

## THE BIRTH OF A LIVE ORGANIZATION:

### ALL INDIA STATE BANK OFFICERS' FEDERATION

#### ***WE ARE NOT MAKERS OF HISTORY, WE ARE MADE BY HISTORY***

*Martin Luther King Jr*

*History is about everything that happened in the past: and it is a fascinating experience to know and understand the significance of collective achievements of our great forefathers under trying and hostile environments giving their blood, sweat and tears.. The past informs our lives, ideas, expectations, challenges, trials, tribulations and contributions. We owe our today to the yesterday leaders for their vision, sacrifice and ability. In fact penning an article on the history of this great organisation itself should be a thanksgiving one to the sagacity and reliving the memories of our pristine past. It also simultaneously reminds us about our responsibility to carry forward the rich legacy so assiduously nurtured by our elders.*

#### ***A journey of thousand miles starts with the first step***

The general perception in the management quarters was that the Trade Unions were meant for the lower level workers and the supervisors were part of the Management. Such a perception could only hold good when the service conditions of the supervisors are better than those of their subordinates. The Trade Union Act prescribed certain broad guidelines regarding the eligibility for the purpose of forming Trade Unions by the workers and provided certain protections and immunities to the leaders of the unions. The professionals including the Bank Officers were ineligible to form unions and they were considered as part of the Management by the frames of the Trade Union Act as well. This was the common perception in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Banking Industry is the backbone of the economy of the country. The Banks were nationalized to ensure that these institutions would function as agencies of the Government for the development of the economy. The first such take over took place in the case of the Imperial Bank of India in the year 1955. This was the period during which there were hundreds of Private Banks operating all over the country and indulging in continuous exploitation of their workers. Thus emerged a strong and vibrant movement of the Award Staff in the Banking Industry, which subsequently played a major role in ensuring the

emergence of strong and organized Officers' Association in the public sector units.

The emergence of unions during 1950's led to a series of agitations, strikes and disputes between the management and the workers in the banks. These frequent strikes, disputes and struggles led to an indefinite strike for over 21 days in the year 1960, by the Award Staff Federation of SBI, which provided a boost to the trade union movement in the State Bank of India. The Government had to appoint Tribunals to look into their grievances and a number of Awards were given by these Tribunals up to 1965. It was during the middle of 1960's that the leadership of the unions decided to do away with the Tribunals and go for direct negotiation with the representatives of the Management. Thus the first bipartite settlement in the banking industry took place during 1967.

Yes, our Federation has traveled several miles ever since the first step was taken by those courageous heroes who formed sub accountants association in 1960. The problems confronted by officers were loss of identity and dignity, increasing responsibilities, unlimited working hours, less and less leisure hours, inability to fulfill family and social obligations and host of other inequities. The longing for unity and solidarity made the various associations of Head Cashiers, sub-Accountants, Staff assistants and Staff Officers to merge and the SBI Supervisory Staff Association was registered under Trade Unions Act, on August 14, 1965. We bow our heads with a deep debt of gratitude to those pioneers of Officers' movement. The immediate reaction from the management was hostile and it even dubbed the association to be a "petition making body". But encouraged by the formation of Madras association, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta circles formed similar associations and these four circles federated to form All India Supervising Staff Federation which is the sole bargaining body for officers in our Bank.

The supervisory staff was excluded from the industrial law by the Government; the officers of the Bank used all ingenuities to secure recognition through a series of industrial actions. The effectiveness of workers' trade unions and their methods influenced the Association to be more militant. The association resorted to the removal of ties, work to rule, mass casual leave and many other forms of agitation. The management let loose terror in the form of victimized transfers, suspensions and charge sheets.

It was during this period that the Officers of the Bombay Circle under the leadership of Com. L.V. Subramaniam the founder and the General Secretary of

the Federation and Com. S. K. Mishra, the founder and the President of the Federation took initiative and consolidated the Officers' movement in the State Bank of India under the banner of AISBOF.

