

# Webinar on TUI (P&R) as unifier of World Pensioners

K.R Editor

[ This is the gist of Main Presentation made in the Webinar organized by the NCCPA on 08.08.2021 in which Comrade K.Ragavendran the TUI (P&R) Coordinator for Asia and also the General Secretary of AIPRPA – Editor)

Dear Comrades! The subject is a heavy one and with hesitation only I took up the job based on history. As the Coordinator of TUI (P&R) I have accepted the task. The TUI (P&R) is the only class-conscious organization working at universal level for the pensioners and retirees under WFTU since its formation in 2014. The foundation World Conference of TUI (P&R) was held in Barcelona (Spain) in which two comrades from India have participated. The 2<sup>nd</sup> World Conference of TUI (P&R) was held in Bogota (Columbia) in which three comrades from India have participated as delegates. Comrade Qu

The World Conference of TUI (P&R) have seen that not only the problems of Pensioners were discussed there but also these Conferences have established clearly that only after the advent of liberalization and globalization the attack on Pension and Social Security have started in many countries. We were really proud that the WFTU had taken the initiative to form a separate a Trade Union International for the Pensioners and Retirees. The forming of this TUI clearly shows that the WFTU had understood that the pensioners and retirees have an important role to play not only in defending the pension and social security but also against the LPG policies which is the starting point of the serious attack on the pension and social security.

WFTU got many Trade Union Internationals formed in order to meet sectoral wise and discuss their problems. WFTU also meets once in five years in the world conference in which all the TUIs join. WFTU used to extend total solidarity to any union on strike in any country. Even today it can be seen that the strike of Colombia or the economic blockage against Cuba, the WFTU and its TUIs are trying to unite their own countrymen and support the action.

We should touch the history of WFTU and then go to the formation of Trade Union International (Pensioners & Retirees). The WFTU is the mother organization and more than 20 TUIs are functioning under it. The WFTU was formed in 1945. Before the formation of WFTU all were functioning under IFTU (International Federation of Trade Unions). Even during the First World War the IFTU was functioning. But during the first World War the working class of Russia took over the leadership of the country through the revolution and the USSR was established. The successful revolution in USSR boosted the morale of world working class. Many organizations started their ideological battle in different countries with the unions without correct class-consciousness. Ultimately, the concept of IFTU itself had changed and the motto of IFTU was declared as “Socialization of means of production”. This had caused an ideological battle inside IFTU and the American Federation of Labour (AFL) left the IFTU.

The IFTU was moving closely with League of Nations and ILO and was reportedly lobbying for the proposals of League of Nations. The headquarters of IFTU was Berlin (Germany). Hitler was rising in Germany and after entrenching himself he started attacking different sections

one after another. He started attacking the left first and then the trade unions and also the Christians. The IFTU could not function from Berlin and the headquarters was shifted to Paris (France). There was another trade union centre called the WCL (World Confederation of Labour) which was based in Europe. This international trade union organization was mainly working with Christian Democratic Parties in Europe and was catering to Roman Catholic constituencies. The regime in Germany and Italy started attacking that union heavily. Many leaders of WCL were arrested and sent to concentration camps also. The WCL could not function and had to close down its Secretariat at Netherlands after Hitler occupied that country.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> World War erupted as the League of Nations could not stop it. Germany formed alliance with Italy and Japan and started attacking the world. The Allied Powers were victorious and the Axis Powers were defeated in the World War after the devastation mainly in Europe. But an important factor of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War was the victory of USSR and the formation of a Socialist Camp in the world. The formation of the Socialist Camp boosted the functioning of IFTU. The change of climate resulted in the formation of WFTU by dissolution of IFTU in 1945 after the world war.

But the USA had brought a scheme called the “Marshal Plan”. The Marshal Plan was offering billions of dollars to reconstruction of devastated economies of Europe. The main intention of the plan was to stop the growth of militant trade union movement which was threatening various powers and a probable take over of power by the working class. Therefore, the Marshal Plan offered reconstruction of economy that would stop the unrest.

The Marshal Plan caused another ideological battle inside WFTU. Many Unions especially in Europe could not take correct position because of their subjective approach. They wanted the help from USA for their own countries. The ideological battle went to the extend of separation of ways that led to the break in the international trade union movement with the formation of a separate trade union centre called the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) in 1949. They called themselves “Free Trade Unions” but in practice they ended up as part of yellow trade unionism only. But the WFTU continued as the class-conscious international movement.

