

Communications

BSWU: A Case of 'Independent' Trade Union in India

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About the Case

This study has two fold objectives: (a) to present the history of trade union¹ movement in India², largely narrating the changing relationships among unions, employers and the state, and (b) to elaborate and explain the conditions that were instrumental in the growth of non-political 'independent' unions in the country. Flanders (1970) pointed out that there is no such animal as a non-political union, and in a situation where most unions owe allegiance to a political party, it is even more difficult to speak of non-political unions (Ramaswamy 1983). However, the points that emerge out of the case discussion signify a trend where independent rank-and-file led union (that came into existence owing to a variety of reasons) has proven its collective strength time and again. With the advent of economic and political reforms, the state-dominated pluralism and the state-controlled unionism gradually perished with a new ray of hope rising with the 'independent' unions. These unions'

active engagement in informed and militant bargaining with employers in the process put the traditional party-based unions in serious trouble with their potential recruitment terrain both challenged and curtailed (Bhattacharjee 1999).

In the contemporary world of work, with the evolving bedlam in industrial relations characterized by floor crossing and inter-union rivalry, the effectiveness of a labour union is contingent upon the union leaders who disclaim allegiance to any political groups. That the union, which stayed unaffiliated although, had not kept itself detached from issues of workers' economic concerns or the country's democratic process happens to be the central theme of the present case. The growth of this union was attributable to certain conditions and the case attempts to portray those conditions. With a little variation in details, such conditions could have taken place virtually in any enterprise or in any location.

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1 The terms 'trade union', 'union', 'labour union', 'workers' union', and 'labour organization' have been used interchangeably in this study.

2 See Appendix 1 for a brief overview of labour and national politics in India.

The word ‘independent’ is used here to signify a broader perspective of the union as a collective muscle and its decentralized power in collective actions to promote industrial democracy.

Rise of ‘Independent’ Union

It is essential to conceptualize the expression ‘independent trade union’ to an extent, which encompasses the contemporary meanings assigned to the term within the industrial relations practices of the country. By definition, a local independent union is a labour organization with membership in one plant or company not affiliated with any national union or federation of any union, and free of employer control, directly or indirectly (Troy 1961). Although there have been debates on whether local independent unions are ‘company unions’ (Taft 1942, Troy 1961), yet there appears to be certain common characteristics. In this case, the word ‘independent’ is used to signify a broader perspective of the union as a collective muscle and its decentralized power in collective actions to promote industrial democracy.

‘Independent’ Union – the Indian experience

Since mid 1980, organized labour has not been able to challenge India’s centrist ideology and politics, that is, to mount or support a left class party (Rudolph & Rudolph 1987). The causal factors for the rise of ‘independent’ unions can be summarized as follows:

The multiplicity of unions led to a severe inter-union rivalry, which promoted a parochial and unprincipled view of membership among the union leaders. Since the unions’ bargaining strength is positively related to their size, membership was a crucial element to be inflated. Eventually, the union (caught in inter-union rivalry) realized that only an independent, vigorous labour organization that enjoys the loyalty of the members has any chance of standing up to the challenges from the rival unions and possible government hostility to defend its relationship with management (Ramaswamy 1983). In this ‘loyalty contest’, unions were caught in the fray over commitment to a political ideology or safeguarding the economic interest of the workers. Many unions opted for the latter and ultimately grew as ‘independent’ unions. This led to a line of distinction between two types of unions – “altruistic” and “selfish unions”. Bhattacharjee (1999) suggests that the national politically affiliated federations seem to display the “altruistic” behaviour, whereas the ‘independent’ unions will approximate the “selfishness”.

The employers also have indirectly played a crucial role by promoting unaffiliated local ‘company unions’ in their enterprises. Employers have all the time remained sensitive to the political affiliation of the labour organizations. Their hostility to political unions stems from the possibility that union leaders might exploit their worker following and paralyze production to pursue political goals, such as bringing down a government (Ramaswamy 1983). Caught

in the fierce conflict with the government's protectionist policies, they gradually started promoting plant level unions, and created pliable union leaders who behaved 'responsibly' and played down the union demands to obtain the status of a 'favourite union'. The "unholy alliance" guided by the protectionist legislations (e.g., employer obligation to offer the status of recognized union) has favoured such a move further. Many 'company unions' in the course of time veiled in darkness a sham independence to maintain their credibility among workers. Employers used the tactic of systematically channelling the economic benefits to workers through the union so that workers' loyalty to their 'favourite union' does not get affected.

