

Biodata of Madan Phadnis, Mumbai

Madan Phadnis belongs to CITU but he works jointly with the AITUC leaders in the Crompton-Greaves Employees Union.

He was born on September 23, 1923. In his student days he was active in the North Bombay Students' Union. It was as a student activist that he came in contact with the Girni Kamgar Union; the workers needed somebody to help them out and write out certain things. That was in 1940.

He was sent in 1941 to Worli area to work among the GKU-controlled workers in 13 mills. Later, he also worked among the workers of the GP Railways. He also worked among the railwaymen of the BB and CI Railways. He led and participated in the DA struggles of the railwaymen in 1940s, which were ultimately successful.

1952 onwards, Phadnis became legal counsellor for the workers after having graduated in law. In 1954, he joined the Greaves group and worked in its union. It was basically an engineering group. Some of the Bombay units of Greaves were transferred to Pune, which led the growth of industries in that small town. Phadnis and others prevailed upon the workers to go to Pune, and that proved fruitful for the future of the TU movement there.

Madan Phadnis is also, at present, the president of the All India Newspaper Employees Federation.

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Transcriptive Summary

Madan Phadnis, Mumbai

(The interview was conducted by Anil Rajimwale in the office of the Crompton Greaves Employees' Union in Mumbai on June 25, 2003 at 3.45 pm.)

I was born on September 23, 1923. In my student days I had joined the North Bombay Students Union and used to attend its office everyday. It was during my visits to students union office that I came in contact with the members and followers of the Girni Kamgar Union. They came there to seek advice of the "educated people" on this or that matter. Thus, I began to help them in their work, particularly those related with writing things.

In 1941, the GKU sent me to the Worli area to work among the workers of the 13 mills there.

I had also begun working in the BB and CI Railway workers. GP railwaymen's union was a big and powerful union. It was during this time, in 1946, that the elections to the Bombay Provincial Legislative Assembly took place. Shiv Vishal Singh was elected from the railway workers' constituency and S.A.Dange from the textile workers' constituency. We worked very hard for their victory, particularly in the railway workshops as centres. Main force of the railway unions were the gangmen.

Our centres of work among the railway workers were — Parel, Matunga, Mahalaxmi, Lower Parel and other railway workshops. They were very loyal people. There were strikes of railwaymen in 1941-42 in Matunga, Parel, Lower Parel workshops of both BB and CI and GP railways.

There was a big movement of the railway workers in 1941-42 of the question of D.A.. Textile and some other workers had already got the D.A. but the employees in the railways or government services did not receive it. They compelled the Justice B.N. Rao Commission to grant Rs 3 as D.A. for the railway workers. This was a big victory.

In 1948, I became a graduate and in 1952 a law graduate. Since then I have been working as a lawyer for the workers. I have conducted adjudication proceedings for the RBI officers, governors, etc.

In 1954, I began working for the Greaves workers as the joint secretary of their union. N.V.Phadke was its first president. When I joined, it was a small union of 600 to 700 workers in three factories. They produced small diesel engines, paper cones, etc.

In 1954, they were shifted to Chinchwad (Pune). About 1,000 workers went to the four factories there. Pune at that time was a small place, more like a village. Initially, the workers refused to shift there. But we prevailed upon the workers to go otherwise they would lose their jobs and the union would be dismantled. About 60 to 70 per cent workers went. After two-three years, the Pune units acquired normal production levels, the same as in Bombay.

The shifting of these units to Pune had far-reaching consequences. It, so to speak, began the process of industrialisation of the city, and considerable credit for it goes to our union and workers. With rising wages more and more workers began going there. After the 4th Plan, the cost of production began coming down. If we would not have sent the workers there, Pune would not have developed.

At present, I am also the president of All India Newspaper Employees' Federation, which includes both journalists and non-journalists.