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THE INDIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT: NEW CHALLENGES

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Abstract:-Economic reforms were launched in India in the early 1990s. There was, thus, a shift from the state to the market and the Indian economy was slowly geared towards the twin process of globalization and liberalization.

Labour market regulations and collective bargaining have emerged as crucially important issues in a globalized economy. Given that globalization inevitably involves economic restructuring, the proponents of globalization – World Bank and IMF – increasingly argue that employment has to be sufficiently adaptable to facilitate adjustment, and stress on flexibility in labour markets. Undoubtedly, this has led to reduced job – security and informalization of labour markets. In this scenario today trade unions face a multitude of challenges from various quarters. The factors like diversity of interests of the working class, the new management techniques that blunt union tactics, the forces of globalization and liberalization etc., all constitute challenges to the effective functioning of trade unions today. In the view of the changing concerns, trade unions will have to reorient their strategies if they are to successfully meet the new challenges.

In this context, this paper tries to highlight the various issues before the Indian Trade Union Movement.

Keywords:Globalization, Liberalization, Trade Union Rights, Trade Unions and Emerging New Sectors, Informalization of labour realtions,

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses secondary data published in the form of books, journals, reports, theses, news paper articles, etc. to analyze new challenges before Indian trade unions. Such material deals directly or indirectly with the topic under study. From the collected material, core data was processed, analysed, and utilised in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

The trade-union movement in India goes back to eight decades or more. During this period it has brought within its fold a large part of the workers, white as well as blue collar, employed in the organised sectors and has done a great deal to promote their interests. But the movement has not been able to grow as strong and effective as its age, size, and effort would warrant.

The challenges faced by the trade union movement in many parts of the world call for new approaches that may imply institutional renovations, new tasks, and even new ways of cooperation with other societal institutions. New trends are emerging in the trade union movement world-wide. New roles for the trade union movement are naturally related to the old traditions of protecting workers and better equipping people for work, and struggling for wider emancipation and democratization. However, given the fast and dramatic structural changes taking place in national and international labour markets, it appears that so far the trade union movement has been unable to assert itself with respect to both employment conditions and worsening power relations.

Since the focus of Indian Trade Union Movement was the workers in the organized sector, more so those employed in the government-owned establishments, the mass of workforce engaged in the unorganized sector remained uncovered by the trade union movement. Consequently, over 90 per cent of the workforce remained unaware of their rights as workers and as such were being exploited by their employers. Most of the times, the workers are not even aware of their exploitation. Long

working hours, under payment, sexual abuse, physical confinements, etc. are day-to-day affairs. The workers take these actions of their employer as fate. The resources of the government and trade unions are directed mainly towards workforce in organised sector. The real exploitation of the worker and his/her family takes place in the unorganised sector where unions are rarely present.

Of recent, the international pressure and the shift of workforce from the organized to the unorganized sector, etc. have generated renewed interest in the unorganized sector. The government has repeatedly made announcements about its intention to shift the focus of its activities towards workers in the unorganized sector.

The trade unions are now trying to penetrate the unorganized sector. All the major Central Trade Union Organizations have specific programmes aimed at enlisting membership of workers in the informal sector. There are some indications of workers being organized in beedi, construction, fisheries, forestry, home based workers, etc. However, enrolling a worker as a member cannot be a sufficient indicator of union's functioning/ effectiveness. In addition there are a large number of non-affiliated/ independent trade unions functional particularly in the unorganized sector and private/ joint venture companies. Then there are other forms of workers organizations, such as labour cooperatives, Non-Governmental Organisations, etc. performing the role of promoting welfare of workers.

Globalisation and labour reforms has been one area which has received much attention in academic research. It has been generally believed that globalisation has done greatest harm to the cause of trade unions the world over. At one point one can notice that trade union organisations in India protesting against globalisation and privatisation across party lines irrespective of ideological beliefs. But these protests have not been very effective. This particular development has shown two contradictory things simultaneously: firstly, there is a definite decline of the trade union movement in terms of its effectiveness but so far as the trade union movement per se is concerned this is a movement that should have been able to rise above party affiliations (Roy,2002).

