



CHAPTER XVII

Wings of BEFI and a Few More**Women Sub-Committee -**

West Bengal State Unit took the first initiative in organizing women employees to have a distinct platform to discuss the peculiar issues especially faced by the women employees, find avenues to combat and ameliorate the problems to the extent feasible and also with a view to make this particular section more involved in the bank employees' as well as mainstream movement in the country. In order to give an wider coverage the first convention was held at Allahabad Bank premises in Kolkata in 1999. A large number of the women comrades attended the first Convention in the State. The news had its positive impact on their counterparts in different districts within the State and also in States beyond. On September 9-10, 2002 women members, numbering 47 from different States participated, fervent with enthusiasm in Kolkata for holding their second conference. From lively deliberations a clear message emerged that the women working in the banks were no exceptions in the face of onslaughts of the LPG policy and therefore, they have no alternative but to come forward to share the responsibility of resisting the menace. It was resolved to mobilize more and more women comrades in the activities of the BEFI, though a hard task because of family obligations and social constraints. Some of the issues of this segment of employees like basic amenities, creche facilities, hostels, exemption from transfer out of station/far off places and bankwise special cells to deal with the problem of sexual harassment were also highlighted. An ad-hoc Women Sub Committee was formed for the purpose of interaction. It was decided that the General Secretary would convene meetings of the sub Committee as and when deemed necessary. This was

just a humble beginning for the All India Body. The second step was to reserve a half day session in the conferences of BEFI exclusively for articulation of the experiences, problems and issues with the bank women by themselves.

The initiative so taken has brought good result. The functioning of **All India Women Sub-Committee** stands by now improved. In quite a good number of States, Women Sub Committees have been formed and State level Women Conventions are also being held more or less at regular intervals. Apart from holding Conventions, cultural and social activities are also organized by the sub committees in different parts of the country. It is also heartening that in some banks, bank level All India women conventions also have been organized. At the apex level BEFI All India Women Convention was successfully organized on February 14-15, 2009 in Bhubaneswar with encouraging participation from all over the country in spite of dislocation of railway traffic due a major accident that occurred just a day before the convention. Centering round the Conferences of BEFI State units or major agitational calls, independent initiatives of women sub-committee at state level including wall writing, poster, street corner meetings etc. had been organized. Expansion of such activities in more States and in more and more areas within States has to be continued. Members of the Women Sub-committee are the permanent invitees of General Council and the convener of the Sub-Committee is an invitee member to the Central Committee of BEFI.

The Sub-committee held its meeting on July 3, 2012 evening in Mumbai and took stock of the activities of women in different States/banks and resolved to take further initiatives to widen their work among women in all banks at all levels.

2nd All India Bank Women's Convention was held in March 8th - 9th 2014 at Bangaluru. The success rate of the Convention

was highly encouraging in view of large number of members', attendance, enthusiasm and active participation.

BEFI-News

It was a long felt necessity for the organization to bring out a journal of its own in order that important matters on economy, social and political issues, apart from developments in the industry we are in, could be transmitted to the members and develop their understanding. But for various reasons it could not be so right after foundation of BEFI in 1982. In the report of the 3rd Conference it was rightly acknowledged - "It is a matter of regret that we have not been able to publish BEFI News regularly. This is a serious lapse which has to be overcome. Actually, till 1990 only one issue could be circulated amongst members. Thereafter also till 2007 two issues of BEFI News could see the light of the days. Thereafter, special emphasize and serious efforts were made in order to make it regular.

From the Office bearers meeting held at Kolkata on March 24, 2011 reconstituted the Sub-committee of the Organ, BEFI News with Jayanta Ray (Convener), Pranab Choudhury, Alok Das, Rana Mitra, Chiranjit Ghosh, Panchugopal Mandal, Sanjoy Chatterjee, Tridib Ghosh, Somenath Dasgupta and Jaydeb Dasgupta (Ex-officio). The Office bearers put on record the sincere appreciation of the members of the previous Sub-committee for their contributions in publishing the Organ on regular basis. Office bearers expected that there should be good response from all affiliates for prompt remittance of dues to ensure publication on standalone basis. Office bearers further appealed to all Units at all levels to send regular report of events at respective areas for publication in the Organ. State Units had also been advised to collect write ups from eminent personalities with pro-working class views for publication in our Organ.