One of the biggest boosts to 'independent' trade unionism in India arrived from the famed leader of 1982, Dr. Datta Samant.

The real twist occurred when the adventurist union leaders started raising their voice and questioning the integrity of 'company unions'. Their argument was on the company union conniving with employers to repudiate the workers their right. Furthermore, the workers were disappointed with the bargaining weakness of traditional unions (Pendse 1981). This resulted in the rise of 'independent' unions in Western India (in Bombay in particular) from within the rank-and-file, setting their own unit leaders. Finally, one of the biggest boosts to 'independent' trade unionism in India

arrived from the famed leader of 1982, Dr. Datta Samant³, and the Bombay Textile Strike of 1982. Although, his assassination had caused an unexpected cessation of the 'independent' trade union movement, his role and leadership has created a perfect quintessence of a contemporary union leader and offered direction to several other young and energetic labour activists.

Blue Star Workers Union, India

When three small companies under the same management were amalgamated into one big business – Blue Star Limited (BSL) and listed in Bombay Stock Exchange in 1969, the union formation process in the company galloped speed subsequently to this merger. By 1969, workers in the factory of BSL were members of Bombay Labour Union (BLU) – led by Mr. George Fernandez of Socialists – *Hind Mazdoor Panchayat* (HMP or Indian Workers Council). Blue Star workers in Thane (one of the old industrial areas located close to Mumbai) factory were not contented with BLU. They were looking for an alternative, and this was the time, when Mr. Nambiath Vasudevan, who was employed as a stenographer in BSL's corporate office,

3 "We have now realized that workers should have a political party controlled by them rather than be controlled by the parties", asserts Dr. Samant in 1985 in an interview given to *Illustrated Weekly of India*. The workers of the textile mills who wanted control over their labour market and industrial relation outcomes at the level of the individual mill approached Dr. Samant to lead an 'independent' trade union movement in Western India.

got in touch with the leading elements in Thane factory. In the meantime, Mr. Vasudevan had established contact with Mr. Yashwant Chavan of *Sarva Shramik Sangh* (SSS) – a general workers union having members in different industries and politically connected to *Lal Nishaan* (Red Flag) Group – a splinter group of the old communist movement). Leading members in Thane factory who were disenchanted with BLU preferred a non-communist party union with a Red Flag. Since SSS fitted the bill, Mr. Vasudevan introduced Mr. Chavan to workers at BSL, Thane factory and they left BLU to join SSS.

History

Mr. Vasudevan had reached an understanding with Mr. Chavan that in the event BSL workers in offices and service centres succeed in forming a union, staff from Thane factory would be transferred to the new union and the principle of one union in one industry would be followed. Attempts to organize office employees into a union became the single-minded objective of Mr. Vasudevan. Among several factors that stood in the way, one major hurdle was the bitter experience of employees in the service stations where a union was formed with internal leadership and the employer's success in promoting union president and office bearers as company officers, thus killing the organization. Mr. Vasudevan had to move cautiously.

During 1969-70, prices were rising and there was a ceiling on Dearness Allowance paid to office employees.

Since Mr. Vasudevan had the intimate knowledge of wage levels in the factory and offices, he was instrumental in collecting mass signatures from office employees and in approaching the management of BSL and broached their concern with the employer through submission of a Memorandum for changes in wage conditions. While doing so he was lying low. Besides manufacturing products like water coolers and air-conditioners at Thane, BSL was marketing well-known foreign and Indian brands of machines, tools, instruments, controls, etc., and the marketing and service activity brought in major profit share for the company.

No profit no loss Assistance and Benefit Club (ABC), etc, provided an opportunity to bring employees together and was a move towards the group formation.

BSL was growing because of its virtual leadership in the distributorship market. It was keen in escalating the growth and as a result, it started employing a large pool of recruits for its corporate office in Bombay. However, many of these new employees from the city began quitting jobs after a short period owing to their well-to-do family conditions. Eventually those who remained were those who needed the job, and these employees were open to the idea of forming a union, though it was an uphill task. In order to seek greater attention of employees towards a collective existence, Mr. Vasudevan tried out numerous new initiatives with the

office employees, like no profit no loss Assistance and Benefit Club (ABC), etc, which provided an opportunity to bring employees together was a move towards the group formation. Gradually, the employees' realization of a considerable amount of confidence and trust in each other, and in solidarity, paved the way for a major rights movement in BSL. In the intervening time, the group started taking up issues related to employee welfare and picked up nuances of acting on behalf of workers.

