community are stupendous. As I visualise, neither the Central Organisations of Trade Unions nor the bigger Federations have looked to the most unorganised working class, that is in millions. As Shri Karnik has stated, only 30% workers are so far organised. The population of India is increasing and there is congestion in cities like Bombay and Calcutta. Naturally the Central Trade Union Organisations give more attention to the organised industries.

My second point is, do we really mean and believe in industrial democracy? In my own experience I find that we talk of unity and industrial democracy; but enough attention has not been paid to either of them.

My third point is that there is a privileged class of the employees in the public sector undertakings and in nationalised industries. The Class IV employee in Reserve Bank gets near about 900 rupees per month whereas there are number of wage earners who do not get even 1/4th of that; nor the other amenities that they are legitimately entitled to have. Is it not the responsibility of the central organisations to pay more attention to this aspect? All the central organisations try to get more economic benefits for workers.

I have worked with Shri Rajabhau Kulkarni in INTUC for years together. I have been in labour movement for more than 35 years; but what I noticed was that bigger unions do not look after the constitutional growth and development of the working class organisations. It is rather unfortunate because we still have kept them in an ivory tower, in the movement form and never brought them in a constructive mood of team work as a union; responsible for union functions. Had it been so, we would have pressed long back and had also insisted and brought about "national wage policy" and "national price policy". This issue was discussed in the last tripartite conference also. Thereafter another conference was convened in Delhi. We discussed again for the "national wage policy", "national price policy" and "the bonus issue" which has been the cause of agitation and unrest for years but we were never serious about those problems. And because we are not united on our own stand, the issues have still remained unresolved. So this is my humble suggestion that let us have quantitative and qualitative growth. Then we may possibly have within the strong genuine Trade Unions, studied leadership, in coming decade it will be from organised industries.

We have to mobilise unorganised labour which needs attention if you really mean industrial democracy and industrial peace. I was amazed to find out that politically oriented class of management in collaboration with the Trade Union Organisations have been depriving the other poor people of their legitimate gains; unorganised workers should have atleast a fair wage as per their requirements with other welfare measures.

I would suggest that it should be the obligation of all Central Organisations and big Federations to see that unorganised labour are not ignored. The employees of organised sector are kept in the reserved compartments. New demands are pressed and all these people combine for economic gains and the situation is going from bad to worse.

In the end I can only say that the central organisations have a constructive approach, and look to the welfare of the unorganised workers and also look to the gains, and how far the disparity existing between the wages of organised and unorganised ones could be reduced. The unorganised field workers do not get any amenities. They get maimum of Rs. 3/- a day. They do not have continuous jobs. They do not have casual leave, monthly leave, medical aid, no housing facilities, etc. I am afraid that the unorganised class of wage earners will revolt against this state of affairs and the society will also side with them.

We must first of all agree that our responsibility is for unorganised and organised sectors, our job is to see that the disparity between the two is removed, our job is to bring them better standard of living. Our job is to insist and prevail on the Government to fix 'national wage' and 'price policy'. This is a challenging work. This is what we have to take-up. We will never be strong and assertive if there are only ramifications, and diversifications. We should be out of the sphere of political influence. I am of the opinion that from political considerations all talks are done. This

is why we do not come to the understanding on any problem and whatever is talked out and suggested is never implemented further.

It is in this context that the responsible genuine leadership have to look at the problems confronting them. In short, I may sum up that well planned union infrastructure, justice to the unorganised workmen productivity and production to boost up national economy, 'National Wage and Price Policy' and unity amongst the working class are some of the points that need serious attention of the Trade Unionist if he styles himself and poses to be the servant of the society.

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V. B. Karnik

Quite a lot has been talked about national wage policy and that is popular all over the country. But let us be aware of one thing. If it is a national wage policy what remains for collective bargaining. So let us not confuse national wage policy with the right of collective bargaining of the worker. We will be happy if there is a national wage policy, So what I suggest is let us have a national minimum and we shall try that and we should try to see that the Government accepts at least the recommendation of the Bhoothalingam Committee with regard to the National, minimum wage. The point is let us not be carried away by prejudice.

I know the deep prejudice that exists about the Bhoothalingam Committee and also its recommendations. But one recommendation that the Committee has made is beneficial and the working class should take up that recommendation and see that at least minimum wage of Rs. 4/- or Rs. 5/- a day is accepted all over the country. That should be our demand so far as the national wage

policy is concerned. We need only minimum That is about national wage policy.

I would like to emphasise more about efficiency of trade unions which I am afraid at present is very very low. I suggest that every union must have some department, for cultural and educational activities, and department to look after the problems of women and children. In this way we can make our unions more and more efficient and if they are efficient they will be able to tackle these problems much better. I was on the E.S.I.C. for a long period and I had to do that work alongwith other types of work. So if we have one man let him be interested in the work regarding ESIC, with regard to the Provident Fund and in that way specialisation will give better result.

In 1980's I emphasise more about the efficiency of our own organisation than going to the Government demanding this or demanding that and getting practically nothing. Therefore, let us look after ourselves. Strengthen our organisation, make it more efficient and then we shall be able to compel the Government or at least persue the Government to do something with regard to our demands.

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B. N. Datar

It is now for me to say the last word. I will be telegraphic in my address to you. I have jotted down all the main points in the wide ranging debate over the last two sessions. It is my intention not to take too much of your precious time just now, but before the proceedings of this conference are out, I will elaborate on certain points which I may lightly touch upon here so that when the proceedings of the seminar are available in print, you will have a full version of my summing-up. I think that will be the best way I can handle the matter in view of the time constraint.

First of all let me express my apologies to you. At the lunch break someone said to me, "Mr. Datar, you have been a very strict Chairman". I plead guilty to the charge. If my strictness has resulted in more persons giving expression to their views, I do not regret being strict, but if in the process, I have stifled the views of any particular person then my apologies to him.

Friends, I find that we have been going backwards and forwards in regard to all the three main subjects slated for discussion in the seminar. That is but natural because one cannot discuss the future without the present; nor can you discuss the present without drawing from the past. You cannot discuss trade union unity and efforts needed therefore without analysing the developments in the past and relating them with the stresses and strains of the present. And therefore as one would have expected, there has been lot of forward and backward talk during the last two days.

This is the N. M. Joshi Centenary Commemoration Seminar on trade union problem. Trade union leadership everywhere, and more so in India, has been with persons who have social conscience. That is why I was surprised that one aspect of Mr. N. M. Joshi's life did not find adequate mention in the meeting: the social consciousness of that man. He brought what may be called a 'social conscience' approach to whatever problems that came his way, or on which he expressed himself, and on tackling which he spent almost all his life including his life in trade union movement. I just had a hurried glance through Mr. Karnik's biography of Mr. Joshi, I had read the typescript of it, to refresh my memory and I found reference to a small incident when Mr. Joshi was a teacher in Elphinstone High School, Bombay. The small incident was about the way he treated the late and the revered Dr. Ambedkar. I quote from Mr. Karnik's book :

"It appears Ambedkar was a student of the Elphinstone High School. As an untouchable he was always re-

quired to sit on the last bench. Joshi did not approve of this arrangement. He asked Ambedkar to occupy the front bench. One day Joshi called upon Ambedkar to write something on the black board. As Ambedkar was approaching the board, students in the class asked him not to touch it. They had hung their lunch bags near the board and were afraid that their food would be polluted if Ambedkar touched it. Joshi understood the feelings of students, but he did not want to pander to their prejudice. He insisted on Ambedkar going to the board and writing on it as directed. Ambedkar did it."

We had discussion about Mr. Joshi's ideas about the trade union movement and their applicability to the Indian trade union scene of today. In all such matters we usually take a static view of the ideas which our great leaders at one time propounded, forgetting that the leaders themselves never meant their pronouncements on a subject dear to them to remain unchanged and true for all times/situations to come. In September 1969, I think, the CBWE had organised a similar seminar on Gandhiji in Delhi. I remember I participated in that seminar and the point I made there was that if Gandhiji were alive for some more years, several of the earlier ideas he held about various subjects, on which he had an occasion to express himself, would have been put differently. He had been pragmatic in his approach to problems and so was Mr. Joshi equally pragmatic in trade union matters. For instance, we heard from Mr. Dange yesterday about how on certain vital matters Mr. Joshi had differences with him and yet in the interest of the working class they decided to work together; the situation in 1929 required such joint action. Of course, in adapting his ideas he must have influenced, because of the important voice he had in public life, the emergence of the situations themselves; but that is a different matter. This process was all the time working in the minds of persons like Gandhiji and Joshi who could be considered as the founders of the trade union movement in India; this can be

said without any disrespect to the present generation of trade union leaders. And indeed, our present workers' leaders also hold these names in high esteem but attempt to interpret Gandhiji and Joshi in the current context, though with their special stant.

Sometime back in Delhi there was a very influential All India Seminar of intellectuals. The title for the seminar was "Agenda for India". Under this spacious title, the participants discussed various issues facing the country: social, economic and political, greater emphasis was naturally about the politics of the present and the shape it should take in future. The discussion as was reported in the media was more or less similar to what we had here. We brought in social, economic and institutional aspects of trade unions but in a given political milieu. I would have thought that the seminar title with such a well organised programme and with such a distinguished galaxy of trade union leaders, could have as well contained a sub-title 'an Agenda for Trade Unions' as an addition to cover the whole gamut of ideas that came up for discussion with past, present and the future thrown in but this is just by the way. We had a better comprehension in the process of the debate of how trade unions were formed, how there was a split, how they regrouped, what were the difficulties and various interpretations of the total phenomenon. View points were expressed on different political assumptions about the future of the trade union movement and how it should re-organise itself in the interest of toiling masses. In that context different facets of agenda for trade unions for the '80s were brought out with appropriate emphasis on trade union unity so that what is built up in the 'eighties would stand in good stead for workers organisations in the remaining part of the 20th century.

1. >

I will begin the substantive part of my contribution by referring to Mr. Karnik's paper though I recognise that I should have made these comments while the discussion on that paper took place. However since, as I said, the com-

partments in which the discussion was divided were hardly watertight, Mr. Karnik will not mind my bringing in the comment now. He presented on the first day itself some statistics regarding trade union finances as indeed his comment thereon. I would interpret the statistics more gloomily than he had done. My gloom is because even on the basis of his statistics trade union expenditure per worker has not changed much in the years gone by even in money terms; in real terms the deterioration is worse. Workers want trade union services to be expanded; at the same time the contribution which the unions collect from their members have remained low for various reasons. Should this situation be allowed to continue? Even a very moderate recommendation made by the National Commission on Labour in this regard is not respected by trade unions by and large. This does not mean that some unions which are doing good work have remained static in prescribing, succeeded in collecting their heavier dues. But much more needs to be done in this regard. To think of improving union work for and union services to its members on the present less than a 'shoe string' budget which unions have is impracticable. Many union leaders recognise this but do not talk about it because of the possible effect such talk will have on retaining their following.

Then Mr. Karnik mentioned another point; that was about what the Registrar should do at the time when he finds it difficult to accept the union's annual return. His advice was for the officer to follow the law without fear or favour. My friend Mr. Ovid from the Labour Office is here. He has a lot of experience in handling the registration of trade unions and all other work connected therewith including the scrutiny of annual returns, re-registration and deregistration of unions and so on. I had done it in my own days 30 years back when I was working in the Bombay Labour office. I found it extremely difficult then for the Registrar's office to cancel the registration of trade union, merely on the basis that the trade union had not sent its annual return or for non-compliance by the union of the

office requests for clarification. It was difficult in my days and I am quite sure that it is much more difficult now when political pressures are operating even more vigorously. He will correct me if I am wrong! The other aspect is that all the law requires is that the trade union should send its returns to the Registrar. Once the return is sent, howsoever defective it may be, the registrar has either to accept it or enter into long correspondence with union which in many cases is infructuous. You must excuse me for this frank observation since I am speaking as one of you now. These are the difficulties which the Registrar's office has and which we should take note of as a group. These are the real problems which, when we discuss the multiplicity of trade unions or the trade union difficulties in getting registration etc., we should keep in mind. If we advocate that the Registrar's Office should do something in the matter of stricter monitoring of trade union finances or trade union activities with a view to avoiding union multiplicity, the present law will have to be changed. Another point: in the international context, giving extra powers to the Registrar of Trade Unions to go beyond his present functions will not be prudent. There will be a possibility of the country being asked to explain in an international forum even its mild action which may have or may be construed to have remote effect on freedom of association. In all such matters therefore there seems to be the need for trade union centres in the country themselves coming together and establishing some norms to settle matters of the type referred to by Mr. Karnik. I regret to say that some efforts made in the 'fifties in this regard with Government coming in as a catalyst did not yield results because either trade union centres expected Government to do much more or Government itself overstepped its initial limited role.

We discussed at length about the trade union movement and over a period of years disunity in the movement gradually crept in. For the sake of convenience these could be recognised under four 'P's: Capital 'P's. First 'P' is Politics to which several speakers adverted. Second 'P'

is Personality: the personality of the organiser; the third 'P' stands for Profession which was referred to under craft unions by some speakers and how narrow craft alignments can create difficulties by stressing in union affairs the problems of an individual craft in relation to others (this causes irritation to members of the other craft.) The fourth 'P' is negative in its operation; it is Pride. Union members do not have a pride in belonging to an organisation and therefore there will be weak loyalties and as a consequence food gets supplied for union multiplicity or trade union disunity. All these were mentioned by speakers. To assume that all these 'P's will, in due course, minimise their influence on trade unions is to ask for the moon. There has to be a conscious effort.

Let us discuss this a little. Personality may be perhaps a waning influence with education, or with a better balanced working class in respect of education. One may expect internal leadership will develop but even with internal leadership a union can succumb to a personality cult for other reasons and these others will have a waning influence. Then will come the related 'P', politics. Can this be completely dissociated with union builders? The answer can be in the negative. This is because in the past workers (or their organisations) have shown that they need politicians when ugly situations develop as much as the politicians need unions whatever the reason. Craft unions are not much in evidence in India. And yet how they can affect multiplicity of unions is common knowledge. Recommendations exist as to how crafts could be given their due share of importance but within a unified organisation of all crafts in an industry; these need to be tried out.

On the positive side, we talked about the principles which should serve as a basis for affecting unity in the trade union movement. These are nothing new. The principles have been evolved since the days of Mr. N. M. Joshi. How he was actually instrumental in formulation of some of these was mentioned by some speakers. Circumstances

have changed since Mr. Joshi's days when the attention of all leaders of public opinion, including trade union leaders, was concentrated on securing independence from the foreign rule. Some compromises were possible then; that urge is less dominant now. We have been talking about the principles but in terms of putting them into practice difficulties have arisen or are created by persons who do not want to see the old order changed. Therefore, it could be said that whatever the principles, a will to work them out must exist. And I am addressing you as trade union leaders of the present; surely some of you will be trade union leaders of the future too. I think it is important therefore that mere agreement in principle on the need for trade union unity will not help. All should sit together, as we have done now, to give thought to the practical aspects of the problem.

As a working arrangement to reach the goal, joint action on problems facing labour was emphasised by various speakers. Every one said that there should be joint action. This aspect of the remedy has been discussed in various tripartite meetings and in the reports of Committees and Commissions. The National Commission on Labour had reached a conclusion that the problems to which workers are exposed are common; articulation of problems by different unions has a large measure of unity barring certain issues which have political overtones, the suggestion coming from trade unions of various shades are similar. This broad agreement could be made a starting point for unity. During the early 'seventies union leadership of diverse shades did have meetings to explore areas of common action. Problems of unemployment, inflation, income inequalities and poverty stare in the face of all unions. A more recent addition to this bundle has been the energy crisis. Mr. Ramanujam mentioned this and so did others. Then poor conditions of work have to be jointly agitated against. The whole range of socio-economic tasks which unions can collectively take upon themselves to help the country's planning process have to be formulated. All these matters re-

quire collective thinking/action on the part of trade unions. Some items in the package may present difficulties; but even after cutting out points which are controversy-prone unions will be left with a sizeable common task. It is by working together on non-controversial issues that we can move a step forward for tackling the more difficult ones. If we as unions have shown the capacity to sit with employers and settle differences when interests are divergent, why can we not do so when a measure of commonality of interests exists i.e. interest of the working men and women. Mr. Bardhan made a similar point and he rightly qualified it by saying that the steps to be taken should be short and efforts to be made should be quick. The word 'quick' brought a response from another speaker who mentioned the well-known saying 'don't marry in haste and repent in future'. Both the points are valid. But all I would say is that time is against us. Moreover, there is no point in delaying good things, because the very process of delay may bring in new problems and make it difficult to concentrate on the recognised common tasks.

Let me illustrate: The government of Mr. Morarji Desai had prepared a Bill, the Industrial Relations Bill, 1978. It had some welcome features and several unwelcome ones. Both the welcome and unwelcome features, at least some of them, were different for trade union federations of different hues. Efforts were made, irrespective of such differences, jointly by the trade union movement, to see that the Bill was not enacted and unions did succeed in stalling the Bill. Similarly when we discussed trade union unity, views were identical round the table that this unity has to be evolved and legislation for the purpose was contraindicated. If this voice of the distinguished trade union participants in this meeting goes to Government. Government will certainly take note of it when it chooses to prepare a fresh Bill on the subject. I cannot speak on behalf of the Government, but my experience of working in Government, albeit jaded by ten years, tells me that unanimity against a particular Government proposition

whether expressed jointly by employers and workers interests or by a strong trade union lobby has the effect of revising Governments original stance. It happens in the case of other recognised pressure groups too !!

Another point which had a large measure of support was about periodic meetings of this type to secure if possible a meeting of minds; meeting of minds as between the trade union leaders, at various levels. I say at 'various levels' deliberately. Experience has it that on several matters top leadership can reach agreement but when it comes to union executives at the working level, difficulties arise in terms of working in the spirit of these top level agreements. Trade unions are not the only institutions to be made aware of this situation. It happens to a larger degree with the employers. The writ of employers associations does not run in regard even to the members of the association not to talk of the general run of employers as a group. History of the 'Codes' evolved in the late 'fifties' shows this.

