

International Trade Unions: Political View and Changing Face of People Management

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Abstract

A trade union must not be looked upon as an organisation whose objective is to struggle mainly for increases in wages and emoluments of workers and percent exploitation by capitalists. A real trade union should be an organisation of human beings with a personality and dignity, to realise all their aspirations and rights through individual and collective endeavour in the sphere of their work, it must have conscious participation and ownership by workers only, its primary emphasis should be on the work level, viz the industry must be primarily industry-conscious in its rights and dignity at work levels. To make Indian Trade union effective there must be one union in one industry and make recognition mandatory by management as a "bargaining agent", must have internal leadership unions, do not allow politicians to exploit industrial workers and trade union movement to meet their narrow political ends, make democratic elections in trade unions compulsory which can be one of the conditions for continued recognition. In addition to subscription, let there be a substantial grant by management/government to the unions, training and development of management relationship. Above all increase mutual trust and goodwill and enlarge scope of union activities to cover areas like profitability, competitiveness, productivity and social responsibility. They must be prepared to share profit and pains of the organization in the sense of workers participation. Enlightened trade unions will realise that a continuous improvement in the workers standard of living can only be the result of rapid economic development which can be materially accelerated through higher productivity of employees in the organisation. Crippling of an industry concerned cannot help to trade union in the ultimate analysis for it gains its strength from the industry concerned. It is therefore in the self-interest of trade unions to adopt policies which do not harm industrial production.

People Management: The Bargaining Agent

The Trade union movement in India has been facing several problems. Moreover, the problems of trade unions are like a vicious circle. It is not possible to neither put an end to all their problems nor mitigate them to a responsible level. Hence, Management, trade unions and political parties should take steps to reduce the effect of these problems. Developing united labour front with one policy, objective, programme and method can eradicate most of the problems [1]. Outside political leadership has been developed and the absence of internal leadership. This problem can be eradicated through the development of leadership talents from within. Management should encourage internal workers to lead their own movement. Management and trade unions should provide educational and training facilities for the development of internal leadership. The membership fee should be raised as the amount of wages of the workers increase significantly. Trade unions should extend welfare measures to the members and actively render social responsibilities. The Trade Union Act should be also amended to avoid dual membership. There should be legal provision for the recognition of the representative union. Trade union should not unnecessarily interfere in the management decision where their interference reduces the organisational effectiveness. The following steps will make Indian Trade union effective as make one union in one industry and make recognition mandatory by management as a "bargaining agent". Make it compulsory to have internal leadership unions. Do not allow politicians to exploit industrial workers and trade union movement to meet their narrow political ends. Make democratic elections in trade unions compulsory which can be one of the conditions for continued recognition. In addition to subscription, let there be a substantial grant by management/government to the unions, training and development of management relationship. Above all increase mutual trust and goodwill. Enlarge scope of union activities to cover areas like profitability, competitiveness, productivity and social

responsibility [2]. They must be prepared to share profit and pains of the organization in the sense of workers participation.

Political View of Trade Unions

The National Commission on Labour has made the suggestions to improve harmonious industrial relations in the country. All employees should be treated as outsiders, for many resign their jobs in order to shoulder increasing responsibilities of trade union activity or because they have been victimized by their employers for their active participation in trade union activity. In both cases, it would be unfair to treat them as outsiders. The trade union act should, therefore be amended with a view to excluding such persons from the definition of outsiders. There should be no ban on non-employees holding positions in the executive of trade union [3]. In this connection, the Commission observes, "office-bearers cannot be prevented from being interested in and connected with political parties or from seeking the assistance of one or the other political group when such assistance is needed political action for bettering its own position cannot be denied to labour, particularly when labour support is necessary for any political party. Steps should be taken to promote leadership from among the members of the working class and enable them, to assume a responsible role in

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trade union activity. It should also be ensured that, when such leaders are developed, they are not victimized by employers. Penalties may be legally provided to curb a management's policy of victimization and similar unfair labour practices which prevent the emergence of internal leadership. The presence of outsiders in the executive of a trade union should be made redundant by the invitation and implementation of such measures as compulsory recognition, on a statutory basis, of majority traded unions to represent workers and negotiate on their behalf with the management. In this way collective bargaining can be promoted and strengthened. As for inter-union rivalries, the commission is of the view that these rivalries would be reduced if its recommendations bearing on the recognition of trade unions, the building of internal leadership, the shift to collective bargaining and the institution of an independent authority for according recognition to a trade union are accepted and acted upon [4]. It should be left to the central organisation to resolve intra-union rivalries; these should be referred to labour courts only when the central organisation is unable to eliminate or reduce them.