The "Gateway"

The state of quasi-dormancy ended with management's abrupt act of enforcing on stenographers to replace the peons in the distribution of mail in BSL. Company's announcement of this change in policy generated anger among the stenographers. Cashing on this anger, the stenographers submitted a common letter of protest to management, stating that such enforcement to replace all peons is a degrading treatment and derogatory to them. Though the management denied the contentions and upheld such moves for greater organizational development, yet they called a meeting of stenographers on May 07, 1971. The company Director addressed this unusual meeting. During the meeting, employees were not focused in their responses and this compelled Mr. Vasudevan to get up and speak on behalf of the stenographers. His sudden manifest of command in the group was responded by the Director's satire – "Yes, union leader, what do you want to say?" Instantly the particular remark

made publicly, egged on Mr. Vasudevan to accept the role and become a real leader of the group. His voice in the meeting remained unheard no more, the scheme announced was withdrawn and was later made voluntary for stenographers. On the evening of May 07, the group under the leadership of Mr. Vasudevan proceeded to Mr. Chavan's office and opted to form a union.

The Blue Star Workers Union (BSWU) was finally organized on May 21, 1971.

With SSS's readiness to develop an office employees' union, the Blue Star Workers Union (BSWU) was finally organized on May 21, 1971. Initially the members were from the offices of BSL. In the following days and months, employees from service centers and repair stations were approached in a tactical way. Many of the service mechanics, who were members of the cricket club and who played cricket on weekly holidays, were contacted by Mr. Vasudevan in the playing field during breaks or in the club meeting rooms. With time, these employees quietly joined BSWU. It would have been an uphill task to wean the employees from allied units and gain recognition from the management.

Cautious & Sentient Move

During 1969-71, Mr. Vasudevan had developed contacts with other unaffiliated unions and had association with some of those unions which were militantly fighting against the employer

for their rights (like, Voltas Employees' Union and Kamani Employees' Union). He knew exactly how harsh the reality was with the militant union leaders from other 'company unions' at Voltas Ltd., etc. who were either promoted or transferred to other units of the company during the course of union's struggle to seek greater independence from the control of management. Moreover, he was alert to the limitations of his own union and did not want to exacerbate already fragile conditions of BSWU, so had no choice but to maintain a low profile in bargaining with the management.

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Management wanted to test its control on the union leader (Vasudevan) under conditions that were eminently fair to workers and sought to test the leader's resilience and adaptability to the employer's controlling measures. Establishing the union and consolidating it was primary concern, hence, the leader had to move tactically at every stage. For about one year, he and other office bearers of BSWU fought with all odds to build confidence among the members and prepared them for the final assault under the garb of wage settlement. After the General Body Meeting (GBM) in September 1971, BSWU prepared its

Charter of Demand for the first 'survival test' – collective bargaining. Although the wage settlement did not bring any major financial gain for workers, yet it could establish pay scales for the first time, removed several anomalies in service conditions and introduced leave facilities.

Union Organizing Efforts

Meanwhile, SSS under the leadership of Mr. Chavan transferred all its members to BSWU on May 01, 1973, and this made the Thane factory workers, service centre and office employees in Bombay to come under a common union for the first time. In September 1973, Mr. Vasudevan visited Delhi, met several employees and in a day's time formed a union in Delhi. However, it was short-lived, and the management in Delhi managed to dismantle the union before Mr. Vasudevan reached Bombay. BSWU witnessed its actual individual expansion when in September 1975 a six-member coordination committee comprising representatives from Bombay, Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai) was formed with a view to form an All India Federation. The representatives from nine different locations met in Bombay in November 1975 for three days and the All India Blue Star Employees Federation (AIBSEF) was formed. BSL management turned hostile to AIBSEF and they resisted Federation's demand for recognition. Since then the management began with a major offensive and launched a series of attacks on employees. Proposal was formulated by AIBSEF to have regional level unions for south, north, west and east zones. In the case of southern region, union

based in Madras submitted demands on behalf of employees spread over three other southern regional units, held talks and reached settlement with the regional management on common demands. At this stage, the corporate management put spokes in the wheel and prevented the possibility of signing a settlement covering the entire southern region employees.

Intra-union Solidarity

Non-signing a settlement for southern region employees created a crisis. Employer was prepared to give wage hike only to employees at Madras unit and insisted that employees working in units from other southern regional units must have their separate unions. This would mean that there would be delay in wage benefits reaching those outside Madras.

