

STATE OF TRADE UNIONISM IN INDIA TODAY

* Prof. (Dr.) R.C. Sharma

ABSTRACT

Though Indian trade unionism has strongly established its identity as a fundamental and powerful institution and has strived hard to secure a considerable amount of improvement in the working and living conditions of the working class but it leaves much to be desired. With the help of secondary data released in Government of India publications and by some other sources as also taking into consideration the views, opinions, research studies conducted by renowned authors and researchers, etc., the present paper points out that the present state of trade unionism in India is still suffering from: small membership of most workers' unions; lack of interest of submission of returns by a good number of registered workers' unions; variable trend in the income and expenditure of workers' unions over a period of last about ten years; dominance of "manufacturing industry" in the number and membership of workers' unions if classified industry-wise; expansion in the number of national-level federations of workers' unions; expansion of trade unions from Blue-collar-workers to White-collar-workers unions; existence of some disruptive elements in many workers' unions; inadequate effort to raise the status of the working class; continuance of politicalisations of workers' unions leading to multiplicity and inter-union rivalries; some unions following Gandhian way of agitation also; lack of democratic functioning in many workers' unions; happening of sporadic instances of violence by some unions; continuance of outside leadership in many unions; beginning of functioning trade union movement on business lines; existence of crafts unions' in certain industries; most strikes of short-duration and resulting in failure; inadequate focus on the institution of collective bargaining; lack of interest in voluntary arbitration; dominance of quite a good number of unions by single individuals; low effectiveness of unions in boosting productivity; inadequate ability to motivate their members; failure to create model brigades, and so on. Hence, in order to create its desired image and credibility in the society and uplifting the working and lives of the working class, Indian trade unions need to overcome the above-mentioned shortcomings.

Key words: Trade Union and Collective bargaining.

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the trade union movement in India has now a fairly long history of growth and struggle, and in this process, it has strongly established its identity as a fundamental and powerful institution affecting the course and content of labour legislation, structure and pattern of industrial relations framework, and power structure. The trade unions, within their constraints, have strived hard to secure better working and living conditions, safety measures, welfare benefits, social security measures, improved wages, participation in management, collective bargaining agreements, protection to trade union officials, recognition of the personality of workers by the management, various labour laws to protect the interest of the workers, etc. But keeping in view what is expected of the trade unions, their achievements leave much to be desired. Some of the salient features of the Indian trade unionism in the

present era are as follows:

I. Consistently Increasing Number of Registered Trade Unions

A noteworthy feature of Indian trade unionism is the consistently increasing trend in the number of registered trade unions of workers. The number of such unions increased from 29,239 in 1976 to 30,403 in 1977, to 31,721 in 1978, to 33,023 in 1979, and further to 42,448 in 2006. But most of the unions are small and have a small number of members and do not, therefore, prove effective to the desired extent.

II. Non-Submission of Returns by a Good Number of Worker's trade unions

Under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 (as amended upto date), it is obligatory on the part of trade unions to submit returns but unfortunately a large number of workers' trade unions do not submit returns or submit the same after their due date. Table 1 presents a State-wise picture of the number of workers' unions, number of workers' unions submitting returns, and membership of workers' (Central and State) trade unions submitting returns during 2006 and 2007.

*Professor Emeritus, (Former Founder Vice Chancellor, AUH), Amity University Haryana, Gurgaon, Manesar-122413

Table 1
State-wise Number and Membership of Workers
(Central and State) Trade Unions during 2006 and 2007

States/Union Territories	2006			2007		
	Workers' Unions			Workers' Unions		
	On Register	Submitting returns	Membership of Unions submitting returns (000's)	On Register	Submitting returns	Membership of Unions submitting returns (000's)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Assam	1244	573	1379	1416	571	1351
Goa	294	62	44	257	71	52
Gujarat	2956	667	1566	..	..	..
Haryana	1534	330	254	1479	274	168
Himachal Pradesh	745	137	78	784	161	62
Karnataka	9879	196	147	11651	186	270
Kerala	1809	947	1276	3819	1249	1222
Maharashtra	7735	941	924	..	..	..
Manipur	..	..	..	83	66	13
Meghalaya	63	20	9	63	22	16
Mizoram	88	5	2	88	15	24
Nagaland	47	32	26	68	21	5
Orissa	..	..	..	2012	66	83
Punjab	2326	539	583	2639	465	525
Rajasthan	4942	126	148	4942	497	564
Tamil Nadu	6782	3603	2371	9954	3591	3423
Tripura	282	43	109	282	34	64
A & N Islands	69	22	3	130	21	2
Chandigarh	593	72	17	507	94	25
D & N Haveli	1	1	3	1	1	3
Puducherry	1059	95	12	..	..	..
Total	42448	8411	8951	40175	7405	7872

- =Nil .. = Not Available @ = Less than 500

N.B. :- Totals may not necessarily tally due to rounding off figures in thousands.