### **THE WATERSHED EVENT JUNE 1969**

*"Do not follow where the path may lead.  
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail".*

The Federation gave a call for non-cooperation to its members during the month of June 1969 in the Bombay Main Branch. As a part of this non-cooperation the Head Cashiers refused to hand over the keys to the Management and the Bank suspended four officers on 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1969 thus sowing the seeds of militant struggle which followed thereafter. A live movement thus took its birth. It was a saga of struggle and sacrifices by thousands of Officers all over the country who could come out openly against the imperial regime and show their collective strength to the Management.

The four comrades who carried the burden of the struggle by facing on the spot suspension have become immortal warriors in the history of our movement. They are, Com. V. H. Khedigkar, who rose to the position of the General Secretary of the Mumbai Circle Association during the subsequent years, Com. Banker, Com. Sajana and Com. Fernandez. The Bombay Circle jumped into immediate action on 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 1969. All the branches in the City of Mumbai were closed on the same day spontaneously. On 11<sup>th</sup> of June, the strike spread over the whole Circle. The Federation gave a call for an indefinite strike demanding the immediate re-instatement of the Officers suspended by the Bank for their legitimate trade union activities.

In those days there was no modern communication mechanism as we have today. The only communication system available at the time was the Trunk Calls and Telegrams. But message still spread like wild fire all over the country and the branches of the State Bank of India all over the country remained closed. It was a lightning, an indefinite strike, the first of its kind in the world. There was no strike notice, no circular, no massive preparation but the strike was a thunderous success. It continued up to 26<sup>th</sup> June 1969 and created history for the supervisory cadre movement. The only demand of the Federation was the reinstatement of the suspended officers and recognition of the Officers' right

to strike. The Bank had to reinstate all the four officers and agreed to commence dialogue on the other issues raised earlier by the Federation. Thus emerged a strong and vibrant movement in the State Bank of India under the banner of the Federation. We have not looked back since.

The Seventeen days indefinite strike in June 1969 was described by the BBC as the first indefinite strike by the supervisory cadre in the entire world. This was the first of its kind in the Banking Industry in the country. The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad instituted a study so as to submit a thesis on what went wrong in the State Bank of India which forced its' Officers to come to the streets and raise the banner of revolt.

The Industrial Relations machinery was established in a structured manner at the Corporate Center as well as the Circles of the bank after this historic strike. The Bilateral Relations strengthened during the next few decades and the mutual trust and respect amongst the leadership of the Federation and the Executives of the Bank was built with the sole objective of ensuring the progress of the Bank.

Subsequent struggles brought many changes in the Service rules and service conditions of officers in our Bank viz., Recognition of federation as the sole bargaining agent, formation of Central / circle negotiation councils, disciplinary procedures, discontinuation of contribution to Pension funds by members, right to defend a colleague, fair promotion policy, transfer policy, officers' representation in the central Board of Directors and other financial benefits to name a few.

The Federation went on strike several times in between but the sensitiveness of the Management was such that it did not allow the Federation to resort to prolonged agitation. However, during the year 2006 history was again created by the Federation together with the Staff Federation by giving a call for an indefinite strike from 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2006 to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2006 demanding a comprehensive review of the superannuation benefits including the Revision of Pension Ceiling to 50% of the last drawn Basic Pay, the Revision of Family pension, Up gradation of Pension, uniform DA providing 100% neutralization etc. The strike was unique in the sense that it was the first joint indefinite strike which brought total closure of all the branches of the Bank and over 2,10,000 workforce all over the country participated in it. The strike was

applauded as a great saga of struggle and success amidst globalization and the attack by the capitalists on the working class at the International conference of Trade Unions held under the UN at Geneva, where the leadership of both the Federations were invited as special guests and were honored. Since then we have marched a long distance. The unionization of the Officers' fraternity took birth with the success of the 17 days strike by the State Bank Officers in the year 1969. We have also seen the Officers organizations not only flourishing in the Banking Industry but elsewhere as well. Today we need to remember all those senior comrades who were fully conscious of the non-availability of the legal protection for conducting legitimate trade union activities by the supervisory cadre, took courage in forming the trade unions and thereafter proceeded to create history by observing 17 days strike in the Bank. Hats off to all those great souls whose only ambition was to fight and free the Officers' fraternity from bondage and sufferings.