If employees at Madras went ahead with signing of the settlement, it would be a blow to solidarity. After reaching agreement, for the sake of solidarity, asking employees from Madras unit to wait indefinitely could harm their morale. Ultimately, solidarity prevailed and members from Madras unit refused to go ahead with the settlement. This crisis necessitated formation of separate unions in other units from southern region like Bangalore, Secunderabad and Cochin. In all the three places, employees elected non-employees as their presidents. In Bangalore, employees elected Mr. K.S. Subrahmanya as President. Mr. Subrahmanya was a victimized employee of Voltas Ltd. and BSL management insisted that he should be removed from the union, but the Bangalore union and AIBSEF

outrightly rejected management's demand.

There could not have been a more emphatic assertion of the utter independence and steadfast loyalty among the workers to the leadership of Mr. Vasudevan. AIBSEF opposing the demand of the management called a general agitation all over the country in support of recognition of Bangalore Union with Mr. Subrahmanya as president. In the course of the agitation, the company dismissed two employees from Bangalore and Secunderabad units. AIBSEF demanded for reinstatement of the dismissed employees and workers resorted to all legitimate methods including go-slow tactics, mass deputations etc. Further, strategies like intermittent strikes were cautiously planned and called on recurrently. These partial strikes affecting a part of the department or certain sections of workers vital to production were organized mostly without prior intimation to employer and hence it invited no immediate reprisal. Finally, after four years of hard battle, in 1979, Mr. Subrahmanya was recognized as the president of the union in Bangalore unit by the management, and two dismissed employees were reinstated back.

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During 1975-79, the country witnessed one of the worst turmoil in labour movement with the declaration of state of Emergency by Indira Gandhi led Congress government. The administration tried out all means and methods to destabilize union activities and the employer took benefit of the State's mandate by launching an organized offence against unions. In fact, they went so far as to discontinue all ex-gratia bonuses paid under wage settlement and several cases were registered with the police against union. Soon after the emergency was lifted up, serious protest against BSL management was launched by AIBSEF. In 1982, the famous Bombay Textile Strike took place and throughout the one-year period of the strike, workers in different parts of the country contributed money every month in support of the striking workers. BSL management openly opposed the union move and instigated gullible employees to defy the union. Influenced by the management a fraction of members voiced their refusal to go with the union's decision concerning solidarity with textile protested. The union leadership stood firm on its commitment to the striking workers and all the fifteen odd members who opposed working class solidarity were expelled in a GBM of union. The intolerant management was waiting to destroy the unity of the workers. In May 1984, there was a communal riot in Thane and using this disturbance, management declared a lock out in Thane factory from June 01, 1984.

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Union's Response

The lockout at Thane Factory lasted for a total of nine months. The management oscillated between the pressures from the militant union and judicial proceedings in Supreme Court against the lockout. In the end, with Supreme Court's decision, management lifted the lockout in three phases (days), allowing in the workers in three different groups. The groups permitted in first two days comprised relatively less militant workers and the last group was of the union activists. Management's decision to reopen the factory in three phases was only to bring unilateral changes in the condition of services of workers after lockout in clear defiance of the settlement terms (like stopping bus at factory gate, low quality of foodstuff offered to workers, change in production norms, etc.). Management's ploy to bring in the change with the first two groups of non-militant workers offered courage to implement the same on the third consecutive day. However, the class-conscious union activists on the third day attacked the decision as anti-labour, and refused to step out of the bus outside the gate. They shouted: "Open the gate or take us back to the railway station". The choice before the employer was either to relent or face another bout of

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production loss. This display of striking back immediately after the lock out amounted to a kick in the teeth to the management who had anticipated a weak lot of exhausted workers on their knees returning to work after nine months of lock out.

Employer's calculation that a lock out would act as a tool to starve workers into submission did not succeed in this case. The nine-month long lock out leading to disrupted production and supply, hugely damaging market position and customer dissatisfaction had caused immense weakness to the management. During the entire period, locked out workers were given monetary help, though insufficient, by Federation through special collections from working employees throughout the country. Faced with the resistance from union and the crippling burden of loss made during lock out, they restored the old conditions and paid the necessary price to secure cooperation of the union and workers.