Dr. Kashikar has put forward along with his colleagues a set of ideas on which he feels there should be an understanding in this group. The elements included bear some resemblance to the documents accepted in the era of Codes. Time was not adequate to have a full discussion on the subject but I recognise that some document on which a general agreement could be reached is necessary as a point of reference. I would only appeal to this gathering that whatever title you give to it, do not call it a 'CODE'. There are dangers, in using that word, of cynics saying 'We have seen it operate earlier and with what results'. A major part of the joint effort will be wasted merely in overcoming this cynicism. These cynics will be from within as also from outside. One has to take cognisance of the latter because they build up public opinion in the country; we may have to pay special heed to their susceptibilities and the manner in which they are likely to react. A periodic meeting with some positive document like the one described will be of

great help. The idea of confederation floated in the meeting, I think, need not be ruled out but limits to its utility will have to be recognised. There will be dangers in trying to force the confederation concept down the throat of any of the national trade union federations. Things may change but to be realistic we must take into account what obtains at present.

If periodic meetings at different levels of leadership is the felt need, the point will be: 'who should organise such meetings?' Organisation means some secretarial effort and some finance too. In this context let me commend the excellent work done by the CBWE so far as this meeting is concerned. The CBWE has gone out of its normal activity because of the demands of this special occasion : Paying tribute to the memory of the late Mr. Joshi. A question may arise in the minds of persons who control the CBWE purse, as to whether it should not merely confine itself to developing its Education Officers and worker educators and then conducting/supervising unit level classes of the current vintage. In my association with the CBWE and its Governing Council in its first eight years I had always been saying that the administrators of the scheme should not take the report of the Working Group or whatever it was called, on Workers Education as sacrosanct. The report was published in 1957; ideas for spreading workers education have to change. All that the reports gave is some idea about how we should start. The intention was never to shackle the CBWE with its past doings in drawing up a future programme on the lines of taking on additional responsibilities of the type the CBWE has done in the last three days in terms of bringing together the national leadership for exchange of ideas. And I should know this because I happened to be the Convener of the 1957 Group. I must therefore congratulate the CBWE and its Director for taking the initiative in this matter. All that I would say, and it was said by quite a number of speakers, is that it is not enough to have only an all India meeting of this type but many more meetings similar in

nature are needed at the regional level or may be at the level of the cities like Bombay or like Calcutta or other big industrial centres and some recognised industrial belts like coal mining, plantations etc. That is a legitimate expectation from the CBWE if what you have said in the last three days provides any guidance. One does not have to make a special pleading for arranging these smaller meetings because: a) they are likely to yield better results than meetings at the all India level; b) the more you are near the level of operation the better the advantage you get; c) participants come to the meeting with specific difficulties but within the geographic confines and thereby make the discussions more realistic and thus more purposeful; d) meetings in smaller geographical confines can help carry the message to workers better. What has been said about confining meetings to small geographic units also holds good for industry-specific meetings. There is thus scope for a variety of effective combinations for this type of educational work with the object of building up in the working men and women the larger identity with unified trade union movement.

Now whenever such ideas come up for discussion, the trade union stand has been that such matters should be settled by the unions themselves; no catalyst is necessary for the purpose. Why! when the CBWE's work was mooted, one had to contend with the same argument; 'leave it to unions'. While there can be absolutely no difficulty about accepting the principle, there will be always questions of detail in bringing together union leaders of different persuasions such as: who should take the lead in arranging the dialogue? what should be the venue? whom should the invitations be sent? what about the expenses on the meeting? who should do the preparatory work? Most of these difficulties could be sorted out if the CBWE is brought in. All unions will be on neutral ground. Also though on a strict interpretation of its present charter it may confine its activities to the three tier system with a frill of the type which the venue of this present meeting

connotes, the departure from it on the basis of which the Seminar has been organised could itself be made a precedent for taking on the educational activities just mentioned. And who will say after listening to what was said in the last three days that the meeting was not for workers' education. For instance Mr. Dange explained the stance of N. M. Joshi in the context of the 1929 strike. Mr. Ramamurthy talked about quite a number of other matters on the wider plane of India as a whole, particularly the happenings in the 'forties'. Mr. Buch brought to our notice the correspondence between Mr. N. M. Joshi and Nandaji with reference to the early efforts in trade union unification. Mr. Ramanujam explained the more recent experiences on the subject. Some of these may be matters of record but others surely have never been put on paper and, for understanding the logic of different stands, one will require this type of platform, where one could exchange views and one could learn from experiences of others.

I am afraid I have given longer time than I should have to discussions in one session. That is because of the importance of the subject and the many views which were aired. Coming to my friend Rajabhau's paper, I am sure you all enjoyed listening to him. He has promised to give the organisers an amplified and written version and judging from what he said we will all be looking forward to that version. He is peeping into the future but by no means can he be said to be a 'star gazer'. He has built up his theme on the solid foundations of his experience of industries of the future: chemicals, petrochemicals and oil where ownership of units has and will continue to have a different pattern. In a way he has brought the perspective provided by the National Commission on Labour a step further. However I would like to refer to an international report for the benefit of participants of this meeting since it may help in taking a view of the future: the report of the Brandt Commission. Dr. Willie Brandt, as you know, is the Ex-Chancellor of West Germany and under his chairmanship there was an independent commission appointed.

Its value lies in the fact that the Commission's work did not have a specific official status, but because of that it has come out with a very frank and excellent assessment of recent happenings in the international economic order. I say excellent because it is excellent in terms of the analysis of responsibilities of developed countries towards developing countries. Apart from providing some of the stark facts of the present, it takes a view of the rest of the century and one believes that because of the influential persons associated with the Commission's work, it is bound to have an effect on international economic relations. I am sure thinking on such a report must have already started in the industrialists' circles, in India as elsewhere, particularly in the Multinational enterprises. Should a distinguished gathering like this not make a common cause and supply the Indian trade union view on such an important matter in order that it could be fed into what the International Trade Union Confederations have to say. There is also another consideration. It is quite possible that reports of the type that I mentioned will be studied by individual trade union federations and views thereon would be sent to national and international agencies. But knowing the state of trade union organisations in this country it is possible that such views, in spite of similar positions on a large majority of issues, will run the risk of being discounted because of the recognised disunity in trade union ranks. A joint presentation will not suffer from that disadvantage.

Leaving aside the Brandt Commission for the present as something which Government will take care of, are not there several issues of common concern to all the unions and on which the trade union prescriptions may not be very different, which require to be tackled in gatherings of this type? I recall the days when prior to the meeting of the Indian Labour Conference and the Standing Labour Committee, the Labour Minister used to have separate meetings with employers as a group and trade unions as a group to understand their respective stances on the issues before the meeting. This advance get-together in groups

did help the queering the pitch for tripartite discussions and devising some broad measure of agreement in the tripartite meeting. I have also seen unions coming together and taking a joint view on issues like sharing of gains in productivity, the stand to be taken about modernization, automation, workers' participation in industry, administration of social security and so on, all of which are issues which will stare us in our face in the coming years. If for reasons stated earlier, some institution can provide a forum for discussion for unions of different views why should it not be taken advantage of? A viewing together of problems as they emerge or are likely to emerge will provide a fair guide-line to Government to take action. What is more it will create a significant impact on the public mind which at present associates trade unions with disunity among their ranks, with work stoppages, with disregard for the well being of the community and what not. Unions collectively have a strong case to educate the public in the matters like this. That is an additional task to which one expects unions will address themselves in the 'eighties'.

To conclude let me thank Dr. Chansarkar and his staff again for organising this meeting and more importantly organising it with a good deal of preparation. Almost all the papers were printed. I think they were sent to the participants well in advance. Arrangements were made for presentation and a full discussion thereon subject to the limitations on participants imposed by harsh chairman/ chairmen. We had a full discussion and I believe there was adequate summing up of the discussion at the end of each meeting. Since I had to take stock of what happened in the last two meetings I am afraid my summing-up has become longer than what I expected it to be. I, therefore, say in the end thank you for the indulgence you showed to me in the last two sessions, and thank you for the patience which you showed in listening to me.

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Justice Shri C. S. Dharmadhikari, of the Bombay High Court was the chief guest at the concluding function of the Seminar on 12th April 1980. The contents of the valedictory address by Shri Dharmadhikari are reproduced below.

सबसे पहले मुझे श्रमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड का शुक्रिया अदा करना चाहिये, जिसने मुझे आपके बीच आने का मौका दिया। ट्रेड यूनियन से मेरा सम्बंध जरूर रहा, लेकिन मैं अपने को इस काबिल नहीं समझता कि इस सेमिनार में आप जैसे इस क्षेत्र में काम करनेवाले नेताओं के सामने कुछ कह सकूँ। मैंने आपका निमंत्रण इसलिये स्वीकार किया कि मुझे कहा गया था कि मालिकों के प्रतिनिधि और ट्रेड यूनियनों के प्रतिनिधि इसमें शरीक हुए हैं। मैंने जिन्दगी में ऐसा माना है कि हर एक औद्योगिक विवाद (इंडस्ट्रीयल डिस्पूट) के तीन पक्ष होते हैं। एक मालिक, दूसरा मजदूर, तीसरा उपभोक्ता या मेरे जैसा नागरिक। मैंने ऐसा माना कि दोनों पक्षों का प्रतिनिधित्व होने के बाद तीसरा पक्ष आपके सामने उपस्थित नहीं हुआ होगा। इसलिये मुझे निमंत्रण दिया गया है। इस त्रिवेणी संगम में यह जो उपभोक्ता या नागरिक है वह मुप्त सरस्वती होता है, वह दिखाई तो नहीं देता, लेकिन जब (डिस्पूटस) विवाद होते हैं तो उनका नतीजा इसी को भुगतना पड़ता है। हमारे विदर्भ में एक कहावत है कि हेलेके टक्कर में कौन, जीतता है, कौन हारता है इसका कोई महत्व नहीं होता लेकिन जिस क्षेत्र में टक्कर होती है उस क्षेत्र का हमेशा नुकसान होता है। “हड़ताल” हो या “लाक आऊट” हमेशा कन्ज्यूमर को ही तकलीफ सहनी पड़ती है। मुनाफा होता है तो शेअर होल्डर को डिव्हीडंड मिलता है। मजदूर को बोनस मिलता है। पर उपभोक्ता को, या सामान्य उपभोक्ता को इस मुनाफे में कोई शेअर, या हिस्सा नहीं मिलता, एक आध बार लाटरी के रूप में कोई इनाम मिल जाता है लेकिन वह लाटरी है, हक नहीं। फिर भी आम गलतफहमी है कि उद्योग-सामान्य नागरिक की भलाई के लिये चलाये जाते हैं, जो बेचारा हर जगह, हर हमेशा अनुपस्थित होता है। उसका विचार, औद्योगिक सम्बंध या विवाद में कोई करना ही नहीं चाहता। यह सामान्य नागरिक की वेदना है। इसलिये जिन सवालों पर आपने विचार किया उन पर मैं थोड़ा सा सामान्य नागरिक की दृष्टि से अपना विचार रखना चाहूंगा। हमारे देश में एक गलतफहमी यह भी है कि प्रोडक्शन बढ़ने से हमारी विभन्नता खतम हो जायेगी, हमारे सवाल सब हल हो जायेंगे।

यह भी कहा जाता है कि इस देश का इतिहास सम्पन्नता का इतिहास है। इतिहास में हमने पढ़ा है कि यहां दूध, दही की नदियां बहती थीं, सोने का धुआं निकलता था, आपने भी ऐसा ही पढ़ा होगा। लेकिन जिस जमाने में दूध, दही की नदियां बहती थीं। उस महाभारत काल में भी अश्वथामा को पानी में आटा घोलकर दूध समझकर पिलाना पड़ा था। रामायण काल में भी आदिवासी शबरी की तकदीर में बेर ही लिखे थे। और नंद का लड़का कृष्ण दूध दही की लीलाओं में मस्त था। उनके गहरे दोस्त मुदामा की जिन्दगी में कभी दूध, दही नहीं आया। उस युग में दूध, दही की नदियां कुछ लोगों के लिए बहीं। और आज के जमाने में भी वही है, और जिनके लिए ये नदियां बहती है वे दूसरों को इसके नजदीक भी आने नहीं देते। उनका स्वाद लेना तो दूर ही रहा। इसलिए पहले हमें यह गलतफहमी दूर करना पड़ेगी कि सिर्फ सम्पन्नता से ही हमारे सवाल हल होनेवाले नहीं हैं। इसलिए मैं यह सब कह रहा हूं कि वर्कर्स पार्टीसिपेशन इन मॅनेजमेंट के बारे में यहां बहुत कुछ कहा गया। मेरे अपने दिमाग में एक शंका आयी, जिसे मैं कहना चाहता हूं, इसे लाऊड थिकींग कहना हूं। कॅपिटलिस्ट मॅनेजमेंट का पॅटर्न कायम रखकर वर्कर्स पार्टीसिपेशन इन मॅनेजमेंट से हमें कुछ हासिल नहीं हो सकेगा। जब तक मॅनेजमेंट का पॅटर्न नहीं बदलता वर्कर्स पार्टीसिपेशन इन मॅनेजमेंट कुछ खास माने रखेगा, ऐसा मुझे नहीं लगता। अंग्रेजी में एक प्रसिद्ध कथन है, 'Each has spun its own impenetrable web of vested interest. These are supported by solid citizens who strive to be virtuous but dislike change, and never fail to protect that part of system that guards their own selfish interests.'

किसी ने ठीक ही कहा है कि हरेक Interest group Pressure group बनना चाहता है और सामान्य नागरिक उनकी दया पर जीता है। अगर व्यवस्थापन में मजदूर का सही हिस्सा हो, ऐसी हमारी इच्छा हो, तो पहिले Kingdom of non-producers or non-Producing people must end. वरना प्रसिद्ध तत्ववेत्ता कामू ने कहा उस तरह Divorce between actor and his setting ऐसी स्थिति मजदूर के प्रतिनिधि और मौजूदा व्यवस्थापन में होगी।

वर्तमान कॅपिटलिस्ट मॅनेजमेंट में वर्कर्स पार्टीसिपेशन इन मॅनेजमेंट में भी विकल्प बहुत सीमित हैं। जिसमें श्रमिकों के लिए चुनाव करने की बात बहुत कम है। अतः पहले यह तय करना पड़ेगा कि हम किस पॅटर्न की तरफ जाना

चाहते हैं। मेरा अपना अनुभव है कि, इंडस्ट्री और लेबर और इंडस्ट्रियल रिलेशन के प्राब्लेम जितने नॅशनलाईज और पब्लिक सेक्टर में ज्यादा होते हैं, उतने प्रायव्हेट सेक्टर में नहीं होते। नेशनलाईज्ड इंडस्ट्री का प्रमुख प्राब्लेम ऐसा होता है कि लेबर कमिश्नर और लेबर डिपार्टमेंट का अधिकारी उसे सुलझाने में मदद इसलिए नहीं कर सकता क्योंकि कुर्सी पर बैठा हुआ अधिकारी उससे ग्रेडेशन में बड़ा होता है। उसकी अपनी डिग्री होती है, उसकी अपनी प्रेसटीज होती है। प्रेसटीज हमेशा दूसरों के ही भरोसे पर या पैसे पर हासिल की जाती है, उसमें अपने जब को आंच नहीं लगती। इसलिये नेशनलाईज्ड सेक्टर में मॅनेजमेंट नॉकरणाहीवादी है। उसका ढांचा भी पूंजीवादी ही है। वह सेक्टर किसी का नहीं है। उसकी स्थिति म्युनिसिपॅलिटी की सड़क जैसी है। जो कचरा कर्म के लिये सबकी होती है, और सफाई करने के लिये किसी की नहीं होती, इसीलिये हम उसे सार्वजनिक सड़क कहते हैं। जो उद्योग किसी व्यक्ति विशेष का नहीं, और सार्वजनिक है, वह सबका अपना उद्योग है, इस भावना को जगाना होगा।

ऐसा दिखता है कि दो तरह के विचार हमेशा रखे जाते हैं, आपके यहां भी रखे होंगे। अलग-अलग तरह के यूनियन लीडर होते हैं। अलग-अलग राजनैतिक पार्टी के भी होते हैं। हर एक अलग अलग प्लेटफार्म पर होते हैं। लेकिन क्या यह जरूरी है कि निजी जीवन में भी वे विरोधक ही रहें, कभी मित्र न रहें, उनमें पारस्परिक सम्बंध कभी हो ही नहीं सकता क्या? बहुत अच्छा हुआ कि वर्कर्स एजुकेशन की शुरुआत हुई और उन्होंने आप सबको यहां एक प्लेटफार्म पर लाया। यह एक अच्छी शुरुआत है। चोटी के लीडर्स एक प्लेटफार्म पर आ जाते हैं पर मुश्किल होती है सेकंड ग्रेड लीडर्स की जिनको एक प्लेटफार्म पर लाना मुश्किल होता है। जैसे मार्क्स और गांधी के बारे में लोग कहते हैं। उन्हें नजदीक लाने में, तकलीफ कम थी क्योंकि मार्क्स, मार्क्स था, मार्क्सिस्ट नहीं था, गांधी गांधी था पर गांधीयन नहीं था। ये जो वर्कर्स एजुकेशन ने सर्वोच्च (टाप) लीडर्स को एक स्थान पर एक साथ लाने का काम किया है यह एक आसान काम है। अब सेकंड ग्रेड के लीडर्स को भी एक स्थान पर लाना पड़ेगा। जिसे मैं फालोअप एक्शन कहता हूं, यदि यह नहीं हुआ तो यह जो सेमिनार आप कर रहे हैं उसका जो फालोअप आप चाहते हैं वह उपलब्ध नहीं होनेवाला है। इसलिये जब आप सेकंड ग्रेड के लीडर्स तक पहुंचेंगे तब आपको उन्हें यह समझाना पड़ेगा कि आज की एक राष्ट्रीय आवश्यकता है कि समस्याओं पर इकट्ठा बैठकर वे सारे सही तरह से मिलकर

सोचें। मुश्किल ऐसी है कि जैसे गणित के सिद्धान्त के अनुसार कामन फॅक्टर कैन्सल हो जाता है वैसे हमारे सारे इकनामिक प्रॉब्लेम्स में मजदूर के मवाल या डिमान्ड कैन्सल होगी क्योंकि वे सबमें कामन फॅक्टर हैं। सिर्फ किस यूनियन की मार्फत मांग आयी वह ट्रेड यूनियन का नाम ही सिर्फ रह जाता है जब यह स्थिति बढ़ती है तो बेचारे उपभोक्ता को बड़ी मुश्किल हो जाती है। मजदूर की मांगे हासिल हो गई इसका तब तक कोई मतलब नहीं रहता, जब तक वह मेरे यूनियन के मार्फत नहीं मिलती। झगडा श्रेय का होता है।

मुझे एक बात याद आती है, मा. विनोबाजी ने क्रिस्सा मुनाया था कि उन्होंने बगीचेमें पानी लाने के लिये एक चैनल बनवाया जिससे झाड़ तक पानी पहुंचेगा और संतरे अच्छे लगेंगे। पर पानी आता ही नहीं था। विशेषज्ञ को बुलाया गया, उन्होंने देखा और कहने लगे कि चैनल तो पूर्णतया ठीक है (दि चैनल इज परफेक्ट) फिर भी यदि पानी नहीं चढ़ता है तो पानी की गलती होनी चाहिये। उसके बाद एक कास्तकार आया, उसने कहा, बाबा पानी नहीं चड़ेगा। जिन चैनल में से पानी आता है वह चैनल ही सारा पानी पी जाता है और झाड़ तक नहीं पहुंचता। यह उदाहरण देकर विनोबाजी ने कहा कि हमारे देश की जो "प्लानिंग है" उसका ऐसा ही हुआ है। हमारे देश की जो प्लानिंग है वह जिस चैनल से निकलती है वह चैनल ही इतना पानी पी लेता है कि पानी नोचे तक पहुंचता ही नहीं। योजनायें देहात तक पहुंच ही नहीं पाती। क्या ऐसा ही कुछ मजदूरों की समस्या या राष्ट्रीय-कृत उद्योगों का तो नहीं हो रहा है ?