#### **ALL INDIA STATE BANK OFFICERS' FEDERATION -UNTIL NOW**

A Trade Union derives its strength from its members. How vibrant and effective it is, depends entirely on its membership. The involvement of members in all organizational activities is a key to its success, whether during peace or during war.

For the success of any movement conviction of the members is of utmost importance. We in AISBOF have found this among our rank and file in a large measure. This is evident from their response to the calls of the organization whether in the form of a meeting, an action programme or a contribution.

Conviction of the members needs to be translated into involvement. We have found that our members have involved themselves in the organization's activities so that there is growth at every level.

With all the conviction, involvement and positive thinking of the members, AISBOF has earned esteem which has given it a distinct identity of its own.

In a society wedded to democratic value, a trade union also should practice internal democracy. We have scrupulously followed this in our functioning. Just as we have received bouquets we have also had our share of brick bats. But we have taken it in our stride. There is no personal rancor or animosity against the

critic and we always protected this trait of ours. These are the four pillars of our strength – conviction, involvement, positivism and democracy.

The relationship between the representatives of the trade union and its Members is one between peers, not one between superiors and sub-ordinates. A sense of purpose or mission drives one to take up the thankless responsibility of representatives. Enlightened members understand this issue.

Coupled with this is the need for committed members to come forward to take the responsibility of running the organization. The administration of a trade union requires managerial skills, but absence of such skills could be compensated by conviction and eagerness to take responsibility. When members do not come forward to take responsibility, one set of leadership continues for ever and the union degenerates. An enlightened membership can guard against this danger.

AISBOF has been built-up into a strong force and its strength has grown like its numbers. Despite many challenges and detractions, we have remained on top. This was possible because of the involvement of the members. A few specific qualities of the members have helped in building our fortress. Informed membership, recognition & encouragement of freedom of expression, fully democratic set-up and high sense of belonging are the principal features of the Membership. Besides this, communication and feedback, a streamlined organizational set-up and a responsive structure have also been our strengths and have helped to build the strong edifice of our solidarity in SBI.

Over four decades of its existence, AISBOF has given a new meaning to the trade union movement, achieved better service conditions and benefits, provided a career path to the Officers, streamlined the system of disciplinary proceedings and brought a sense of belongingness to the officers. Behind this transformation there remain the vision of our founding brethren, the sacrifices of the leaders and thus AISBOF has gone beyond the realm of conventional trade unionism. While championing the cause of the Officers, equal importance was given to the healthy growth of the Bank. The often expressed concerns on the ill-health of the credit portfolio, the fragility of the systems, the lack of streamlined organizational structure and the absence of uniform

rewards and punishments, have vividly demonstrated our commitment to the Institution.

AISBOF introduced a series of new activities to give the image of a positive and value oriented union. Setting up of the SBIOA Education Trust, National Academy for Trade Union Research and Education (NATURE), a Training Centre, conducting various seminars, symposiums, lectures, cadre and leadership development programmes and so on bears testimony to such commitment.

Organising workshop on Disciplinary matters, publishing a regular journal "Officers' Cause", publication of other periodicals such as 'Domestic Enquiry', 'Social Concern' etc. all these have taken AISBOF to a higher plane. While we were labeled militant, grudging eulogy was also given about the quality of leadership and the union Management. Many of AISBOF's innovations have inspired other unions to follow suit. Thus the involvement, the interaction and the communication have contributed to the strength of AISBOF. What we are today is indeed the net result of the immense faith the rank and file have placed on the organization.