The national parties, irrespective of their ideologies, have by and large supported globalisation and liberalisation. In order to promote foreign investments they have been talking of labour reforms. The trade unions in the process have got an unfair deal. It has ranged from casualisation of labour, flexibility of working hours to the voluntary retirement scheme. The final outcome: a sense of insecurity looms large. Trade unions under all political banners have opposed privatisation but they have failed in getting privatisation reversed.

Trade unions are the main organisations that could counter the anti-worker, anti-employment policies. Unfortunately the labour movement is fractured with workers being divided into a huge number of trade unions. Besides the eleven trade union centres there are hundreds of thousands of trade unions most of whom are fighting each other without really tackling problems with employers or the state (Bhowmik, 2013).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The planned process of industrialization in the post-independence era facilitated the emergence of trade unionism as an effective force not only in the context of employment relations but also in its direct and indirect effect on the economy at all levels (Sheth, 2002).

Before understanding the new challenges before Indian trade union movement, it is important to understand the historical context in which unions functioned during the first four decades in the post-independence period. During the freedom movement, trade unions were supported by political parties and freedom movement helped trade unions to be recognised as legal labour organisations to promote the interests of the working class, more especially in the organised sector of the economy. Trade unions during the post-independence period preferred state-led planned industrialisation. The national government also passed a number of Acts with which they codified the roles of trade unions as instruments of collective bargaining on behalf of the workers. Tripartite structures of consultation were created like Indian Labour Conference, wage boards, Central Industrial Relations Machinery, joint management councils, etc. The purpose was that these institutions should be used to reduce the areas of conflict by dialogue, rather than resort to strikes.

In case of failure by dialogue, the government used the instrument of compulsory adjudications, by appointing state as well as national level tribunals. This period was marked by a social cohesion between the state and the trade unions to improve the miserable conditions of the working class (Datt, 2013).

The country adopted the New Economic Policy in 1991 popularly called as the LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation) model of development to accelerate the development with least amount of government intervention. This had an impact on the trade unions. The state started extending the support to the capitalist class and they were considered as the chief instrument to promote development. Globalisation added strength to the Indian capitalist class. Thus, capital-Indian as well as foreign argued for labour reform. A new meaning was given to the term 'labour reform' which implied the power to 'hire and fire' workers, freedom to determine wages according to the market demand and supply. Consequently, the employers used different methods to reduce the size of the labour, by decentralising production and even subcontracting for various operations to small businesses. This led to reduction in the growth of jobs in the organised sector and increase in the share of the informal sector in industrial employment. Regular workers were replaced by contract workers to reduce wage costs, so that business firms could compete in the market. This started the process of weakening the trade unions. Lockouts were used by the employers to retrench workers and prolonged lockouts were used as the instruments of pressurising labour to accept humiliating conditions of work before lifting lockouts. This further weakened the trade unions (Datt, 2013).

Indian Trade Union Movement: Some Major Issues

Lack of Unity

The most important cause for the present state of affairs is the woeful lack of unity among trade unions. While this lack of unity has been a feature of the movement ever since its inception, it has aggravated with time. Today the Indian trade union movement is deeply fragmented along many lines. This is one of the major reasons why it has failed to assert itself in the context of the new economic policy. At one level the movement is divided along political party lines with each political party having its own trade-union wing. During the past two decades, the fragmentation has still worsened with each organisation having a number of factions within. Caught up in their own petty rivalries, these organisations have failed to see common issues affecting the working class in general.

