

समृद्ध जीवनको लागि
सुदृढ संगठन र एकीकृत ट्रेड यूनियन आन्दोलन ।



GEFONT 3rd National Congress
May 1-3, 2000

Workers' of the World, Unite!

*Unified Trade
Unionism
for
Prosperous Life!*

Report
of the
Secretary
General



Glorious
Ten Years
of our Struggle

GLORIOUS TEN YEARS *of our*

GEFONT has completed its glorious ten years. Achievements of the decade, on which we feel proud, are as follows:

1. Efforts for the development of unified trade union movement:

The slogan 'Workers of the world, Unite!' has been raised by the trade union movement of Nepal from the very beginning. However, Nepalese trade union movement could not be developed on the spirit of 'one class - one organisation'. In 1979, efforts were initiated to reorganise our movement. But during the period, existing extremism and intolerance among the unions had developed a tendency of denying the existence of one another instead of developing the fronts and unifying the movement.

After this early phase, moves through fronts in special situations were begun. It also caused some illusive trends within the movement. The illusive concept 'trade unions for merely factory workers' developed the wrong feeling that service sector workers are petty bourgeois. Based on this wrong notion, white collar workers were made outsiders whereas a policy of providing membership even to the highly skilled technicians like engineers was adopted by the unions.

Union movement came to an easy phase of accepting the existence of one another after the mass movement of 1990, but it also created an environment of unhealthy competition. Though in papers there was a front among the left unions during active period of united left front of political parties, it came to a natural dissolve with the approaching general election. Scenario of the union movement became dominated by unhealthy competition and self-centred position.

Trade union Act was enacted in 1992 and then a debate 'trade union or professional organisation' crept into the trade union movement. Two questions emerged in this regard:

- Union with CBA right or mere Association?
- Independent trade union movement or a frontal trade union serving the patch-up policy based on vested interest of concerned political parties?

The debate about the limitation of trade union movement came on the surface.

Only after 1996, the right notion of 'All wage earners in the trade union' has gained its due place. Now it has become irrelevant to make front of left-ist trade unions. Unions have, now, started to treat one another on the basis whether the union in question is legally recognised or not. Nowadays, a new debate is ongoing to develop a giant and unified trade union movement through the wide unity among the workers of agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors of work.

In order to launch union movement with a clear vision and in a planned manner, significant contribution is made by International Trade Union Conference in 1994 organised by GEFONT in Kathmandu. How to explain trade union movement? Unions were defined mainly in three forms:

- Red (Genuine) Union
- Yellow Union
- Orange or Centrist Union

On the basis of colour, a tradition of defining relationship of unions with political parties was in use. The ITUC Put forward the concept of 'Pro Worker Trade Unionism', the basics of which are:

- Independent
- Mass based
- Militant
- Socialist

Based on this concept of Pro Worker Trade Unionism, GEFONT adopted the program 'One Union - One Voice'. While launching the program, GEFONT came to the conclusion of unifying the trade union movement through the integration of agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors both in formal and informal sectors of work.

2. Organisation & mobilisation:

GEFONT does not hesitate to claim that the expansion of organisation and mobilisation during the decade has been significant. There were only four founder federations - Nepal Independent Workers Union, Independent Transport Workers association, Nepal Independent Hotel workers Union and Nepal Trekking Workers Union - at the time of the establishment of GEFONT in underground existence in 1989.

In the open-air program in July 1990, the number of the federations under GEFONT umbrella reached to nine, which is reflected in the nine corners of our logo, too. Then started a campaign of forming more and more federations in order to have legal recognition of GEFONT as the first confederation of Nepal. Now the number of affiliates is sixteen. Formation of new federation on short-term vision at that time has also contributed to the efforts of enlarging the circle of the union movement.

As the latest campaign of expansion of organisation at that time, GEFONT Support Groups were formed. Initially the objective was to form GSG by the inclusion of Nepalese workers & friendly foreigners and to mobilise material-financial assistance, but while on the practice GSGs emerged as the organisation of Nepali migrant workers.