Source: *Indian Labour Year Book 2009 and 2010*, Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Bureau, Shimla/Chandigarh, 2012

Table 1 reflects that during 2006, out of 42448 registered workers' unions, only 8411 submitted their returns, and during 2007, out of 40175 registered workers' unions, only 7405 submitted their returns. So far as various States are concerned, during 2006, out of 42448 Registered Workers' Unions, Karnataka has the largest number of Registered Unions (9879) followed by Maharashtra (7735) and Tamil Nadu (6782). In 2007, out of 40175 Workers' Unions, Karnataka has the largest number of Registered Unions (11651) followed by Tamil Nadu (9954) and Rajasthan (4942). However, among the responding States/Union Territories, maximum of (3603) and (3591) Workers Unions submitted returns from Tamil Nadu in the year 2006 and 2007 respectively.

III. Variable trend in the Income and Expenditure of Registered Trade Unions of Workers

As far as the Income and Expenditure of Workers' Unions submitting returns for the years 1998 to 2007 are concerned, the same are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 reflects that during the period 1998 to 2007, there has been a varying trend as far as income of registered workers' union is concerned fluctuating between Rs. 2629.26 lakh in 1998 and Rs. 11565.82 in 2006. While the income of the workers' trade unions which submitted returns, continued increasing for the first three years (1998, 1999 and 2000), it dipped in 2001 and thereafter continued going up and down and reaching the highest (Rs. 11565.82 lakh) in 2006 and again coming down to Rs. 10294.95 lakh in 2007. Almost a similar trend is noticeable in the case of expenditure of the registered trade unions which submitted returns, it being the highest (Rs. 8980.36 lakh) in 2006 and the lowest (Rs. 2335.44 lakh) in 1998.

IV. Dominance of Manufacturing Industry in the Number and Membership of workers' unions classified according to Industries during 2006 and 2007

In case the number and membership of workers' unions is classified according to industries during 2006 and 2007, it is the Manufacturing Industry that has dominated the scene as is evident from Table 3:

Table 2
Income and Expenditure of Registered Workers' Trade Unions submitting Returns for the Year 1998 to 2007

Year	Workers' Unions		
	No. of unions submitting returns	Income (Rs. In Lakh)	Expenditure (Rs. In Lakh)
1	2	3	4
1998	7291	2629.26	2335.44
1999	8061	5791.36	5043.13
2000	7231	7463.60	5940.66
2001	6513	5558.52	4895.56
2002	7734	6254.54	5340.46
2003	7229	9432.81	6733.15
2004	5217	6983.41	5627.83
2005	8255	8521.84	6182.51
2006	8411	11565.82	8980.36
2007	7405	10294.95	8437.25

Source: *Indian Labour Year Book 2009 and 2010*, Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Bureau, Shimla/ Chandigarh, 2012

Table 3
Unions Submitting Returns

Industry Code (NIC 2004)	Industry	2006			2007		
		Number of Unions submitting returns	Membership	Average membership per union submitting returns	Number of Unions submitting returns	Membership	Average membership per union submitting returns
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	274	1311424	4786	228	1639108	7189
B	Fishing	33	62187	1884	29	88618	3056
C	Mining And Quarrying	156	135063	866	131	131541	1004
D	Manufacturing	2817	1717829	610	3350	2948639	8801
E	Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	186	384843	2069	257	220247	857
F	Construction	558	755879	1355	288	679035	2358
G	Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles, Motorcycles and Personal and Household Goods	263	138733	528	291	232663	800
H	Hotels and Restaurants	96	18908	197	165	22979	139
I	Transport, Storage and Communications	1526	1702375	1116	957	927618	969
J	Financial Intermediation	513	304293	593	530	143530	271
K	Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	309	1207577	3908	334	246568	738
L	Public Administration And Defence, Compulsory Social Security.	407	208770	513	225	82908	368
M	Education	85	57882	681	52	70062	1347
N	Health And Social Work	98	35687	364	157	40424	257
P	Private Households with Employed Persons	20	13032	652	15	4369	291
Q	Extra- Territorial Organisations and Bodies	1	170	170	1	174	174
	TOTAL	8411	8950861	1064	7405	7872374	1063