भित्रो, कभी हमने यह सोचा है कि इंडस्ट्रीयल डिस्पूट के सेटलमेंट के लिये हमने जितनी योजनायें बनाई, चैनल बनाई, उनमें ट्रेड यूनियन्स अथवा इन चैनल ने हमें कितना साथ दिया। मैं आप सबसे नम्रतापूर्वक कहना चाहता हूं, हम मजदूर आन्दोलन में इस मुकाम पर पहुंचे हैं कि वेज इन्क्रीज कितनी होती है, या तनखा कितनी होती है। इससे ज्यादा श्रम करनेवाले श्रमिक की समाज में प्रतिष्ठा कितनी है, यह मजदूर आंदोलन के सामने का आज का यक्ष प्रश्न है। आज तो मजदूर के स्वास्थ्य का विचार भी Productivity के Context में किया जाता है, एक इन्सान के हैसियत से नहीं। इसका मतलब यह हुआ कि रेस के घोड़े के समान उसकी स्थिति है। घोडा रेस के काम न रहा तो वह भर जाये तो किसी को बुरा तक नहीं लगेगा। मजदूर एक इन्सान के नाते प्रतिष्ठा चाहता है। केवल उत्पादन क्षमता के संदर्भ में

नहीं। उसे प्रतिष्ठा समाज में शारीरिक श्रम करनेवाले की चाहिये, श्रमका कमायी करनेवालों की चाहिये, हराम की कमायी की नहीं। सामान्य मजदूर की आकांक्षा यह होती है कि उसकी अपने समाज में प्रतिष्ठा या डिग्निटी होनी चाहिये। इस श्रमिक शिक्षा द्वारा उन्हें अपना दर्जा तथा सामाजिक स्थान प्राप्त करने के लिये मार्गदर्शन मिलना चाहिये। आजादी के बाद श्रमिक के श्रम की प्रतिष्ठा बढ़नी चाहिये यह उनकी असली मांग है। गांधीजी ने कहा था कि जो शारीरिक श्रम करता है उसकी इज्जत होनी चाहिये। उसकी सामाजिक कद्र होनी चाहिये। लेकिन क्या यह सचमुच होता है? इसका विचार हम अब तक नहीं कुछकर पाये। परिणामस्वरूप आज भी मजदूर अपनी मजदूरी के वेतन से संतुष्ट नहीं हो पाता। आप बुरा न माने अगर मैं यह कहूँ कि मजदूर अपने आर में पोटेन्शीयल कंपिटेलिस्ट बन रहा है। फिर से आचार्य विनोबाजी के वाक्य की याद आती है उनसे यह पूछा गया कि "पूजीवादी-कंपिटेलिस्ट का मतलब क्या होता है? उन्होंने जबाब में कहा था-पूजीवादी का मतलब One who has least capital of his own. जिसकी स्वयं की पूजी कम है। यह सारी पूजी तो सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की होती है, नागरिकों की होती है। पूजीपति बैंकों का उपयोग उत्पादक का खून निकालने की पिचकारी की तरह करते हैं दूसरी बात उन्होंने उपस्थित की थी कि उत्पादन मकान के लिये होगा या दुकान के लिये। सवाल उत्पादनको भावना क्या होगी? बाजार की होगी या इन्सान या उपभोक्ता की तरफ जाने की होगी? बाजार उसका लक्ष्य होगा? या नागरिक उसका लक्ष्य होगा? अर्थशास्त्रियों ने ऐसा कहा है कि बाजार में एक्सेंज व्हैल्यू तय होती है जिसे हम कीमत कहते हैं। बाजार में ज्यो कीमत तय होती है वह अपने बूते पर तय नहीं होती। बाजार में हर चीज की कीमत Exchange Value की बुनियाद पर तय होती है। वह वस्तुका जीवन मूल्य होता ही है ऐसा नहीं। Price and value अलग चीज है। बाजार की "कीमत" यह वस्तु के मूल्य का पर्याप्त मूल्यांकन नहीं है। मैं यह सेमिनार में यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि हम मजदूर आंदोलन की इज्जत (व्हैल्यू) प्रस्थापित करना चाहते हैं या नहीं और इनमें सामान्य नागरिक को स्थान मिलेगा या नहीं?

मित्रों, आज सिर्फ मजदूरों का विश्वास संपादित करने का ही केवल प्रश्न नहीं है बल्कि सामान्य नागरिक का भी विश्वास संपादन करने की आवश्यकता है। किसी भी आंदोलन को जब तक सामान्य नागरिक की सम्मति नहीं मिलती तब तक वह सफल नहीं होता। मजदूर आंदोलन को भी

सामान्य नागरिक की सहानुभूति चाहिये। आज उद्योग के क्षेत्र में सही माने में मालिकों का इनव्हालमेंट नहीं है, मजदूरों का इनव्हालमेंट नहीं है और कज्यूमर्स का भी इनव्हालमेंट नहीं है। ये तीनों मंच पर (प्लॉटफार्म) पर आना नहीं चाहते। इसलिए तीनों किसी समस्या को हल नहीं कर पाते आपने जो शुरुवात की है तीनों को एक प्लेटफार्म पर लाने की वह भी पूरी नहीं हो पाई है। यहां तो सिर्फ मजदूरों के और मालिकों के प्रतिनिधि इकट्ठा हुये है। मजदूरों के और मालिकों के जो प्रतिनिधि आये है उनका सेल्फ इन्ट्रेस्ट होता है। जब तक किसी ग्रुप की न्यूसेन्स व्हेल्यू नहीं होती है तब तक उसकी कोई व्हेल्यू नहीं होती। यह मेरा अपना अनुमान है। यहां मैं मेरा अपना अनुभव बताना चाहूंगा। जब मैं एक यूनियन का प्रेसिडेंट था तब मैंने सचिवालय के सेक्रेटरी को पत्र लिखा कि मैं कुछ निगोसिएशन के लिये आपसे मिलना चाहता हूं। जवाब आया कि फिलहाल एक महिना फुर्सत नहीं है। मैंने यह बात मजदूरों के प्रतिनिधियों को बताई और कहा कि भाई इसके लिये उन्हें एक महिना फुर्सत नहीं है, इसके बाद ही मुलाकात होगी। मालूम नहीं उनके दिमाग में क्या आया। उन्होंने दूसरे दिन लायटनिंग स्ट्राईक किया, नागपुर को टेलिफोन पर टेलिफोन आना शुरू हुवे कि सेक्रेटरी साहब हमसे मिलना चाहते है। उस समय फिर हमने जबाब दिया कि अब हमें फुर्सत नहीं है। फिर डिग्नीटी और प्रेस्टीज का सवाल आया कि कौन किससे और कहाँ मिले। क्या एम्प्लायर यूनियन और कन्ज्युमर्स एक जगह नहीं मिल सकते। मैं वर्कर्स एजुकेशन बोर्ड से कहना चाहूंगा कि अगर आपने शुरुआत की है तो इसका फालोअप भी होना चाहिये। इस काम में श्री कर्णिक, श्री दातार आदि लोगों की मदद हो सकती है। हमारे यहां ऐसे कुछ जाने माने सज्जन हैं जो अनुभवी हैं। उनकी मदद से बहुत सी बातें सफल हो सकती हैं। आपने जो लोगों को एक प्लॉटफार्म पर लाने की शुरुआत की है, आपका मुझे, अभिनन्दन करना चाहिये।

एक पेपर मैंने श्री बर्धन जी का पढ़ा, सारी यूनियन्स में कुछ कामन चीजे हो, तो ठीक है। मुझे मालूम नहीं क्या-क्या चर्चा हुई है। लेकिन नॉर्मली मैं ऐसा मानकर चलता हूं कि चर्चा गरम हुई होगी। क्यों कि मेरे जमाने में भी ऐसी गरम चर्चा हुआ करती थी। मैं आप सभी से एक सवाल करना चाहता हूं कि क्या प्रश्न केवल आयडिओलाजिकल डिफरेंस का है ? अगर हो, तो मैं समझ सकता हूं। वैसा देखा जाये तो सभी ट्रेड यूनियनों का यह विचार है कि मजदूरों की आर्थिक दृष्टि से विचार करनेवाला पहिला पैगंबर कार्लमार्क्स ही था, इसमें

कोई शंका नहीं हो सकती। झगडा प्रतिष्ठा को लेकर चलता है। फिर हम गांधीवादी अलग हो जाते हैं, मावसवाल अलग हो जाते हैं। तीसरे और अलग रास्ते से चले जाते हैं, लेकिन कोई अगर कामन प्लेटफार्म की बात हो और उस पर हम एकत्रित आते और सवाल को मुलज्ञाने की कोशिश करें तो काफी सवाल हल हो सकेंगे। राजनैतिक पक्ष इकट्ठा नहीं आ सकते क्योंकि वहाँ कैंडिडेट्स का झगडा होता है। रामराज्य का गोस्वामी तुलसीदासजी ने बड़ा अच्छा वर्णन किया है, आप सभी ने उसे पढ़ा होगा। यदि नहीं पढ़ा हो तो उसे जरूर पढ़िए, जब राम बनवास से लौटते हैं। तब भरत उनसे मिलने आते हैं। उसका वर्णन तुलसीदासजी ने किया है। राम और भरत दोनों का हुलिया ऐसा था कि समझ में नहीं आ रहा था की राज कौन कर रहा था और बनवास में कौन गया था। फिर उन्होंने लिखा कि राजा दशरथ के चार लडके थे चारों राजपुत्रों का गद्दी पर हक था। सबसे बड़े लडके का सबसे बड़ा हक था। लेकिन वह अपने पिता ने जो वचन लिया था उसको निभाने के लिये वह बनवास में चला गया। जिसके लिये रामायण हुआ वह भरत, उसने अपने बड़े भाई से कहा आप वापस आइये और राज गद्दी सम्हालिए। यह आपकी है। आप इसे स्वीकारीये, राम ने इन्कार किया। तब भरत ने राम के सैन्डील (पादुका) लेकर उन्हें राज गद्दी पर रखा और राम के प्रतिनिधि के नाते राज्य चलाया था। सही माने में रामराज्य राजा राम का राज नहीं था। बल्कि भरत ने उनके प्रतिनिधि के रूप में जो राज चलाया था वह सही माने में रामराज्य था। रामराज्य में गद्दी के चार हकदार थे। लेकिन उनमें से एक भी उमीदवार नहीं था। इसलिए रामराज हुआ। इसलिए जहाँ उमीदवार नहीं होते वहाँ रामराज्य होता है। हमारे देश में ब्लाईड रिजल्ट असोसिएशन में क्यों चुनाव होता है यह मेरी समझ में नहीं आता। अनाथाश्रम में क्यों चुनाव होते हैं, मेरी समझ में नहीं आया। सोशल सर्विसेस में चुनाव इसलिये होता है कि सोशल सर्विसेस वेस्टेड इन्टरेस्ट की बुनियाद पर ही चलाई जाती है। और सोशल सर्विसेस भी निरपेक्ष नहीं होती, उसमें भी सत्ता स्पर्धा है। और यदि ट्रेड यूनियन्स को इस आरोप से मुक्त होना हो तो उन्हें अपने मतभेद भुलाकर एक मंच पर आना होगा और कुछ दिनों के लिए अपने लेबल्स भुलाने पड़ेंगे। हम लोग लेबल्स पर जीते हैं। हर ट्रेड यूनियन का अलग अलग लेबल है। ये लेबल्स मजदूर के पेट पर चिपकाये जाते हैं। परिणामस्वरूप लेबल ही दिखायी देते हैं, बेचारे मजदूर का कहीं पता ही नहीं चलता। झगडा श्रेयका होता है, सवाल हल होने का नहीं, इसलिए सारे लेबल्स तोड़कर जो वर्कर्स एजुकेशन बोर्ड ने सबको एक प्लेटफार्म पर लाने की शुरुआत की है यह अभिनन्दनीय कदम है।

यह ऐसा मंच 'who will watch the watchman' इस प्रश्न का उत्तर दे सकता है। इन कदम का आपने स्वागत किया, इसे आगे चलाने की जरूरत है। यह आगे नहीं चला तो मित्रों आपको मानकर चलना होगा कि एक दिन ऐसा भी आवेगा जब कि सामान्य नागरिक और सामान्य मजदूर भी आपको माफ नहीं कर पावेगा। और वह दिन जब आवेगा वह बड़ा ही मुश्किल का रहेगा। हम सब मच्छरदांनी की संस्कृति में जी रहे हैं। मैं इसे मच्छरदांनीकी संस्कृति कहता हूँ। जैसे आप सब लोग जानते हैं, बम्बई में मच्छर बहुत है। इसलिये मैं मच्छरदांनी लगाकर सो जाता हूँ। मुझे तब मच्छर नहीं काटते। तो क्या इसका मतलब यह हुआ की बम्बई में सब मच्छर खत्म हो गये? क्या इसका मतलब यह हुआ कि बम्बई के सब मच्छर मर गये? मच्छरदांनी में मीने से मरग संरक्षण होता है, लेकिन मच्छर नहीं मरते। मच्छर मारने के लिए जहां मच्छर पैदा होते हैं वहां दवाईयां डालकर उन्हें मारने का उपाय करना चाहिये। समाज में अनेक सामाजिक, आर्थिक-असंतुलन पैदा होते हैं। लेकिन अक्सर ऐसा देखने में आता है कि जहां डिस्पूटस पत्तने है, उस जगह पर यूनियन नहीं पहुंचती। और समस्याये या डिस्पूटस पैदाही न हो ऐसी कोशिश कोई करना ही नहीं चाहता। यह सामाजिक और आर्थिक असंतुलन खत्म होकर विवाद पैदा ही न हो, ऐसी कोशिश करनी होगी। यह समाज परिवर्तन तथा हृदयपरिवर्तन की बात है। मैं आपसे नम्रतापूर्वक कहना चाहता हूँ कि पूरे देश में किसी भी ट्रेड यूनियन में यह ताकत नहीं कि वे देश के समूचे मवाल का हल ढूँढ सके। यह सारी मच्छर-दांनीकी संस्कृति लेकर अगर ट्रेड यूनियन जीना चाहें तो इससे सवाल हल नहीं होने वाले हैं। इमप्लिग मैंने इस सेमितार का स्वागत किया।

मैं आपका ज्यादा समय नहीं लेना चाहता लेकिन एक चीज जो मुझे अब्बर गई, उसका मैं जरूर उल्लेख करना चाहता हूँ। किसी देहाती मुफासिल क्षेत्र में मैं गया था, वहां २-३ ट्रेड यूनियन की तकतीयां पड़ी। यूनियन्स के नाम भी कास्ट और काम्युनिटी के निर्देशक थे। हमने ऐसा माना था कि दुनिया के मजदूर एक हैं। आयडियालाजिकल डिफरेंस से अलग अलग यूनियन्स बने यह समझ में आता है। अब कास्ट और काम्युनिटी के आधार पर बनने लगी। मित्रों इस देश में रिलिजन फिक्शन है और कास्ट एक रिगैलिटी है। और कास्ट का हिंसाब ऐसा है कि जिसे वह फायदेमंद है वह उसे पालना चाहता है। और जिसे वह फायदेमंद नहीं होता है वही उसे तोड़ना चाहता है। मेरी किस्मत अच्छी थी मैं वर्धा में गांधीजी के उपस्थिति

में पावन वातावरण में रहा इसलिए मुझे पर किसी विणिष्ट जातिका संस्कार नहीं हुआ। इसलिए मेरा व्रतबंध जनेऊ नहीं हुआ। मैं वैदिक पद्धति से शादी नहीं कर पाया क्योंकि हमारे समाज में कास्ट वाईज शादी की पद्धति बदलती है। यह मेरी अपनी मर्यादा में नहीं बैठता था। लेकिन हिन्दु कास्ट पालना चाहता है। और कास्ट तब तक खतम नहीं होगी तब तक जिसे वह फायदेमंद है वह उससे इन्कार नहीं करता। हमारे यहां कास्ट वाईज या काम्युनिटी वाईज यूनियन्स कभी नहीं बनी। यह कहां से बीमारी आयी, मेरी समझ में नहीं आता। इस बीमारी को रोकना चाहिये, वरना मजदूर आंदोलन की बुनियाद ही खतम होगी। अन्तर सेमिनार का अनुभव ऐसा है कि हम सारी चर्चा भूल जाते हैं। अभी अभी डॉ. चान्सरकर जी ने कहा हम नहीं भूलनेवाले हैं। हम इसे आगे चलायेंगे। मैं ऐसा मानता हूं कि यह सिलसिला चलेगा। और आप लोग इसे चलायेंगे। मित्रों मैं आपसे यह कहना चाहता हूं कि सबसे मैं हायकोर्ट जज बना तबसे कोई भी सामाजिक कार्य नहीं करता। इसलिए मुझे इस तरह के सेमिनार में भाषण करने का कोई अधिकार नहीं। लेकिन हमारे महाराष्ट्र में ऐसी प्रथा है कि आषाढी एकादशी दिन जो पंढरपुर में विठोबा के दर्शन करने के लिए नहीं जा पाते, वे लोग उन यात्रियों का दर्शन करते हैं जिन्हें हम वारकरी कहते हैं। इन वारकरी को नमस्कार करने से वह नमस्कार भगवान तक पहुंचता है। यह हमारी धारणा है।

मैं ऐसा मानता हूं कि ट्रेड यूनियन में काम करनेवाले लोग जो सामाजिक, आर्थिक चॅलेंज को स्वीकार करके समाज रचना को बदलना चाहते हैं, वे उस दिशा में जानेवाले यात्री या वारकरी हैं, उनको नमस्कार करूं, तो मेरा नमस्कार भी उस भगवान तक पहुंच जावेगा, जिसे मैं मानता हूं। इसलिये मैं आपको नम्रतापूर्वक नमस्कार करता हूं।

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VOTE OF THANKS

V. B. Karnik

On behalf of the participants I express our grateful thanks to the Central Board for Workers Education for organising this seminar and for looking after our needs efficiently and so well. Expressing our thanks to Dr. M. A. Chansarkar and also expressing our thanks to the officers of Nagpur as well as Bombay and the assistance of all the staff, we are expressing our thanks to the Board as a whole.

