

CHAPTER - 8

TRADE UNION

8.1 INTRODUCTION :

After looking into details of various aspects of the commitment, recruitment and industrial work, factory as a place of work, it will be appropriate to analyze the situation of workers collective actions in the form of trade union. The present chapter deals with the various aspects of trade union with reference to membership in the union, attendance in the meetings of union, workers' participation in trade union activities, advantages and disadvantages of the union and workers' views on the functions of unions in industry.

The trade unions have been accepted by society because, "so long as working people have a grievance, they will find a way of expressing it. Grievance is endemic to modern organizations and the trade union is the medium through which it is expressed."¹

8.2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNION :

The workers were asked whether they were members of the trade union. Majority of the workers 59 (64.1) reported that they were not members of trade union. The remaining workers 33 (35.9) were members of trade union.

8.3 NATURE OF EMPLOYEE'S SERVICE AND MEMBERSHIP

OF UNION :

When the data were seen with reference to nature of job, it shows that all the 27 permanent employees were union members. Out of 65 non-union members, majority 59 (90.8) were the temporary employees and only 6 (9.2) temporary employees were union members.

This trend may be explained in the terms of the permanent members have security of job and therefore they have become union members to put their grievances to the management. On the other hand the temporary employees may not be feeling secure and therefore they have not joined the union.

8.4 ATTENDANCE AT THE UNION MEETINGS :

The actual participation of workers in union activities can be made clear by the concept of union democracy. "In trade unions, the people are the union members. Since the people's participation is a measure of real democracy, the extent of membership participation in the day-to-day functioning of trade unions constitute a critical measure of real union democracy."²

On this background the participation of the workers was studied. The questions were asked whether the union members were attending the union meetings, whether they were expressing their opinions in the union meetings, whether they were involved in union election and whether they were participating in the strikes.

The question was asked to the union members about their attendance in the union meetings. Out of 33 union members majority of the workers 23 (69.7) reported that they attend all the meetings, whereas the remaining workers 10 (30.3) have reported that they use to attend some of the meetings. There was no union member who use not to attend any meetings. The data thus indicates that the union members were attending the meetings.

8.5 EXPRESSING OPINIONS IN UNION MEETINGS :

The question was asked whether the union members express their opinions in the union meetings. Out of the 33 union members majority 24 (72.7) use to express their opinions in the union meetings, while the remaining 9 (27.2) reported that they do not use to express their opinions in the union meetings. Thus here also we find that the union members were expressing opinions in meetings.

8.6 INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNION ELECTIONS :

The question was asked to the union members whether they were involved directly in the elections of trade union. Majority of the workers 20 (60.6) reported that they have been involved in the union elections, whereas 13 (39.3) members have reported that they have not involved in the union elections. The trend here indicates that the union members were involved in the elections.

8.7 PARTICIPATION IN STRIKE :

The workers were asked whether they have participated during the time of strike. Absolute majority of the workers 31 (93.9) reported that they do participate in the strike, whereas only 2 (6.1) workers reported that they do not participate in the strike. The trend here indicates that the union members have participated in the strike activities.

8.8 WORKER'S VIEWS ON FUNCTION OF UNION :

Even though majority of the workers were not members of the trade union, the question was asked to all the workers to indicate their response on the function of union. This was an open-ended question and the workers responses were varied in wide range. These responses were classified into nine categories and some of the workers have reported combination of function of trade union, and therefore in total there were eighteen categories of responses. Due to eighteen categories, the responses of the workers were scattered.

The highest proportion of workers 15 (16.3) have indicated the function of union to provide security of service + economic gain. Again 11 (12.0) workers indicated union function to provide security of service. 8 (8.7) workers have indicated the union function of economic gain and the same number of workers have indicated the union function to help to increase production + economic gain. 7 (7.6) workers have indicated the union function to organize workers in order to make them feel united and the same number of the workers 7 (7.6) have indicated to organize worker + economic gain as the union function. 28 (30.4) workers reported various

functions of union in the broad range of to bargain on behalf of workers, to help to increase in production, to serve narrow interests, workers unions. Commitment to the betterment and welfare of workers and combinations of these functions. The remaining 8 (8.7) workers were unable to reply to this question.

8.9 ADVANTAGES OF THE UNION :

Morris S. Viteles notes that "it is clearly apparent that economic needs - expressed in the desire for higher wages, job security and fringe benefits - play a highly significant role in leading workers to join unions."³

Further, E.A. Ramaswamy points out that " there are tangible gains to be had by way of wages and working conditions by unionizing. More specifically, wage increases, reasonable work assignments, a larger annual bonus and safeguarding workers from abusive treatment by jobbers and the management have been the most important objectives of the unions."⁴

On this background, the question was asked what were the advantages the workers have gained from the union. The 90 union members and non-members have responded to this question. More than 1/3 of the workers 31 (33.7) reported economic gains as the advantages of the union. More than 1/4 of the workers 25 (27.2) have reported the feeling of unity among the workers was the advantage of union. 14 (15.2) workers reported the combination of factors like sense of security of service + proper treatment by management + feeling of unity among workers + economic gain as the advantages of union. 12 (13.0) workers reported proper treatment by management and 8 (8.7) workers reported sense of security of service as advantages of union. The remaining 2 workers were unable to reply to this question.

Thus the trend indicates advantages of the union in economic gains and unity which are on the similar lines as noted in the above references.

8.10 DISADVANTAGES FROM THE UNION :

The question was asked what are the disadvantages of trade union and here 81 (88.0) workers reported no disadvantages of the union. The disadvantages were reported by only 11 workers. Thus these workers are including the two workers who have reported no advantages from the union in the earlier question and 9 workers were those who have reported advantage to the earlier question and disadvantages to the present question. Out of these 11 workers 4 (36.3) workers reported increase in politics and 4 (36.3) workers reported constant tension as the disadvantages of union. The remaining 3 workers have indicated interference in work as disadvantage of the union.

REFERENCES

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4. Ramaswamy E.A. : "The Worker and His Union" P. 42.