The WFTU was supported by many countries under Socialist camp also. At this time the dormant World Confederation of Labour (WCL) due to atrocities by the totalitarian regimes revived its functioning. It wanted to merge with another international trade union centre, There were proposals of merger with WFTU. But the delegates of WFTU rejected that line of merger. The history reveals us that this WCL and ICFTU merged to form a new outfit called the “ITUC” (International Trade Union Confederation) in the year 2006.

An unexpected development took place in the Socialist Camp. The USSR and the Camp destroyed in the early 1990s. The disintegration of socialist camp affected the WFTU also. The WFTU was actually declining during this phase. This phase went on till the year 2005. In the year 2005, the WFTU held its world conference in Havana (Cuba). A leadership with Comrade George Mavrikose of Greece was elected as the General Secretary of WFTU. The WFTU adopted new methods of organization and approach to problems. The disintegration of

socialist camp also ushered in a world order of globalization and liberalization to the glee of corporates. They started the ground for blind privatization and also as part of the attack started attacking the pension and social security also. In fact the pension and social security benefits were the products of USSR and the formation of Socialist camp only. With the disintegration of the camp, the pension and social security along with labour rights started to be withdrawn by several countries.

But the advent of liberalization opened new avenues for growth to WFTU. It started to vehemently oppose the exploitation of labour and other forms of repression under Imperialism and Racism. The struggle against poverty and environmental degradation helped the WFTU to grow faster. The struggle against the evils of liberalization and the organizational functioning led to the phenomenal growth of WFTU in several countries. WFTU started its struggle for full employment; for social security; for health protection and for trade union rights. Many trade unions joined the WFTU. In India also presently two trade union centres of left, the AITUC and CITU are affiliates of WFTU. The WFTU encouraged the formation of several Trade Union Internationals including one of the latest formation of TUI (Pensioners & Retired) and Regional Conferences that boosted the growth.

Thus came the birth of Trade Union International for Pensioners and Retirees to which we are also affiliated. Comrade Quim Boix from Spain is the General Secretary and Comrade Dimos Koumpouris from Greece is the President. The TUI (Pensioners & Retirees) is proving that the senior citizens both pensioners and retirees have a role to play in the present situation when the pension and social security is under severe attack including India. The TUI (P&R) is organising international movements for highlighting the problems of pensioners and retirees. It observes October 1<sup>st</sup> as the Day of Elders to focus for a dignified life to all senior citizens. It organizes Regional Conferences covering different continents so that not only the issues of pensioners and retirees of different countries are highlighted but also guiding them in the fight against liberalization.

In India there are millions of Pensioners and Retirees. The Central and State Government Pensioners as well as the Pensioners in Public Sector Institutions are not at all unionised even now and hardly 20% of them are members of the pensioners associations. Without organization none can fight for justice. There is no all-India centre for many including the State Government Pensioners who are scattered into several States. The attempt to form an all India Centre for State Government Pensioners is also halted due to the pandemic. There are pensioners in many sectors like the transport, electricity, banks, LIC and other institutions etc. While we strengthen our NCCPA at one hand, we have also to unify them all under an umbrella in India and to bring closer to the international organization called the TUI (P&R) to strengthen the fight against the causes of liberalization. This process is to happen not only in India but in all countries to exalt the TUI (P&R) into a stronger entity universally.

We require class-consciousness. What is class consciousness? Class consciousness means not only highlighting and fighting for our own issues. We should fight against the root cause of our problems too. It is not only fighting against the effects of liberalization. We have to understand that liberalization is the root cause of all evils including the attack on pension and social security. If you want to end the menace of mosquito bite then no use in taking measures

of fighting against the mosquito bite alone but concrete measures like cleaning or closing down the ditch which is producing the mosquitos. But individual pensioners associations cannot fight successfully the liberalization itself. Therefore, two measures are inevitable needs. They are to unify the Pensioners and Retirees of all the countries under TUI (P&R) and to work closely with the trade unions of employees and workers of different segments and the Trade Union Centres as well as the WFTU. This unity and united struggle alone can defeat the designs of liberalization and end the human exploitation. Let us strengthen the fight because the trend in several European and South American countries is reversion from contributory to stand funded old pension system because of the failure of privatization of pension. Let us strengthen the movement and fight against attack on pension like the NPS schemes in India by building a broader platform of struggle.