New Philosophy in to Union Movement

If the trade union movement is really to help the workers, the philosophy of trade unions must change. A trade union must not be looked upon as an organisation whose objective is to struggle mainly for increases in wages and emoluments of workers and percent exploitation by capitalists [5]. It should be an organisation of human beings with a personality and dignity. It should be an organisation of these human beings who are workers, to realise all their aspirations and rights through individual and collective endeavour in the sphere of their work. It must have conscious participation of and ownership by workers only. Its primary emphasis should be on the work level, viz the industry must be primarily industry conscious in its rights and dignity at work levels [6]. Both employers and union leaders generally do not afford an equal social status to the workers. The trade union's first responsibility is no doubt of its members. If this is not being discharged by a particular trade union, its members should be in a position to appreciate this and have the courage to organise and manage the union themselves. There should be no place in such a movement for sentimentalism or sensationalism [7]. There must be self-discipline and an overall objective of national patriotism. On the side of management, the employees must be looked upon as human beings craving social acceptance and the feeling of belonging to their own organisations. A worker should not be made to feel inferior or ashamed of himself, but must be viewed with dignity, as a contributor to the overall effectiveness and profitability of the organization itself. The time has come to realise that management and Labour must not be looked upon as two separate and distinct segments of an organisation full of potential conflict [8]. If our industrial relations situation is to improve, it must be realised that both management and workers are partners in an enterprise. Both must expect to derive satisfaction from their work. Professionalization of management has already emerged on the Indian scene. In larger enterprises, there is a divorce between ownership and management. Why should management and labour be viewed as separate groups and not all of them as employees? Once, there is such a change in philosophy of both management and labour, the trade union with outsider leaders with political self-interest will soon find it difficult to advance their political causes instead of the interests of the employees. Enlightened trade unions will realise that a continuous improvement in the workers standard of living can only be the result of rapid economic development which can be materially accelerated through higher productivity of employees in the organisation [9]. Crippling of an industry concerned cannot help

to trade union in the ultimate analysis for it gains its strength from the industry concerned [10]. It is therefore in the self-interest of trade unions to adopt policies which do not harm industrial production. It is the duty of trade unions, particularly in the Indian context of limitation of resources, to help management and enable all employees to utilise to the maximum the scarce resources of production available in the organisation. Thus, trade unions and management must be conscious of both their rights and responsibilities and obligations.

An interesting example of how an improvement in the existing philosophy can be introduced is the Singapore model. In Singapore, trade unions do not regard collective Bargaining as their main and exclusive preoccupation. They try to serve many types of interests of their members. For example, they have introduced life and other types of insurance having floated the Life Insurance Corporation of Income. Surpluses generated in this way are invested in trade union protects and co-operative, Concerns they have also started five co-operative supermarkets with a view to stabilize prices. This number is shortly expected to increase to ten; A Consumer movement was launched by "SNTUC" (Singapore National Trade Union Congress). Based on this model, our trade unions should not regard collective bargaining and the constant submission of demands and efforts to secure them as the end-all and be-all of the Work. They now branch out into other fields like "Co-operation, education and welfare." Very little part has been taken by our trade unions in co-operative credit institutions and still less in consumer co-operatives, producers' co-operatives and housing co-operatives. By developing activities in the field of education and welfare, the trade unions will be rendering greater service.

Conclusion

The recent collective actions have prompted great debate in India, in the course of which almost all of the problems faced by trade unions were thoroughly aired in public with the help of the Internet and other media. In a sense, the current disputes are a continuation of earlier debates; however, these discussions covered not only the embarrassing dilemmas that trade unions have faced in industrial conflicts, but also rational considerations about the future of trade unions [2]. They have not only rehearsed time-worn historical disputes about the role of trade unions, but also disseminated successful experiences of Western trade unions. Undoubtedly, trade union reform in India is closely related to the whole question of wider political reform. Some researchers, indeed, have pointed out that the main issue at stake in trade union reform is the resolution of the dilemma in which trade unions have had to play a double role, on the one hand to carry out the tasks set by the Party and on the other to represent the interests of the workers. The current workers' movement has already given prominence.

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