At another level, the movement is weakened because of the growth of enterprise level unions. These unions are effective only at enterprise level but are too narrow in their vision, which is restricted to the problems of their enterprise. Efforts to bring about these unions under one umbrella have not been successful because they lack a common ideological basis that can bind them together. Given such deep fragmentation within the movement, it is not surprising that the trade-union response to the new economic policy of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG) has been so diffused and ineffective.

The support base of the existing central trade unions is extremely limited. It is restricted to the organised sector, which employs merely 8 per cent of the total work force in the country. Even within the organised sector, their membership has been rapidly declining because of the independent enterprise unionism. So, the actual membership of the central trade unions together is not more than 4 or 5 per cent of the total workforce in the country. In the coming days, with the rapid decline of the public sector, which is their main support base, there is bound to be a further erosion of their membership (Benjamin, 2001).

Low Priority by Policy Makers

Our policy makers see labour and trade unions as an obstacle to the freedom of the entrepreneur, as a barrier to the policy of "hire and fire" at will; as a major liability. That is why labour has been so systematically excluded from any serious policies and measures that are liable to affect it directly or indirectly.

As the liberalisation process unleashes new economic forces, trade unions have a number of challenges to face in the coming years. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost in the last one decade in the organised sector. Thousands of workers have taken voluntary retirement from public sector enterprises. And thousands of them have become redundant in the private sector. Within the organised sector the proportion of contract and casual labour has increased phenomenally.

Employers increasingly use vicious methods: lockout in the plant, stopping wage payments, defaulting on water and electricity bills so that essential supplies are cut, refusing to apply sections of the Industrial Disputes Act for permission to close, evading all liabilities to workers, and keeping the unit indefinitely closed after cheating creditors of their dues.

Unorganised Sector

In our country, unorganised workers account for 92 per cent of the workforce including agriculture. There are those who are wholly or largely self-employed, for example hawkers, vegetable vendors, rag-pickers, and domestic servants. They are completely unorganised and are also very difficult to organise, being by their nature not amenable to collective or joint activity.

Another category comprises people employed in small and micro- industries, restaurants, construction, transport, security agencies, and so on, who are already covered by protective legislation, and who need to have it faithfully implemented so that their unions are not crushed and their minimum wages are paid.

The rapid growth of unorganised sector poses a major threat to the trade-union rights of working people. This is one of the greatest challenges that confront the trade-union movement today. The central trade unions have little chance of surviving unless they start unionising workers in the unorganised sector. Without bringing the unorganised workers into the fold of the organised trade-union movement, without politicising them, the Indian working class will never be able to play its historic role in combating socio-economic inequalities and injustice (Benjamin, 2001).

Informalization of Labour Relations

Extensive informalization of labour relations, whether in formal or informal sectors, has become a major characteristic of the labour and work situation in many countries. In India, for instance the informal sector has been reduced and yet new informal work patterns are being initiated through casualization of work.

Relevant informal-sector phenomena such as labour organization, working conditions, and access to employment, many of which are poverty related, have not been given a high policy priority so far by the trade union movement.

If the trade union movements, especially the national ones, do not change course and take up informal-sector work as their key policy concern, it is hard to see how they can continue to exist as more than skeleton institutions which lack social legitimacy.

Women and Trade Unions

The discrimination against women in labour markets and the pro-male bias in development policies have been analysed extensively in recent years. The over-representation of women in vulnerable working conditions in the informal sector forms a central theme in numerous gender-oriented studies (Elson, 1991).

The issue of multiple identities of women in the context of trade unions deserves more attention than it has received so far. These identities relate to family, community, workplace, and state.

The ambivalence of traditional trade union movement towards these issues and female labour leadership is well known. Unless women are allowed and assume leadership and articulate the interests of their constituencies, the trade union movement will continue to be seen as defending narrow, male interests only.

A major issue of concern is should women strive after feminization of the existing trade union movement or should they organize independently and associate closely with extensive networks of new social movements? One example of the latter strategy has been the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India which has received widespread attention. It is often observed that women's departments form isolated units are placed outside the mainstream of trade union activities (Kurian, et al., 1994).

