

M D Harigovind

A short biographical note on M D Harigovind (BEL) interviewed on September 29, 2004 in Bangalore

M D Harigovind was born on July 11, 1947 in Mysore town. His father was a businessman. Harigovind studied in Bangalore upto ITI and as electrician joined on February 14, 1968 Mysore Electrical Industries where he worked for 33 years.

However after he had done ITI, he was unemployed for some time and was involved in social work and came in touch with Youth Federation of India led by Communists.

Harigovind maintained his links with the Communist Party even when he joined Mysore Electricals and got involved in trade union activities.

To get the union recognised, the union launched a struggle and in 1969, there was a strike for two months. Finally the workers got their union registered. The factory was private and there was a move for nationalisation. Workers joined in the struggle for two years and finally the government took over in 1979. The same union continued and Harigovind remained its general secretary. Even after his retirement, Harigovind is still general secretary of this union.

In 1975, Harigovind was retired and joined the Engineering and General Workers' union. Harigovind had also organised pharmaceutical workers, breweries, packaging, plastic and bedding workers. There were seventy small scale unions organised by Harigovind with 4000 workers.

In Medirich Pharmaceutical industries, workers got a hike of Rs 3500 at the insistence of the union. Their salary has gone upto Rs 7000 a month after the third settlement negotiated by Harigovind.

For contract workers too, Harigovind had launched agitations to get a hike in their daily wages, statutory minimum facilities. He has been fighting for their regularisation also.

In Bangalore, the trade unions do not approach the workers. They themselves come to the unions. The number is ever increasing. In small scale units, more often the management refuses to recognise unions, hence the General union was formed taking together all such workers. There are closures, retrenchments and forced voluntary retirements, against which the union keeps fighting.

According to Harigovind the skilled workers are more concerned about their job security. It is the unskilled ones who get organised in the union more easily. Union has to be registered taking in the unskilled workers as it is difficult to rope in the skilled ones.

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However after I had done ITI, I was unemployed for some time and was involved in social work and came in touch with Youth Federation of India led by Communists.

I maintained my links with the Communist Party even when I joined Mysore Electricals and got involved in trade union activities.

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I think that the skilled workers are more concerned about their job security. It is the unskilled ones who get organised in the union more easily. Union has to be registered taking in the unskilled workers as it is difficult to rope in the skilled ones.