However we should not rest on our laurels. It is often said that **war is the beginning of peace and peace is the beginning of war**. The suggestion is that constant preparedness for struggle is necessary for the Officers' community. One cannot get justice unless one fights for it. If success is desired a constant alertness and persuasion is absolutely necessary. The Cadre Development programmes would underscore the imperative need for preparedness. In the backdrop of more than 44 years of pride and glory, we should look to the future and its challenges.

### ***What are the challenges before us?***

Increasing de-unionisation, unethical practices of the Management in order to cause dissuasions among the members, loss of sense of pride and honour to our history, limited vision of some of the members and the Management's growing intolerance to criticism of failures, stare at us. Tackling these issues is a major task before us. The lessons of history should help us evolve strategies to meet these challenges squarely and effectively. In the backdrop of growing apprehensions about erosion of power and authority of Trade Unions in the

wake of globalization, a true realization and clear understanding of the challenges before us as a community and rational response to them will help us stride beyond the Golden Justice years with confidence and hope.

In the days to come there will be more severe tests. The sweep of economic and financial sector reforms, the emphasis on profits as distinguished from earlier social objectives and the principle of the survival of the fittest, which are being vigorously followed, have created intricate and multifaceted problems for the officers of the Bank and in the industry as a whole. Our own issues will be defied satisfactory solutions and larger issues of wage revision and other monetary benefits will face serious resistance from the establishment. Members need to be more informed to meet the new challenges. From solidarity will emerge the determination needed to wrest what is legitimately due to the officers.

While working for the continuous upliftment of the members, the bigger objectives of making our bank stable, healthy and dynamic should be kept in mind. AISBOF should be the rallying point for a value based trade unionism. The values to be cherished and imbibed are:-

- i) Independent Unionism
- ii) Internal Democracy
- iii) Responsiveness to Members' problems and aspirations.
- iv) Constructive and positive outlook,
- v) Continuous involvement in relevant social issues.

The series of training programmes conducted by NATURE, aim at instilling ideas as values in the minds of the Members. Ultimately, the health, strength and growth of any trade union are directly related to its members' awareness of their relationship and responsibilities towards their Union as their representative body.

The Cadre development Programmes should prove that we have strengthened the pillars of a strong trade union with the sense of conviction, commitment, involvement, positivism and democracy, so that the rich tradition of values, ethics, morals and principles all of us have strived to create through our uncompromising struggle and strong commitment for securing justice and



legitimate rights as well as for making significant contribution to our societies continues to prosper.

Remember: The more we sweat during peace time, the less we bleed during war time. We are confident that, with active participation of the Members and the continued support of our 15 affiliates, our journey to build a strong cadre base will be successful.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS OF AISBOF**

### **EVOLUTION OF COMPENSATION SYSTEM**

The Federation is solely responsible for the evolution of Compensation System in the Bank through its collective bargaining strength. During earlier days the Salary which was being paid to the Officers in the Bank was a fixed one. The Salary component consisted of only one item which may be compared with the present Basic Pay. The Basic Pay of the Officers was fixed in such a manner that they would not come under the definition of the workmen, hence; they would not be legally entitled to organize themselves as a trade union for the purpose of collective bargaining. Before we examine the current structure of the Working / Service Conditions let us take a look at the pay slip of an Officer who enters the bank as on to-day;

#### **i) BASIC PAY**

The basic pay was fixed arbitrarily in the 1950's. There were two types of salaries. One was for the European officers and the other was for the Indian Officers. The entry point for the European Officers used to be one grade above that of the Indian Officers who were largely ranked promotees. However, after the initiation of the expansion programme, when the Imperial Bank of India became the State Bank of India, the bank went for direct appointment of Officers who were called Probationary Officers. They were also allowed the basic pay which was fixed for European Officers. However, those who were promoted from the ranks had two types of positions. The first one was that of Sub-Accountants, the senior clerk who were being promoted purely on the basis of the recommendations of the Agents. The next position was the position of the Head Cashiers – who were also promoted on the basis of seniority in service.

