



Available Online at eSci Journals
Journal of Business and Finance

ISSN: 2305-1825 (Online), 2308-7714 (Print)
<http://www.escijournals.net/JBF>



IMPACT OF TRADE UNIONISM ON INDIAN SOCIETY

Abhishek Gupta*

Sardar Swaran Singh National Institute of Renewable Energy, Kapurthala (Punjab), India.

ABSTRACT

A Trade union is an organization of workers, acting collectively, who seek to protect and promote their mutual interests through collective bargaining. Trade unions are based upon the concept of "class-struggle" between the capitalist employers and their workers. Tannenbaum traces the rise of unions to the worker's reaction to the philosophy of individualism dominating the 19th and the 20th centuries. The Industrial Revolution destroyed the older way of life and left the individual worker at the mercy of the employer "who became the catalytic agent that crystallized them into a self-conscious group." The worker became completely dependent on others for his livelihood, and "equality came to mean equality for competitive strife. The role of trade unions are considered as essentially reformist organizations and economic institutions based on the Sarvodaya principles of Truth, Non-violence and Trusteeship. Trade unions are important players in today's industrialized world. Trade Unions have three cardinal principles; Unity is strength, Equality of pay for equal work, Security of employment. Trade unions have gradually evolved and have now come to occupy an important place in the modern industrial order, they have now become gigantic associations; they have now become institutions which are interested in the social, cultural and political development of the county. Now-a-days the trade union movement is no longer solely a movement for advancing claims as a movement seeking to increase the material well being of its members but has grown into a force which not only defends the political, social and cultural interests of its members but also carries out special tasks affecting enterprising and intellectual workers especially with regard to their career, jobs, salaries, paid holidays, vocational training, recreational and health improvement programmes etc. The growth of trade unions has been influenced by a number of ideologies, social, economic and even political movements have influenced trade unions in one or the other way.

Keywords: Trade union, Indian economy.

INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution, the consequent property of owners, exploitation of workers by the then newly rich capitalists and the widening gap between the living standards of owners and workers etc. have contributed towards the animosity between the two. "Workers unite" was the message to the workers. This was due to writings of communists, the socialists and others have sown the seeds of distrust between owners and workers and marked the beginning of the class wars between the two. Trade unions are association of workers united with common objective of betterment of their service conditions. Unions are organized in lines of craft or trade, unite service conditions. Unions are organized in lines of craft or trade, unit-wise, industry-wise or even based on political ideologies on state- wise or nation -

wise. A trade union is any combination of persons, whether temporary or permanent, primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workers and employers, or between workers and workers, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade, or business and includes the federations of two or more trade union. A Trade union is an organization of workers, acting collectively, who seek to protect and promote their mutual interests through collective bargaining. The union is an association of person viz., employers, employees or independent workers/tradesmen. The union is not casual; it is relatively more permanent and may be temporary for some time. The union's main objective is to secure economic benefits to its members. This is done by collective bargaining. The union influences or affects industrial relations. The union serves the purpose of "checks and balances" on the employers and thus cause "restriction" on management. Union can be a union of more union or

* Corresponding Author:

Email: iloveindia1909@gmail.com

© 2012 eSci Journals Publishing. All rights reserved.

Associations. Trade unions thus play an important role in molding the industrial relations. Union management relations can influence productivity, efficiency and industrial peace substantially. It depends on attitude. Attitude can vary from that of a responsible partnership to that of an irresponsible adversary. Depending on these changes, industrial peace and productivity vary from units to units. Political leadership, public opinion, value system and shop floor ethos, and industrial culture, etc. have varied influence on union management relationships.

The origin of the trade union has been interpreted in different ways by different authorities. Their views are expressed in the form of ideologies, principles, approaches, theories or philosophies. The purpose of such theories has been to explain the basic motivating factors behind union organization, growth and bargaining policies. European approach, represented by Sydney and Beatrice Webb's' (of England) separation of functions, ownership and control and execution. Indian approach is based on the application of the principles of Truth and Non-Violence. Unions grow out of different social-psychological conditions and different temperamental characteristics of the workers; trade unionism is essentially pragmatic and non-revolutionary in its function. "Industrial Autocracy" should be replaced by "Industrial Democracy". The machine is the cause and the labor movement is the result because the machine degrades the workers and makes them insecure. The trade union aims at control over, the machine so as to overcome insecurity.

