

**ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION**  
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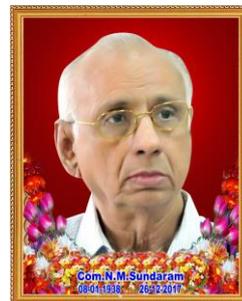
28<sup>th</sup> December, 2017

To  
All the Employees,

Dear Comrade,

**“We account for this man as we do the highest  
Mountain, the greatest river, the most perfect gem”**

- R.G. Ingersoll



He strode the insurance industry like a colossus. He was tall literally as well as metaphorically. He was one who influenced and inspired thousands of cadres into trade union activity. He was a person with vision. His unswerving commitment to the cause of public sector insurance industry was only to be matched by his unalloyed love for insurance employees and the working people at large. He was an economist, a historian, a philosopher, a voracious reader, a prolific writer, an astute observer of society, a great admirer of art, culture and music, a sports enthusiast, a trade unionist with an abiding commitment to the philosophy of the working class – all rolled into one. He was none other than N.M. Sundaram - 'NMS' to thousands of insurance and financial sector employees across the country.

26th December 2017 was a day of shock and grief for insurance employees. Com. Sundaram, the legendary leader adored and admired by thousands of insurance employees throughout the length and breadth of the country, passed away around 8.20 am on this day due to massive cardiac arrest. Insurance employees and cadres of AIIEA were left stupefied and devastated. A pall of gloom descended on the offices of LIC and General Insurance across the country. People were not prepared to believe that their beloved leader Com. N.M. Sundaram was no more.

Born on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1938, he was a young Sundaram of 19 years when he joined LIC in the year 1957 (the first batch of LIC recruits in Assistant cadre). Little did the industry know then that it would be he who would set in motion a long, sustained campaign and struggle to protect LIC in the public sector. **William Jennings Bryan was absolutely right when he said: “Destiny is no matter of Chance. It is a matter of Choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.”** At a young age of 25 he became the General Secretary of SZIEF, the largest Zonal Unit of AIIEA. He continued to lead the zone till 1988 when he became the General Secretary of AIIEA. He continued as the General Secretary of AIIEA from 1988 to 2003 and functioned as the President from 2003 to 2007. Though he retired from LIC in 1998 he was active as the leader of AIIEA. Even when he was relieved as the President of AIIEA in 2007 he continued to be the LEADER of AIIEA.

No sooner Com. Sundaram took over the leadership than started the liberalisation policies of the government. Privatisation of Public sector became the cornerstone of the new

economic policies. It was during this period that privatization of public sector insurance acquired centerstage of the policy paradigm. But he was a visionary who could see that the defeat of these policies could be only with the support of the people of this country. Thus started AIIEA's no holds barred campaign among the public and the volumes of literature that AIIEA brought out had the unmistakable imprint of Com. Sundaram's astute observation and incisive analysis.

It would be a truism to say that Com. NMS grew with the organization and the organization grew with him. The two-pronged campaign strategy – 'campaign from the seat' and 'campaign on the street'- was very successful. He convinced the rank and file of the organisation that upgradation of technology would stand us in good stead when the financial sharks start coming in the insurance sector. The fact that LIC today has the technological advantage of servicing over 40 crore policies goes to the credit of the sharp acumen of leaders like Com. Sundaram and the organization that he built up. It is this farsightedness that has kept the entry of the private companies at bay through campaign - this was achieved for more than 15 years. Then when the private companies came in, they saw a very strong LIC to combat. Now that campaign of 15 million signatures during 1999 stood us in good stead even today when people continue to bestow their faith in public sector insurance. When the trade unions remember AIIEA they recall this gigantic effort. It was NMS who gave this call in the 1998 AIIEA conference at Hyderabad.

Pension was a benefit which the insurance employees had been longing for since long. Com. Sundaram could see the commonality of this demand for the employees of insurance and banking and was instrumental in forging the Joint Action Committee bringing together the insurance and banking employees on one platform on the issue of Pension. Hyderabad comrades remember the numerous visits he made to Hyderabad to organise the meetings of the JAC. Finally, Pension was clinched in 1995 and comrades remember NMS for his stellar contribution in realizing this.

During wage negotiations he was always on one simple argument. 'Basic Pay is the mother benefit and negotiate to have a higher basic pay'. He also believed that the wages of insurance employees should be on the basis of the performance of insurance industry and should not be fixed on extraneous reasons.

Like **Pablo Neruda said "He studied to be a hurricane wind, He fought himself until his blood was extinguished. Only then was he worthy of his people"**. He was quintessentially a man of organisation. He would spend any time needed to see that organisational issues were resolved. His closeness with the cadres was also an advantage which encouraged many cadres to take up leadership. The continuity of leadership across all the levels was also due to this aspect that he was looking much ahead in building the organisation. He played a pivotal role in bringing women comrades to forefront in the union activities and encouraged them into taking leadership of the organisation. When it came to organization, Com. Sundaram would never confine himself to the four corners of the insurance industry. With his unflinching commitment to the ideology of the working class, he had a firm conviction that insurance employees could never aspire to a life free from exploitation unless they made common cause with other sections of the exploited people. It was this

understanding that propelled him to envision the “**People for India**” forums as a broader platform to fight injustice and exploitation of all kinds.

He was a man who respected and enjoyed music. He was a person who studied literature with as much sincerity and interest as he did history. He was a comrade who studied economics from the people's angle. It would be no exaggeration to say that his horizon of understanding and depth of knowledge was encyclopedic. He would not keep them to himself but would teach others too. Hence, he was also called the ‘Professor of University of AIIEA’.

He was a person who wanted the working class to remain united. He was every inch of his persona a secular person who would practice and teach the term in its truest sense. He was a democrat who would give the chance for others to speak and express. He was a communist who wanted a society without exploitation to be built and wanted the insurance employees also to be part of this effort. Today one cannot believe that Com. Sundaram is no more with us. But what if he is not there??

“Rahe na Rahe Hum, Meheka Kareng  
Ban ke Kali, ban ke Saba, Bagh E Wafa mein ...  
Mausam Koi Ho Is chaman mein, Rang banke rahenge hum khiraama...”  
**(Whether or not I am here, this fragrance will remain  
Amongst the flower buds, in the garden of faithfulness  
In all the seasons, I shall colour the garden of your life)**

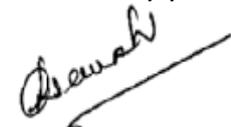
Whether Com. Sundaram remains with us or not, his memory will continue to inspire us and guide us towards realizing the cherished goals which he held so dear to his heart.

**AIIEA SALUTES AND DIPS THE BANNER IN MEMORY OF THE GREATEST GENERAL OF INSURANCE EMPLOYEES’ MOVEMENT.**

AIIEA conveys its deepest condolences to the family of Com. Sundaram and also to all the comrades of AIIEA.

**Com. NM Sundaram Amar Rahe....**

Comradely yours



General Secretary.