

Munishwar Pandey, Mussoorie

Born on 5th November 1921, in village Orma, P.O. & District Siwan, Bihar. He went to study in the BHU, Benaras. It was in Benaras that he came into contact with politics. He was associated with the AISF during 1941-45. After having completed his M.A. (Pol. Sc.), he straight away jumped into the labour movement, without visiting his home village. As a student, he came into contact with such Communist stalwarts as C. Rajeshwar Rao, Rustom Satin and others. So it was through student movement that he joined the labour movement. Munishwar Pandey joined the labour movement intentionally and with full commitment, as he thought that there could be no other motive than serving the working class. He worked in the union of Benaras Cotton and Silk Mills, Railwaymen's Federation, and others. There were no labour laws. If there were any, they were not implemented. Factory owners' whims were the laws. This repelled M. Pandey. For no rhyme or reason, he and some others were imprisoned in Benaras district jail on several occasions. He worked actively in the Railway men's federation, including in 1948-50. He was functioning underground during that period. In the Railway men's federation, his main work was among the PWIs (Permanent way Inspectors' Gang). These people worked out the railway tracks. To organise them, Munishwar Pandey had to walk miles and miles, contacting and enrolling them. He also worked in the Loco Shed.

Besides, among his major contributions was the work among the Railway Porters. It is interesting to note that these porters were not railway employees, but employed by private agencies. Pandey led their struggle to be made permanent. In one of the conciliation, the famous congress leader Kamala Pati Tripathi represented the contractors, while Pandey represented the porters.

After the underground period was over in 1951, and the AITUC changed its and decided to function openly, Pandey shifted to Dehradun. That was partly because of gathering of several TU associates, and of the TU work. But he had to take up a job, and ultimately became a lecturer in English. He continued doing TU and political activities. He worked a great deal among the Hotel workers, who were in substantial number in this region. Hotel workers union was affiliated to the AITUC.

He finally settled down in Mussoorie with his family. He continues to be in contact with the various sections of workers including the Hotel workers. He holds Honorary posts in various unions. At present, he is District Secretary of the CPI.

He has long been associated with coolies, hotel worker, construction workers, etc. in Mussoorie and helped organise them. For example, the problem hand- rickshaws and their drivers in Mussoorie. Mussoorie being a hilly place, it was very difficult and inhuman to drive "pull and push" rickshaws by hand. In fact, earlier one rickshaw was

driven by two people by hand, one in the front and other one pushing from back. Pandey and his associates opposed this and highlighted rickshaw-pullers' problems. They demanded replacement of hand driven rickshaws by paddle-driven or the normal cycle-rickshaws. After a long struggle by the Union, the demand was conceded and today, there are no hand-driven rickshaws in Mussoorie. Only cycle-rickshaws can be seen.