SOCIOLOGICAL TREND OF TRADE UNIONISM

The Industrial Revolution destroyed the older way of life and left the individual worker at the mercy of the employer. The worker became completely dependent on others for his livelihood, and "equality came to mean equality for competitive strife. To secure a job and to hold it proved to be the test of all else and very means of survival." But man, being a social animal, cannot live alone." Man has to belong to something real, purposeful, creative; he must belong to his job and to his industry or must belong to him." Workers are engaging in an unconscious rebellion against the atomization of industrial society. It is inevitable that a sense of identity should develop among men behaving at a common task. The moral fusion of men physically associated in labour "is an old-age experience". The original organizer of the trade union movement is the shop, the factory, the mine, and the industry. The agitator or the labour leader

merely announces the already existing fact. The emergence of unionism is spontaneous and unpremeditated; it is inherent in the growth of capitalism. It reflects the urge of human beings to create a society. "It is not merely an economic organization, it is also a social and ethical system and its ends are moral and not economic, because it strives to re-establish the values in which man had found his dignity."

SCARCITY CONSCIOUSNESS OF TRADE UNIONISM

The worker as a person with a pessimistic out-look, a feeling of scarcity of economic opportunity and consequently in need of an organization which would control the scarcity opportunity and retain it on some pre-determined and fair basis. "Scarcity Consciousness", "trade union is essentially pragmatic and struggles constantly for the betterment of the economic conditions and relationship through broad schemes of social and economic reform. After analyzing the labour movement in Russia, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, we found that 'working people in reality felt an urge towards collective control of their employment opportunities, but hardly towards similar control of industry. Therefore the "three factors are basic in any labour situations: *first*, the resistance power of capitalism, determined by its own historical development; *second*, the degree of dominance over the labour movements by the intellectuals' mentality which regularly underestimates and *third*, the degree of maturity of a trade union mentality'. Unionism developed because of workers' scarcity consciousness, which arose in the minds of the workers because of the fact that their economic position cannot improve beyond that which is barely sufficient to cover minimum essentials of an ordinary standard of living. Two causes were said to be responsible for this belief. "The typical manuals are aware of his lack of native capacity for coping with the complex business world. He also has the conviction that the world has been rendered one of scarcity by an institutional order of things, which purposely reserved the last opportunity for landlords, capitalists and other privileged groups". Out of scarcity consciousness grew a job-conscious unionism, a unionism, which controls the job opportunity. The union establishes certain job 'rights' which it then rations among the members through regulations applying to overtime, seniority, etc. The union does not replace the employer as the risk taker and the owner of business, but it does become the administrator of the scarce job opportunity. Trade unions are based upon the concept

of "class-struggle" between the capitalist employers and their workers. The study found trade unions as revolutionary and political organizations. They are the instruments for complete displacement of capitalists in government and industry by their revolutionary programme.

TRADE UNION IN INDIA

Trade Union may an association of either of the employers or employees or independent worker. Labour unions are relatively permanent combinations of workers and are not temporary or casual. It is an association of workers who are engaged in securing economic benefits for their members. In other words, it is essentially "a cooperative labour marketing association". Its purpose is to secure control of the supply of labour in one or more markets and to maintain that control as a means of fixing the price of labour as well as the conditions under which it works. Trade union functions which was to defend the workers' rights and interests against the employers and the State, has now changed and given place to a new approach towards its functions, namely, protection of workers and provision for their security; improving the wages, conditions of work and standards of living; raising the status of the worker as a part of industry and citizen of society; and extending the area of social control of the nation's economic life and participating in that control. The trade unions have also been changing constantly. Trade unions change their methods and their working to adjust themselves to changing circumstances. Trade unions have gradually evolved and have now come to occupy an important place in the modern industrial order "From criminal and illegal associations; from institutions which were only very small bodies, they have now become gigantic associations; from institutions that were primarily interested in the advancement of the cause of their own membership, they have now become institutions which are interested in the social, cultural and political development of the county." The trade unions, thus, have made a remarkable progress since their inception. The growth of trade unions has been influenced by a number of ideologies. Social, economic and even political movements have influenced trade unions in one or the other way. The class-conflict and dialectical materialism created a class of trade unionists who regarded labour organization as "absolutely essential for bringing about a revolutionary and fundamental change in the social order. The proletariat must overthrow the present

bourgeoisie class, capture State power and usher in a classless society because the capitalistic class has long exploited the workers. Under capitalism, the principal function of a trade union has been defensive, namely, to fight for the maintenance of the existing wages, to demand (relatively) higher wages, and the betterment of the conditions of work.