The astonishing revelation for all of you is that there was no payment other than salary. There was no DA to the officers. When the Trade Unions in respect

of the workmen were in the process of evolution, they could achieve a lot of benefits for themselves including the payment of Dearness Allowance etc. The Awards made a substantial improvement in their working conditions. As a result, the Officers were in an awkward position. The promotion became a curse in terms of the emoluments as far as the responsibilities were concerned in respect of the Officers' community.

Let us now examine the evolution of Dearness Allowance due to the Organizational struggle over the last 50 years.

### **DEARNESS ALLOWANCE**

The Federation demanded that Dearness Allowance is to be linked to the Cost of Living Index. The evolution achieved through the collective struggle by Federation can be divided into two periods:-

From 1965 to 1980

From 1980 to 2006

The beginning of the introduction of the Dearness Allowances for the Officers was mainly as a result of the removal of anomaly between emoluments of the Award Staff and that of the Officers. Therefore, the Federation demanded review of the Dearness Allowance at periodical intervals linked to the cost of living Index. The compensation which was being paid as D.A. was as follows:-

For every 9 points increase

In the Index Number – Rs.25/- + payable at lower levels

For every 16 points increase

In the Index Number – For higher level Basic pay

For every 24 points increase

In the Index Number – For senior Executives

- i) The Grant of enhancement in the DA was as per the discretion of the Board. The Dearness Allowance was being paid once in 6 months.
- ii) The Grant of Dearness Allowances in respect of the Award Staff was automatic on the basis of quarterly index for middle class - base year being 1960.
- iii) The DA enhancement was not uniform – It used to be raising one up to Rs.1050 and thereafter from 1050 to 1600 it used to be a flat one. From Rs.1600 to Rs.2400/- it was again going up. As a result, the Officers in

between depending upon their Basic Pay were never getting any increase. This was a great heart burn. There were four slabs of D.A. for officers. The D.A. increase was not uniform. From this position we saw revolutionary changes in the bipartite settlements that were entered during 1980s, 1990s and 2002, thereby bringing some uniformity between the Award Staff and the Officers fraternity. The first achievement of the Federation was demanding the linkage of DA along with the cost of living index by way of settlement. Therefore, the removal of anomaly with regard to the periodicity for payment of D.A., at the same rate as was being paid to the Award Staff popularly known as 100% D.A. neutralization.

We are today enjoying 100% DA as in the case of the Award Staff. The current Dearness Allowances payable to the employees and officers in the State Bank of India beginning from the level of sub-staffs to that of the Dy. Manager Director is the same.

The pay slips now contain so many columns and some times the columns fall insufficient and the bank has to update it from time to time. Each and every component added to your Pay scale is due to the sacrifice of thousands of Officers who struggled for all of us not knowing that they are creating a comfort zone for the officers who will be joining at a much later date.

The pay slip produced above will itself reveal the history of the Federation and the struggle the membership had gone through in arriving at the present status. Our salutation to all those who are responsible for creating the present state of comfortable service conditions for us through their dedication and sacrifice for the cause of the officers under the banner of the Federation. Each column in the pay slip has its own history of evolution and struggle behind. The improvements have not come overnight. Neither was it the magnanimity of the management. It was the struggle by the members that decided the conditions.

## **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND NEGOTIATING FORUMS**

**THOSE WHO DO NOT REMEMBER THE PAST ARE CONDEMED TO REPEAT IT**

George Santayana

The strength of a Trade Union lies in its capacity for collective bargaining, the individuals cannot participate in the negotiation or bargain. They have to

contribute their strength to the organization so that the bargaining is effective and fruitful to the members of the organization.