Please convey our thanks also to the Chairman of the Board who was good enough to come to Bombay and preside over the inaugural session of the Seminar.

ANNEXURES

- I. Working Papers
 - a) Contribution of N. M. Joshi to Indian Trade Union Movement and Social Welfare.
 - b) Trade Unions—Today.
 - c) Towards Trade Union Unity.
 - d) Trade Union Movement—Tomorrow.
 - e) N. M. Joshi & Trade Union Movement.
 - II. Programme.
 - III. Participants
 - IV. Secretariat of the Seminar.
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**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON N. M. JOSHI
AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

At Indian Institute of Workers Education, Bombay.

**contribution of n. m. joshi
to indian trade union movement
and social welfare**

Dr. M. S. Gore

Contribution of N. M. Joshi to Indian
Trade Union Movement and
Social Welfare

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as different, contemporaneous facets of a movement which are always present though with a differing emphasis at each of these stages.

Thus, even in the days of Lokhandey, Bole and Talchekar (1885-1910) there was already an element of protest, agitation and confrontation in their work. The Bombay Millhands Association established by Lokhandey, 'agitated' against the inequities of the Factories' Act of 1881. Yet, as late as 1922 when N. M. Joshi organised through the Social Service League an All-India Industrial Welfare Conference and later in 1930 when he submitted his memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour, there were elements of a plea for redressal of 'injustices' and an effort to seek a common ground with employers for ensuring better conditions of work.

The stance that a leader of a movement adopts may be partly a matter of ideology, partly of his temperament, but largely of what is possible at the specific stage of development of a movement depending upon whether the new value system and the concept of legitimate expectations derived from it is generally established in the elite groups of society.

Workers' Movement : Early Years

At the end of the nineteenth century or even at the beginning of the twentieth, there was little awareness of the conditions of industrial workers in the general public. Though a few strikes had been organised in the last decade of the 19th century in different parts of the country, they were not backed by any protective legislation. Neither the government nor the people generally seemed to be aware of the low wages paid to industrial workers, the long hours of work which they were expected to put in and the total absence of industrial safety measures as a result of which the workers ran unnecessary hazards in the course of their day-to-day work.

Despite an acceptance of the message of liberalism which had been the inspiration for the work undertaken by

some to improve the conditions of industrial workers, the general attitude towards the industrial worker was one of condescension. They were called and treated as "mill hands". There was not the acceptance of the sense of dignity associated with work.

Even the phraseology of those who sought to improve the conditions of industrial workers was characteristically dominated by the welfare concept. They sought to "uplift" the industrial workers much in the same way as the later social workers sought to uplift Harijans and depressed classes.

Lokhandey's work for the "social uplift" of mill hands at the textile factories in Bombay and Ahmedabad, the "relief" work of the Social Service League during the textile strikes (1924-25) and N. M. Joshi's initial work for education and training of workers through the employer-supported Workingmen's Institution (1919) helped on the one hand to sensitise the community to the conditions of work and the needs of factory workers and on the other to arouse among the workers a sense of their own dignity, aspirations for a better life and a confidence in their ability to help themselves. But basically the approach was one of the white collared middle class person undertaking good deeds among the poor and ignorant workers.

In 1917 Joshi outlined a note for the Social Service League about its work among factory workers. It emphasised, (i) educational work, (ii) economic activities consisting primarily of the organisation of cooperatives for workers, (iii) moral improvement consisting of temperance work, (iv) recreation for young boys.

Joshi was a member of the Servants of India Society and was a founder-member of the Social Service League in Bombay. He had decided to dedicate himself to work among the industrial workers of the city. So far as the Social Service League was concerned it could hardly have been expected to engage itself in the organisation of work-

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in 1940 his toleration, if not support, of the "ex-
tremes" like Kalekar, Godavari, Gokhale and Phadke
caused him to lose respect from his colleagues and from
the public. But before this happened, he had already
achieved national and international eminence in the
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ed and most of these unions belonged to some national fede-
ration or confederation.

By the 1950s not only had the clerical workers in tex-
tile mills become members of trade unions, but the tradi-
tionally white collar occupations like those of bank employ-
ees, Government employees, postal employees etc. had all
been brought within the organised 'workers' category whe-
ther they formed unions or staff associations. Even em-
ployees from government undertakings had become
unionised.

It is obvious that all this growth in the trade union
movement was not a direct consequence of the work done

by N. M. Joshi. At the same time, Joshi's contribution was substantial. He has rightly been regarded as the **Father** of the Indian Trade Union Movement, though some unions had been organised and some strikes had taken place much before Joshi entered the labour field. While it is difficult to assess the contribution of Joshi to the labour movement.

I would be inclined to identify the following three as probably the most significant of his contributions. First he served as an advocate of the interests of labour. He brought an entirely new approach to his advocacy. It was an advocacy based on a careful study of facts which appealed to the educated middle class and to the government. by his work, his approach and by the careful memoranda that he prepared for various committees and commissions of government Joshi earned a credibility for the labour movement. His second contribution lay in the part that he played in maintaining for a long time the unity of the trade union movement despite the ideological differences among the leaders of the various trade union organisations. He was able to do this primarily because of his unquestioned dedication to the cause of industrial workers combined with a restraint in verbal expression which had earned for him great respect both from employers and from government. The fact that he was not affiliated with any political party also helped him in his mediatory role.

His third contribution was in the role that he played as an interpreter of the problems of Indian workers in international bodies and of bringing his international experience to bear on policy making with regard to industrial labour in India.

If the Indian government, both before and after independence, ratified a large number of I.L.O. conventions, the credit must in a good measure go to the persuasive and sustained efforts of Joshi. The fact that for almost two decades Joshi continued to be a member of the Central Legislature enabled him to influence government's policy formulation on this subject.

Change in Government Policies

Needless to say Joshi was greatly helped in his efforts by a change of climate that had come about in the country as a result of other factors. One of these was that the government's own attitude to industry and to industrial workers had undergone substantial change between the years 1925 and 1950.

Until about the First World War the British government had shown no interest either in promoting industry or in protecting the lot of industrial workers in India. However, the First World War brought about a slight change in the attitude of government toward industry. The need to encourage local production of commodities which were demanded by the people at large or which were necessary for war effort compelled the government to take a more sympathetic attitude towards the development of industry within India. This also made it necessary for the government to take greater cognizance of the conditions of industrial workers.

In 1926 the Government of India enacted the Indian Trade Union Act. This was the first statutory recognition of the rights of workers to organise themselves into unions. Thereafter governmental activity with reference to industrial workers has gradually increased and today government is the largest employer in the organised sector of the economy and an important third party in most matters of industrial policy, industrial relations policy and settlement of industrial disputes.

Prior to Independence government's interest in matters relating to industrial labour was stimulated primarily by acute conditions of industrial unrest, the demands made by the Second World War on the productive efficiency of Indian industries, the continuous pressure exercised by the representatives of organised labour within the legislatures and the influence exercised by the International Labour Organisation on the development of labour policies in developing countries.

Labour Lobby

All these factors have continued to play an important role in making government take an active interest in matters relating to industrial labour after independence. However, an additional factor now plays a role. This is the political importance of the labour lobby. Though industrial workers constitute a small proportion of the total electorate the fact is that they are among the most well organised and the most articulate of the working population. Besides, labour has won its rights to be taken seriously by the national government because of the role that it played in the national struggle for independence.

Both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had taken a sustained interest in the cause of industrial workers though their approaches may not have been always the same. They were both genuinely interested in the welfare of the industrial workers and they were equally sensitive to the importance of organised industrial labour as a part of the nationalist movement.

Nehru had actively involved himself in the work of the All India Trade Union Congress and had once served as its President. Correspondingly the major trade union leaders had openly expressed their sympathy for the national cause and had participated in the Salt Satyagraha, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. When the All India Trade Union Congress broke up, the leaders of Indian National Congress found it necessary to encourage the establishment of the Indian National Trade Union Congress with which they maintained a loose political link.

Thus humanitarian and ideological factors, factors of political expediency and factors of economic compulsion have forced government to take an active interest in meeting half way the demands of organised industrial workers in India.

Workers' Movement : Recent Years

In the 25 years since Joshi's death, trade union activities in India have extended to many more segments of wor-

hospitals, ground engineers, technical staff and pilots of Indian Airlines and Air India, and, in a few States, even the policemen in uniform."

Thus, the trade union movement has come to be accepted by groups which at one time looked down upon the workers' movement as obstructionist and would have considered it improper for men in their status and occupations to join trade unions. In some of the above cases where the law forbids formation of trade unions by employees of particular categories, they have grouped themselves into what are called employee association. Many of these groups though small in numbers are strategically located in the techno-economic system of society, and can bring economic activity to a standstill. Such was the recent strike by the engineers of the Uttar Pradesh Electricity Board (1979).

Though the Government claimed that it had been able to maintain electric supply with the help of uniformed employees and other staff, the fact is that industrial production as well as civil life in U.P. towns was greatly affected as a result of the strike by engineers of the Electricity Board. With the extension of the trade union movement to these various groups two things have become obvious. "One is that trade union activity has covered groups that would not be considered to be "workers" in the traditional sense of the term.

On the other hand, the term 'workers' itself has come to assume a certain respectability. It no longer raises to one's mind of the picture of an illiterate, helpless, over-worked and under-paid person employed in a manufacturing process.

In fact, the conditions of the industrial workers themselves have changed and they have gained in status and in

the total number of employed workers in those engaged in occupations like school teaching or nursing. Some categories of industrial workers are paid better than even college teachers."

Quantitative Growth

If there were 8095 registered trade unions in 1955-56 (India: 1975), there were three times as many (24,547) in 1975-76 (India: 1979) and if there were 2.3 million members registered with the unions that submitted returns in 1955-56 (India: 1975), there were in 1975, 4.1 million members (India: 1979) registered with such unions. The percentage of registered unions that submitted returns to government had, however, fallen from 50 per cent in the 1950s (Sharma: 1963) to about 20 per cent in the 1970s (India: 1979). This may either be regarded as a weakness of the trade union movement in India—that they do not maintain proper membership records—or it may be an indication of their indifference to governmental effort to gather statistics.

An interesting development since the 1960s has been the phenomenal growth in employers' unions. In 1961-62, 198 such organisations were estimated to be in existence; in 1975 there were as many as 555 such organisations estimated to be in existence (India: 1979). This, however, is not of immediate interest to us except perhaps as an indirect indication of the need employers' have felt to organise themselves to meet the challenge posed by the increasing strength of workers' organisations. But this latter is not the only reason why the employers' organisations came into existence.

The above data give a fair idea of the quantitative growth of the trade union movement. The growth is a result partly of the awakening among workers, partly of the fact that the total number of workers employed in factories alone has grown rapidly since the 1960s (from approxima-

tely 3.9 million in 1961 and partly of the generally supportive policies adopted by the Indian government towards urban, industrial workers.

While it may be true that the real wages of workers in industry have not gained substantially or uniformly, if we allow for the rise in cost of living, there is no denying the fact that there is an overall improvement in the conditions of work of most factory workers and that their bargaining capacity has increased since Independence.

Governmental Measures and Services

The scope of government's legislative and administrative activity with reference to workers in the organised sector of employment is wide ranging. One part of this legislation relates to the formation and registration of trade unions and to the maintenance of membership and other records.

Another part relates to payment of wages, to the fixation of minimum wages through statutory boards for different major industries, to specifying hours of work, periods of rest, and the maximum period of work at a stretch, to evolving and enforcing standards of safety in the interest of operators and to maintenance of continued employment and achieving decasualisation in some of the industries.

A third activity is concerned with regulation of industrial relations and minimisation of industrial disputes. This is sought to be done through law which defines strikes and lock-outs as legal or illegal under certain conditions, but also through a machinery for conciliation and where necessary for adjudication. Government has also sought through other measures to promote worker participation in management.

* The total employment in the organised sector has increased from 12 million in 1961 to 21 million in 1977. These figures are taken from the Statistical Outline of India: 1980 (p. 128) published by the Tata Services Limited, Bombay.

Finally, there is the whole area of social security. The legislation specifies services required to be provided by its workers.

Additionally, some of the state governments have undertaken to organise directly welfare activities in geographical areas where industrial workers live. For some industries like mines and steel, the Government has also established special welfare boards. West Bengal State Insurance programmes provide a measure of protection against limited unemployment, sickness, and old age. There is also coverage of medical expenses and a certain amount of medical services through the State Insurance Corporation.

"It is thus obvious that the workers' movement has not only begun haltingly with the advent of the industrial revolution at the end of nineteenth century but has also made considerable progress in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It has not only advanced a long way both in terms of membership and in terms of unionised workers and in terms of the services which it has been able to obtain from government and employers.

Does this mean everything is done with the workers' movement? It has definitely reached a certain stage of maturity but it faces a number of problems and has still a great deal of work left under its belt. The remainder of this will be devoted to a discussion of the various problems and short-comings and unfinished business of the workers' movement.

Some Issues

Uneven Growth: One of the major problems of the workers' movement in India is its uneven growth. There are differences as between different regions, different types of industries, and of the economy and between different types of workers. The growth of urban-based industries has been rapid and has led to a concentration of a town and city population. This has led to a concentration of organisations, such as trade unions, labour parties, and co-operative industries. Within the urban-based industries, the growth of the

ing pharmaceutical workers are better organised than factory based workers are better organised than workers working in the power-loom sector.

The white collar unions of bank and insurance employees are probably better organised than factory based workers in manufacturing industries are. As between the industrial and agrarian sector the latter is almost un-organised except probably in Kerala and except in plantations.

These judgements of relative strength are subjective but it should be possible to examine them by using some criteria like proportion of workers who are regular fee-paying members, the unity or multiplicity of organisations, the capacity of the unions to throw up leadership from among the worker-members, and, finally, the effectiveness of the unions in gaining better terms and conditions of employment for the workers.

The differentiation between industrial unions in terms of the above criteria need not, however, be discussed at great length here. What is important is the basic differential between workers in large industry and small industry on the one hand and the differential between industrial and agricultural workers on the other.

If one looks at the development of the workers' movement it is clear that this movement has not even touched the lives of workers in agriculture and has barely reached the workers in small industry. The problems of organising such workers are, of course, many but until they are brought within the orbit of organisational activity the workers movement will cover only a small minority of the working population of the country.

In the absence of organisation of agricultural workers the interests of the urban and rural workers will inevitably seem to conflict. It is in this context that one has to look at the repeated statements that urban, industrial workers are a 'privileged lot' in the Indian economy.

While the data on real earnings may not support this contention in the sense that the earnings of industrial workers have not appreciably increased over the decades, the fact is that the real wages of agricultural workers have probably decreased.

One need not blame the industrial workers or their unions for this situation, but if the urban groups of workers are strongly organised while the rural workers are not, the terms of rural-urban transfers and those of transfers within the rural segment of the economy get settled in particular ways and the rural workers suffer.

For the leaders of the workers' movement this lack of organisation of rural workers and of workers of small industry remains an important unfulfilled task.

Neglect of Workers' Education : Another aspect of the workers' movement that needs examination is the almost total neglect of the welfare orientation with which the movement initially began. The movement is at present pre-occupied with improving the earnings of workers which is of course unexceptionable; but its neglect of the aspects of health, housing, education and general well-being of the employee is difficult to justify particularly in the case of the less educated factory floor employees in many industries.

While the government has launched programmes of the social insurance and workers' education variety, they cannot cover all the needs of industrial workers. Further, the neglect of education among workers—particularly neglect of education in issues relating to their work lives and union organisation only strengthens the tendency among workers for passive participation and dependence on outsiders.

The unions often plead non-availability of funds for undertaking these activities but it is also a fact that they do not themselves assign any importance to these activities, do not even encourage the full and proper utilisation of government sponsored programmes of workers education

or training within industry, and thus indirectly acquiesce in the continued state of ignorance and dependence of the worker.

It is also possible to argue that the financially weak position of many of the unions which is due to the failure of workers to regularly pay their dues is itself a result of the neglect of workers' education and their general well-being.

The workers has been conditioned to look upon trade unions as useful only for purposes of solving problems of individual grievance or for getting higher wages. This has led, on the one hand, to union rivalries and on the other to an equally cynical shift of loyalties by workers from one union to another depending upon which one promises to get the next pay rise for them.

There is no basic commitment to the movement nor even any loyalty to the trade union leader. If the trade union leader seems to "exploit" the workers in some situations, it is equally true that the workers exploit the professional leaders' need for union clientele.

Workers Participation in Union Activities : The participation of the worker in the decision-making process in unions is largely formal. He does not take part in the deliberations, he does not know the larger issues, he is not willing to accept either the discipline of the work place or of the worker movement. While worker education need not be a panacea for this situation, it is at least an essential requirement for its transformation. The financial weakness of the trade unions is as much a result of the workers' lack of education, of his lack of wider awareness of the issues of the labour movement and of his consequent lack of commitment as it may be seen to be a cause of the latter.

Outside Leaders : Another aspect of the workers' movement which has been passingly referred to above, is its near total dependence on outside or non-worker leadership, except in some of the white collar unions such as those of

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the workers. But linkage with opposition parties also increases the chances of strife.