The trade unionism to be the extension of the "Principles of democracy" in the sphere of industry, require the trade unions "to be institutions for overcoming managerial dictatorship to strengthen individual laborers and to give them voice in the determination of the conditions under which they have to work." "If the democratic State is to attain its fullest and finest development, it is essential that the actual needs and desires of human agents concerned should be the main consideration in determining conditions of employment. Here, then, we find the special function of the trade union in the administration of industry. In all socialist countries, it has been accepted that trade unions have to take an active part in preparing labour laws concerning labour, production, the way of life, culture and the implementation of these laws. Class conflict is sought to be met through equality and collective agreements and joint consultations. The State recognizes the rights of the people to work, rest and leisure and maintenance in old age, sickness and disability, education and equal pay for equal work. Workers and managers have the same common purpose, namely, to promote the interests of the socialist State with which their own interest are bound up. A trade union may continuous and voluntary Association of the salary earners and employees engaged in whatever industry or trade, formed for safeguarding the interests of its members, maintaining and improving the conditions of their working lives, raising their status and promoting their vocational interests; and securing better relations between them and their employers, through collective bargaining. A trade union is therefore, a device which enables a group /class in industry or trade to bargain with any other class/group on equal footing. It is to be noted that modern trade union retains from its early development. It is economically oriented; it is an instrument of defense; it implies class distinction; and it is an outcome of an individualistic society.

THE GOVERNMENT AND TRADE UNION

The government is regarded as a greater hindrance than the employers in the way of achievement of union goals.

But this order is reversed and this is apparently a paradox. In fact this shows that the interviewees expect more from a democratically elected government, which is wedded to public welfare and has several old trade unionists in responsible Positions, than from the employers. The differential attitude to the central and state governments can be explained in terms of who happens to be at the helm of affairs a party sympathetic to their organization or its rivals. At the time of investigation the Indian National Trade Union Congress preferred the Central Congress Government. In contrast to this the provincial Coalition Government was preferred by the Indian Labor Union and the All-India Trade Union Congress.

GENERAL TREND OF TRADE UNIONISM

"Worker's protest is inherent in industrialization." They offer an explanation of workers' protest which arises due to stress and strain of industrialization. Organized form of protest, according to them, is labour organization. The nature and role of such organization depend upon the industrialization process, the industrializing elite and the specific culture and environment of a country. The leadership of industrialization process is taken by one of the five ideal types, namely, dynastic elite, the middle class, the revolutionary intellectuals, the colonial administrators, and the nationalist leaders. They are of the opinion that the structure, functions, and source of leadership and ideology of trade unions differ with the type of industrializing elites. The role of trade unions and considered these as essentially reformist organizations and economic institutions-based on the Sarvodaya principles of Truth, Non-violence and Trusteeship to promote class collaborations as "capital and labour should supplement each other and live in unity and harmony."

CONCLUSION

There is no one to one match between employee and employer. This is the reason why in the past, workers were exploited by employers such as low wages, hire and fire authority exercised at will, poor working conditions, engagement of workers for long hours like 12 hours a day, arbitrary punishment like flogging', slave trade. That many of them are intellectually talented is evident from the panorama of problems mentioned by them during the course of the interviews. Trade unionists consider themselves as intellectuals and envisage for themselves a role as educators of general public and agents of social change.

REFERENCES

- Bhatia S. K.(2003), "Constructive Industrial relations and labour Laws" New Delhi, Deep & deep Publishers.
- Castles, St.; Miller M.J. (1998), "The age of migration" (International population movement in the modern world). London, MacMillan.
- Datt, R. (ed.) (1998) "Organising the unorganised workers", Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi.
- H.L. Kumar (2000), "Dismissal, Discharge and Retrenchment" (Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.) p. 257.
- H.L. Kumar (2006),"Labour Law" (Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co.) p. 120.
- Hoeven, R. van der. (1999) forthcoming." Adjustment, employment and missing institutions in Africa". Geneva, ILO.
- Kumar, H.L. (2007), "Labour & Industrial Law", Universal Law Publishing Co., Delhi, (vol. II), 3rd edition
- Mamoria & Gankar (2000), "Dynamics of Industrial Relations" Mumbai Himalaya Publishers.
- Mody, G.; Mani, M.; Ramaswamy, E.A. (1998), "Development of self-management institutions in India". Project conclusion report. New Delhi, CWM.
- Moonilal, R. (1998), "Changing labour relations and the future of trade unions A case study of Trinidad and Tobago". The Hague, PhD dissertation, ISS.
- Ramaswamy, E.A. forthcoming (1999). "Trade unions in India".
- Salas, M.M. (1998). "Labor market flexibility or employment precariousness under structural adjustment programs: The case of Costa Rica". The Hague, MA research thesis, ISS.