Legal Battle

By the end of 1980s, the management stirred up fierce enmity against the unions and embarked on a spree of victimizations and union bashing. A

systematic offensive was launched against the union activists and settlement terms were flouted. Wage agreements were signed with individuals and thumb impressions were obtained from graduate employees disowning Union and Federation. Culminating this part of the offensive, company stopped paying salary to Mr. Vasudevan with effect from October 1989 on the specious plea that he was carrying on trade union activity during working hours. It was Mr. Vasudevan's contention that the management had allowed him to do full time union work on behalf of employees as against a battery of managers did the same for management.

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The union approached the industrial court against the management's decision accusing the company of unfair labour practice. The trial court termed company's action as unfair labour practice and company's writ petition in the High Court was not admitted. Company went in appeal before a division bench, which stayed the industrial court order. Finally, a division bench of the Bombay High Court on March 01, 1996 set aside the industrial court order and ruled that management need not pay a worker for carrying out trade union work during working hours, so the withdrawal of concession will not amount to unfair labour practice.

However, this legal battle resulted in the gain of members' confidence towards the leadership, particularly, when employer is powerful.

Inter-union Relationship & Alliances

The pioneering history of the BSWU joining other labour movements began since 1970 when Mr. Vasudevan got associated with the Middle Class Employees Coordination Committee consisting of several unions espousing general issues affecting the working class and rural poor. In 1989, he became a convener of Trade Union Solidarity Committee (TUSC) which is a constituent of Joint Action Committee of Unions that was responsible for several solidarity actions, legal assistance to unions, and works closely with city based national trade union centers like AITUC, CITU, HMS, HMKP, Federations in Banks, Insurance, Railways, Road Transport, Teachers, and factory. In spite of owing faith in Marxist ideology, Mr. Vasudevan accommodated and worked with people with diverse viewpoints and beliefs. This is evident from the incidence when unions in Maharashtra – casting aside ideological differences decided to oppose IMF/World Bank/WTO dictated anti-labour policies and observed a statewide '*bandh*' on April 25, 2001 joining hands with *Shiv-Sena* led unions (Extreme Right Wing), BMS and INTUC.

The Leadership & Vision

Ramaswamy (1988) wisely pointed out: "The driving forces of the Bombay

The driving forces of the Bombay labour movement are union leaders who disclaim allegiance to political parties and their trade union federations.

labour movement are union leaders who disclaim allegiance to political parties and their trade union federations. What we find here is the most evolved Indian version of business trade unionism", and "the city has witnessed the steady decline, if not eclipse into oblivion, of ideological trade unionism". The 65-year-old leader of BSWU believes that trade unions should be independent of political parties, employers and government and unions must be rooted in working class politics, not party politics. He believes that unions, by their very nature struggle for reforms, and the very reforms over a period, in the absence of political consciousness, eat into the vitals of the struggles thus destroying the capacity of workers and unions in playing a role to create a society free of exploitation and oppression.

Conclusion

In history, some of the most important unions in India were built around a core of members resolutely loyal to a political ideology. These members considered the union as important for fostering that ideology or policies of the political parties in rule. However, with time the alliances between trade unions broke the links with their respective political parties or

groups. The centralized and traditional union structures fell short of worker expectation, thereby giving way to 'independent' and decentralized union structures (Davalá 1992, Muralidhar 1994). The author attempted to describe the case of an 'independent' union in India – which has hitherto preserved the position of vigorous independent nature⁴ after four decades of struggle. The case is repository of a number of critical factors which led to the emergence of 'independent' labour movement. In general the factors that are said to influence the emergence of independent labour unions are – composition of jobs, workers and firms, macro-economic variables, state policies, employer actions and union activities. Furthermore, localized bargaining no longer remains a key to success of independent labour union.

The analysis of effective causes of emergence of the union refutes some of the previous explanations on local independent labour union⁵ and suggests that local independence cannot be

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The private company union in course of its emergence was found to be more alert and militant in its movement.

equated with employer domination and it is not the effective cause of their emergence. It was found that external and internal conditions instrumental in growth of the union and strengthening its camaraderie have evolved out of crisis brought in due to economic hostility towards labour like wage bargaining, right to represent, employment insecurity, economic de-regulation. Analysis also shows that membership is a mixed bag with employees having individual allegiance to different political ideologies yet joined hand to create a competitive bargaining strength. Leadership (style) plays a key role in shaping the course of action and strategies opted by the independent union to counter employer's hostility. Moreover, initial phase of expansion of independent union is largely driven by a small clique of cautious workers and not by the entire institution. The private company union in course of its emergence was found to be more alert and militant in its movement. It emerged out of company enterprise unions of capital-intensive private enterprise in India and has chosen more militant and aggressive methods with getting subtly exposed through use of tactics like intermittent strike. The union operated at the local level to expand its membership strength without much dispute in leadership position. In India the economic issue of wage bargaining and employee right to form union and