It should be noted, however, that because the gaps in culture, analysis and approach towards women's work between trade unions and women's movements and organisations are very wide, these strategies will probably have major impacts only in the long run. In the short and medium terms, the most feasible strategy is to extend wide the dialogue and cooperation on an equal footing between women's social movements and trade unions.

Child Labour:

Article 24 of the Constitution of India prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years of age in any factory or mine. Furthermore, the Government has enacted the Child Labour [Prohibition and Regulation] Act of 1986, abolishing the employment of child labour in certain industries while regulating it in others. The Government of India, during 2001, has made elementary education a fundamental right, making it mandatory for all children between 6 and 14 years to be in school.

The employment of children, however, is widespread and touches almost all the industries in the unorganized sector. Mass illiteracy and widespread poverty have been identified as major causes behind the existence of the child labour. Most of these children are subjected to the worst form of exploitation.

In recent years a number of programmes aimed at removal of child labour from wage employment have been initiated by the government, employer's association, Non-Governmental Organisations and the trade unions. Most of the activities related to awareness generation. But unfortunately trade unions have paid less attention to this serious issue.

Trade Union Rights:

Article 19 of the Constitution of India guarantees freedom to form unions as such a right to form unions is a fundamental right in India. The Trade Union Act, 1926, also provides the formation of trade unions by workers to redress their grievances. However, there are certain categories of workers such as civil servants, police, army, etc. who are debarred from forming and/or joining a trade union. The groups not covered under the provisions of trade Union Act have, nevertheless, formed their associations and are undertaking activities for and on behalf of its members. In recent years, some of the state governments have imposed restrictions on the formation of unions, and, if formed, then on its functioning. For example, the state governments of Kerala and West Bengal had passed orders restricting the functioning of trade unions.

Discrimination:

Article 16 provides that no citizen, on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, etc. be discriminated against in respect of employment. The Payment of Wages Act and also the Minimum Wage Act do not make any distinction between male or female workers. Nevertheless, in practice, the provisions of law and the Constitutional provisions are openly flouted. Trade unions have not taken serious steps to curb this discrimination.

Forced Labour:

Article 23 of the Constitution forbids forced labour of any kind. The Bonded Labour (Abolition and Regulation) Act also forbids force labour of any kind and as such the bonded labour system in India is stated to be formally abolished with effect from February 1976. However, despite of the efforts of government/ Non-Governmental Organisations /trade unions, the practice of bonded labour in India continues.

Reduction of Employment in the Public Sector

The state started adopting the methods like freezing fresh recruitment, by offering workers voluntary retirement schemes (VRS), etc. to remove 'surplus' workers. During the last decade, there was considerable reduction in employment in the organised sector. The process of privatisation of state enterprises, by the instrument of disinvestment, further led to a decline in employment, dilution of collective bargaining, worsening in working conditions and reduction in wages.

Over the years there has been a rapid increase in informal employment the pace of which increased after 1991. At present informal employment comprises 93 per cent of the total employment of 470 million in the country while formal employment comprises a mere 7 per cent. The trade unions operate mainly among formal sector workers. The informal workers are largely unorganised. There are very few unions that want to unionise these workers. A major exception is the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the largest union of informal workers.

The existence of casual and contract labour by large companies has reached the wide ranging proportions. Contract labour is not directly employed through company. They are employees of labour contractors who are appointed by these companies. These workers work alongside the permanent workers doing exactly the same type of work, but they are paid less wages to permanent workers. Wages in the informal sector are not regulated and are very low. Unionisation of these workers is very difficult as they do not have any security of employment nor do they have any post retirement benefits (Bhowmik, 2013).

Labour Flexibility permitted by the state in Practice

The capitalist class has been pressurising the state to permit labour flexibility in business, which implies the right to retrench labour, to permit business firms to replace regular workers with either temporary or contract labour so that the benefits of provident funds, gratuity, paid leave, etc. are denied to a part of the working class. All this is done by many firms to face competition while earning reasonably good profits.