P = Provisional

Source: Compiled on the basis of figures contained in *Indian Labour Year Book 2009 and 2010*, Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Bureau Shimla, 2012

It is observed from Table 3 which presents industry-wise number and membership of Workers' unions for the years 2006 and 2007 [according to Industry Code (NIC 2004)], that out of 8411 and 7405 Workers' unions that submitted returns for 2006 and 2007, 'Manufacturing group' (Ind. Code D) accounted for maximum number of 2817 unions (33.49%) and 3350 (45.24%) unions, followed by "Transport, storage and Communications" (Ind. Code I); 1526 Unions (18.14%) and 957 unions (12.92%) during 2006 and 2007 respectively. As regard to membership of Workers' Unions it is again the "Manufacturing Group" (Ind. Code D) that accounted for the largest membership of 1717829 (19.19%) and 2948639 (37.46%) during 2006 and 2007 respectively.

V. Expansion in the Number of National Level Federations of Workers' Trade Unions

Since all major political parties in our country have been trying to increase their share of workers' votes, every one of them has constituted a national level Federation to which a good number of trade unions at company level are affiliated. While in 1921, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC),⁶ (patronised by the Congress Party) was the only national level Federation of workers' trade unions, today besides the four major ones, viz., the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), (patronised by Communist Party, and established in 1921), the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), (patronized by Indian National Congress, and established in 1947), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) which espouses the socialist philosophy, and established in 1948), and the Centre of Indian Trade Union Congress (CITU) which has got its allegiance to CPI (M), and established in 1971, there also exist national level Federations of workers' trade unions, like the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), the National Labour Organisation (NLO), the Hind Mazdoor Panchayat (HMP), the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), etc.

Thus from the good number of Federations operating these days, it is evident that the modern trade union movement is still suffering from politicalisation of trade unions resulting in fragmentation and multiplicity of unions. Besides, there are other federations like National Fish Workers Federation, National Alliance of Street Vendors, National Alliance of Construction Workers, etc., which have kept themselves out of

the main Central Trade Union Federations. All the same there is also an increasing tendency noticeable in trade unions to get together to support each other's struggle at critical junctures and also struggles launched for a common cause like raising their voice against price rise etc.

VI. Expansion of Arena of Indian Trade Unionism from Blue-Collar workers to White-Collar workers

The arena of trade unionism in India continues expanding. It has spread from manual to non-manual industrial workers. White-collar people have also been pushed to 20th century facts towards the wage worker type of collective economic life.

It is not only the traditionally exploited categories of industrial workers but also the rather better placed white-collar workers, even stiff-white collar workers, such as government employees, officers in banks and insurance organisations, teachers, nurses and doctors in public hospitals, ground engineers, technical staff, pilots of Indian Airlines and Air India, and in a few States even policemen in uniform, have started forming trade unions for getting their demands accepted. For an example, about 5,00,000 workmen employees of the 14 public sector and major private sector banks struck work on 28th December, 1978 (and many times thereafter also the public sector bank employees have gone on strike paralysing the whole economy of the country). On the following day, about 1,00,000 bank officers in 30,000 branches of banks joined the striking workmen. 'Go-slow', 'work to rule', 'sit-in', etc., type of agitations have become a common feature with the employees of the Life Insurance Corporation of India, Nationalised Banks, General Insurance Companies, State Electricity Boards, etc. Then on September 14, 1979, the entire public sector was crippled by a one day token strike. The workers of the Indian Oil Corporation were already on strike. The squeeze on perks placed on managers and some other factors have made them feel the necessity of protection by a union. Hence, an increasing number of managers are joining unions. In India, the lack of security of job and the ceiling on salary, commission, and perks have forced the managers and officers and also other white-collar personnel to form their own unions to safeguard their interests and they have been successful to a great extent in securing many benefits for themselves.