BEFI News by now has undoubtedly made a dent amongst members and subscribers. It has reached each of the State Units throughout the country, even outside the banking periphery and also abroad.

The meeting of the Office bearers held on April 17, 2012 appreciated the initiative of the Sub-committee for regular quarterly publication of BEFI News for the past several years till then. Office bearers accepted the suggestion of the Sub-committee for enrolling subscribers by State Units against advance payment of Rs. 40/- p.a. This would help us overcome the problem of accumulated dues. The distribution arrangement of the Organ will, however, continue as usual - the Office bearers opined.

All efforts are there to ensure regular publication of the quarterly journal during the period. From January 2008 till October 2014 - in a span of 7 years - 28 issues have been published in a regular interval of every three months - January, April, July and October.

The first and foremost condition of publication is that it should be regular and it may humbly be admitted that the criterion has been achieved.

That it should reach the member-subscribers in all corners of the country also stand more or less achieved. Nevertheless, all serious and sincere efforts are being made in order to extent the horizon of understanding of the members and arouse their interest with regard to the journal.

The journal can play its vital role as a true mouth piece of the members provided they get involved and identified with it, contribute their thoughts through their valuable suggestions, write-ups, more and more reporting on developments at the State Unit level, enrich it and ensure its greater and wider circulation and reading.

Journals of other organisations

BANKFLAG

After a gap of about 20/25 years, the journal of AIBEA is being republished from 1995 May with its name changed from Monthly Journal “BANK MAZDOOR” to “BANKFLAG”. It was a Bi-monthly journal of AIBEA. Just after a year the publication was converted to a monthly journal/organ of AIBEA from May 1996. The publication is being continued in the same name. It is published from Kolkata. Apart from news on banking, national and international arena, it covers all sorts of news on working class struggles and movements vis-a-vis corporate world.

GRAMIN BANK

AIRRBEA as a trade union started its journey from its first conference held on February 28 to 1 & 2 March, 1980 at Cannanore, Kerala. The need to bring out a journal for the employees of the bank during the early 80s was very much felt by the organization. However, it was possible to bring out the journal with the name “GRAMIN BANK” from 26/2, Saheed Surya Sen Road, Berhampore, Murshidabad, West Bengal in April 1984 as the first issue, i.e. within 6 years of the foundation of the organization.

The first issue contained amongst others memorandum dated 20.12.1983 to Sri. R.K. Kaul, the then chairman, NABARD highlighting the main issues and demands relating to the burning issues confronting the workforce acquainted by RRBs on one hand, and the issues of viability and other areas of development of RRBs themselves on the other.

The publication above named continued upto its 10th issue, September 1985. The editor of the publication all along was Dilip Kumar Mukherjee. The name of the journal was changed as “GRAMIN BANK EMPLOYEE” w.e.f. 11th issue -

November 1985. The address of the publication got changed with the change of residence-cum-office of Dilip Kumar Mukherjee to 11/10, K.K. Banerjee Road, Gorabazar, Berhampore, West Bengal w.e.f. its 8th issue - May 1985.

The name of the publication was further changed as “RURAL BANK STAFF” from June 2003 and the series was also rearranged to call this June 2003 issue as the first issue of this new series.

This is an in-house journal mainly circulated amongst members, leaders of the AIRRBEA units, State Federations, Office Bearers, CC Members throughout the country and supplementary copies are sent to leaders of fraternal Trade Unions and mass organizations. This journal has present level of publication of around 4000 copies of which around 3500 belong to regular membership throughout the country. After sad demise of the legendary leader Dilip Kumar Mukherjee on 31.03.2013, the Central Committee of AIRRBEA in its meeting held on 07.04.2013 decided Ajit Kumar Ghosh, the then President and presently advisor to act as Editor of the journal and as such, he has been continuing in the position.

The publication has been proved to be a valuable item in the activity of not only the leaders and members of the organization but also to the leadership of many fraternal organizations as because the journal contains various materials concerning the struggles of bank employees and workforce of other sectors, within the nation and outside, besides the details of activities relating to struggles of RRB employees as a whole.

Leadership of the AIRRBEA has been trying to improve the journal further, both in quality and quantity, and also to raise the membership subscriber to the level of at least 10,000 as early as possible.