

12. CH Raghavendra Rao (AITUC), Working President of Contract Labour Union, Vizag

BIO-NOTE

A short biographical note on CH Raghavendra Rao, working president of Contract Labour Union, secretary of district council of AITUC and a member of Hidustan Zinc workers' union, interviewed at CPI office, Vishakhapatnam on September 11, 2004

CH Raghavendra Rao was born on 16 November, 1955 in Vizag. He comes from a family of Communist party whole timers.

Raghavendra got employed in Hindustan Zinc in 1978 and joined union immediately. He was elected General Secretary for three consecutive terms in the unit. He was also active among the contract workers who were employed in various factories. According to Raghavendra the character of contract workers is changing along with the unavailability of job due to automation. When the regular or contract workers go on strike, the management brings other workers from the awaiting pool of unemployed ones. Earlier no worker used to take up work if their comrades were agitating, but now they do not hesitate as the jobs have become extremely scarce. This phenomenon has made it difficult to organise the contract workers even more.

The exploitation rate of the contract workers is quite high. As Raghavendra organised a strike of such workers in 2003 for 25 days employed in various units in the city, one of the units cancelled the contractors' licence. They brought their own goons as contractors who made the workers slog at any rate dictated by them. In such incidents, police too sides with the management only.

There is another plant called SR polarisation plant that appointed no worker till now. For all the jobs, it has given contracts but no legal safety is granted to the employees.

According to Raghavendra, it is completely new situation for which a policy level decision has to be taken.

So far as Hindustan Zinc is concerned, all the employees were served notices to take retirement in October, 2000. All the workers went to court but their plea was rejected. At least 176 workers had to retire and Raghavendra was one among them in January, 2001

The facilities and benefits are not taken away till now, but the treatment of the workers is very dissatisfactory. As a result the workers are themselves leaving the organisation.

Hindustan Zinc was privatised in 2002 and taken over by Sterlite Group who followed the policy of Build, Operate and Transport (BOT). Today even in the shipyard same policy is followed.

TRANSCRIPTIVE NOTE

A short transcriptive note on CH Raghavendra Rao, working president of Contract Labour Union, secretary of district council of AITUC and a member of Hindustan Zinc workers' union, interviewed at CPI office, Vishakhapatnam on September 11, 2004

I was born on 16 November, 1955 in Vizag. I belong to a family of Communist party whole timers.

I got employed in Hindustan Zinc in 1978 and joined union immediately. I was elected General Secretary for three consecutive terms in the unit. I was also active among the contract workers who were employed in various factories. As I think, the character of contract workers is changing along with the unavailability of job due to automation. When the regular or contract workers go on

strike, the management brings other workers from the awaiting pool of unemployed ones. Earlier no worker used to take up work if their comrades were agitating, but now they do not hesitate as the jobs have become extremely scarce. This phenomenon has made it difficult to organise the contract workers even more.

The exploitation rate of the contract workers is quite high. As I had organised a strike of such workers in 2003 for 25 days employed in various units in the city, one of the units cancelled the contractors' licence. They brought their own goons as contractors who made the workers slog at any rate dictated by them. In such incidents, police too sides with the management only.

There is another plant called SR polarisation plant that appointed no worker till now. For all the jobs, it has given contracts but no legal safety is granted to the employees.

I think it is completely new situation for which a policy level decision has to be taken.

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