VII. Existence of Some Disruptive Forces in the Trade Union Movement

It should be noted that the significance of a movement cannot, of course, be measured simply in terms of the total number of supporters or members. A strong minority, that can exert considerable influence upon the non-members and sympathisers, may be more powerful than a weak majority. So far as Indian trade unionism is concerned, there is a widely held view among business leaders, politicians and editorial writers that unions in India have been a disruptive force in our economic life due to their ceaseless badgering of management, intermittent work stoppages and prolonged strikes. Though a large number of unions favour peaceful policies and methods but in some cases growing militancy and revolutionary nature of trade unionism under militant labour leaders have also been experienced. Bombay textile men strike in 1982 under the leadership of Dr. Datta Samant is a clear testimony of the emerging militant trade unionism. (But this is also construed by some thinkers as a rise of a second line trade unionists). It is perhaps because of such incidents from time to time that the Indian trade unions have not been able to evoke the desired sympathy and concern from the non-members towards their cause. The trade unions have yet to build up their image so that the non-members may not continue to be indifferent or silent spectators and may come forward to champion their cause. It is a well known fact that the Datta Samant led prolonged strike by the textile workers failed to attract the desired support from the non-members and could not accomplish the desired ends.

VIII. Inadequate Efforts to Improve the Status of the working class

Trade unionism should be able to elevate the status of the working classes above that of mere slaves. In this direction, Indian trade unionism has been able to make a considerable headway, especially in the organised sector, though much remains to be desired. However, today the condition of the workers in the unorganised and not so well organised sectors needs much attention.

IX. Continuance of Political Unions, Multiplicity of Unions, Intra-Union and Inter-Union Rivalries

Marx believed that capitalism itself renders effective, although unintended, aid to its enemies.

However, so far as India is concerned, the inter-union and intra-union rivalries have been coming in the way of taking the full advantage of this characteristic feature of capitalism. All over the world, overt and covert involvement of trade unions in politics is discernible. Same is the case with the Indian trade unions. In our country, unions are influenced by politics much too glaringly and palpably. Of late, political unionism, multi-unionism, and inter-union and intra-union rivalries have taken deep roots in the trade union movement. Political unionism has divided the trade union movement on political lines and led to rivalries and division on account of political and ideological differences. Narrow sectional feeling has been provoked more after Independence by political parties. Though there is unabated political interference and also widespread dissensions, there appears to be no move by different political leaders involved in trade union affairs to forge a common alliance and project a united trade union movement. Formation of unions on caste lines in recent years, though not in form but in essence, is an unwanted trend. The inter-union rivalry in certain cases has become quite noticeable and gone beyond limits. Another problem in the context of multiplicity of unions with inter-and intra-union rivalry is that the union leaders have always been under great pressure to conceive or concoct and raise demands to justify their election or re-election. According to Marx, complete emancipation of workers involves co-operation between political struggle and trade unionism. But in India due to political unionism, that is far to seek.

X. Some Examples of Gandhian Form of Agitation

We also come across the Gandhian form of agitation. For example, nearly 400 junior engineers of BHEL in August 1978 instead of slowing down or stopping work, worked more hours per day by missing lunch hour and working an extra hour at the end of the day besides gathering in the parade ground for prayer meeting and observing two minutes solemn silence for truth and justice.

XI. Lack of Democratic Functioning in a Good Number of Trade Unions

Sydney and Beatrice Webb have considered trade unionism to be the extension of the principle of democracy to the sphere of industry. However, in India though the unions harp upon workers' participation in management and the right to be

consulted by the management in all vital matters, there is little internal democracy in a large number of trade unions. There is inadequate communication, delegation and decentralisation in most trade unions than most industrial enterprises. There is a great deal of mutual mistrust among the principal office bearers of the same union specially during the periods of negotiation.

XII. Inadequate Efforts to carry on the Class Struggle

Trade unionism is considered to exist to carry on the class struggle because it is through this struggle that we can escape from the class structure established in our social institutions. Though in this respect, Indian trade unions have been trying to make much efforts but have not been able to cut much ice. The trade unionism should be able to get the workers organised and disciplined which is indispensable for industrial development. So far as Indian trade unions are concerned, they have not yet been able to organise the entire working force. As many as 90% of the workers still belong to the unorganised sector. Only about 10% of the entire working force has been able to organise itself and even in the organised sector, in some cases, the workers are not so well organised.

