

No15. RAJENDRA PRASAD YADAV.

R.P. Yadav as he is popularly called or 'Rajenderji' hails from Hajipur, Vaishali and comes from a family who was steeped in the freedom movement and were all Congressmen. His father was a freedom fighter and was once member of AICC. Top political leaders of Bihar from his childhood visited his home. In the 60s and 70s Hajipur and Vaishali became the hotbed of naxalite movement and many of his good friends joined it and were killed. This left a lasting impression on him. And since then he had decided that he would join politics and work for social change but only under the red flag. And when he came to work at Bokaro in 1969 to work as a supervisor in GRSEL to construct the BSP he came to the red flag office and join trade union movement. From

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then on he started his work among the contractor workers who can be classified as coming under the category of 'unorganized', as they had no permanency and low wages, no social security etc. He started this work in BSP, HSCCL and among the contractor workers of the private and public sector companies engaged in constructing BSP. His only aim was to see that the contractor workers sector in Bokaro gets at least the minimum wage. He learnt trade union work under the tallest leader of Bokaro Chinmay Mukherjee and then under Gaya Singh. The main issue of this section of workers has always been regularization of employment. He was part of many of the struggles in these companies. Yadavji was involved in all the major struggles in HSCCL and BSP under BIKU since 1969 in which A.K. Ahmad was also involved. Of course A.K. Ahmad was a more senior leader. In 1983 he organized the contract workers at the steel melting shop of BSP. Through this he entered other departments in BSP. They managed to get for the contract workers Rs. 11.65/- more than the Bihar State Govt's Minimum Wage act payment for them. This was a big achievement.

15. RAJENDRA PRASAD YADAV, Unorganized Sector Workers. Bokaro, Jharkhand.

Date:- 22 Jan (Wed) 2003.

Time:- 11 am to 12.15 pm. & 12.15 pm to 12.45 pm

Venue:- Bokaro Ispat Kamgar Union's office at III-D B.S. City.

Interviewers:- Bobby Poulouse.

Context:- Rajendra Prasad Yadav is a quite straight forward and humorous person. He seemed to be an action oriented person. But a committed person. His main work has been with contractor workers.

Interview Summary:-

Rajendra Prasad Yadav began his narration on the labour history of Bokaro and especially on the unorganized workers who are popularly called "theka mazdoor". He began by saying that initially all workers in India could be classified as 'unorganized'. It is a fact that prior to independence even the today's so called 'organized' workers like dock workers, miners, railway workers, bank employees, insurance employees, in fact almost all categories of today's 'organized' workers were 'unorganized' in the pre-independence days. In fact he said part of the independence struggle was obviously intended to give some organized social security to these classes. However the focus remained the independence of India. However he said that after independence the aim changed and the focus of trade union struggle was the rights of workers.

As regards those days Rajendra Prasad Yadav said that in those days Bihar and Jharkhand were one. As regards in the post-independence period is concerned in this area, Kedar Das was really one of the biggest fighters who organized the contractor workers in TELCO, Tinsplate, TISCO at Jamshedpur against this system of 'theekedari' and his struggles there were a great battle on this issue said Rajendra Prasad Yadav. There were nearly 1 lakh workers in those days in late 1960s and early 1970s working as contractor workers in daily wages. Rajenderji said that he did'nt work with Kedar Dasji.

Rajendra Prasad Yadavji said that he came to Bokaro in 1969. At that time Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSEL) was doing construction work for BSP. GRSEL was constructing the Coke Oven, Steam Pipes, Conveyor etc for the BSP. Yadavji said that it was during this construction work that he had come to BSP in 1970 and started working as a construction worker. GRSEL was given contractor work by BSP. R.P. Yadavji said his job with GRSEL was one of a Supervisor. And it was here that his trade union work started.

He said that in those days the 'fabrication yard' had more than 10,000 workers. The BSP had almost 30,000 contract workers. The work of construction of BSP was done by HSCL and lots of private construction contractors. The workers both in govt. company HSCL and private construction contractors were all

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contract workers. Thus there was a large pool of contract workers at BSP working in those days and even so today. The private construction contractor companies were like Western India, Bridge and Roof (Gol), Gammon India Ltd. , K.L. Bhasin, Duggal, GEC, etc. Yadavji said that they began their work then with Gaya Singh as G-Secretary of BIKU and Chinmay Mukherjee had just left for Dhanbad. Yadavji said he began his work with struggles for demands of social security and minimum wages. He said that in those days too there was rivalry with INTUC union at BSP which was the recognized union and it was according to him very pro-management.