Alternatively, the workers can look to the politically non-affiliated, professional trade union negotiators to provide advice and leadership. But these leaders are also under pressure to promise a lot to workers and try to fulfil the promises in a short period of time. Thus they also must resort to precipitate action, 'show their muscle' and thus indirectly increase the level or pitch of industrial strife.

The workers' movement will have to find a way out of this impasse. The fact is that partly because of the workers' lack of organisational knowledge and perspective, partly because of the over-dependence of labour leaders on governmental intervention and partly because of the unwillingness of some of the national labour federations to accept a one-shop-one-union-and-a-secret-ballot-system of electing worker representatives nothing like a strong bargaining agent has emerged in many of the units and industries.

Neither the system of collective bargaining nor a system of voluntary arbitration with the concomitant self-discipline required for their operation has come to be stabilised and industrial negotiations in India often get bogged down in long drawn and frustrating litigation in labour courts. This is a sorry situation for a movement that has now been in existence for well over 50 years, even if one counts only the period from the passing of the Indian Trade Union Act in 1926.

Working Class : It was suggested earlier that the workers' movement has succeeded in giving the urban industrial worker a sense of power and a sense of dignity which could not be conceived of in relation to the unorganised, uneducated and unprotected 'mill-hand' of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

On the other hand, it does not appear that anything like a consciousness of class has emerged among the Indian industrial workers. Two processes seem to have countered this happening. One of these is that the trade union move-

ment is no longer the movement of the skilled and unskilled manual, floor-level workers.

As a tool of improving one's 'bargaining' strength it has been coopted by middle class groups in the organised sector of the economy. The particular method of seeking improvement of working conditions and earnings no longer separates or differentiates the 'workers' from the middle class. At the same time the industrial worker is differentiating himself from the large numbers of urban workers in the unorganised sector of the economy and also from the numberless agricultural and other workers in the rural areas. He is probably more keen to identify himself with the educated middle classes and to pick up his norms and aspirations from them. This is likely to be particularly the case for the relatively well-paid workers of pharmaceutical, engineering and chemical industries. In these industries the recruitment qualification is often an S.S.C. pass and among the skilled trades there is a fair proportion of workers who have been drawn from white-collar homes. While we have no data on this point, it is a plausible assumption that the workers—even the floor-level factory workers in different industries—do not constitute a homogeneous social group and do not see themselves as such except in moments of militant slogan shouting. If this assumption is valid, our trade union movement cannot be said to be contributing to the emergence of a working class consciousness. In fact it may be leading to the expansion of the middle class ethos. This is what is said to have happened in the west European and north American countries.

While it need not in itself be looked upon as a problem, this 'embourgeoisment' of the industrial workers in western Europe was largely possible because the costs of the rising standards of living of the industrial workers were passed on through colonial measures and later through the mechanisms of international trade to the people of the developing countries.

The Indian economy may not be able to do this and in so far as it does it will have to behave toward the less

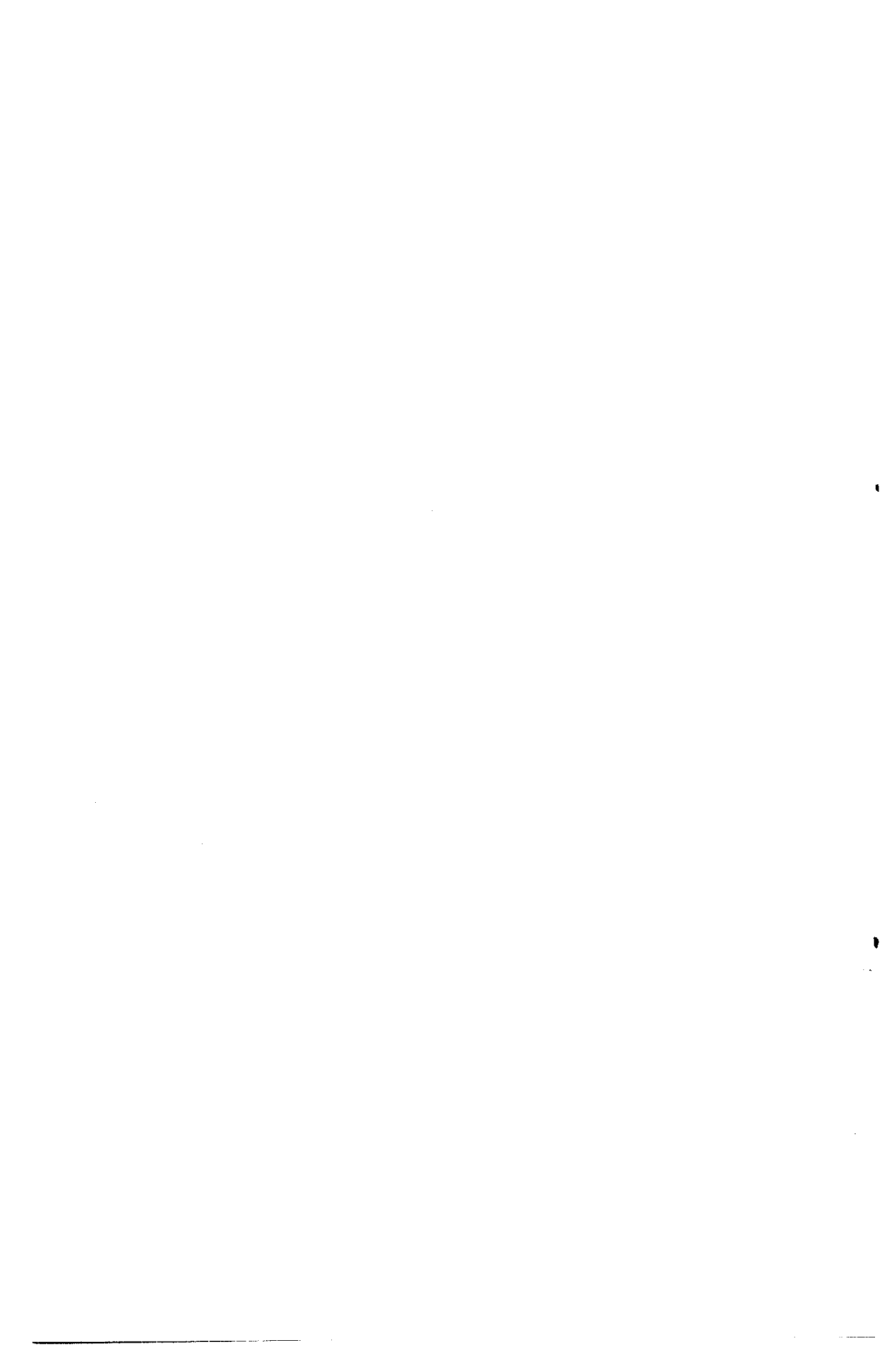
developed countries in the same way as the developed countries have behaved toward the developing ones.

In the meanwhile the burden of supporting the higher standards of life of the urban rich, urban middle and urban organised worker groups will tend to be passed on to the unorganised urban and rural workers who will become increasingly impoverished.

This last is not a problem for the workers' movement alone, but for the entire strategy of planning and economic growth of the country. It is mentioned here because the growth of the workers' movement in the present context is likely to pose greater problems of internal stress in India than it did in Europe or in North America. It is not suggested that the workers' movement should not be allowed to grow, but if the strains are to be minimised, we would either be forced to follow the strategy of the developed countries vis-a-vis developing ones—to the extent that we are capable of doing this—or, preferably, develop new patterns of achieving greater distributive justice within our own society.

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trade unions today

V. B. Karnik

of increase during the year 1954-55 as compared with 1953-54. The following table will bear out the fact:

Year	Registered Unions	Memberships submitting the returns
1953-54	34	2377
1954-55	37	4228

The above table shows that the number of registered unions has increased by 3 in 1954-55 as compared with 1953-54. The membership has increased by 1851 in 1954-55 as compared with 1953-54.

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Trade unionists are entitled to feel happy at this rapid progress made by their movement. But there are two drawbacks which they must keep in mind. One is that nearly 50 per cent of registered unions failed to submit their annual returns.

In 1974, the percentage was 47.5. Submission of annual returns is an obligation imposed by the Trade Unions Act. Failure to submit them may entail cancellation of registration. And yet about 50 per cent of unions merely ignore the obligation and the Registrar of Trade Unions equally merrily condones their failure. The return, though it can be shortened, is not such as cannot be filled in by any well-run union. Which means that many unions are not well-run, may not have a proper office or staff or may not be maintaining proper accounts. This is not creditable to the movement of which they are a part.

The other is that the average membership of a union is still very low. In 1974 it was 737 which means that many unions are small. Small unions cannot be ordinarily effective. We are still far away from the position of national industrial unions. In a vast country like ours it may be difficult to build up national unions. But there can be State-wide or regionwide unions. But most unions are plant unions. And even in a small plant there may be often more than one union to cater to the needs of workers.

Fragmentation of unions has increased rather than decreased. In the days of late Joshi there were four central trade union organisations, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC. Now there are five more BMS, CITU, NFITU, NLO, IFTU. In addition there are some regional organisations like the Kamgar Sena of Shiv Sena. One need not go deep into this problem as it is going to be discussed separately in another paper. One must say, however, that this fragmentation causes immense harm to the trade union movement.

There is also a trend to form categorywise unions. It is to be found particularly in railways and air lines where

there are separate organisations of station masters, guards, engine drivers and of pilots, navigators, technicians and others. The trend may grow unless adequate arrangements are made in general unions to protect and advance the interests of workers of different categories.

The picture, however, is not entirely gloomy. There are many bright spots. Some of them are :

(a) The movement was extended practically amongst all urban wage-earners **excepting** those in unorganised industries. White-collar workers were at one time hostile or indifferent to trade unions. Many have now joined them and have on occasions resorted to strikes which were at one time restricted only to white collar workers. Government employees and even professionals like doctors and engineers, are now drawn into the movement.

The only large group left is mainly the rural workers. The deficiency is now recognised and attempts are afoot to reach out to them.

(b) Some good unions have grown up with well-equipped offices and notable work in the fields of welfare and education. Their existence and the work that they do, should be publicised so that others may be inspired to follow in their footsteps.

(c) Some unions have secured recognition and collective bargaining rights on the basis of their own strength. Some have even secured the right of check-off. They are, no doubt, very very few, but it is hoped that others will look up to them and try to rely on their own strength rather than on courts and tribunals or on governmental intervention.

(d) A little sense of serial responsibility has developed. There are many unions which collect funds and contribute to the relief of distress caused by floods, famines or fires. In some cases unions take care to see that strikes organised by them do not hit the common man too severely.

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own narrow sphere of work. It isolates itself from the mass of workers. Is such isolation helpful and desirable? If it is not, how can such unions be brought into the main stream?

There is a growing tendency amongst trade unions to concentrate all their attention on their own demands of wages and allowances. Thereby they are becoming indifferent to national problems of poverty, misery, unemployment and development. They are already being accused of narrow selfishness. They can escape that accusation only by taking wider interest in national affairs and by contributing their mite to the solution of big and small national problems. They must become aware of their social responsibilities and undertake to discharge them.

As things stand at present, trade unions play a very minor role in public affairs. They are noticed only when there is a strike and the strike is big enough not to escape attention. Strikes will continue to take place and some of them may be big. But that should not be the only way to attract attention. They can attract attention by increasing production and productivity, by rendering useful service in many other fields of public work and by making available to the society men of integrity and competence for work in various spheres. If trade unions grow in a healthy manner, they can easily render that service to the nation.



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towards trade union unity

A. B. Bardhan

On the occasion of the birth centenary of N. M. Joshi, it is necessary to recall, that he was a pioneer of the organised trade union movement in India, and continued his intimate association with it for more than three decades.

It is the task of historians to trace the genesis and the various stages of growth of the trade union movement in India. That is not the object of this paper. Here it is enough to state that the militant struggles of the Indian workers in all major industrial centres, especially in the background of a national political struggle of the Indian people soon after the end of the First World War, laid the firm foundation of modern trade unionism in India. The year 1920 thus saw the convocation of the first national convention of trade unions, and the birth of the first central organisation of Indian workers, the All India Trade Union Congress.

N. M. Joshi was actively involved in this process from the very beginning. Earlier that year, the Government of India had nominated him to represent Indian labour in the

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not of the CBWE.

Washington ILO Conference. He was also a nominated member of the Central Legislative Assembly, where he had sponsored the Indian Trade Unions Bill, the forerunner of the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926. But it was in the founding Congress of the AITUC, that N. M. Joshi was first elected as a member of the Standing Committee for conducting the activities of the AITUC.

At the Fifth Session of the AITUC in 1925, he was elected its general secretary, which post he continued to hold till the Tenth Session in 1929. At this Session in Nagpur, the first split in the AITUC took place. Along with others, N. M. Joshi then launched the Indian Trade Union Federation, which subsequently became the National Trade Union Federation. Joshi took over the secretaryship of this organisation till 1938, when the AITUC and the NTUF came together on a national plane. Thereafter, in 1940 at the 18th Session, he was again elected as general secretary. He continued in this position till his retirement from the AITUC in the early fifties. Joshi died in 1955.

Thus for three decades, Joshi was at the helm of affairs of the central trade union organisation of the Indian workers.

During this long period, the Indian trade union movement grew in breadth and scope. It witnessed heroic, long-drawn and bitterly fought strikes, whether they culminated in successes or failures. It drew ever new sections of Indian workers into the fold of organisation and the movement. At the same time, it went through the ups and downs, inevitable under the prevailing circumstances. It had to undergo splits, followed by reunification, and then again by splits. The situation as it has developed to the present day, is characterised by multiplicity of unions, rival unions and federations, existence of several trade union centres, all of which give expression to the prevailing deep disunity within the Indian working class and trade union movement. At the same time of course, there have been numerous instances of united mass actions by workers all

through this period, whether at the local, industrial, state or national level. There has been an intense realisation of the need for forging trade union unity to meet the challenge of the times. The two contradictory phenomena together make up the complexities of the present situation.

This is precisely the reason why on the occasion of the centenary of this pioneer of the Indian trade union movement, we should ponder over the question : How to advance towards trade union unity.

To begin with, it is worthwhile recalling how the several splits in the trade union movement took place and what were the efforts to overcome them, during the period of N. M. Joshi's stewardship. This is not with a view to apportion blame and fix responsibilities, but in order to draw the necessary lessons from the past for moving towards unity in the coming days. Here is a resume of the several splits and unity moves since the founding of the AITUC in 1920 :

At the 10th session of the AITUC held at Nagpur in 1929, the first split occurred in this premier central organisation. The seceders led by S/Shri V. V. Giri, N. M. Joshi and other noted veterans, met separately and set up the Indian Trade Union Federation.

At the 11th session of the AITUC held in Calcutta during July 1931, under the presidency of Subhas Chandra Bose, a second split took place. This time, the section led by S. V. Deshpande, D. B. Kulkarni, Bankim Mukherjee and B. T. Ranadive held a separate convention and set up what was called the All India Red Trade Union Congress.

Efforts for Forging Unity

The economic crisis of 1931-34, which led to terrific burdens being imposed on the workers in the form of wage-cuts, retrenchment etc., came up against the consequences of disunity in trade union ranks. It gave rise to the urge for unity, and therefore to efforts for re-forging unity.

Following prolonged and sustained efforts, impelled specially by the urge for unity of the rank and file workers, the Red TUC first of all decided to dissolve itself and merge back into the AITUC. This was consummated at the 14th session of the AITUC held in April 1935.

The ITUF which had subsequently become the National Trade Union Federation, dragged its feet for some time more. It signed a joint statement along with the AITUC, deploring the split and stating that even if complete unity was not possible a machinery should be evolved so that joint action by several organisations becomes practicable. Consequently in 1936, a Joint Labour Board was set up in order to facilitate the participation of unions belonging to the AITUC and the NTUF, in common actions.

This significant step paved the way for a subsequent merger. In 1938, at a joint sitting of the two organisations the unity proposals worked out after thorough deliberations were accepted by both sides. An agreed set of office bearers and a general council were announced, and unity was achieved though the separate identities continued for some more time.

Finally, at the 18th session of the AITUC in 1940, all the reservations were overcome, and full merger was achieved. The above narration shows how once a split has taken place, the subsequent process of unification has to be worked up step by step. The compulsions of the situation that drive the workers towards unity, determine the steps as well as the speed of achieving unity. Coming on the very eve of the War, the fully restored unity of the AITUC helped the Indian workers to play their role in the economic and political spheres during all stages of that War.

The War and the post-War period saw the culmination of India's struggle for Freedom. With the impending dawn of Independence in 1947, the Indian National Congress clearly visualised its coming to power in a Free India. At this crucial hour, the Congress leadership found itself "in

fundamental opposition to the Communists", as Sri Gulzarilal Nanda expressed it in the founding session of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. To use the words of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in his presidential address at the same session convened in May 1947 by the Congress Majdoor Sevak Sangh—the labour wing of the Congress, "it was no use trying to reform the AITUC and capture it, because the communist unions put a bogus membership and do not hesitate to resort to unscrupulous methods..... The step which is being taken now should have been taken earlier". Thus was called into being the INTUC, as an ideological, political and trade union rival to the AITUC, backed up by the tremendous prestige of the Congress, which was and is now the ruling party enjoying uninterrupted power except for a short break in recent times.

Division in Trade Union Ranks

A split of such magnitude and type, and in such circumstances accelerated the process of further division. In March 1948, the Congress Socialist group broke away from the Congress and formed a separate Socialist Party. Simultaneously this group came out of the AITUC and set up its Hind Mazdoor Panchayat, which together with M. N. Roy's Indian Federation of Labour renamed itself as the Hind Mazdoor Sabha in December 1948.

Some other socialist-minded groups like the Revolutionary Socialist Party preferred to set up another organisation under their influence, called the United Trades Union Congress. When the Socialist Unity Centre broke from the RSP, it organised a parallel UTUC.

The subsequent split and dissensions within the Socialist Party led to the formation of the Hind Mazdoor Panchayat. But recently, the HMS and the HMP have merged together into the HMS.

The rising political ambitions of the Jan Sangh drew its eyes towards the labour class. Thereupon, it set up the Bharatiya Madzoor Sangh.

The split in the Indian Communist movement in 1964 created strains within the AITUC, and by 1970 a new central organisation called the Centre of Indian Trade Unions was set up on the initiative of the C.P.I.(M).

Organisations like the NLO and IFTU have been brought into existence by political parties or groups on the same basis as other parties had set up central trade union organisations under their influence.