In the middle of the 1960s, the Federation came into being. The Federation began to submit memorandum/ petition etc. by way of appeals for the rectification of anomalies that had cropped up between the Award Staff and Officers in their service conditions. The management was averse to the supervisory cadre organizing themselves into trade unions. In one of the meetings where the Management had agreed to meet the representatives of the Federation, Mr. Dehejia, the then Chairman was present. One of the participants made a statement that the officers are not enjoying the facility of casual leave and hence the Federation demands immediate introduction of Casual Leave for Officers. The Executives of the Bank were irritated due to the use of the word "**Demand**" by the representatives of the Officers and the meeting concluded with the Executive getting upset over the attitude of the representative of the officers. How can an officer talk in such a rude manner and use words like demand like ordinary workmen? Since then the movement has travelled over 50 years seeing several ups and downs ultimately ensuring a well placed structure for the purpose of negotiations. The Federation perhaps encountered the sternest test during the infamous "Pratip Chaudhuri" era, which tested the strength and will of the leadership to the limit.

It was on 25.08.2012, in a meeting of credit analysts Shri Pratip Chaudhuri, Chairman announced about his intentions of introducing 7 day banking which was covered extensively by the print as well as electronic media. In that meeting the Chairman said that the costs incurred on the developing physical infrastructure and network does not hit the Bank as much as staff costs. In order to improve efficiency, it will therefore try to delegate routine responsibilities currently done by officers to the low cost Junior employees. All the above three statements raised genuine apprehension in the minds of the membership and a spontaneous lunch time demonstration at the call of the Federation was organised on 28.08.2012 at all Local Head Offices . Immediately after the demonstration, which was a legitimate trade union action, the General Secretaries of all the 14 circles of SBIOA were served with a letter by the respective DGM & CDO on 30th August 2012, which ended with " You are hereby called upon to desist from such behaviour and not to repeat it in future." The letter did not invite a reply. It was an advisory and conclusive letter. Hence the cause of action ended with the serving of the letter.

Subsequently, on 24th September 2012, the General Secretaries were again served with a letter alleging non submission of reply to the letter dated 30th August 2012 and also surprisingly invoking Sec 36AD of Banking Regulation Act. Any action to be initiated against an official of the Bank is to be done under the extant OSR within the Bank. By invoking 36 AD of BR Act, which in no way applies to a peaceful demonstration held before various administrative offices and there was no prevention of ingress or egress of any person. The invocation of BR Act requires the Courts intervention. This exposed the clear, vindictive and malicious action of the Management to suppress genuine trade union action.

Even before the General Secretaries could submit a reply to the second letter dated 24.09.2012, charge sheets were served in the personal names of the individual officers who are holding the posts of the Presidents and General Secretaries on 27th September 2012. There has been an indecent hurry to victimize Com. Keshav Thaokar the General secretary of Mumbai Circle, who was to superannuate on 30th September 2012. The motive behind this hurriedly coined charge sheet was to somehow punish Com. Thaokar, GS, Mumbai Ultimately this was achieved and Com. Thaokar was retired under OSR 19(3).

The whole sequence of events reeked of malicious intent as the cause of action of 28th August 2012 was effectively closed by issuance of letter to the General Secretaries on 30.08.2012. Subsequently, there was no incident / provocation. Assuming there was, that requires to be pursued as a fresh cause of action. All Presidents and General Secretaries were charge sheeted even though the demonstration on 28th August 2012 was not conducted / attended by certain Presidents and General Secretaries who were away.

The leadership of the Federation had demonstrated tremendous patience and perseverance and was willing to discuss the issues that led to the issuance of the Charge sheet and convince the Management for an amicable settlement. The top management was determined to break all those talks and have clearly demonstrated that they had already planned to utilize these charge sheets with an intention to attack the trade union movement built by the Federation over the last 50 years.

