



# ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS(AITUC) AND INTER-UNION RIVALRY IN KARNATAKA.

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**Abstract:** Trade Unions occupy an important role in protecting the interest of workers. In Karnataka, one of the Industrialized State in India All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) is the earliest left union to organize workers. However, AITUC was affected in its development and growth by inter-union rivalry. In this background this paper makes an attempt to understand reasons for inter-union rivalry and its efforts towards Trade union unity.

**Key Words:** AITUC, INTUC, HMS, CITU, unionization.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Trade Unions are one of the important social movements in the Modern world. Trade unions are the by products of Industrial revolution. The working conditions created by factory system of production forced workers to organize themselves into unions. Thus, Trade Unions are mainly organized by workers to protect their working Interests. In India also trade Unions developed along with the development of Industries. The First Trade Union with all India presence was All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) which was established in 1920. Though in the early days it was dominated by congress leaders later on the influence of Communists increased with in AITUC and it came to be identified with communist party of India (CPI). After 1947 though many Trade unions with all India presence like Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) was established AITUC was able to maintain its prominent position. In Karnataka which is one of the vastly industrialized State in India, All India Trade Union Congress opened its state unit Karnataka Provincial Trade union Congress (KPTUC) only in 1950. However before starting the state Unit of AITUC there were many industries specific Unions organized by left leaders in the State. There were Unions in Cashew, beedi, Tiles, textiles and mines. They had organized Municipal workers as well. Though after 1950 KPTUC organized workers in a larger way in the state, they were engaged in inter-union rivalry with other unions in the state. AITUC had rivalry with INTUC and HMS in the state. After 1970, when AITUC was split into two and Central Trade Union Congress (CITU) was formed it had rivalry with CITU in spite of ideological similarities. In this background this paper is an attempt to examine the inter-union rivalry of AITUC with other Unions in the state. For the convenience of study this paper tries to understand inter union rivalry from 1950 to 1990 that is prior to commencement of New Economic policy in India.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To examine the causes for Inter-union rivalry of AITUC.
2. To explore the effects of Inter- union rivalry on AITUC in the state.
3. To examine the efforts at Trade Union Unity by AITUC.

## **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Inter-Union Rivalry:**

During the early period that is till late 1940, s there is no reference about inter- union rivalry in the State. This may be largely due to the absence of state unit of AITUC and majority of left leaders in the state were members of Indian National Congress. However, this situation changed with the formation of INTUC and HMS in the State

during 1949. With the starting of State unit of AITUC along with the starting of INTUC and HMS in the state inter – union rivalry also commenced. The attempts of these two Unions to build unions in the industries created rivalry with AITUC. This fact has been acknowledged by a prominent Left Union leader M. S. Krishnan in 1949. He wrote that during 1949, in our state INTUC and HMS were born which tried to organize rival unions to AITUC, in many places they were successful mainly due to lack of leadership in our side.<sup>1</sup> Apart from INTUC, CITU emerged as another important rival to AITUC after the split of AITUC in 1970. Though communist party of India was split in 1964, AITUC remained united till 1970. Though it remained united there was disagreement between union leaders who supported CPI and CPM within AITUC. Each group accused the other of breaking workers unity. The important grounds on which AITUC developed rivalry with other unions can be listed as follows:

**Physical attacks:** One of the important accusations of AITUC on rival Unions was physical attack on its cadres. For instance, in 1968, the CPI faction within AITUC alleged that in Hailand tile factory three workers and in battery tile factory two workers were assaulted by CPM faction<sup>2</sup>The allegation of AITUC of physical attacks on its cadres continued even after its split in 1970 and the starting of CITU. AITUC apart from accusing CITU of physical attacks has also accused INTUC of attacking its cadres physically and instigating violence in Trade Union front. It argued that in Davangere Chandri sugar factory, Management attacked AITUC cadres physically with the support of CITU cadres<sup>3</sup>AITUC developed rivalry with unions affiliated with Janatha Party during 1977-78 period. It accused these Unions of indulging in violence on AITUC workers and thereby breaking working class unity. The other allegation of AITUC on rival unions especially on INTUC was that they were taking police support to attack its cadres. It argued that in Nanjangud Sujatha mill, when AITUC was collecting subscription charges INTUC prevented them with the help of Police.

**Breaking working-class unity:** AITUC also accused other unions of breaking working-class unity by indulging in false propaganda on AITUC. It stated that in Davanagere Textile sector in 1975 INTUC leader are indulging in false propaganda on AITUC leaders. It argued that Janata party leaders were organizing separate meeting and instigating the workers when Shanker mill workers were protesting Lockout.

**Establishing Unions on Communal lines:** AITUC also criticized other Unions of organizing workers on communal lines. It accused INTUC of forcing workers to join its union with the help of catholic priests in plantation sector. AITUC also argued that INTUC is collaborating with RSS and Jana sangha in public sector Industries like Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), Barath Electronics (BEL) and in banking sectors in the state.

**Colluding with Management:** The other important allegation of AITUC on rival unions was collaboration with management and betraying the cause of working class. It alleged that in Mangalore Automobiles company workers had filed a case against management and when the case was progressing in their favor INTUC interfered and argued for dismissal of the case<sup>4</sup>It also accused CITU of collaborating with Tile factory management through secret agreements. It stated that in 1972, when dispute regarding DA was in labour tribunal CITU withdraw the case and compromised with the management.

**Union Recognition:** AITUC also had rivalry with other Unions regarding Election for union recognition. In February 1975 in Mysore Electrical Mechanical and General Workers union election it accused INTUC of appealing to District court even when AITUC has won all the seats.<sup>5</sup>

**Misusing Emergency:** During Emergency AITUC accused INTUC of betraying worker's interest. It accused INTUC of preventing a meeting of workers with the help of police in Mysore Electrical industries on the pretext of emergency.

**Ideological Difference:** AITUC also had differences with other unions on ideological issues. For instance, it didn't join with HMS and CITU for May Day parade in 1980 due to their stand on Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and considering it as an attack.

### Efforts towards Trade Union unity

<sup>1</sup> Kembauta, December 18, 1983, p.6

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> ibid

Even though AITUC had rivalry with other unions in the state, it made certain efforts towards Trade union unity. In 1958 itself it requested HMS to merge its unions with AITUC union in some industries, Like in Canara Motor automobile union. AITUC also held joint struggle with other unions. On September 2, 1960, it held joint demonstration with UTUC and HMS on Trade Union Day. In another instance, the meeting of all trade union representatives on June 15, 1978 decided to go on general strike in support of workers' demands. In another incidence on August 1980 AITUC went on strike with CITU, INTUC, HMS against price rise.

After 1990 AITUC had close collaboration with CITU especially on the new economic policies of Government. In 1992, it participated in the Raj bhavan Chalo agitation with CITU to protest against Economic policies of Central Government. In the same year AITUC issued a joint statement with CITU against Economic policies of the Government.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Thus, AITUC was engaged in Inter union rivalry with other unions from 1950 onwards. It was INTUC and HMS in the earlier period. It was CITU after 1970, though its rivalry with CITU minimized after 1990 in the face of new economic policies. Nevertheless, INTUC remained its traditional rival throughout. The Rivalry of AITUC with other unions has affected its growth to a large extent. Though it had expanded its base sector wise and region wise it had lost many unions due to inter-union rivalry. It had erosion of its base in few of its earlier unions like weaving and tiles. These unions switched towards rival unions, especially to CITU. Therefore, it can be argued that inter-union rivalry has affected AITUC in its effectiveness of unionizing workers in the State.

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