Repression of the Working Class by the State

During the last few years, cases of repression by the state of the working class have further weakened the trade unions. For example, The Government used police force against striking workers in Maruti-Suzuki factory at Manesar in (2012).

Role of Judiciary

During the sixties and the seventies, the judiciary played a very progressive role in protecting the rights of labour there is a major change in its role after the introduction of reforms.

The Supreme Court judgement in 2003 declared that the government employees have "no fundamental, legal, moral, or equitable right to go on strike". This was a great blow to the trade unions who were opposing flexibility of labour.

Rise of the Independent Industry Unions

In recent years, instead of getting affiliated to unions supported by political parties, the employees are organising independent industry-wise unions.

For example: unions formed in banks, insurance companies, etc.
Absence of Cooperation and Consolidation among Major Unions

Politically affiliated unions have shown a change in attitude with the change in the ruling party. For example, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) cooperated with the Congress Government during the Emergency, and reversed its attitude towards the government when Janata Party came to power. There are occasions when unions have come together "for some struggle" but parted ways as soon as the struggle came to an end. All these tendencies show absence of unity among trade unions which are politically affiliated.

Trade Unions and Emerging New Sectors

With increasing demands for more skilled workers, especially in the Information Technology (IT), Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Retail Sector, a new class of managers and skilled workers are being recruited by business firms. These workers place individual interest at a higher level than group interest. Business firms offer high wages and perks to these knowledge workers and promise frequent promotions on performance basis. Consequently, a new class of highly paid, knowledge sector workers is emerging- they do not like to be members of trade unions, but form their own associations to seek greater benefits.

This has led to contraction of union base and unions are trying to organise workers from informal sector.

Uneven Growth of Unionism

Trade unionism has not influenced a variety of industries. For example: Plantations, coal mines, food industries, textiles, printing presses, chemicals, utility services, transport and communication and commerce are main organised industries, in which unionism has made progress (Bhopal, 2001).

Another important feature of the unionism is that it is mainly concentrated in a few states and in bigger industrial centres. The main reason for the development of such industry-cum-centre unions has been the concentration of certain industries in particular areas. For example: textile workers in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, etc. Plantation labour in Assam, West Bengal, etc. Trade union development in white-collar workers and in lower management cadre is even more unsatisfactory. Hardly there is any trade union activity in small scale enterprises, domestic servants and agricultural labourers. There has been no movement amongst the vast mass of labour in the in the primary sector and the small establishments. The lack of labour organisation in the rural sector is due to their scattered habitations, their lack in "in group" feeling, and their neglect by labour leaders.

Small Size of Unions

Though trade unions are of various sizes with thousands of members, yet, most of the unions are still characterized by their small size and small membership. The small size of the union is due to following factors: the fact that any seven workers may form a union under the Trade Union Act and get in registered has resulted in large number of small unions. Whenever employees in a particular factory or mine are organised, a new union is formed. Unionisation in India started with the big employees and gradually spread to smaller employees (Herry, 2009).

Because of the small size of the unions, they suffer from lack of adequate funds and find it difficult to engage the services of experts to aid and advise members in time of need. Further, they cannot face the challenge of employers for long because of their weak bargaining power. Again, the small degree of unionisation further aggravates their helplessness in collective bargaining and makes them thoroughly dependent either on the political parties or on such outside personalities who happen to command political influence on the employers and the government machinery.