The first policy of expansion & mobilisation was based on 'Many organisation - Large Membership'. After first national congress, policy of 'Strong Organisation - Large Membership' came into practice. Thirdly, the policy of 'Planned & Manageable Organisation - Expansion & Members in New Sectors' was forwarded after second national congress. Second National Congress adopted 'Line Industry Campaign' in order to end up adhocism in the union movement and to strengthen organisational structure. The campaign was successful towards:

- Restructuring of large federations on the basis of the nature of work
- Unification & polarisation of federations of similar nature into one
- Development of departmental structure based on nature of job in various federations.

The success of this campaign is reflected in the activities of Nepal Independent Food & Beverage Workers Union, Nepal Independent textile & Garment workers Union, Nepal Auto Mechanics Union and Union of Trekking, Rafting & Travel Workers, Nepal as the new restructured unions and also in the international affiliation of Chemical Iron Union (NICIWU) with ICEM & Construction sector union (CUPPEC-Nepal) with IFBWW.

As mentioned in the 11-point program 'GEFONT By 2000' adopted by the Second National Congress, the campaign of unionisation of agricultural workers is another program related to organisational expansion & mobilisation. In the course of unionising the Two Million agricultural workers in the mainstream of union movement, following achievements are mentionable:

- Registration of 'Federation of Agricultural workers, Nepal' as the union of largest membership under GEFONT fold.
- Fixation of minimum wages and working hours for agricultural workers.
- Government declaration to eliminate gender discrimination in agricultural sector.
- Formation of Minimum Wage implementation Monitoring Committee in central level and participation of GEFONT in the committee

The strength of the union is measured through its total membership. But it is difficult in our country to evaluate it because of poor database. In this regard, the first FES publication Labour Institutions and Economic Development: A study of Nepal (1993, New Delhi) has evaluated the union membership to be:

GEFONT:	235,000
NTUC:	160,000
Others:	95,000

On the other hand, the registration of enterprise unions in formal sector shows a clear position as follows:

Name of Union	No. of Reg. unions	No. of Active unions
GEFONT	788	580
NTUC	574	297
Others	265	174

The position of different national centres is evaluated in a recent publication 'Productivity, Wages, Employment & Labour Market Situation in Nepal, The Role of Trade Unions' published by NEFAS/FES (August 1999, Kathmandu), which provides the statistics of total membership as follows:

GEFONT:	301,176
NTUC:	194,000
DECONT:	17,670

With respect to the number, there may be different views. In our case, we have now classified GEFONT membership into three categories. The position as made available by our national affiliates after renewal in the eve of the Third National Congress is given in the table below:

S.N	Name of Affiliates	Paid up Membership	Signature Membership	Active Enterprises	Associate Members
1	Nepal Independent Workers' Union (NIWU)	1,000	3,500	73	7,800
2	Independent Textile Garment Workers' union of Nepal (ITGWUN)	5,000	15,000	104	32,000
3	Independent Transport-Workers' Association of Nepal (ITWAN)	12,853	12,853	individual membership	52,655
4	Nepal Independent Carpet Workers' Union (NICWU)	2,000	5,154	82	20,480
5	Nepal Independent Hotel Workers' Union (NIHWU)	5,538	8,000	100	20,000
6	Union of Trekking-Travel-Rafting Workers, Nepal (UNITRAV)	1,284	9,716	59	11,000
7	Independent Press Workers' Union of Nepal (IPWUN)	250	850	individual membership	3,800
8	Independent Tea plantation Workers' Union of Nepal (ITPWUN)	2,500	5,500	33	9,500
9	Nepal Auto-mechanics Trade Union (NATU)	1,800	1,800	individual membership	4,000
10	Central Union of Painters, Plumbers, Electro & Construction Workers-Nepal (CUPPEC)	4,790	4,790	individual membership	22,500
11	Independent Garbage cleaners' Union of Nepal (IGCUN)	8,18	1,046	individual membership	4,100
12	Nepal Independent Food & Beverage Workers' Union (NIFBWU)	3,029	3,029	52	9,200
13	Nepal Independent Chemical-Iron Workers' Union (NICIWU)	3,813	3,813	68	20,540
14	Nepal Riskhaw Pullers' Union (NRPU)	3,000	14,000	individual membership	18,000
15	Federation of Agricultural Workers-Nepal (FAWN)	3,000	35,257	individual membership	75,000
	Total	52,175	1,25,508		310,575

3. Struggles & Movements of the Decade:

Our struggle has two sides - politics related and labour related. Following are the political struggles and movement in the past decade.