Especially after the advent of Freedom, when different political parties emerged with definite ideological outlook and with more or less well defined political and economic programme, and launched their separate attempts to draw the Indian masses behind them, it became the practice to set up trade union organisations as an extension of their base to the working masses.

It may be said that all the splits detailed above took place at the top and therefore do not fully reflect the disunity at all levels. But experience shows that generally, though not exclusively, it is the splits at the top that have worked down to splits at the grass root level. It is this very situation which has encouraged the creation of independent trade federations powerful in their own spheres but not affiliated to any central trade union organisation, and even of independent and unaffiliated unions or groups of unions. It has fostered a spirit of 'exclusiveness' and 'isolation' among these sections of workers, and kept them away from the mainstream of the Indian trade union movement, though obviously they are integral parts of the Indian working class.

Turning now to a study of the lessons of these splits, we can say that there are no specific and separate conclusions to be drawn from each of the splits mentioned, except the general conclusion already stated above. It will be more worthwhile, and also relevant on the occasion of today's centenary celebration, to go a little deeper into the splits and unity moves that took place from 1929 to 1947,

that is during the period when Sri N. M. Joshi was one of the leading lights of the Indian trade union movement.

Let us frankly state, that it would be one-sided and historically unscientific and unobjective, if we were now to try and embellish or glorify his role on this vexed question of split and unity. The ethics of the centenary celebration necessarily do not call for this. On the other hand, such is N. M. Joshi's positive contribution to the trade union movement in India seen from a historical perspective and at this distance of time, that one can critically examine whatever he did and stood for, without fear of doing any injustice to his haloed memory.

The causes of the first split lie in the very dynamics of growth of the Indian trade union movement. During the twenties, there was a rapid spurt of trade unionism in India. Big working class struggles took place in many parts of the country. The spread of the national movement in those troublous and turbulent times drew thousands of young radicals within its sweep. The beacon light of the Russian October Revolution attracted many of them towards the ideas of Marxism, of Socialism and Communism. Lala Lajpat Rai, the first president of the AITUC took note of these facts in his address to the founding Congress in 1920. Most of the young radicals entered the trade unions as active organisers and builders. These young socialist-minded activists inevitably came into conflict with the old reformist leaders who were at the helm and looked askance at the new ideas and trends.

On the other hand, the new left-oriented leaders who had organised mass-based unions and were fresh from the field of strike-battles, displayed a sectarian attitude, and a lack of flexibility and spirit of accommodation that is needed in the over-all interest of unity of the working class. They showed an impatient narrow-mindedness born out of inexperience. In fairness to the latter it must be said, that having pursued this sectarianism to the extent of setting up the Red TUC, and forcing a second split, they hastened

to correct their mistake and were the first to reunite with the main organisation and to dissolve the Red TUC.

Views of Pandit Nehru

Here it would be worthwhile to recall the statement of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who presided over the AITUC when the first split took place. While feeling unhappy at the impatience of the left-wing, he was forthright in his denunciation of the 'seceders', the old reformist leaders. This is what he stated :

"I deeply regret that this should have been so (i.e. the split should have occurred-author), for I realize that our labour movement can ill afford disunity. But perhaps a split at this stage was inevitable. I have no doubt that the experience and force of circumstances will bring the two together whenever occasion demands. But although the split was likely in any event, there is no doubt that many people actively worked for it and forced the issue. On the one side there was the youthful enthusiasm of some members of the left-wing who wanted to go ahead regardless of consequences, and on the other, the deliberate attempt to push them on so as to widen the breach and thus get additional reasons for seceding....."

Further on in this statement, Nehru remarks, "Many of the seceders actually voted for the resolution which they protested against in their subsequent statement. This was a strange conduct, and regrettable enough. Equally strange and regrettable was the conduct of some other members who having taken up a brave and even defiant attitude in regard to certain resolutions later thought that discretion was the better part of valour, and quietly withdrew from the Congress and joined the seceders." etc.

Nehru's statement is instructive and revealing, as to the attitude and mode of behaviour, which bring about a split in the trade union movement, and was therefore worth quoting. Subsequently, having tasted the bitter fruits of disunity, and having reflected soberly on what can en-

sure unity in the then prevailing circumstances, the following principles were enunciated (1) Unequivocal acceptance of the principle of class struggle, (2) No affiliation to any international organisation, (3) Question of India's labour representation to the ILO to be decided annually and to be binding on the unions, (4) Acceptance of the principle of one union in one industry and (5) Acceptance of the AITUC as the central trade union organisation of the Indian workers. Later on, in order to allay all apprehensions, an in-built constitutional safeguard was incorporated to the effect that, all political questions and questions of strikes would be decided by three-fourth majority of the General Council or Working Committee.

In another situation, with reference to the most damaging split,—a split that heralded a series of other splits, and has perpetuated the cleavages within the ranks of workers,—the one that was heralded by the launching of the INTUC in 1947, N. M. Joshi replied as follows to the charges levelled by Sardar Patel and G. L. Nanda (reproduced earlier in this paper): "The newly formed organisation is really an adjunct of the Indian National Congress and is in no sense a non-party or non-political labour organisation as the AITUC is, and may not be able to represent the working class. Communists today have a majority in the AITUC but all decisions taken by the AITUC are the decisions of the AITUC as a whole. The remedy of the present difficulty lies in sympathetic and prompt redressal of grievances. Unfortunately, the bewildered Congress ministries think that the easy way to get out of difficulty lies in dividing the ranks of labour. They will live and learn but in the meanwhile the mischief has been done."

These are hard words, and will be unpalatable to many, but uttered by one who is pained at the prospect of an ever-widening breach within the ranks of workers, they have a prophetic ring in them.

It is true that the remedies against splits and the proposals for restoring unity which were good in an earlier situation, are not sufficient or fully relevant in a more

complex and complicated situation, such as exists today. But there are lessons to be learnt from the past.

Why Trade Union Unity ?

Coming to the present, we cannot help observing that the division in the trade union movement today, is more than ever before. At the same time, united actions, huge mass actions jointly by several organisations, are also more frequent than ever before. They are in fact too numerous to be mentioned here. The crisis within the system that is driving the workers towards common actions is deeper than ever before. In this situation, we need the unity of the trade union movement. We need the unity of the working class in order to resist all onslaughts of capital, to fight for and win trade union rights and preserve the existing ones, to combat all forms of exploitation and oppression. We need the unity of workers as a precondition to the broader unity of all the toiling masses in town and countryside—unity of the workers and peasants, so as to advance towards the goal of socialism. We need unity for the economic, social and political battles that are ahead. Without all-in-unity, any progress or ultimate victory is impossible.

We therefore stand for one union in one industry, irrespective of categories. We stand for one national federation in each major branch of industry. We stand for a united central organisation at the national level, with corresponding united state organisations. We believe that the factors that impel the workers towards unity are more powerful than the factors that divide them, precisely because the former point the way to the future, while the latter are rooted in the past. But then how are we to advance towards unity and united organisation, from the present chaos and welter of multiple and rival organisations? To begin with, let us pose and answer a few questions, so as to clear up the tangled undergrowth in the path to unity.

Is it necessary or even possible to eschew 'politics', to keep workers away from 'politics', to insulate the unions from all politics? By no means. The working class as

one of the most active and organised sector of society cannot keep itself aloof from political events. Even to think of doing so would be to isolate the workers from the rest of society and to pose the narrow and immediate interests of the workers against the interests of the masses and of society as a whole. In fighting for itself, the working class has to fight for the cause of social progress. Life itself has asserted the intimate connection of the working class with the political, economic and social life of the nation.

Therefore to strive to divorce the workers from politics, is to attempt the impossible. In practice what the slogan means is to make the workers the involuntary camp followers of the politics of other classes and sections, who, it must be assumed have a right to indulge in politics. 'Trade union neutrality' or 'trade union independence' cannot be made to imply 'neutrality' on all political matters or 'independence' from all politics. All that is needed is that the trade union organisation should be 'independent' of the domination of any particular political party.

Is the adherence of some sections to the concept of 'class struggle' an obstacle to trade union unity? By no means. Militant working class actions do not take place because somebody injects the concept of 'class struggle'. They take place because of the prevailing system itself. We can do no better than to quote Nehru again :

"The class war is none of our creation. It is the creation of capitalism and so long capitalism endures it will endure. For those who are on the top it is easy to ignore it and to preach moderation and good will. But the good-will does not induce these self-proclaimed well-wishers of ours to get off our backs and shoulders. They only shout the louder from the eminence which they have acquired at our cost. The class war has existed and exists today. By trying ostrich-like to ignore it, we do not get rid of it..."

Steps Towards Unity

To proceed towards unity from the existing reality, the First important step,—a step which life itself, which the

practice of the day to day movement has brought forward, is to take initiative for joint actions, to organise common united actions by workers belonging to different unions, different industrial federations, and trade union centres, at whatever level possible. These actions may be on a single outstanding issue, or on a jointly worked out charter of demands or programme. They may be momentary actions, or actions spread out over a long period. Such actions throw up their own form of organisation like joint action committees, coordination committees and so on.

The Second possible and practicable step is to go ahead with frequent joint meetings, consultations and dialogues for levelling out differences of opinion, and determining areas of agreement on problems facing the workers, and on the tactics to be pursued for solving them. Wherever possible, consultation and coordination committees can be set up as forums for conducting such friendly dialogue. Frequent contacts at different levels have to be consciously pursued. Sharing of common platforms presumes that voluntary restraint is imposed on harmful and unnecessary criticisms, on raking up past issues and real or imaginary grievances, on challenging or measuring relative strengths, on the use of abrasive language in mutual dealings, and on polemics directed against each other howsoever obliquely.

It is understood of course that the method of taking decisions in all platforms of joint action, is by mutual agreement, by general consensus and not by imposing the will of one on all the others. Practice has to be confined to the agreed brief and the agreed programme. All this does not presuppose the abjuring of all politics, but of taking up only such political issues as are based on consensus and are essential for the advance of the movement. It only means the abjuring of political partisanship and sectarianism. Is this possible? The experiences of the struggle against the I. R. Bill, for instance, show that it is possible.

Beyond the commonly undertaken actions, the several organisations have to be left free to strengthen their own

organisation and to carry on their independent activities, without in any way coming into conflict with, or undermining the joint programme of action. Let it be recognised that today, because of disunity and the time wasted on attacks against each other, a big majority of the workers have remained outside the pale of organisation. Therefore building one's own strength, does not necessarily mean launching piratical offensives against each other's organised base, but of spreading out among the unorganised sections and of drawing them within the fold of organisation. A sober attitude developed by the responsible leaderships of established unions and central organisations can isolate the irresponsible sections who cause disruption by means of gangster methods and unscrupulous demagoguery, by utilising caste and chauvinistic feelings or exploiting the sentiments of backward sections, by instigating one category against another, and by other foul means.

The Third step which can be taken in the coming days, and which is no longer a distant perspective, is to move for setting up a confederation of as many central trade union organisations and industrial federations as are willing to come together. The time is ripe for it. Such a step has already been proposed. The point is to carefully prepare the ground for it. Mutual confidence, confidence in organisational unity is being achieved through a series of joint mass actions and propagation of commonly accepted views. If the leadership listens to the voice of the masses and pays heed to their interests, if it learns to rise above its petty and narrow interests which are in any case rarely served in conditions of disunity, then this is not very difficult. The last vestiges of reservation can then be overcome, and the seemingly impassable hurdles can be crossed.

Changing Complexion of Working Class

Before we conclude, we should take note of certain important developments that are taking place within the working class today. The sudden spurt of industrial development and growth in our country has led to a rapid in-

crease in the number of workers. New sections from the masses of rural unemployed and of raw youths, have joined the ranks of industrial workers. They have not inherited the industrial or 'proletarian culture', since they are only first generation workers. They have no traditions of working class actions. To them, combination in trade union actions, are a new experience. In most cases, they have not yet overcome the divisive forces which segment Indian society, including the mass of workers, like caste, language, tribal exclusiveness or regional prejudices etc. These factors have therefore come to exercise significant strains on trade union unity.

The setting up of big projects, especially in the public sector in hitherto backward regions, has introduced in those areas skilled and semi-skilled workers and technical personnel from many parts of the country. Inevitably, this has given rise to some tension between the local—mostly unskilled labour, and the 'outsiders' who possess higher skill. In the North-East region, it has taken the acute form of a struggle between the 'sons of the soil' and the so-called 'foreigners'. It is to the credit of the mature trade union leaderships of established unions, that they have largely managed to maintain the brotherly unity of all workers under such difficult conditions. But it has to be noted that the struggle for trade union unity has to reckon very carefully with these facts of life. Given a positive attitude and a correct approach, these very facts can serve the cause of national integration by first of all uniting the workers on a higher socialist level of consciousness.

The higher technological level and sophistication of the hundreds of new undertakings and establishments, has also changed the composition of the working class, and affected its outlook. The average educational level and technical skill is today higher than before. Engineers, technicians and qualified administrative and supervisory personnel have come up in large numbers. Most of them have entered the field of trade unionism. Ever new sections of

people are also forming unions. In order to fully integrate them into the trade union and working class movement, it is necessary to 'educate' them and raise their consciousness as a class, as otherwise they may tend to retain their 'exclusiveness' and their isolation from others.

All these factors have made the task of achieving trade union unity, a more complex task, than say in the days of Shri N. M. Joshi.



**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON N. M. JOSHI
AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

At the Indian Institute of Workers Education, Bombay

trade union movement - tomorrow

Raja Kulkarni

The subject visualises basic features of the Indian Trade Union Movement that would have relevance not for the immediate future nor for a too-distant future, but for sizeable, planworthy future i.e. a decade. The subject, therefore, essentially means "Challenges of 80's Before the Indian Trade Union Movement".

A Challenge can be an Opportunity

A challenge can be converted into an opportunity if we understand the pulse of the change that is taking place in the political, socio-economic systems of our society. The rational approach for understanding the essential nature of this change is to know what were the challenges of 70's, how far the Trade Union Movement met these challenges, what went wrong in the widening of the gap between the rising expectations and actual performance in spite of the growth process. It is also necessary to know that in the decade of 80s, what would be the newness of the problems that faced the Trade Union Movement during last three decades. Are the problems new or old or only their context and solutions are compelling the Trade Union leaders to find new patterns, new structures, new strategies and new solutions ?

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Trends during 1970s

During 1970s, the Trade Union Movement, no doubt, has shown the signs of growth, both vertical and horizontal. However, in this very process of growth, indications of internal contradictions in changing relationships and concepts have also come on the surface. Its development in 70's, is a product-mix of both forward march and constraints.

It is not necessary for me to put before you the numerical growth rate of Trade Union Movement of 1970s in terms of membership and the number of Trade Unions. This matter has been dealt with by other speakers during the course of three days of this Seminar. The fact remains that the Trade Union Movement spread and became much wider in all those economic activities and social services where earlier formation of Trade Unions, demonstrations and strikes were not visualised.

Vertical and Horizontal Growth

The Trade Union Movement of today is not confined to manufacturing industries, transport, commercial establishments and sales or service-organisations, but has also entered into such fields as research activities, educational institutions, professional, charitable institutions, health organisations, philanthropic institutions, health services, hospitals, judiciary. It has also entered the agricultural sector of the national economy. Even Government administrative employees including Police & Security forces have embraced Trade Unionism. This vertical and horizontal growth process of the Trade Union Movement of 70s will continue in the decade of 80s perhaps with greater pace covering still wider fields bringing into the Trade Union fold most of the economic and social activities in the Society.

Superiority of Human Relations in Industries

What is the basic factor or the motivating force behind this growth of Trade Union Movement? Trade Union orga-

nisation is a motivating force of human relationship in industry, expressed in terms of 'Industrial Relations'. There is a claim of superiority of this human relationship in industry over many other human relationships in the society. We have human relationships in a family as an Institution. We have human relationship in educational field. between the teacher and the student. We have human relationship in the market, between the seller and the buyer or the producer and the consumer. We have human relationship in defence forces, between a soldier and a Commander. We have human relationship in religious activities, between Guru and disciples. We have also human relationship in political fields between the leaders and active workers.

In all these various patterns of relationships, the human relationship in industry i.e. "Industrial Relations" is the most dynamic, comprehensive one. It strives to outbid and take over all other human relations in human activities. It includes the elements of father and son relationship in a family, of seller and buyer elements of the market, of Guru and disciple in religion or of the teacher and the student in education. It also includes the element of soldier and Commander relationship under the umbrella of discipline. However, it cannot be equated with any of these human relationship patterns. It is all comprehensive and a compound product-mix of all other human relationships. It represents a synthesis of them all and has its own separate identity quite distinct from any one of them. It combines individualism with collectivism. Therefore it is a progressive force for changing the society and an individual.

Collectivity the Second Dimension

Having understood this dynamic and the comprehensive concept of industrial relations, as a specific pattern of human beings engaged in a common task, we have now to see the second dimension of industrial relations. This is its "collectivity character" i.e. Human relationships between groups of human beings working or engaged in various

types of socio-economic, political and other activities, services and institutions, during 1970s became more integrated, complex in nature and interdependent for solutions.

The country's struggle against unemployment and poverty, as well as all policies and measures to contain, control inflation, compelled everybody to realise that the success and purposeful implementation of labour policy, depends as much on its inter-relationship with industrial, economic, political and social programmes and working of these institutions, as on the working of its internal model and independent plans of labour legislation, welfare, housing measures and of labour participation in Management.

Inter-dependence gives meaning and purpose to independence

The development of inter-sectoral growth, has strengthened the concept of "inter-dependence" inside and between human beings, between groups of human-beings, between established socio-economic institutions and also between nations. A politically independent nation, developed or developing, is free to draw its own plan and policy to fight against poverty and unemployment. However, every nationalist and freedom-fighter has become aware that the success of such a plan and policy, can be ensured provided it becomes a part of a three-tier-regional, national and international strategy and programme of fighting against poverty and unemployment in the world. Therefore, a new source of strength has emerged. It is the concept of the development of relationships for a co-ordinated, integrated comprehensive solution. In the eighties, realisation of "inter-dependence" is as much a significant factor as an urge for independence, freedom or 'self-reliance' in 1970s.

Reason for failure of Labour Policy

The stagnation on the Government's labour front in respect of policy, programmes and legislation during 1970s has been due to lack of understanding in this relationship of inter-dependence with social, political and economic

stagnation in the country during the corresponding period. In the nation's effort during 1970s to work the Parliamentary institutions for a programme of the benefits to the poor and weaker sections in the Society, brought on the surface, the inadequacies of the Parliamentary institutions including the inter-relationship between legislature, executive and judiciary.