Financial Weakness

Trade unions suffer from financial weakness as the average yearly income of the unions has been rather low and inadequate (Freeman, 2005). The average income has been low not because of the poverty of the workers but because of certain factors namely, workers are apathetic towards trade unions and do not want to contribute out of their hard earned money. The National Commission on Labour (1999) observed that, union organisers generally do not claim anything higher nor do the workers feel like contributing more because the services rendered by the unions do not deserve a higher fee. The members instead of making regular payment to the unions make ad-hoc payment if dispute arises which show a lack of commitment to the unions. Under conditions of multiplicity of unions, a union interested in increasing its membership, usually keeps their subscription rate unduly low and does not collect even that subscription regularly. The best solution of improving the financial condition of the unions would be to remove trade union rivalry, by strictly adhering to the principle of 'one union in one industry' (Ghosh, 2005).

Multiplicity of Trade Unions

The issue of multiplicity of trade unions is the serious threat to the Indian Trade Union Movement. Existence of many trade unions each trying to compete with each other on membership drive and securing management support to recognise their union, not only weakens the trade union movement but also cause inter-union rivalry and disunity among the workers (Kumar, 2010).

Most of the trade unions in India are linked to the political parties. Since India has plethora of political parties, it causes formation of number of trade unions linking with each political party. When such political parties split, the trade unions also split. Since the political parties' fortune changes rapidly, the membership of unions also fluctuate.

Multiple trade unions also make it difficult for all of them to join together and make a single charter of demands or chalk out a common strategy of action plan. This will make their bargaining power weak. Multiple trade unions weaken the financial status of each union. This causes severe handicap for each of them to effectively project their programmes and influence the workers.

Inter-Union Rivalries

Another serious problem is inter-union rivalry. Trade union rivalry is acute and pervades the entire industrial scene in India. Rival unions sometimes go to the extent of even obstructing the normal conduct of trade union activities on different pleas. The rivals also indulge in wild accusations which shakes worker's faith in trade union itself.

The National Commission on Labour recommended the following to reduce inter-union rivalries:

Building of internal leadership within the unions in order to eliminate party politics and outsiders
Promotion of collective bargaining through recognition of sole bargaining agents;
Improving the system of union recognition;
Encouraging union security;
Empowering the Labour Courts to settle inter-union disputes, if the concerned central organisation is unable to resolve these.

Politicisation of Trade Unions

In a democracy, political influence of trade unionism cannot be avoided. However, in India, the historical development trade union movement was intermingled with political movement through freedom struggle. In the initial stages, it helped union to record rapid growth and gain considerable influence with the government in power. In the long run this has become a serious threat to the trade union movement. The disadvantages are: dependence on outside leadership who are not committed to the organisation, exploitation of trade unions because of the existence of multiple political parties; any split in the parental political party automatically split the corresponding trade unions. The problem with the labour movement lies not merely in the multiple trade unions but also because most of the unions are extensions of political parties. This seriously affects their independence. Unions aligned to the ruling party become less assertive in putting forth the demands of their members.

Democracy and Leadership

One of the basic objectives of trade unionism is to promote industrial democracy. This objective is achieved when trade union is an organisation of the workers'. In practice, this rarely happens. Decision making is centralized. Elections are often postponed and positions are filled repeatedly by nominations. Situation gets worse when unions are guided by outside leader and regulated by the politics or political parties. Absence of democratic leadership reduces the effectiveness of trade union and prevents the development of trade union among the workers within the industries.

Management Attitude

Management of the companies are not sympathetic towards trade unions in general. Union leaders according to management are trouble makers. They are believed to break the harmony between the management and workers. They try to restrict the decision making powers of the managers. Some union leaders are also responsible for the negative image of the unions because of the use of muscle power, money power, and militant methods adopted by them which is called "irresponsible unionism". Managers also take advantage of multiple trade unions and their inter-union rivalry by playing one against another.

Statutory Support

Indian constitution considers formation of association as a fundamental right. Indian Trade Union Act allows any seven workers to join together and form a trade union. As a result there is a serious problem of existence multiple trade unions. The Indian Trade union Act even allows 50 per cent of office-bearers from outside the organization and 10 per cent of leadership from outside. This provision resulted in politicisation and remote control of union activities from outside the organisation.