- Active involvement in anti Panchayat movement and establishment of multiparty system.
- Active participation in struggles related to nationalism as Tanakpur, Mahakali, border disputes etc.
- Active participation in favour of pro people forces during General & Local Elections.

A number of struggles for the protection and safeguarding of the interest of workers have been launched during the decade, the achievements can be summed up as:

- Development of controlled & planned movement from the early phases of uncontrolled & spontaneous struggles.
- Widening of the movement from limited organised sector towards urban and rural informal sector including different services and agriculture.

Altogether 87 struggles were led by GEFONT during the decade. The Third assembly of GEFONT National Council had given a mandate of mass mobilisation & movement. So, during mid January to mid February, GEFONT moved among the masses in the signature collection campaign through the post card mentioning seven causes of the movement. The number of signature presented to the Minister of Labour during the campaign was 39,602; the target was 50,000, which stands to be the achievement of 79.2%. The campaign was limited to organised sector and proved to be successful to mobilise workers in enterprises.

During the same period, card signature campaign was launched with the demand for paid leave in 8 March for women workers. The number of the card presented to the Minister of Labour was 6,676.

4. Educational Campaign:

Trade union education campaign in our movement is taking a planned and organised shape from an unorganised spontaneous phase. During the decade, educational activities were underground, semi-underground and open in accordance with existing environment. The focus was on:

- Political freedom & right to workers to form organisation
- Formulation of progressive labour laws

- Right of collective bargaining and ideological as well as philosophic topics

After the First National Congress in 1992, departmental structure was developed for trade union education. The achievements of the time are as follows:

- Information & management training in a participatory approach in co-operation with Asia Monitor Resource Centre in 1992.
- The training was helpful to establish GEFONT Resource Centre and to develop new curriculum in trade union education.
- Beginning of systematic trade union education program in the form of TRUE Campaign in June 1993.
- Literacy program launched in selected areas of all five-development regions in 1994.
- Development of the Concept of Mobile Trade Union School

Moreover, TOT programs have been organised as mentioned below:

- The first TOT in 1993
- TOT for literacy classes in 1994
- The first TOT based on training & education methodology in 1997
- Advanced level TOT program in 1998
- Facilitators Training based on ILO ACTRV course of Trade Union Management & Leadership Development in 1999.

It is also to be noted that GEFONT made efforts to establish National Labour Academy in co-operation with other organisations & experts in order to create an environment of action research on labour issues and to develop advanced materials for workers education. Now, the Academy is functioning.

During the period, GEFONT educational curriculum was classified into three:

- **Basic course** - labour laws, trade unions and political parties, collective bargaining, basic trade union knowledge.
- **Special course** - Contemporary and leading issues (tackled during the period are Labour Policy, Child Labour, Bonded Labour, Migrant Workers, Agricultural Workers)
- **Advanced course** - Detailed study on any of the subject

On the spirit that training gives knowledge, GEFONT tried to develop skilled manpower within its fold. In initial days, it was limited to the activities of leaders & leadership development. In this regard, the systematic approach was Cadre Top 100 campaign. Before the Second National Congress, there was no systematic effort towards HRD. After the Congress, the efforts in this regard can be mentioned in the following way:

- **Internal training** (including discussions and seminars organised by GEFONT Departments)
- **Internship Programs**
- **Comparatively long subject based training of various training institutes**
(Six persons sent in ILO Turin Centre In Italy for five week training, Two persons in Histadrut Training Institute in Israel for three month training, one person in three week TOT organised by IRR in Nepal and two persons in three week training on trade union management & leadership development organised by ILO-ACTRAV/DANIDA.)
- **Study & Observation Visits:**
(An eight-member team visited SEWA of Gujrat, India for the study of workers co-operatives; One person in observation tour in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan organised by ILO-IPEC; One person in observation tour in Bangladesh organised by Caritas Nepal.)
- **Participation in friendly visits, seminars, workshops, meetings and gatherings**

During the period, excluding the programs of GEFONT, altogether 217 persons participated in national level training in 16 different subjects. In addition, 97 persons participated in various international programs.

For the education programs and HRD, a number of publications have been done.