In an effort to fight inflation for economic progress and stability, the deployment of all traditional measures of fiscal policy, bank rate, budget, credit controls and other physical controls on production, price and distribution, brought during their process of implementation, their weaknesses and ineffectiveness. All economic experts started talking of 'integrated' policy approach. The same experience has been witnessed in the implementation of 5-year Plan of National economic development with the result that 30 years of planning itself lost its utilisation value.

The rapid growth of industrialisation, and transport and revolutionary changes in communications have not borne the fruits of national integration where people would think that we are Indian first and Indian last. The heterogeneous social and religious structures, with different communities and castes, infiltrated not only into the political system, but even inside the economic institutions. The Trade Union movement as a part of such socio-economic, political society also showed its weakness in the process of growth, on the issue of national integration.

New Source of Strength for Success

The purpose in bringing the second dimension to the notice is that the chaotic growth of Trade Union Movement in 1970s and weaknesses of industrial relations, can face the challenges of 1980s provided Trade Unions realise that the elements of strength also exist within the womb of or inside their 'inter-relations' with various economic, social and political institutions in the country.

Integrated Industrial Structure

The development of industrial structure has been more closely integrated and inter-dependent during 1970s than in the earlier period. This process of industrial structure would continue faster in 1980s. It is not only the development aspect of industry but also the day-to-day working problems of an industry, the supply of power, procurement of raw materials, prices of products, production controls and Management techniques etc. are becoming more and more centralised. The centre of power for decision making is passing on into the hands of bureaucracy. This is evident in Public Sector Undertakings, from the over-centralisation of power into the hands of Bureau of Public Enterprises under the cover of coordination and rationalisation.

Impact on Trade Union Structure

For Trade Unions, under such circumstances, there is no option but to seek changes in their present structure which is not capable to generate adequate strength of decision-making in the face of organised Management and centralised bureaucracy.

Need to Restructure

In 1980s, therefore, the first task before the Trade Unions is of restructuring themselves in their internal relationships from the local, plant level unions to the National Central Organisations. Without structural changes, even if all present national Central Labour Organisations come together in a united body under compulsions of political or other circumstances, such unity would not last because it would not generate adequate strength at plant, industry and national levels to influence Management and Government decisions.

Industrial Relations Bill

The next issue is Government's failure to bring an appropriate Labour Relations Bill. All concerned want a new

legislation for collective bargaining. Everybody agrees that the thirty three-year-old Industrial Disputes Act, with all its subsequent amendments, has become disserviceable. But, the new prepared Bill is a non-starter. There is only a talk of the essential features of a new legislation. The Bonus Act has become out-dated. The non-implementation of Minimum Wages Acts by State Governments has become a permanent complaint. The unrealistic and irrational policy on neutralisation of the rising Cost of Living in the form of DA, the misconceived notions of wage-comparisons of jobs holding common general titles inside and between the organised and unorganised sectors, the missing link between the wage-incomes and non-wage-incomes in the economy, are the causes of disturbed industrial relations. All these are symptoms of the general stagnation of economic, social and political situation in the country. You cannot think of industrial peace and industrial security and industrial production, growth-plans, when lawlessness, violence and insecurity prevail in the society at large.

Trade Unions, therefore, have to realise that their stake in the Nation's political and economic progress and stability through democracy, would be much more in 1980s than in 1970s.

Reorientation of Thinking and Action Patterns

Apart from initiating efforts for restructuring the Trade Union movement in an integrated manner from Plant, industrial to National level with delegated functions and powers, Trade Unions during 1980s have to give up most of their traditional thinking, action patterns and methods of working. They should give up talking of ideologies. It does not mean that they should give up ideals and ideas which are needed to indicate direction of activities and programme. They should not think in terms of abstract principles but should talk the modern language of objectives, programmes, strategies and techniques for mobilisation of workers' strength and for achieving results.

Need for Professional Base

Trade Unions are, no doubt, social service organisations but they have to function in a modern society. They have to prove through their working methods, that they are democratic, socially-accountable and responsible. Their programme and actions should create an image that they are a force for both stability and progress. They cannot function only on emotions and glories of sacrifices. Trade Union leadership will be judged by the modern society, not by its services to workers as individuals or to the working class as an organised section of the society, but by their service to the nation, in its general fight against poverty and unemployment. To this extent, the Trade Unions and their leaders have to think that they have a distinct business to perform with a leadership role.

Collective Bargaining—Modern Process

Extending this modern concept of Trade Union functions and leadership, Trade Unions in 1980s, will have to give an appropriate pattern, strategy and technique of collective bargaining in the field of industry and at the Government level. Trade Unions which, in the past, believed that collective bargaining existed only at Plant level, did so on the assumption, that both the Management and the Trade Union leaders had powers and capacity to take final decisions for entering into a new collective contract of service conditions. To them, mutual negotiations start at plant level and end with plant level.

In eighties, they have to give up their old concept that collective agreements means Plant level Agreements only.

Strike as Class Struggle Weapon—Exploded Device

Similarly, those Trade Unions and leaders who believed that each and every dispute can and should be resolved through strikes or through fight on the streets, have also to

give up their old ideas in the present day modern society. This concept and its origin in the philosophy of class struggle, where every economic grievance and demand of workers should be raised, converted and translated into a political fight of the working class against the Government. This ideology, and methods thought-patterns are historically exploded devices. They have no relevance in a modern society which has opened avenues to the working class to fight for its economic and social status on various fronts and at different levels in the Society.

Legal Ban on Strikes is Equally Purposeless

A new labour legislation if it is meant to ban strikes of industrial, commercial and service workers, will not serve its purpose, as has been amply proved with the 33-year experience of the working of Industrial Disputes Act. Strikes are to be prevented and avoided through various checks and balances in the process of collective bargaining itself. They cannot be reduced or eliminated through legal bans with penalties of imprisonment and fines.

Even in the case of essential services and of Government employees, right to strike cannot and should not be taken away. It should be noted that during the decade of 1970s, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of Public Sector employees and of Government's departmental employees.

There is also a distinct feature of a growth of intermediate industries—auxiliaries and ancillaries—run as small scale, medium industries. Underneath the growth of various industries in the Public and Private Sector, there is a claim of Inter-dependence, one supplying raw material or becoming a feeder to the other industry. The Ordnance Depots, Railways, Airlines and Road Transport are regarded public utility and essential services. The ban on essential services in reality does not get limited to those workers who are directly employed in these undertaking and services. There

are hundreds of intermediate industries. There are thousands of contractors and dealers who are supplying spare-parts, raw materials or utilities. There are distributing and marketing agents. It has been the experience of 1970s that strike-ban, on essential services, automatically gets extended to cover all the workers working in such thousands and thousands of Private Sector and Small scale industries which are indirectly connected with the main essential services. There have been examples during last ten years where Police force have been utilised to lift up the stocks during the pendency of strikes in the Private Sector intermediary, small scale industries contractually connected with essential services.

Therefore, in reality, it is not possible to lay any strike ban on essential services because of the thin line between the essential and non-essential services in the present inter-dependent and integrated industrial structure.

The right to announce a strike-ban has been misused by bureaucracy in declaring non-essential services as essential services. There is evidence to prove that Maharashtra Government, not once but twice, declared polyester fibre/filament manufacturing plants belonging to a multi-national private Company as public utility for the declaration of illegal strikes. It is difficult to disbelieve that this misuse of power had no origin in corruption.

No Division with Unequal Rights

Therefore, the basic fundamental right to strike should not be curtailed by any new legislation dividing the working class into those covered under essential and non-essential services. In one way, every productive job wherever it may exist, in Private or Public Sector, is an essential service. Therefore, the game of dividing the working class in the denial of fundamental right to strike would be self-defeating in purpose. This does not mean that Trade Unions should encourage strikes and resort to strikes every now and then.

Alternative methods should be found out in the collective bargaining system itself.

When the fundamental right to strike is accepted by the constitution, it is no use denying it permanently to a section of workmen in the country. Most of the essential services come under Public Sector including Govt. departmental employees and of State Government as well as of the Local Self-Government. The number of workmen in the organised sector of the national economy are more in Public Sector than in Private Sector. Therefore a legislation that bans strikes, will deny fundamental right to more than half the number of the organised workers in the organised economic sector of the economy. When Trade Union Movement in Public Sector becomes weak, how one can believe that Trade Union Movement in Private Sector will become strong? A weak link in the chain makes the whole chain weak. Prevention and avoidance of strikes, not inconsistent with justifiable exercise of the basic right to strike in democracy, should be built in the formulation and implementation of the integrated process of collective bargaining itself.

Collective Bargaining—A Modern Continuous Process

In consideration of the present integrated industrial structure, the rapid growth of Public Sector where Government is an employer, and also a political authority, and in view of the nation's need to prevent too much centralisation of power either in the hands of private industries or in the hands of bureaucracy, a modern method of collective bargaining, as a continuous co-ordinated and integrated chain-like process for resolving industrial disputes with specific delegations of functions and powers for negotiations at national, industry and plant levels. is the appropriate pattern and correct answer.

Three-Tier Scheme of Bargaining

We visualise a negotiation process of a total period of two months as a 3-tier scheme at National, industrial and

Plant levels—once in every two or three years. This process starts first, at National level, where the subjects to be negotiated are the state of the development of national economy, past and future, employment generation, housing, retirement benefits and programme for labour legislation. Equally important for the national level negotiations is the function to evolve a formula that transfers greater and greater part (percentagewise) of the increasing national gross income through wage-incomes compared to non-wage incomes in the economy. This is done both by way of generating new employment thereby increasing wage-earners; and also through direct wages increases in the field of existing employment.

Why there should not be a 3-year National-level Agreement proposing to increase the present ratio of wage-income constituting 33.33% of the Gross National income, be raised to 48 to 50% of the projected or estimated gross national income, by way of wages in new employment and by way of wage increases in the existing employment? Govt. has got the list of wage and non-wage incomes and necessary information thereof. These negotiations should result in what is known as "National Basic Agreement" for workers of the organised sector of the National economy. It should be treated as the basis of the Labour Policy of the Government. It would act as a watch dog for fulfilment of the targets of employment generation year by year and industry by industry.

In respect of wages, the national negotiations should not deal with individual earnings job-wise or industry-wise. National interest is protected by dealing with the mutually agreed and standard ratios of labour costs to the total cost of production or the ratios of total wage-bills to the total incomes of Companies or industries. It is forgotten that high wage industries are generally low wage-cost industries, because of less number of workmen, because of modern technology, high efficiency of labour and because of higher

incomes and profits earned by employers per worker employed.

The National level negotiations should also cover the subject of the rules of appointments of Executives of the Public Sector Undertakings and consideration and disposal of complaints about the existing executives. They can also evolve a machinery for joint surveys, evaluation of the performance of Public Sector Undertakings.

The national negotiations can act as a guideline to the negotiations at the level of each industry in the organised sector of the national economy. National level negotiations can be tripartite in nature and should have continuous sittings and should not take more than two weeks.

Industry Level Bargaining for Maximum—Minimum Range Fixing

In the light of the National Basic Agreement, negotiations should start in the organised sector in each industry. These talks can lay down targets and ranges of minimum and maximum range of wage increases and other fringe benefits dependent on the state of different Units in that industry relevant with technological development, performance of Management and prosperity including profits.

Industrywise negotiations should be bipartite. They should be continuous and should not take more than two weeks. They are to be held immediately after the conclusion of National Basic Agreement.

Plant/Company Level Bargaining as a Package Service Agreement

The third tier is the Plant Level Agreement. It will decide all service conditions on the basis of the guidelines in the National Basic Agreement; and within the framework of ranges, ratios or minimum standards, given by Industrial Agreements. Actual wages and service conditions can be decided on the basis of employment increase, technological

advance, profits and managerial and workers' efficiency at the Plant level.

Since Plant level Agreements are to take place within the national guidelines and within the framework of Industrial Agreements, there is no significance in wage and benefit comparisons between similar or corresponding jobs in different units in the same industry or in different industries. Same job must draw the same wages in different units and in different industries. These are the old notions of uniformity. It gives premium to inefficiency. There has to be a socialistic and progressive competition between Unit and Unit in the disbursements of surplus funds amongst workmen based on performance. The Unit or Plantwise Agreements should be with one Union recognised as exclusive bargaining Agent and the period of Plant/Unit negotiations should not exceed one month.

Units where Agreements not signed within Specified Time, be Declared Sick Units

If the whole integrated 3-tier system of collective bargaining is not over within the specified period of two months, then, Unit or Plants where Agreements have not taken place, should be treated as Sick Units for the purpose of industrial relations.

Process to Resolve Disputes in Sick-Units

Unions should agree for submission of disputes to voluntary arbitration. If voluntary arbitration is not coming and if workers have given a strike notice or resorted to strike, Government can go to judicial authorities seeking for postponement of strike for a period of 60 days during which period Govt. takes the responsibility of offering a rational, positive, proposal to both parties. If Management does not agree with the proposals given by the Government, then Government should support the strike of the workmen with full protection of strike, wages and police help. If Unions concerned do not agree with Government proposal, then Go-

vernment and the Union have a right to propagate their viewpoints in the public. Workers, under such circumstances, will have to carry on their struggle on their own, with or without public support and with non-interference by Government.

This avoids any Government action curtailing the right to strike through legal ban on the demands establishing **workers' collective rights.**

Strike Eliminated on Grievance—Disputes

Regarding strikes taking place on individual grievances or complaints including disputes on victimisation or termination of services of workmen or non-implementation of any of the clauses of Agreement, provision has to be made in each Plantwise Agreement that all such industrial disputes or grievances and complaints as well as disputes relating to wrong implementation/non-implementation of agreements, could be taken directly by the aggrieved party to voluntary arbitration. Without the provision of such a clause, no Plantwise Agreement should be registered with the Labour Ministry. This will eliminate strikes on individual complaints or grievances, anywhere, Private or Public Sector, essential or non-essential.

Recognition of Unions

In respect of the method of recognition of Union/Unions for collective bargaining at different levels, national, industrial and plant/company, the exclusive single agency pattern is required at Plant/Company level. There may be multi-agency representation of Trade Unions at industry and national levels.

Recognition process starts at Plant/Company level. In the organised sector, Government should declare recognition-units i.e. list of Plants/Companies for which a Union/Unions seek exclusive recognition. The recognition-Unit

should be on the basis of Units in industry and not on the basis of local areas. Each State is the local area for each Unit of the industry concerned. Thus, in each State, there would be list of organised industries and of the Units in each industry.

Rights and responsibilities of recognised Unions should be specified. Exclusive representation function in the past brought more responsibilities and less rights to give protection to Trade Union leaders from harassment and from misuse of managerial powers of employment, transfer and promotion. Rights are to be adequate to shoulder the responsibilities.

Union at Plant/Company level should be recognised mainly on the basis of membership verification. The question of secret ballot can come only when the difference between the membership of contesting unions show a difference of less than 5 percent.

Bargaining agency at industry level in each State, need not be exclusive. However, only those industrial Unions which have earned recognition status at least in one-fifth (if Units are more than 100), for one-third (if the Units are less than 100), can be deemed to be qualified for industrial bargaining agent at State level. Further, those industrial Unions which earn industrial bargaining status in more than three States, could be deemed to be industrial bargaining agent at National level.

For the purpose of national-level bargaining, those national labour centres which have as affiliates, at least 25 percent of industrial bargaining agents at national level in the specified list of organised industries, should be deemed to be qualified for national bargaining agent.

Labour Participation in Management

Much talk has taken place on evaluating various experiments, relating to labour participation in Management dur-

ing the last three decades. These experiments have not succeeded in achieving the purpose of democratising industrial structures and managerial process, because they were accompanied by a counter-process of reducing collective bargaining to a farce i.e. non-participative. Industrial peace grows neither in any model scheme of labour participation in Management nor in any model scheme of industrial relations. Seeds of industrial peace are sown and they grow inside the relationship between the two.

Taking a lesson from 1970s, what the Trade Unions can do in 1980s is to give a concrete plan of industrial democracy by way of an integrated process of labour participation in Management. So far, labour participation was only conceived of being required to be in existence only at Plant level in joint production committees, joint welfare and canteen committees including sports. In some cases, labour participation was extended by giving representation to the Unions to send their nominees in the Board of Directors at Company level. In a few cases Joint Management Councils have been brought to work. None of these experiments made any headway. What is really required is an integrated process of labour participation in Management from Plant, Company and upto Government Labour Ministry level.

Labour Participation—As Integrated Process : Industrial Self-Government

The present practice of running Employees' State Insurance Corporation, Provident Fund Corporation, Gratuity Scheme, Workers' Education, Factory Inspectorate, Labour Statistical and Research Bureau etc. run by various bodies have been given labour representations on their Board. But they are run bureaucratically through Statutory Corporations. These statutory Corporations are completely subservient to Government Departments and act as an extension of the bureaucratic control in the Government administration. Labour representatives cannot play effective

role in running these social, welfare and housing schemes in a meaningful manner to the life of industrial workers.

It is suggested that all the present Corporations, Boards, Commissions including the plans for Housing for industrial workers, should all be pooled together under one organisation to be modelled on the lines of Municipal Corporations or Zilla Parishad at State and Central levels. They can function under a statute as is the case for local self-Government, giving powers to raise resources and to run the administration. Manner of electing representatives of workmen, can be the same as is existing for Municipal Corporations or Zilla Parishads. It would be "Industrial Self-Government". This would really mean industrial democracy.

In the initial stages, there would be mistakes, lapses, inadequacies etc. but that should not deter us from introducing 'Industrial-Self-Government'. It is necessary for decentralising the political power which is concentrated in the bureaucracy of various Governments.

It should also be given an authority on a subject-matter under its jurisdiction, to initiate a Bill for introduction or revision in the existing schemes and benefits. This would mean the right of initiating the legislation would be vested in the hands of the Industrial Self-Government organisation. Such legislation can then be forwarded to the Assembly or Parliament, as the case may be, for consideration and passing. No Bill on the subject concerned with Industrial Self-Government can originate either in the Assembly or in the Parliament though it has a right to pass the same finally.

In respect of Plant level participation, it should be left to the Labour representatives at the Plant level and should be made subject-matter of collective bargaining at Plant level.

Plant/Company level participation should be on the basic policy of co-determination in all personnel functions, production and financial matters.