XIII. Continuance of Spardani Industrial of Violence by Some Unions

The Indian trade unionism at present needs to make the workers more disciplined. The recent incidents like the one in which the owner of the Calcutta Steel Equipment and Construction Company was beaten to death inside the factory premises on 18th October, 1986, by a group of workers belonging to a particular union, or another one in which about 50 workers belonging to a particular union picketed the factory and resorted to heavy stone throwing when police began removing them. Earlier, on 8th January, 1979, Mr, N.P. Godrej, Vice Chairman of M/S Godrej & Boyce Pvt. Ltd., was stabbed by an unidentified knife-wielding assailant. These are not the solitary examples. To quote a few incidents, in July 2005, around 350 workers and over a dozen policemen were injured in an agitation started by workers of Honda Motor Cycle and Scooter India Plant. In October 2009, a RICO worker was killed in a clash with police when thousands of workers resorted to stone pelting outside the factory gates on Delhi-Jaipur

Highway. Again in September 2011, two Maruti union workers were arrested for inciting a worker to physically attack supervisors of the company. In March 2012, the workers of Orient Craft Limited in Udyog Vihar, Gurgaon, turned violent after a contractor allegedly assaulted a worker. The irate mob pelted stones at the premises and on fire twenty bikes, two trucks, One SUV and one police van. In March, 2012, workers assaulted Vice President of Suzuki motor cycles after the management suspended three union workers. On July 18, 2012, workers at the Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, IMT, Manesar (Gurgaon) plant went on a rampage and killed Ashwani Kumar Dev, the General Manager, HR by burning him beyond recognition. Again, more than a dozen garment manufacturing units were vandalized on February 12, 2015 and over hundred cars were damaged after hundreds of factory workers in industrial belt of Udyog Vihar, Gurgaon, turned violent in the afternoon. The workers pelted stones at the management in which one of the executives was injured. The violence was triggered after workers of Gaurav International and Richa Global - garment manufacturing companies - were fed with rumours of a fellow worker dying in a hospital after being beaten up by the company administration. The worker was allegedly assaulted by the administration for reporting late to work on February 10, 2015. The police later said the injured worker was alive. But, all the same, this is not to say that trade unions in India have not been able to control or discipline their workers altogether. However, in a majority of cases, the workers have shown good examples of restraint and peace even in the face of provocation and instigation by certain employers.

Suppression of Employers' Competitive Menaces

It has been rightly said by Selig Perlman that impulse of the employees is not to suppress the employers but to suppress their competitive menaces. At least in the organised sector, Indian trade unionism has been able to make its presence felt in this direction as is evident from the collective bargaining agreements, appointment of various wage boards, the enactment of various labour laws, and the action of the government with regard to workers' participation in management etc.

Continuance of Outside Leadership

It is noteworthy that most of the prominent leaders in the Indian trade unions are still 'out-

siders' i.e. educated, middle class individuals who came into union work from outside rather than through the wage-earning ranks. Unionised employees have generally been showing preferences to people with political clout in choosing their leadership. Most leaders combine political interest with union work, and, therefore, they cannot focus their entire attention on the internal functioning of their unions or on daily problems of the members in the work place. Besides, they hold multiplicity of offices. Despite all this, outside leadership cannot be altogether avoided. However, of late, there is change in this pattern and more internal leadership is forthcoming.

Trade Union Movement being Operated Mostly in Business Lines

It has also been observed that the Indian trade unionism has grown up as an organisation operated mainly on business lines. It is no more an emotional struggle for a just labour cause as it used to be initially.

Crafts Unions in Certain Industries

It has also been found that in the case of air transport, ports and docks, etc., there is a trend of formation of crafts unions as industry-wise unions cannot take care of the grievances of different crafts in an industry due to divergent problems of different crafts in the same industry. Anyway, formation of crafts unions is not in the interest of workers, in general, because it lacks a clear perspective of the needs of the working class as a whole and also leads to multiplicity of unions thus weakening the labour movement.

Most Strikes are Short-lived and End in Failures

Most strikes resorted to by Indian trade unions are short lived and end in larger number of failures as compared to the industrialised countries. But contrary to this, we also come across the example of the Bombay textilemen's strike wherein the workers sustained strike for an abnormally long period. It has also been felt that there have been more un-official strikes than official strikes.

Much Left to be Desired in the Area of Collective Bargaining & Workers' Participation in Management

Indian trade unions, by and large, have not been able to make the desired progress in the field of

collective bargaining though quite a good number of collective bargaining agreements have been reached from time to time and implemented also. Similarly, in the field of workers' participation in management also, the trade unions have not shown the interest expected of them. Most of the trade unions consider the collective bargaining and the workers' participation in management as a challenge to their authority.

Voluntary Arbitration Still a Less Preferred Option

Enough interest has not been shown by Indian Trade Unions in promoting the institution of voluntary arbitration. Indian trade unions are becoming more and more litigation-oriented leading to ever increasing State intervention.