5. Involvement in the issues of social concern:

In this period of our struggle, the concept 'Trade union is the social partner' displaced the wrong traditional notion that trade union is the equipment for increases in wages & facilities and that it is for strikes. Our movement has laid down two responsibilities of trade unions:

- **Professional responsibility** related to rights & interests concerning job & employment.
- **Social responsibility** related to the liberation of the oppressed segment of our society.

Among the two, GEFONT has been active on the following issues of social concern:

- Elimination of Kamaiya system, the bonded labour system.
- Elimination of child labour and girls trafficking.
- Programs against social & gender discrimination.
- Human Right
- Consumer issues like price hike, budget and other policies.
- Blood Donation
- Games & Cultural Programs
- Programs for victims of natural calamities.

6 Activities related to Social Security:

During the glorious decade, a number of issues have been given a concrete shape from the former unplanned frame. Some initiatives on social security have been taken after First National Congress, which are as follows:

- Financial-physical assistance through federations to the workers affected by labour disputes including strikes
- Establishment of Emergency Fund Scheme as a beginning of institutional campaign
- New institutional initiative on workers co-operative as a part of GEFONT By 2000 from Second National Congress
- Sufficient financial assistance by ITWAN (GEFONT Affiliate of transport workers) to the members affected by road accidents
- Constant lobbying for social security system and network

7. Labour Laws & Trade Union Rights:

As the achievement of the decade, we have received some new labour laws. Significant in this regard are Labour Act 1992, Trade Union Act 1992 and Transportation Act-1995. Moreover efforts to make corrections in the Acts were launched after Second National congress; the results are the following:

- First amendment in Labour Act 1992
- First amendment in Trade Union Act 1992
- First amendment in Foreign Employment Act 1986
- First amendment in Bonus Act 1974

Coveninences have been felt in labour disputes, union registration and operation of welfare fund after these amendments.

With respect to the trade union right, 175 cases in the court have been handled by our Dept. of Trade Union Rights & Grievances Handling. Out of those, 45.71% were decided in favour of our members, 12% in favour of employers, 24% are in continuation and 18% cases are in pending.

8 Woman workers Campaign:

A large number of Nepalese workforce consists of women workers. So, large participation of women workers from local to central level is essential in order to make our movement representative. Considering the reality, this campaign has been launched through CWWD.

There are two experiences of women participation in trade union movement. First is of separate trade union for woman workers. Second is of representation of handful of women in working committee and formulation of department or committee in the unions where the number of woman workers is considerably high.

GEFONT has different experience. "Participation, not mere representation" is our slogan in this regard. CWWD has been functioning as a special department with regard to the exercise of rights. And, at the same time it is enjoying the equal status of National Federation within the organisational framework of GEFONT.

CWWD is functioning in tiers:

- Concentration in professional rights of women workers by forming RWWD & DWWD as well as separate departments in Centre of the National Federations.
- Affiliation to the National women movement in order to fight for general women rights of the woman workers.

For the purpose, the policy of GEFONT in relation to CWWD can be expressed in three points:

- Direct representation of CWWD in GEFONT NEC.
- At least 25% women participation in every programme of GEFONT.
- 25% male participation in the programmes of CWWD.

Achievements after the formation of CWWD can be mentioned as follows:

- Increasing women participation in trade union activities.
- Good understanding on **representation, participation, sexual dis-**

crimination and gender discrimination within GEFONT umbrella.

- Establishment of 8th March as historical day.
- Identification of problems of women workers.
- And initiatives in garbage cleaning and tea plantation to enjoy paternity leaves also.

9. GEFONT and contemporary politics

The trade union movement of Nepal has been divided into leftist and non-leftist unions from the very beginning. This type of polarisation is still in continuation even after the mass movement of 1990. After the enactment of Trade Union Act 1992, political division of trade unions is basically represented by:

- GEFONT as the legally recognised leftist trade union centre
- NTUC as the legally recognised rightist trade union centre

Other centres do not exist with the legal point of view and are just the **paper unions** traditionally affiliated to the various political parties.

On the question of trade union and contemporary politics, both the main streams are following the political trade unionism. However, there are differences in the issue of relationship between trade union and the political parties.

The relation of NTUC with the political party is based on opportunist character. As a result, though Nepali Congress is not divided formally, the leadership of NTUC divided into two groups; which resulted formal division of the Union - NTUC & DECONT.