Protection to Workers in Unorganised Sector of the Economy

Requirements of industrial peace, higher production, healthy, democratic and free industrial relations and of the development of Trade Unions as socio-economic dynamic organisations in the organised sector of the national economy are different at the present stage from those of the requirements for economic uplift, social progress and for development of Trade Union Movement in the unorganised sector such as small scale industries, shops and establishments, house-building, road construction, handicraft industries, bidi or cottage industries, tanneries, sweepers and scavengers' services, forest labour, tribal labour, agricultural labour, educational institutions, social, welfare or charitable organisations or services, research institutions, scientific bodies and co-operatives etc.

Workers in such unorganised sector from the point of view of institutionalising human relations on Trade Union basis, need more legal protection, Government interference in favour of workers. A legal machinery of mediatory services and of adjudication by Government is needed. A separate legislation should be enacted enabling them to secure social justice from the Society.

Government adopted a separate and distinct policy to resolve all other developmental problems of small scale industries and unorganised services, such as investment, technical services production, sales, price-subsidies and marketing. Labour relations in this sector, also needs special, separate legislative and administrative policies. State Governments should legislate for workers in the unorganised sector.

**State Governments should Legislate for Workers in the
Unorganised Sector**

Trade Unions in the organised sector have also to do a lot for organising the unorganised. They can increase their present rate of subscription dues per member and the increased collection be earmarked through separate funds for organising the unorganised on sound Trade Union basis. Human relations in the unorganised industries and services can and has to be undertaken on a Trade Union institutional basis. A trade union movement would not be socially, economically and politically strong unless it reaches and covers each wage/salary earner in the country.

**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON N. M. JOSHI
AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

At Indian Institute of Workers Education, Bombay.

**n. m. joshi and
trade union movement**

R. G. Gokhale

I have always considered myself very fortunate in having the opportunity of coming in contact with Late Shri N. M. Joshi, who was a true and faithful servant of India, the founder of Indian Trade Union Movement, a keen and selfless social worker and above all a great humanitarian, a true patriot and a rare gentleman.

Since July 1926, I had been working as the Statistical Superintendent in the Labour Office of the Government of Bombay which was located on the ground floor of the old Secretariat Building, near the Rajabhai Tower. I was working under Late Shri S. R. Deshpande, who was then the Assistant Commissioner of Labour and who was a close friend of Shri Joshi. While in India, Shri Joshi used to call at the Labour Office frequently for a chat with Shri Deshpande and I was also called sometimes to participate in their discussion. This was how Shri Joshi come to know me.

I was a close friend of Late Shri R. R. Bakhale, who was assisting Shri Joshi, particularly in his work relating to La-

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not of the CBWE.

bour Movement. In those days Shri Bakhale was the General Secretary of the Bombay Textile Labour Union of which Shri Joshi was the President.

When the Royal Commission on Labour in India was appointed in May 1929, of which Shri Joshi was a member, we in the Labour office were engaged in preparing a Memorandum to be submitted to the Commissioner on behalf of the Government of Bombay. Shri Joshi used to come very frequently to Shri Deshpande for discussion on various Labour matters. At one of such meeting, Shri Joshi mooted the idea of "Minimum Wage" and suggested that it should be worked out on the basis of 'Jail Diet' given to prisoners. He asked me and Shri Bakhale to evaluate the Jail Diet on the basis of the prevailing prices as the food expenditure of a working class family. The main argument of Shri Joshi was that the industrial workers and their members of the family do at least deserve—'Jail diet'—if not better. A Minimum Wage was worked out on this basis and a note on the subject was included in the Memorandum submitted by the Bombay Textile Labour Union to the Royal Commission. It was entirely Shri Joshi's idea to work out a minimum wage on the basis of Jail diet. It was later in the Fifteenth Session of the Indian Labour Conference that the concept of Minimum Wage was evolved and an attempt made to give it a concrete shape.

Training Activities of Social Service League

In this scrapy note, I should like to refer to one of the numerous activities which Shri Joshi initiated for the benefit of working class. In August 1924 he established a Textile Training School under the auspicious of the Social Service League for Training sons and relatives of Bombay Cotton Mill workers before they are employed in the mills. This pre-employment training was soon enlarged and post employment training classes were started. I was associated with the school since 1938 when I started working as the Labour Officer of the Millowner's Association Bombay. It was under the guidance of Mr. Joshi that the supervising

committee of the school was working and I left this work in 1978. This school during the past 30 years, has become a big institute and its permanent name is the Mafatlal Textile Technical Institute.

In this brief note I have referred to two of Mr. Joshi's activities. It was always inspiring to come in contact with this worthy son of India who has left behind him a rich heritage of missionary, zeal, service and devotion.



PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 10TH APRIL, 1980

Inaugural Session

15.00 hrs.

Registration of participants

16.00 hrs.

Welcome Speech

... Shri R. K. A. Subrahmanya,
Chairman, CBWE and Additional
Secretary, Ministry of Labour,
Government of India,
New Delhi.

Inaugural Address

... Hon'ble Shri J. B. Patnaik,
Union Minister for Labour,
Tourism and Civil Aviation,
Government of India,
New Delhi.

Speech by

.. Shri V. B. Karnik,
Contemporary of late N. M. Joshi
Bombay

Speech by

... Shri Naval H. Tata,
President,
Employers Federation of India,
Bombay.

Speech by

... Shri K. G. Srivastava,
General Secretary,
All India Trade Union
Congress,
New Delhi.

Speech by

... Dr. Shanti Patel,
General Secretary,
Hind Mazdoor Sabha,
Bombay.

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- Speech by ... Shri D. S. Raj.
Director,
International Labour Office
for Bhutan, India, Nepal,
Sri Lanka and Rep. of Maldives,
New Delhi.
- Speech by ... Shri G. Ramanujam,
General Secretary,
Indian National Trade
Union Congress,
Madras.
- 17.30 hrs.
Reception ... Shri R. K. A. Subrahmanya,
Chairman. CBWE and
Additional Secretary,
Ministry of Labour,
Government of India,
New Delhi.

FRIDAY 11TH APRIL, 1980

First Session

- 09.00 hrs.
Chairman ... Dr. M. A. Chansarkar.
Director, CBWE, Nagpur.
- Presentation of paper on ... Dr. M. S. Gore,
"Contribution of N. M. Director,
Joshi to the Indian Trade Tata Institute of Social
Union Movement and So- Sciences,
cial Welfare." Bombay.
- Rapporteur ... Shri V. K. Pitkar,
Dy. Director (Edn.)
Central Board for
Workers Education,
Nagpur.
- Discussion session ... Shri Rajni Mukherjee.
Contemporary of late N. M. Joshi
Calcutta.
-

-
- ... Shri J. C. Dixit,
Director,
Central Institute of
Workers Education (INTUC),
Lucknow.
- ... Prof. V. B. Kamath,
All India Manufacturers'
Organisation,
Bombay.
- 11.00 hrs.
Tea break ...
- 11.15 hrs.
Discussion session
- .. Shri V. B. Karnik,
Advocate (High Court),
Bombay.
- ... Shri S. A. Dange,
President, INTUC,
New Delhi.
- ... Shri A. N. Buch,
President,
National Labour Organisation,
Ahmedabad.
- ... Dr. M. K. Pandhe,
Secretary,
Centre of Indian Trade Unions,
New Delhi.
- ... Shri G. Ramanujam,
General Secretary,
I.N.T.U.C.,
Madras.
- ... Shri P. Ramamurthy,
General Secretary CITU,
New Delhi.
- Concluding remarks ... Dr. M. S. Gore,
Director,
Tata Institute of Social
Sciences,
Bombay.
- 13.00 hrs.
Lunch ...
-

Second Session

- 14.00 hrs.
Chairman ... Prof. V. B. Kamath,
All India Manufacturers
Organisation, Bombay.
and member CBWE
- Presentation of paper on ... Shri V. B. Karnik,
"Trade Union Movement
Today" Contemporary of late N. M. Joshi
Bombay.
- Rapporteur ... Shri V. K. Pitkar,
Dy. Director (Edn.),
C.B.W.E., Nagpur.
- Discussion session
- .. Dr. S. L. Kashikar,
Working President,
National Front of Indian
Trade Unions,
Nagpur.
- ... Shri Vithal Choudhary,
Chairman,
Regional Advisory Committee
Workers Education Centre,
Thane.
- 15.30 hrs.
Tea break ...
- 15.45 hrs.
Discussion session
- ... Dr. Smt. Maitrayee Bose,
Calcutta.
- .. Shri J. C. Dixit,
Director,
Central Institute of Workers
Education, (INTUC),
Lucknow.
- ... Shri Naren Sen,
President,
National Front of Indian
Trade Unions,
Calcutta.
- ... Shri V. B. Karnik,
Advocate (High Court),
Bombay.
-

SATURDAY 12TH APRIL, 1980

Third Session

10.00 hrs.

Chairman

... Shri B. N. Datar,
Director,
Ambekar Institute of
Labour Studies,
Bombay.

Presentation of paper on
"Towards Trade Union
Unity"

... Shri A. B. Bardhan,
Vice-President, CBWE &
Member of General Council
of AITUC,
Nagpur.

Rapporteur

... Shri V. K. Pitkar,
Dy. Dir. (Edn.) CBWE,
Nagpur.

Discussion session

... Dr. Shanti Patel,
General Secretary,
H.M.S. Bombay

... Prof. V. B. Kamath,
All India Manufacturers'
Organisation, Bombay.

11.15 hrs.

Tea break

...

11.30 hrs.

Discussion session

... Shri J. C. Dixit,
Director,
Central Institute of
Workers Education, INTUC,
Lucknow.

... Shri Anil Das Chaudhary,
UTUC,
Calcutta.

-
- ... Dr. M. K. Pandhe,
Secretary, CITU,
New Delhi.
- ... Shri Manhar P. Mehta,
B.M.S. Bombay.
- Concluding remarks ... Shri A. B. Bardhan,
Member, General Council of
AITUC, Nagpur.

13.00 hrs.

Lunch ..

14.00 hrs.

Discussion session
(continued)

- ... Shri V. B. Karnik,
Bombay.
- ... Shri P. M. Mantri,
Secretary (Personnel),
Millowners' Association,
Bombay.

Fourth Session

14.30 hrs.

Chairman

- ... Shri B. N. Datar,
Director,
Ambekar Institute of
Labour Studies,
Bombay.

Presentation of paper on
"Trade Union Movement—
Tomorrow."

- ... Shri Raja Kulkarni,
President,
National Federation of
Petroleum Workers (INTUC),
Bombay.

Discussion session

- ... Dr. S. L. Kashikar
Working President
NFIU,
Nagpur.
-

-
- ... Shri V. B. Karnik,
Advocate (High Court),
Bombay.
- Concluding remarks ... Shri B. N. Datar,
Director,
Ambekar Institute of
Labour Studies,
Bombay.

CONCLUDING SESSION

16.00 hrs.

- Valedictory Address by ... Justice C. S. Dharmadhikari,
High Court, Bombay.
- Vote of thanks ... Shri V. B. Karnik,
Bombay.

* * *

PARTICIPANTS

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15. Shri Anil Das Chaudhary,
United Trade Union Congress,
Central Office,
Bepin Behari Ganguli Street,
Calcutta-700012.

Central Organisations of Employers**E.F.I.**

16. Shri Naval H. Tata,
President,
Employers' Federation of India,
Army & Navy Building,
148 Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bombay-400001.
-

17. Shri N. M. Vakil,
Secretary,
Employers' Federation of India,
Army & Navy Building,
148 Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bombay-400001.
18. Shri V. B. Mahatme,
Assistant Secretary,
Employers' Federation of India,
Army & Navy Building,
148 Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bombay-400001.

A.I.M.O.

19. Prof. V. B. Kamath,
All India Manufacturers' Organisation,
Jeevan Sahakar,
Sir Firozshah Mehta Road,
Bombay-400001.

Educational Institutions

20. Dr. Prayag Mehta,
National Labour Institute,
A. B. 6, Safdarganj Enclave,
New Delhi-110016.
 21. Dr. M. S. Gore,
Director,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
Sion-Trombay Road,
Bombay-400088.
 22. Dr. A. M. Sarma,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
Sion-Trombay Road,
Bombay-400088.
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23. Dr. V. G. Mhetras,
Director,
Maharashtra Institute of Labour Studies,
Chamarbaug Lane, Parel,
Bombay-400012.
24. Shri B. N. Datar,
Director,
Ambekar Institute of Labour Studies,
R.M.M.S. Building,
G. D. Ambekar Marg, Parel,
Bombay-400012.

International Labour Organisation

25. Shri D. S. Raj,
Director,
International Labour Office for
Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and
Republic of Maldives,
7 Sardar Patel Marg,
New Delhi-110021.

Contemporaries of N. M. Joshi

26. Shri Rajani Mukherjee,
7, B Ekdalia Road,
Calcutta-700019.
27. Dr. Mrs. Maitrayee Bose,
Ranganathpur Colony,
Thakur Pukur,
Calcutta-700063.
28. Shri V. B. Karnik,
Abhang, Sahitya Sahawas,
Bandra (East),
Bombay-400051.
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Social Service League

29. Shri D. G. Dalvi,
Social Service League,
Prarthana Samaj,
Bombay-400004.

Members of the Central Board for Workers Education

30. Shri A. B. Bardhan,
Member of the General Council
of All India Trade Union Congress,
Sadar,
Nagpur.
31. Shri P. M. Mantri,
Secretary (Personnel)
Millowners' Association,
Elphinstone Building,
Veer Nariman Road,
Bombay-400001.
32. Shri M. L. Paradkar,
Secretary,
Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh,
Mazdoor Manzil,
G. D. Ambekar Road, Parel,
Bombay-400012.

Chairmen Regional Advisory Committees of CBWE

33. Shri Vithal Chaudhari,
Chairman,
Regional Advisory Committee,
Workers Education Centre, Thane,
"Krupa", Block No. 12,
Bhagat Galli, Mahim,
Bombay-400016.
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34. Shri A. T. Bhonsale,
Chairman,
Regional Advisory Committee,
Workers Education Centre, Bombay,
Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh,
Mazdoor Manzil,
G. D. Ambekar Marg, Parel,
Bombay-400012.

Government

35. Shri Ashok Narayan,
Deputy Secretary to Govt. of India,
Ministry of Labour,
Shram Shakti Bhavan,
Rafi Marg,
New Delhi-110001.
36. Shri P. J. Ovid,
Additional Commissioner of Labour,
Govt. of Maharashtra,
Commerce Centre,
Tardeo,
Bombay-400034.

Observer

37. Prof. G. S. Pohekar,
United Asia Publications
Private Limited,
12 K. Subhash Marg,
Bombay-400023.

Director of the Seminar

38. Dr. M. A. Chansarkar,
Director,
Central Board for Workers Education,
Nagpur-10.
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Secretariat of the Seminar

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LATE N. M. JOSHI

(A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH)

- 5th June, 1879 Born in a village of Kolaba District
- 1901 Graduated from Deccan College, Pune.
- 1909 Becomes life member of the Servants of India Society.
- 1911 One of the founders of Social Service League; was its Secretary for several years.
- 1915 Member, Press Delegate sent by British Government to visit war front.
- 1918 Undertook major relief work during Influenza epidemic in Bombay.
Awarded Kaiser-e-Hind Silver Medal in recognition of his service to labour.
- 1919 First Indian nominee as Workers Delegate to ILO which met in Washington in October. From 1934 to 1944 member of the Governing Body of ILO.
- 1920 Assistant Secretary, AITUC.
- 1921 Nominated as a member to represent labour in the Central Legislative Assembly. He remained member of the Assembly until it was superseded by Constituent Assembly in 1947.
- 1922 The Social Service League organised an All India Industrial Welfare Conference.
- 1924 Editor, AITUC Trade Union Bulletin.
- 1925 Training programmes for trade union workers started by the Social Service League.
Joint General Secretary, AITUC.
Vice-President of Indian Railwaymens Federation.
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- Presided over Commonwealth Labour Conference in London.
Attended Conference of the British Committee of the International Women Suffrage Alliance.
- 1926 President, Textile Labour Union.
- 1927 General Secretary, AITUC.
Presided over Madras Provincial Labour Conference.
- 1929 Member, Royal Commission on Labour.
- 1930 Member, Round Table Conference.
to
- 1934 President, National Trade Union Federation.
Vice-Chairman of Asiatic Labour Congress Conference, Colombo.
- 1938 Member, National Planning Committee set up by the Indian National Congress, Chairman of its Labour Sub-Committee.
- 1940 General Secretary, AITUC.
- 1946 Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Interim Government.
Member, Pay Committee appointed by Central Government for Central Government Employees.
- 1947 Attended Asian Preparatory Conference as leader of the Indian Workers Delegation. Inaugurated the Conference as Senior Most Member of the Governing Body of ILO.
Member, Select Committee of Minimum Wages Bill and Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Bill.
- 1948 Resigned from the General Secretaryship of AITUC.
- 1951 Presided over the 1st session of Asian Trade Union Conference at Karachi.
- 30th May 1955 Died at Bombay.
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N. M. JOSHI ON 'EDUCATION'

"The most outstanding drawback of the labouring classes in India is their universal illiteracy. Complaints are often heard that the workers are dupes to agitators and wire-pullers who instigate labour trouble to serve their individual ulterior purposes. But this lack of organisation, which may result in the workers playing into the hands of agitators, is a logical out-come of their illiteracy. Unlike labourers in Western Countries they are hardly intelligent enough to understand the force of organised effort. Without minimizing the importance of establishing more cordial relations between the employers and the employees, it may be asserted safely that the real set-back in this respect comes from the illiteracy of the employees who are too shy to meet their employers face to face and are also unable to explain their case to and argue with their masters. The panacea for all these ills is the universal spread of education".

(Extract from the pamphlet entitled
"Wanted -- A Workers Education")

"The quality of the education which is being given at present should be improved and the higher education should be spread among the people as widely as possible. University education should not be confined to a few boys who have the means of spending their whole time in securing higher education. Even the ancient universities at Oxford and Cambridge 50 years ago found it necessary to extend their work beyond the boundaries of university. These universities found that their work was not completed unless and until they brought the large mass of the society

into their sphere of work, and, for that purpose the universities of England started work, called the University Extension Work, the work of spreading culture and higher education amongst not only a few boys, but amongst the whole society, whole mass of the working classes, as well as those who had not the benefit of getting university education during their boy-hood."

(From the Budget Speech on the
Resolution relating to Delhi University)



A view of the participants.