

REPORT IV

THE MAKE-UP AND TASKS OF OUR T. U. FUNCTIONARY.

1. In the conditions and tasks facing our T. U. functionary he has to reorganise his make up and re-equip himself. The conditions of T. U. work are no longer what they were six years back. While strike struggles have to be led and fought, strike-leadership alone is not enough to unite and organise the working class. The bourgeois attack takes various forms, in reply to which a strike alone is not sufficient. We have to meet the attack according to the means employed by the bourgeoisie.

2. We must be under no illusions that government's economic plan or American aid is going to lessen the crisis for food, consumer goods, industrialisation and markets. The food crisis is a permanent one until the land is handed over to the peasant and landlordism abolished. The American loans may delay the impacts of famines here and there. But these very loans will ultimately intensify the crisis. Either by buying over whatever industry we have and our national resources, or entering into partnerships with British and Indian holders, the American entry into our markets will ruin our industry and trade and make the situation worse, by accelerating the concentration of money and national wealth in the hands of big monopoly groups.

Therefore we must always be prepared to be with the workers in their struggles against rising living costs, unemployment and rationalisation.

3. Our T. U. functionary must know at least a short outline of our struggles and achievements so that he can give an outlook of confidence, class consciousness, and victory to the worker and can draw on past experience to help in the present struggles.

Our enemy distorts our history and misleads the worker. We must be able to combat this distortion.

Industry & its Development

4. Our T. U. functionary must know not only the general trends of development but also those in each industry where he works to be able to lead the worker correctly.

The increasing growth of monopoly is ruining the small producers and genuine industrialists. The hold of British capital for example has closed the whole leather industry in South India throwing out thousands of workers, and ruining hundreds of employers who are clamouring for aid against the power of the British market. The import of British power-engines of small calibre threatens to ruin the industrial units manufacturing such engines in India and render thousands unemployed.

Therefore, while fighting for the workers' demands, we must learn to combine the demands of the worker with the demands of the employer in *such* cases and defend our national interests against foreign monopoly capital. Hence, we must know the trends in each industry, where we work.

5. Our T. U. functionary must know the markets for the products produced by our workers, the prices therein, the causes of their rise and fall. It is necessary because the government and the bourgeoisie try to set the consuming public against the worker by attributing high prices to our wages and create antagonisms between the working class of the towns and the peasantry in the countryside.

Technique of the Trade

6. Our T. U. functionary must know at least the rudiments of the technique of the trade in which he is running the union, so that he can understand the problems of wages and work-load, of speed up and piece-rates better and can represent them with correctness. The best teacher in this is the worker in the trade itself. We must not neglect to learn from him.

7. Our T. U. functionary must pay serious attention to the application of the laws on industrial matters. There is a tendency to consider all the laws as attacks on the working class and hence requiring no attention except to combat them in a general form. But it is forgotten that there are *two sets of laws*. One is an achievement on our part and to demand and supervise their realisation and application is a task of the trade unions. Laws such as Payment of Wages Act, Compensation for Injuries, Sickness Insurance, Maternity Benefits, Factory Acts have been fought for and won by us in the teeth of opposition of the bourgeoisie, which does not wish to apply these laws in their full effectiveness. Therefore, we must build the T. U.

movement around the application and enforcement of laws which are in the interests of the workers.

Conciliation & Arbitration

The other set of laws—mainly those concerning conciliation, arbitration, recognition are laws which are imposed on us to curb and devitalise the class solidarity and action of the working class. Therefore we must build the T. U. movement around the struggle against such laws as are against the interests of the workers.

In the early days of its rule, the Congress Government allowed the conciliation and arbitration tribunals to concede the demands of the working class. Thereby it hoped that the workers would line up behind it, abjure strike actions and give up the class-outlook.

But very soon, when the bourgeoisie wanted to withhold concessions, the workers threw overboard the conciliation and tribunal acts as in the 1950 Bombay Textile Strike. The reaction of the workers has been so swift that even the INTUC has demanded an overhauling of the machinery of the arbitration tribunals, and the interference of the Central Appellate Tribunal in revising awards of lower courts which turned favourable to workers.

The scandal of the Bank Tribunal has shattered even the faith of the middle-class, which was most critical of our hostility to these Acts and manoeuvres of the Congress Government.

Though the workers have thus come to the point of defying these laws, the Acts still remain in force and have to be skilfully used by our trade unions.

Hence the legal branch of our T. U. work has become a very important one. The fight in the Wage Boards, Conciliation and Arbitrary Tribunals has become a part of the class struggles.

The T. U. lawyers of the AITUC have done excellent work in many areas, with the result that workers belonging even to the INTUC and HMS unions demand the services of AITUC lawyers.

That becomes a starting point for united work. Hence industrial law and T.U. lawyers have to be given special attention.

Welfare & Cultural Work

8. Our T. U. functionary must not neglect the organisation of social service, co-operative and welfare work, and cultural needs

of the working class. There has been a tendency, and it exists even today to label all such activity as “reformist”. That is so because all reformists emphasise welfare work to the detriment of struggles of the workers. But because reformists misuse welfare work, social service and cultural work, it is no reason why our T. U’s. should condemn it, instead of giving such work its proper place in the organisation. The bourgeoisie deprives the workers of entertainment, makes it too dear for them. Nowadays, the Congress Government, with the aid of the British and American funds and organisation, is undertaking organised corruption of our national and class traditions and culture. It is the task of the Trade Unions to organise good entertainment, good cultural education of the workers. The famous example of how the Rangoon Dock workers by simply taking up cooperative housing for the homeless dockers, became a mass force and a big union uniting the divided workers is worth studying.