Yadavji said that it was due to their collective struggles for the contractor workers at BSP, HSCL and private contractor companies that certain bodies like Contract Labour Advisory Board and Minimum Wage Advisory Board came into being and through them some jobs started being made permanent. The fight for regularization was there from the beginning. He also narrated about the Labour Deptt. And said that in Bihar it was totally corrupt and literally the loud speaker of the the management and private business. In fact their attitude he said was quite openly anti-labour. As regards unorganized or contractor worker Rajendendra Prasad Yadavji said in fact the biggest abuser of all labour laws was the govt. itself. This he said was so because in all govt. work from road construction, to civil, etc in departments were employing thousands of contractor workers and not regularizing them. The govt. itself was refusing to give them any card, social security or anything. Thus Yadavji's opinion was that when the govt. itself was such a big abuser and non-implementor or laws passed by itself at least in its departments, then you can forget about the private sector. This he said has always been the condition of contractor workers. His biggest aim is to see at least the implementation of Minimum Wages on the unorganized sector workers. As to the question as to how did you start work here and how did you enter the trade union activity? Yadavji said that he started work at the fabrication yard. As regards entering trade union activity he said that he was always interested in politics and social problems as his whole family from his childhood he had seen was involved in this activity. He is from Hajipur, Vaishalli and his father was a freedom fighter and was in those days member of AICC. All big Congress leaders came to his house be it L.N. Mishra, Kishore Prasan Singh and others. His father even at this age is the All India Secretary of the All India Freedom Fighters Association. His name is Bishnu Dev Prasad Yadav. As a young man Yadavji said that he got deeply influenced by the Left movement as his area in those days was under the influence of the Naxal movement so many of his friends had been killed and the area was full of killing and violence in those days as it was the peak of the Naxal movement. Thus when he came to Bokaro to work as a Supervisor he said that though he didn't know anything about left ideology, he said that he must join any red flag union. So he himself went to the BIKU and became its member. His father was jailed during British period at Muzzafarpur jail for 7 years from 1937. R.P.Yadavji has three brothers. Yadavji was fully active during the emergency at the trade union level and political level and felt at that time that they were on the verge of takeover. Yadavji got married in 1976 during the emergency and in the midst of the political struggle. He has three boys. From 1974 till he was leading the workers of the fabrication yard and contractor workers at GRSEL. Main fight in those days was for regularization of workers. On 9th August 1986 there was the ADM Gherao. The issue was giving jobs to those employees who died. Then there was the issue of giving displaced land and some compensation to those people who lived on the

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land on which BSP was built. It was in this struggle that the CISF resorted to firing and BIKMU leader Anirudh Singh was badly injured on the head and developed a blood clot and had to be taken to a proper hospital. Yadavji said about the ADM Gherao that we had decided that we will not allow any worker to enter the ADM building.

As regards the contractor workers of BSP R.P.Yadavji said that as regards what they achieved through their struggles they managed to force the BSP to accept the State govt. Minimum Wage. BSP was forced to give Rs. 4/- to Rs.5/- more than the state govt. minimum wage. They said that their demand was that the govt. should give the steel contractor workers the wage given to steel industry workers.

As regards R.P. Yadav's work in BSP he said that in 1983 he started organizing the contract workers at the steel melting shop in the plant. Then later slowly he took the unionization to all departments of the BSP. Here in 1983 R.P.Yadav organized the steel melting shop workers in some trade union actions and they managed as a result to get Rs.11.65/- more than the Bihar State Govt's Minimum Wage act payments. This was a major achievement for contractor workers those days. As regards the matter of contractor workers Yadavji said that they took up the matter to SC. The policy position about contract labour is that the issue would be looked after by the central govt. Yadavji said the electoral loss in 1977 was a big blow as it put the party in a bad shape. From then on they had to work hard in Bokaro to reestablish themselves. As regards HSCL contractor workers is concerned they were regularized in a big way in the 1974-77 period. In fact lot of contract workers went from HSCL to BSP and also from the various companies to BSP and HSCL as permanent employees. The various categories that got regularized were- welder, fitter, gas center, crane operator, dozer operation, high pressure welder, all these categories came under contract labour. He said that BIKU between 1974-77 regularized 1000 contractor workers into HSCL. Similarly 1000 workers were regularized in BSL. As regards what were the difficulties encountered in organizing the contractor workers, R.P. Yadav said that the union argued those categories of contract workers doing perenial nature of work should be regularized. As regards the position of various trade unions in BSP and HSCL Yadavji said that though INTUC union is the recognized union in both companies yet due to the following among workers the management cannot take any decision without the consent of their union's. This was the situation in BSP and HSCL.