

ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION
LIC BUILDING SECRETARIAT ROAD HYDERABAD 500 063
(E-mail: aiieahyd@gmail.com)

Cir. No. 24/2020

23 June ,2020

To,

All the Zonal/Divisional/State/Regional Units

Dear Comrades,

Re: 70th Foundation Day of AIIEA

The 70th Foundation Day of AIIEA falls on 1 July 2020. This will naturally be a historic occasion for all of us. We are sure that our units across the country will celebrate this day by observing a number of programmes and organizational activities, without of course violating the norms of physical distancing.

Com. Amanulla Khan has authored an article titled "A Few Thoughts on the 70th Foundation Day of AIIEA" which is being published in the July issue of Insurance Worker. We reproduce the article here for the benefit of our members and units. Our units should make optimum use of the article so that it reaches the maximum number of comrades.

With Greetings,

Comradely Yours

Shreekanth Mishra

General Secretary

A Few Thoughts On 70TH Foundation Day Of AIIEA

Amanulla Khan

Yet another eventful year is added to the glorious history of AIIEA. As the AIIEA steps into the 70th year of its magnificent journey, we look back with great satisfaction over the successes achieved against difficult and at times impossible situations. The successes achieved are due to unity of the employees and the unity built on the political beliefs the organisation holds so dear. During this long and arduous journey of 69 years, AIIEA never compromised on the interests of the employees and the political beliefs of the organisation however big the odds were. The founding fathers of the organisation were master masons who laid the first stones of not just a great trade union but also a great legacy of philosophical, economic and humanist thoughts. Remaining loyal to these ideals, the AIIEA today has become a great trade union commanding respect from both the Indian and the international working class. The AIIEA is aware that as it enters the 70th year, enormous challenges await its path. But it is supremely confident of overcoming these challenges with unity within its ranks and through building up massive networks of working-class solidarity.

The 25th General Conference of AIIEA held at Visakhapatnam from 27th to 30th January this year not just laid the path organisation needs to traverse but also signalled a generational change in the leadership of the organisation. The smooth transition in the leadership may surprise other trade unions but not the AIIEA as it is built on the support of the cadre and works through a collective leadership. The

25th General Conference entrusted leadership to the fourth generation of cadres. This youthful leadership has abundance of talent and a mature political understanding that is necessary to steer the organisation on the correct path. Therefore, there is absolutely no doubt that this young leadership will live upto the tasks and noble traditions of the organisation.

Every generation had to confront the challenges of their times and achieve the goals set by the organisation. The founders of the AIIEA had the experience of both the anti-colonial struggle and the post independence exploitation of the workers by the Indian ruling classes. Therefore, they were clear in their understanding that freedom from colonial rule will not automatically result in freedom from hunger, destitution and exploitation. Therefore, the task of a trade union is not just to secure decent working conditions but also to develop into a broader movement for constructing a society that is fair, equal and just for its entire people. Succeeding in building a great trade union, this leadership passed on the baton in the 1988 Conference at Jaipur to the generation that joined the industry as employees of LIC and groomed in gigantic struggles post nationalisation including the heroic struggle against automation. The 2003 Raipur Conference witnessed yet another change with the leadership passed on to the third generation which was baptised in struggles against split of AIIEA, lockout in LIC and the Internal Emergency declared in 1975. No challenge was ever easy but all challenges were successfully met because of the unity in ranks and the correct political understanding. The generation which has now been called to shoulder the responsibility this year have the experience of mass mobilisation of public opinion and halting the privatisation policy of the government for over two decades. Therefore, there is no doubt that the current leadership which is immensely talented will continue to take the organisation to greater heights.

Economic growth must enhance life standards

The challenges the organisation has to confront in its 70th year are economic and political as well as cultural. The primary task of any economic activity is to enhance the life standards of the entire society. But the way economy is run today is to place profits over people and this has made Indian society one of the most unequal societies in the world with vast sections of our people totally left untouched by the economic development. This neoliberal economic philosophy is totally retrograde and hostile to the concept of distributive justice. It demands the State to act as a facilitator to the market for profit maximisation and open up the entire economy for the greed of capitalism. This is the philosophy that demands privatisation of all public assets. The decision to list LIC in the capital markets has to be seen and understood in this context. There is no justification to list LIC and finally privatise it as there were no justification for having such heavily privatised education and health care systems. We are paying heavy price today as Covid 19 pandemic has struck mercilessly and India struggles to cope up with the disaster with a shattered and debilitated public health system. Therefore, the struggle against privatisation of LIC and public sector general insurance companies cannot be seen in isolation from what is happening to the other sectors of the economy that were earlier benefitted by the presence of public sector. In the circumstances, it becomes clear that while we defend our institutions through struggles, we also need to expose the inequalities in the society and the unfair treatment given to the marginalised. Our campaign against listing of LIC should be converted into a campaign for alternative sustainable economic development model that enhances the life experiences of all citizens respecting the nature at the same time. This requires broadening of struggle by involving all those who have become victims of

this path of development and challenge the neoliberal regime for its disastrous economic policies.

