

DV Krishnamraju

A short biographical note on D V Krishnaraju, General Secretary, ONGC union (INTUC) interviewed on September 21, 2004 at Rajamundri, Andhra Pradesh

Krishnaraju was born on January 14, 1961 in a village near Rajamundri. His father is a farmer. He studied at Bhimavaram in West Godavari district upto graduation and for post graduation in commerce, went to Nagpur university.

Krishnaraju joined ONGC as an assistant accountant in 1985 in grade three. He started his trade union activities immediately after joining. In the beginning, he was with Hind Mazdoor Sabha in 1985. He was an active trade union worker even before that. However when he came in touch with Raja Kulkarni, in 1989, he formed INTUC in his unit.

In 1992-93, he was elected joint secretary and treasurer in the union. Since 1995, he is the general secretary of the ONGC project in Andhra Pradesh. In this project with office at Rajamundri, drilling is done in the Krishna Godavari basin, with a focus on development part. The administrative aspect is dealt in the office at Rajamundri. The project was initiated in 1987.

There are eight drilling rings covering three districts and sixty percent of the employees are working at the drill site and installation. There are thousand employees inclusive of technical and non-technical staff as well as engineers. Whenever a problem arises, union representatives go to the site. Otherwise every three months, they visit the site, according to Krishnaraju. At the site, the workers have to be on duty for twelve hours a day for fourteen days continuously with shifts changing from one weak day and another night. At the end of two weeks, they get leave for fourteen days and one way flight ticket for their home destinations.

The union meets the local management every month and takes decisions about the working conditions. The union goes for elections once in two years in which delegates from drill sites too take part. The general secretary visits headquarters at Delhi and Dehradun twice a year. There are joint council meetings too to discuss any issue coming up.

The contract workers have their own union. At least 1200 workers are employed at Rajamundri project out of which 166 have been regularised at the behest of union.

In 1997, there was demand for pay revision which was finalised in 1999. The basic salary for the bottomline worker is Rs 4300. Usually the workers take home salary is Rs 10,000. The officers salary goes upto Rs 25000 to Rs 30,000.

The union has succeeded in getting night allowance of Rs 150 for teh workers and for those working off shore, 35 percent extra would be added to their basic salary.

The union had launched agitation to get the regional office at Rajamundri in 1997. There was five days hunger strike and the management assured that steps would be taken to redress the demands. But as no steps were taken in this regard, there was relay fast for 70 days.

There was ban imposed on recruitment of class three and four employees against which there

was strike notice given by Krishnaraju. The issue could be settled only after two years in 2004. However, union realises its responsibility towards the country as well. Each worker has radio facility and reports keep pouring in from the site.

Since 1982, off shore projects are given to private companies. The production rate is every thousand cubic metres, 900 tonnes of oil is produced per day.

According to Krishnaraju, workers feel that struggle has to become more sophisticated as modern technology is involved which has come as a threat. The union members discuss the issues threadbare before going into action.

ONGC is today one of the Navaratna declared by the government with a gross profit of Rs 33000 crores gross profit.

Krisahnaraju is a worker in the new era of modernisation and has his methods of struggle to meet the workers' demands.

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