

G Krishnamurthy

A short transcriptive note on G Krishnamurthy, President Vijayawada Bank Employees Association, interviewed in Vijayawada on September 24, 2004

I was born on 3 November, 1938 in a village in Vijayawada district. My father migrated to Chennai in search of a job. I studied upto high school in Chennai and then joined General Radio and Appliances (GRA) in 1955 and was sent to Rajasthan. My second posting was in Chandrapur in Maharashtra.

I joined State Bank of India (SBI) in 1958 in Chennai. In 1959, I was retrenched from SBI alongwith Godown keepers and watchmen for agitating for their demands. Later I was reinstated and posted in Vijayawada in 1960.

In Vijayawada, I came under the influence of PV Raju, a leader employed in Imperial Bank. I came to know Sanat Bhattacharya, Alok Kar and Sushil Ghosh also employed in Imperial bank. They formed state unit of SBI that stretched over to Madras. Later separate circle was formed in 1965. SBI management was anti-Communist. It was difficult to work as there were attempts of disruption. Finally the union was split in 1970. In 1970 and 1972, the union launched several agitations for negotiated settlement of issues and against disruption in the union. Finally in 1972, repressive measures were taken and active union members were victimised.

On bank employees struggle, Com S A Dange wrote a booklet criticising the government stand. He referred to the historic strikes launched by workers of textile and other industries. He advocated that the struggle was negotiations on the table for power game and fight for rights on the street. Alongwith my comrades, I followed the line seriously as by then SBI was called MCarthy's centre. Later the SBI union got affiliated to the AIBEA officially.

I have been active in other unions too and was part of their negotiations, like engineering workers, Post and Telegraph employees.

However I feel dejected today so far as union activities are concerned. For me strikes are never total as at least twenty percent always remains inside which may matter in the long run. The element of militancy has gone. Since Voluntary Retirement Scheme has also been popularised, workers feel no involvement with their job.

In the bank, workers get used to so many facilities that it is impossible to incite them for agitation. There are hardly any issue left. All the employees are indebted to the bank for things like house, car etc. They have to pay instalment and agitation may disrupt the arrangement.

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However Krishnamurthy is dejected today so far as union activities are concerned. According to him, strikes are never total as at least twenty percent always remains inside which may matter in the long run. The element of militancy has gone he says. Since Voluntary Retirement Scheme has also been popularised, workers feel no involvement with their job.

In the bank, workers get used to so many facilities that it is impossible to incite them for agitation. There are hardly any issue left. All the employees are indebted to the bank for things like house, car etc. They have to pay instalment and agitation may disrupt the arrangement, says Krishnamurthy.