Illiteracy and Ignorance

Majority of Indian workers are illiterate, semi-literate, and poor. They are exploited unscrupulous trade union leaders, which result in the following problems: these workers are easily brain-washed to become card holders of political parties and work for such parties at the expense of working class interest and unity. Workers are divided on caste, religion, regional, and linguistic bases which go against the trade union objectives of unity and identity. Illiteracy and ignorance are also exploited by outside leaders who prevent development of leaders from within the organisation. Workers are too ignorant to know their rights and often believe in the fake promises of trade union leaders. At times they may even hold membership of more than one union in order to improve their socio-economic conditions (Gupta and Gupta, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

The unions brought about some economic, political, and social betterment of workers. Politically, the unionism has produced a mighty secular anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, equalitarian and socialistic force of national economy. Socially they have emerged as a unique force of national integration in spite of the hindrances offered by illiteracy, rural background of the worker, and their migratory character, by communalism, and casteism. Then there is a problem of the heterogeneity of membership with workers from different areas, classes, castes, and regions. Because of such peculiarities, it has been observed

that unlike the trade unions in Sweden, Germany, the U.K., the U.S.A., Indian unions are weak, unstable, fragmental, and uncoordinated.

Today's situation for the trade unions should be the spring-board for future action. They need to redefine their goals as methods of struggle and work culture. The weakening of the trade union movement is the logical outcome of their wrong strategies. It is high time they recognise this and take corrective steps. It is wrong to hold globalisation and privatisation alone responsible for their decline. It is the result of their blind faith in the political parties. The parties have hijacked the working class for their own political interests. Globalisation has only accelerated their decline (Roy, 2002).

Today trade unions are confronted with challenges as great as, if not greater than, the labour movement has faced since the early days of the industrial revolution. If there is trade union fatigue in the world, it is because they refuse to reinvent themselves. If they were indeed strategic, they would have participated closely in the reform process and impacted policies that would contribute to their standing, as well as growth in the employment, productivity and overall incomes. Some unions in Europe have adopted more viable strategies, of participating in the reform process and can serve as role models (Reddy, 2005). The need for the 'globalization' of struggle is fundamental and it requires a degree of solidarity and internationalism of a new kind. Unity of purpose and worldwide coordination among diverse groups and social movements is crucial.

The world community should recognise the failure of the dominant neoliberal system. The globalization of poverty, hunger (food crises) is unprecedented in world history. This poverty is not the consequence of the 'scarcity' of human and material resources. This global economic system is based on the relentless accumulation of private wealth and it feeds on social divisiveness of between and within the countries. Against this global onslaught of the MNCs people need to build up an international network, not only among trade unions and within the trade union movement but also to strengthen the unity and solidarity with all social movements at the global level.

A major thrust is required which brings together social movements and trade union movements together in all the major regions of the world in a common pursuit and commitments to the elimination of poverty, eradication of illiteracy and a lasting world peace in a New World Order.

SUGGESTIONS

Against a globalised onslaught of capital, trade unions must take following steps:

Trade unions must fight against the 'free trade policy', liberalisation and, privatisation.

Trade Unions should organise and mobilise the people against multinationals as multinationals determine the globalisation policy and hence, the need to attack the very base of concerned MNCs.

Trade unionists should try to build bridges that bring together the trade unions with the idea of developing international trade union solidarity.

Trade unionists must struggle for the implementation of all labour rights agreed at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and fight for regularisation of international labour laws.

Trade unionists must focus upon organising international struggles. Multinationals are having their own international strategy but trade unions are still bogged within national boundaries.

The ultimate strategy of trade unionists should be to build up solidarity movements with the multiple social movements – ecologist, feminist, civil rights, anti-war / anti-nuclear, anti-racist / anti-caste / anti-communal, Third World Solidarity Movements, etc. in order to face the current socio-economic crises.

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