To add insult to injury two of our senior leaders Com.Samir Banerjee, President of our Bhopal Circle Association and Com. L.K. Mishra, President of our Bhubaneswar Circle Association who were to retire from the active services of the Bank on 30th November, 2012 even though the explanation for the charge sheet has been submitted 1½ months back have been placed under Rule 19(3) of SBIOSR. This was the last straw on the camel's back and the membership at large were very much agitated on this issue of the Presidents and General secretaries being retired under the draconian rule of OSR 19(3). In order to show their solidarity and to show the dissent towards the senior leaders being punished for a legitimate trade union activity the members of the Federation held demonstrations in the evening of 30th November 2012 in front of all LHOS/Aus/ZOs of the Bank. This demonstration again was a massively attended peaceful demonstration only to highlight the unity and solidarity of the Federation. The Federation at its EC meeting in Bhopal held on 27<sup>th</sup> November'12 decided to file writ petitions at all High Courts challenging the legality of the charge-sheets. In the meantime on 30th November 2012 the Management approached the High Court at Mumbai with a case against the Federation, Mumbai Circle Association and the General secretary of the Federation claiming damages of Rs.100 crore for loss of image of the Bank and to restrain the Federation and its affiliates from holding demonstration etc within 100 metres of any premises of the Bank. There were several rounds of fruitless discussion as the Chairman stuck to his decision of going all out against the leadership of the Federation.

The first writ was admitted at Bangalore High Court, which fomented the anger of the Chairman, who immediately instructed for transfer of Presidents and General Secretaries of all circles. Meanwhile, as a mediation process was initiated at Mumbai, following the petition filed by the bank, some transfer orders had to be revoked.

The disciplinary enquiries were conducted against all Presidents and General Secretaries of all affiliates. The Inquiring Authority and Presenting Officers were from other Circles, who were tutored how to proceed with the job.

In many Circles, the writs filed by the Association were dismissed and the Bank punished the Presidents and General Secretaries by demoting them to a lower grade. Amidst all this, the General Secretary of the Federation Com. Rishabadas resigned in the midst of an EC Meeting at Mumbai on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013 citing health reasons. With the sudden resignation of the General Secretary Com. Y. Sudarshan was co-opted as the General Secretary of the Federation.

In June, 2013 after the mediation process failed, the bank again transferred the remaining General Secretaries and Presidents. In our Circle too, Com Soumya Datta, the then President, was transferred as Service Manager of Kamarhati Branch, which was almost 20 kms from Headquarters while Com Kalyan Brata Bhowmik, the then General Secretary was transferred to AO Kolkata. A massive transfer exercise was undertaken and activists and office bearers of all tiers were transferred.

On 08/09/2013, a massive Dharna was held at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, the capital of our country to register our protest against the victimization of Office bearers and anti trade union actions on the part of the Management. Several Trade Union from fraternal organisations participated in the Dharna. All EC members of the Federation had also taken part.

It was almost like history repeating itself. In the meantime our Chennai Circle achieved a decision in the Honourable Bench of Justice Chitra Venkatraman and Justice Vasuki who quashed the charge sheet citing “weakness of the allegations made and with discriminatory treatment writ large allowed the appeal and set aside the enquiry. This victory again fomented the Chairman, who went berserk and withdrew the Check off facility to all the Circle Associations.

Again our Chennai Circle obtained a stay at Madras High Court for restoring the check off for the Circle Association and then for the Federation. As the Chairman did not implement the Court order, later another contempt petition was filed on behalf of the Chennai Circle Association and on behalf of the Federation which led to the Chairman appearing at Madras High Court as a contempee even after his retirement. It was again a victory for the Federation.

On 28/09/2013, a massive 'silent' march was organised by SBIOA(Bengal Circle) in Kolkata where over 3000 officers had taken part . The rallyists covered their mouth with black tapes. Despite all attempts of the Chairman, the rally could not be prevented.

Things gradually improved over time after Smt Arundhati Bhattacharyya took over as Chairman and the check off facility was restored.

The wound has healed but the scar remains.

Challenges are many, challenges are serious and real and we are confident that we will meet these challenges in right earnest and bring laurels to this great Officers' Association. It is our pledge that we will never leave any stone unturned in our effort to bring peace happiness and prosperity to our beloved members.