

M Deepak

A short biographical note on M Deepak, President Bangalore District AITUC, interviewed in Bangalore on September 28, 2004

M Deepak was born in a village called Kothanoor in Bangalore on October 28, 1935. His father was a farmer. They used to live in the outskirts of the Bangalore city and Deepak studied upto class eight here and later went for high school to Bangalore after which he did a training for vocational diploma for eight months at Vizag port in plant training which was part of the course in 1957.

Deepak joined Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in April, 1958 as a mechanic trainee. After a year he was absorbed in the plant. Deepak was retired in 1993 and joined the district committee of Bangalore as vice president and after a year became president. He looks after Engineering and General Workers' Union in which there are 4000 workers already registered.

The day Deepak was made permanent in BEL, one woman employee was suspended on the pretext of misconduct. The Workers Union in BEL refused to take it and all the three thousand workers went on strike. It was the first such experience for Deepak. The management led by managing director AK Ghosh surrendered and the woman worker was taken back as charges were withdrawn.

The next step was taken by the radio wire making section dominated by women workers who were not regularised and union was agitating for their cause in 1962. Instead of accepting their demands, the women were asked to go home on the pretext that there was no work.

The women as well as the union launched an agitation against the step and again the management led by a new managing director BB Baliga had to surrender. The union was led then by Com M S Krishnan.

In 1966, there was another strike for eighteen days and factory was totally closed against suspension of union vice president MSS Rao when he confronted the management taking up workers demands. It was a time when workers were emotionally charged and refused to leave the factory premises even after the shift was over. At least thousand workers remained inside the factory for five days without food. The women workers came to their help who lived in the hostels around. They used to bring food packets and throw it over the gate. These girls were from all over the country including Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Andhra.

On sixth day, police came and chased out the workers. At this stage, some workers started vacillating. But 505 workers were firm on their stand.

Com S A Dange was then member of Parliament and took up the cause of the agitating workers. The then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi responded to his appeal and workers' demands were accepted.

The management had also sent a report that the union led by the AITUC was notorious for creating interruptions in the production work as they had launched 350 strikes in a period of ten years from 1956 to '65. However, even after all such allegations, the management failed to crush the union.

Deepak got actively involved from 1966. For a hike of Rs 25 in the wages, the workers had to launch a strike for 77 days without wages and then again for a month. However, finally they got what they had demanded.

After MS Krishnan, the union was led Babu Mathew for nine years. They brought out a history of trade union movement in BEL.

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I joined Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in April, 1958 as a mechanic trainee. After a year I was absorbed in the plant. I was retired in 1993 and joined the district committee of Bangalore as vice president and after a year became president. I look after Engineering and General Workers' Union in which there are 4000 workers already registered.

The day I was made permanent in BEL, one woman employee was suspended on the pretext of misconduct. The Workers Union in BEL refused to take it and all the three thousand workers went on strike. It was the first such experience for me. The management led by managing director AK Ghosh surrendered and the woman worker was taken back as charges were withdrawn.

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