Dominance of Quite a Good Number of Unions by Single Individuals

Some of the features of trade unionism at present in our country that have been reflected by some of the important strikes including the 1982 Bombay textilemen's strike which is popularly known as 'Datta Samant Phenomena', include the dominance of quite a good number of unions by single individuals, the effectiveness of even unrecognised groups of workers over the one recognised by the management, the indifferent and sometimes even pro-management attitude of the government, long sustaining power of the workers, inter-union rivalry and lack of support by rival unions even in the matters of common cause, non-compromising attitude of certain union leaders, political interference, etc. Some of the workers' leaders are using trade unions as the platform for entering into politics. They form workers' parties to contest elections. Thus, certain political parties and ambitious individuals have been using trade unions to serve their ulterior motives, thereby thwarting attempts of trade union unity.

Less Effectiveness in Boosting Productivity

In our country, the trade unionism has not been very effective in boosting productivity which is a very important function of any good trade union movement. Indian trade unions lack that type of leadership. Here it will be pertinent to quote a labour's spokesman who said: "You can't just load yourself into prosperity. You must work yourself into prosperity. If you want higher wages, better vacations, more security, a health and welfare fund, you must of necessity,

recognise that your company cannot give it to you unless you first give it to the company. You have got to put money in the barrel if you want to take it out.”

Inability in Motivating the workers to seek inspiration from certain well known Movements and Slogans

The Indian trade unionism has also not been successful in motivating the workers to seek inspiration from movements like the ‘Subbotniks Movement’ of the Soviet Russia under which voluntary Saturday work without pay became almost routine for a large majority of workers. The outcome of the ‘Subbotnik’ movement was summed up most appropriately by the first British Labour Delegation visiting Soviet Russia in the Spring of 1920, in the following words: “voluntary and unpaid labour on Saturday afternoons for purposes of reconstruction..... has become one of the regular features of town life. The idea of the duty of all citizens to take part in reconstruction work for the State is being inculcated to a degree unknown elsewhere.

Similarly, the trade unionism in India has not been very successful in getting the slogans like ‘eyes on the target’, ‘shoulders to the wheel’, ‘noses to grindstone’, implemented by some of the workers in their respective organisations. The trade unions have not been able to encourage their workers to develop friendly co-operation, patriotic feelings, creative spirit and a sense of belongingness among them towards their organisations which all are very important to make an organisation successful and effective. The Indian trade unionism has achieved a very little success in the field of improvement of domestic and social life of their workers. They have also not been very effective in educating the workers and creating a confidence in them that they gain by the drive for higher productivity or any such constructive programme.

Failure to Create Model Brigades

Trade unions have also not mooted any such idea as that of creating a model brigade of young workers in every organisation which may set example of good and dedicated work before other workers. The trade unions have also not made any significant progress in the field of training the workers in practical economic work by drawing them into regular discussion of the production plans and the current task of the individual enterprises.

To conclude, it can be safely remarked that while some trade unions have been doing a marvellous job and their efforts for the emancipation of underdog from wretched levels of living and working has been unique and outstanding, majority of the trade unions have yet to come up to our expectations. The Indian trade unionism is, by and large, still suffering to a considerable extent from such shortcomings as political unionism, multi-unionism, inter-union and intra-union rivalries, inadequate and, in some cases, inefficient internal leadership, indifference towards voluntary arbitration, lack of collective bargaining skills, lack of adequate enthusiasm towards workers’ participation in management, inadequate and, in some cases, even zero emphasis on extra-mural activities, ever increasing reliance on legislation, predominance of short lived strikes and at times even prolonged strikes, many a time marked with violence, spread of trade unionism even among white-collar employees including officers and intellectuals, misuse of the platform of trade unions by certain individuals for their personal ends, in some cases effectiveness even of unrecognised unions, lack of bringing a large chunk of workers in its fold, indiscipline among certain workers, domination of certain unions by certain individuals, lack of motivating its members, lack of constructive spirit, etc. Besides, there are several trade union leaders who succumb to the temptations offered by employers and thus let the cause of workers suffer. There is also some move towards encouraging ‘closed shops’ or ‘union shops’ it has neither gained currency in India yet, nor does the future appears to be optimistic in this regard. According to National Commission on Labour, “closed shop” is neither practicable nor desirable as it is against the fundamental right of association guaranteed under Article 19(I) (c) of the Constitution.

CONCLUSION

Indian trade unionism has, no doubt, established its identity as a fundamental and powerful institution but yet has not been able to create its desired image and credibility in the society. It needs a change of orientation of trade unionism in India – change from the traditional protection-conscious to production conscious. Perhaps it has already started moving in this direction though has yet to achieve momentum.

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