4 BSWU is neither affiliated to any national political parties, nor remained any longer a 'company union'.

5 Nothing was found in the case which is similar to what Troy (1960) suggested that local independent labour union oppose national affiliation principally because they believe that their members' incomes (wage rates) can be maximized by localized bargaining.

collective bargaining are frequently challenged by the employer within the legislative framework operating inside the political democracy. In the private sector, trade unions have adapted their structures in response to the decentralization of industrial relations, but these adjustments might be painful and difficult in the public sector. There is no other way but to increase membership, which means organizing vulnerable workers in the informal sector. This is the most obvious way for unions to win broader community support. Finally, trade unions can only gain by cooperating and working together. Perhaps the new millennium will witness a series of mergers leading to a united and independent labour movement.

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Appendix 1: Labour & National Politics: Historical Review of Trade Unionism in India

Labour movements have historically remained an important part of the national political process in India. The involvement of the Indian trade union movement in politics is evidenced by the fact that the multiplicity of trade unions in the country is not due to different perspectives on labour issues but because of the different political ideologies of the parties to whom the major trade unions owe their allegiance (Saxena 1993). Unlike American labour unions, which operate largely in the economic field and do not acknowledge allegiance to any political party, trade unions in India were primarily organized on political lines with divided allegiance to political ideologies and parties. National independence and the victory of Congress party have contributed considerably to the growth of unions. The first trade union congress – All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), formed in 1920's was favoured by the cooperation of the Indian National Congress (INC). However, regardless of the leadership from Indian National Congress (INC), it cannot be said that the

All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was under the complete control of any one political group because Congress at that time was a mixture of various political views. It was not long before the cooperation with the Congress ceased and the Communists in India who were inspired by the victory in Soviet Union and ongoing revolutionary activities in Bengal increased their effort to capture control of AITUC, which ultimately resulted in several splits and recombinations between 1929 and 1945. Finally, by the end of the World War-II India boasted two major labour federations – the AITUC and the Indian Federation of Labour (IFL – which was viewed with disfavour by Congress because of its close cooperation with government in active prosecution of war) (Park 1949).

Near the beginning of 1947, the IFL started declining in power and Congress Party realized that the existing conditions in labour organizations were deplorable for a party, which was soon

to be called upon to lead an independent Government. Consequently, INTUC was formed in May 1947. Although it was founded upon independent lines, but it is to believe that the INTUC is the child of the Congress. The critics of INTUC claimed that the “unholy alliance” between the Congress Party in power and a trade union federation, bodes ill for the political and economic future of India (Park 1949). However, it was the belief in the economic unionism, which forged such close links between government, INTUC, and employers all over the country during three decades of Congress rule. Weiner’s (1962) observation of the INTUC leadership was succinct: “Their loyalties are to the Congress Party, to the nation and last of all to the workers who belong to their unions.” Confronted with a choice between the patronage of the ruling party and genuine worker support, the INTUC usually opted for the former (Chatterjee 1980). This initial phase corresponds to an era of state driven industrialization, when public-sector unionism rose phenomenally and unions and bargaining structures were highly centralized with state intervention – “state-dominated pluralism” (Bhattacharjee 1999).

Towards the beginning of 1960’s, Congress Government-INTUC duo

(Kennedy 1966) had generated adequate disillusionment with the INTUC’s ineffectiveness at enterprise level. This further led to a proliferation of unions affiliated to more radical political organizations during this period. According to Bhattacharjee (1999), two demographic factors may be associated with this change in worker preferences. First, a growing proportion of workers were young people who had not participated in the pre-independence labour struggles. Second and probably more important, the leaders of the radical unions at this time were mostly not party politicians but committed lawyers and student activists well versed in the bureaucratic rites of the Indian industrial relations system (Chatterjee 1980). The INTUC stood in sharp contrast to the two communist union federations – AITUC and CITU (Marxist Centre of Indian Trade Unions) as well as the unions loyal to the socialist parties. Others, which were affiliated or closely linked to regional political parties or those, which were set apart as splinters following on any factional squabbles, were divided mainly on the political lines. The objective crisis of legitimacy of the “state dominated pluralism” model resulted in the split up of organized labour movement.