

Lal Bahadur Singh, Bengal State INTUC General Secretary, Calcutta

Name	Lal Bahadur Singh, Bengal State INTUC General Secretary, Calcutta
Date of Interview	February 11, 2003
Place	Calcutta
Context	Lal Bahadur Singh is actively involved in trade union movement in Bengal. He believes in the unity of trade unions irrespective of political affiliations.
Interviewers	Krishna Jha

Biographical Sketches

I was born at Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh on June 3, 1940. I come from an agrarian background and my father was a peasant. I passed my intermediate examination, did Visharad and Sahityaratna. Originally I wanted to become a professor.

In the beginning I had joined AITUC for three to four years in 1962. Later differences emerged and I formed my own Gandhi Sewa Samiti. When in 1964, there was split in the Communist Party, I could not decide which side I should take. Finally I went over to INTUC. Basically I did not have any difference with the Communists.

In my opinion in the Hindi belt, there is no communist movement which could have been decisive. From Somnath to Ayodhya the agriculture workers can be organised and many political problems can also be solved. If Bhumi Sanskar of Ayodhya would have taken place somewhere in Bengal, it would have died unsung. Since the cow belt had no Communist influence, the communal issues could be played up so easily.

I was a jute worker and semi-skilled till I retired in 2000. I was active alongwith my maternal uncle in the Dumdum case where workers killed three members of the management. Later I got involved in the trade union though still working in the factory.

In 1971 we took up bonus issue against 4.33 percent and boycotted two years' annual bonus. All shades of trade unions joined the strike with at least 14000 workers joining the strike. The demands were met and later INTUC President Maitrayi Bose asked the Labour Minister Raghunath Reddy to make the bonus advantages common for all the workers. Thus we got 8.33 percent bonus.

In 1977, one of the workers died on duty. Workers went on strike led by INTUC for the demands of expenses for his last rites and job for the next of the kin on compassionate grounds. It was accepted and all the workers got benefitted. However the present government has violated this law.

I think trade union movement itself has got weakened. All shades must join together to meet the challenge. Also a demand should be made for technical education of the workers to equip them to face modernisation.

Transcript Summary

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