Caste & National Composition

9. Our T. U. functionary must know the caste and national composition of the workers in his Union and trade, their customs and traditions, their approach to life and the antagonism that the bourgeoisie foments on the basis of caste, community, tribe and linguistic national groups.

The worker coming to industry under the grinding wheel of capitalism, carries with him all the ideology, traditions and loyalties of his tribe, caste, village, religion etc. The new class solidarity takes a long time to mature in him. In fact many a caste, village or national bonds act for him as protection against sickness, family difficulties, and such other needs. Before he can learn to go to the Union for his difficulties, he turns to his Jamat.

We must learn to evaluate these relations of his and how to prevent them from cutting across his new class needs and loyalties. The caste, nation, tribe in the worker must be harnessed in the service of building the class outlook, solidarity and trade union unity of the worker as an exploited man, where the exploiter stands above him irrespective of caste, tribe, nation and religion.

If we neglect to evaluate this factor correctly, the bourgeoisie will succeed in dividing our unions and struggles and preventing us from achieving our aim.

Women & Child Labour

10. In view of the special hardships imposed on the women not only as workers but as women in the conditions of our economy, the T.U. functionary has to pay special attention to the problem of women in matters of equal pay for equal work, maternity benefits to working women, care of their children etc.

11. As regards young workers, he must pay special attention to the question of apprenticeship laws and education, sports, etc. after working hours.

12. Child labour which is extremely scattered in domestic and plantation industries requires immediate study and attention.

Unemployed

13. Our T. U. functionary must carefully study the moods of the employed worker primarily and not judge the pressure for action only relying on the unemployed workers, who come into contact with the unions more easily than the employed. We must learn to develop the unity of the employed and unemployed against the common exploiter who uses one against the other for his own aims.

Cadres

14. We must learn how to build up new cadres inside the factories, fearless and militant, watchful and wise, to take the lead of the workers' struggles.

We must learn to keep some of the cadres unexposed. Or else, the victimisation by the employers will throw all our best leaders and men from the real field of work that is the factory, shop and office.

Some people think that because our unions are now legal, we bring all our cadres to the forefront. We have to remember that the unions are legal but the crisis of capitalism is not over. The bourgeoisie does not hesitate to attack us when we lead workers' struggles.

Learn From the Masses

15. Our T. U. functionary must learn how not to run ahead of the masses nor lag behind them. This he can do only by

experience and study. He has sometimes to restrain the inexperienced masses while at other times, he has to rouse them into correct action.

In this task our functionary is suffering from the legacies of the past. At one time, we banned all strikes in the name of a political line. At another time, we called strikes on every thing without caring to know if the masses were ready or not.

As a result, even where workers are ready to act we now hesitate lest we may burn our fingers again. And when workers act on their own, controversies flare up among us, calling each other names. This results from not keeping our ears to the ground and sounding the mass mind though correct mass trade union work.

We must remember that there is no such thing as a period of "no strikes" or a period of "all strikes".

So long as we have not achieved People's Democracy we will have to struggle, and there will be strikes. In the present crisis of imperialism and its colonial economy there is no such thing as "partial stabilisation" leading to a period of relative peaceful growth of industries. The warmongers' boom is always a temporary one and each one leads to a more severe crisis than the preceding one. Hence there is no question of one or the other slogan. We must know how to assess the situation, the mass mind and the correct type of struggle that will take us ahead.

16. Our T. U. functionary must know the various tactics of mass struggle from past experience. He must know the local traditions of struggle and its forces and must also learn from them. Ready-made rules of struggles will not serve the purpose except in the general approach.

17. Our T. U. functionary must know the peasant around his factory if it is in the countryside. In such areas the worker lives in the village and works in the factory. Under such conditions, strike struggles are directly linked with the peasantry around.

We must learn how to get the peasant's help and also how to render him our help. In the sugar plantations, tea gardens, in mining and new factories spreading out into the interior to secure cheap labour and land, the sympathy and ties with the peasant are a great factor in the success of the T. U. struggles.

Develop Working-class Outlook

18. Our T. U. functionary must have the overall world outlook of Marxism and in the present period must know how to link up the Peace movement with the struggles of the masses. In this respect every economic evil today can be read in the wise words of Stalin which explain the crisis and peace as the solution of it.

“...What does placing the economy of a country on a war footing mean? It means giving industry a one-sided, war direction; developing to the utmost the production of goods necessary for war and not for consumption by the population; restricting to the utmost the production and, especially, the sale of articles of general consumption—and, consequently, reducing consumption by the population and confronting the country with an economic crisis.”

There has been a tendency either to neglect the Peace Movement or to present it mechanically as a duty. That arises out of the failure to understand the present phase of the crisis, as described by Stalin.

19. Our T. U. functionary himself must develop culture, must be modest and patient with the masses. Even while negotiating and dealing with the “enemy” at the conciliation and negotiation table, he should be polite and dignified, though sharp and firm in his approach. Rudeness is not an attribute of the class struggle.

20. If we succeed in producing such a functionary and boldly champion the cause of the workers, without jumping into false sectarian boldness or reformist lack of confidence, we shall revive our T.U. movement; we shall take the lead of the people's struggles on all issues and take the path of achieving the demands of the workers and the people.