Divisive politics weakens class unity

It is difficult to separate economics from politics or vice-versa. Both are closely connected. Whoever controls the economy will also control the politics. Unfortunately, today the world is in the grip of authoritarian and autocratic regimes. This is the result of the deep economic crisis globally as also the inability of the working class and progressive sections to present a credible alternative. In the past few years, India has also seen a significant rightward shift in its politics. This rightwing politics is built on prejudices and imaginary victimisation and is sustained on the basis of hate. The polarisation of society on the basis of politics of hate carries with it the potential to disrupt the unity of the working class. The working class which is up against the might of the State which today is under the control of the rightwing cannot win its battle unless it challenges the project that politically mobilises communalism and casteism to strengthen its hold over the State. Today democracy is subverted, all institutions are compromised and there is scant respect for the fundamental rights of the people. If these rights are denied today to a section of the population, there is every danger that everybody loses these rights in due course. These rights are essential for the struggle of the working class for a decent and dignified existence.

But fighting these divisive politics is not easy as substantial sections of the working class have become victims of the divisive propaganda. It would require a painstaking effort to educate and convince the workers that it is necessary to fight the politics of hate in order to protect the class unity and build struggles against class exploitation. The organisation needs to take urgent steps in this direction.

We have full faith in the youth

The next one decade will see a large number of employees on roll today going out of the books due to retirements. The resultant vacancies are to be filled by a generation which is born in the post liberalisation period. This generation has to give the future leadership to the organisation. In the past year 8000 Assistants have been recruited in LIC and there is a possibility of many more recruited in the coming years. Considerable numbers of young employees have joined our ranks in the General Insurance. This generation has been brought up on the values that define neoliberal project. This project is based on individualism, uncaring towards society and cultural degradation. The neoliberal project also considers organised trade union movement as an obstacle for economic development and unhealthy for society. However, we are confident that the actual life experiences will disabuse the minds of this generation and they will become great soldiers in the army of the working class. They will realise that but for the working-class movement the life of the worker would have been much worse and democratic rights would have vanished. The youth is our hope and we are confident they will live upto our expectations. Today if we look around the country, it was the students who led the battles for democracy and protection of fundamental rights. The struggles to protect the religious, linguistic and cultural plurality and the constitution were waged in the campuses. Therefore, we must have immense faith in the young generation and take proper steps to inculcate in them the glorious traditions and noble values of the working-class movement.

Tasks relating to our Institutions

Apart from the challenges of privatisation of public sector general insurance companies and listing of LIC, there are many other issues relating to the institutions that the organisation has to take note. The consolidation of the private sector through mergers and acquisitions would challenge the market dominance of our institutions. Retaining the market domination would require both innovative ideas from the managements and spreading our political beliefs and understanding of the public sector to the people of our country. With the rapid growth of technology, there is a potential to replace labour by adopting higher technology. This danger is real for the service industry. The experiences under Covid 19 have demonstrated that the work pattern itself can undergo a change. This demands vigilance and to draw out a correct balance between the job security and the technological need of the institutions. There is also a need to launch a struggle on the demand for respecting industrial democracy by recognising the representative character of the unions.

Look to the future with confidence

We can claim legitimate pride that we have built a marvellous organisation. We have succeeded in sensitising the membership to relate to the sufferings of the marginalised. The magnificent work done by the units of AIIEA in helping the migrant workers in the last two months can make any trade union proud. This is not the first occasion when AIIEA was called to perform its social responsibilities as the past is full of such rich actions of solidarity. There is no denying the fact that a strong organisation with political maturity is the only weapon to defend our gains and fight for our rights. Today the government is bent upon delegitimizing the trade unions and deunionisation of workers. The actions it is taking will make functioning of genuine trade unions extremely difficult. But then, there is no choice other than confronting these challenges and winning these battles through class unity. The AIIEA believes that a genuine trade union cannot rest on its achievements; it must continuously march towards the final destination it has set for itself. That destination is the construction of a society that is equal, just and fair. Yes, it may take years or decades to reach that destination but there is absolutely no doubt that ultimately the working class would succeed in constructing such a society. I would like to conclude with a beautiful couplet from a famous poet.

मंजिल मुझे मिले न मिले इसका गम नहीं
मंजिल की जुस्तजू में मेरा कारवां तो है

Destination I reach or not matters does not much
Towards that destination my caravan continues to march