On the contrary, GEFONT has explained its relationship with the parties as **engagement with organisational autonomy**. It refers to:

- Working in co-operation for same political mission with the political party of the same vision.
- Organisational independence
- Choice of political party by the members as their personal freedom.

Under this policy, GEFONT is in close hand-in-hand relationship with CPN-UML. Although GEFONT was fully aware of the limitation of the **minority and coalition government** of CPN-UML, it has played a role of **comrade -in -arm** during the movement and has staged its reservation and protest on non-pro worker activities during its participation in Government.

Because of this concrete policy and relationship, GEFONT did not have to face division and inside fighting even in the period of division in the parliamentary party of CPN-UML.

10. Miscellaneous

- a) **OSH:** Though information oriented activities were started before Second National Congress, OSH was paid high emphasis through its inclusion as a campaign in the program 'GEFONT By 2000' adopted by the Congress.
- Subject Committee has been formed to launch this campaign. GEFONT has been participated in various training and exposure programs organised by national and international organisation related to OSH.
 - After Second National Congress, GEFONT is also involved in OSH project launched by the Government and environment project- ESPS under HMG/DANIDA co-operation.
- b) **Labour Building** Construction Campaign: Second National Congress had announced "GEFONT will have its own building by 2000" and the construction of the Building will be symbol of **Dignity & Unity** of workers". To meet the challenge and sentiment of the Congress, GEFONT has recently purchased the same building where its central office was situated. This building is named as *Man Mohan Labour Building* in the name of Com. Man Mohan Adhikary, the founder leader of Nepali trade union movement.

We have gained these achievements in the course of our struggle. Is it sufficient?

We commit- During the Glorious Ten Years of our struggle, there have been weaknesses from our parts in between the activities.

One

- Spirit of the movement for democratic constitution could not be realised to the fullest extent. Even the oppressors of the movement enjoyed impunity and our movement could not become successful to pull them under the legal punishment.
- Co-ordination with various peoples' organisation could not be translated into practice to the desired extent.

Two

- Though the policy intervention was highly significant during this

tenure, we became less impressive in mass mobilisation on specific National labour issues.

Three

- Effective implementation of labour laws could not be realised in practice as expected.

Four

- We became less effective within our rank & file to make a clear understanding in various components of the Labour Policy and our position.

Five

- Our movement still demands more effective departmental exercise and conducive organisational structure.

Six

- Because of the bureaucratic delay in the amendment of trade union act, our programme of **One Million Membership** proved to be ambitious even in a situation of high potentiality.

Besides, there are various opportunities for our movement, which can be listed out as following:

Our Opportunities:

- Establishment of multiparty system and democratic constitution
- Recognition and involvement in Central Labour Advisory Committee
- Acceptance of trade union movement as social partner
- Strong membership base and expansion of trade union movement
- Openness created by globalisation
- Increasing international relation
- Contact & development of relationship with organisations like ILO
- Increasing participation of women workers
- Sufficient publication and education campaign
- Mobilisation of internal and external resources
- GEFONT Building
- Resource centre
- Large workforce of Agriculture and service sector
- Access of trade union workers in political parties

Not only opportunities, but also there are Challenges to be faced. Following points can be listed out as **Our Challenges-**

- Capital friendly forces in Government instead of pro-worker forces
- Anti-worker provisions in labour laws and no control of pro-worker forces in labour related state machinery

- Less social recognition of the coverage of the trade union movement
- Adverse effect of Globalisation
- Weak position of Socialist forces in International trade union movement
- Patriarchal social structure
- Less development of required Human Resources
- Poor internal resources
- Poor data base
- Concept of Unified trade union movement including agriculture, services and manufacturing sector not yet established
- Less realisation of political parties regarding the strength of trade union movement

MOVING AHEAD WITHIN THE FIRST DECADE *of* 21st

The 80's and 90's of the recently past 20th Century have proved that the union movement cannot go ahead only through the traditional union works as in previous decades. Declining union membership in all the continents has created a big challenge to the unions. As a result, unions have already started to modernise themselves and to expand the style of thinking, techniques and area coverage of activities from the concluding decade of the 20th Century. In addition, it is also observed that the effectiveness of and attraction towards trade unions have sharply declined in various parts of the globe because of the involvement of NGOs and consumer organisations in some of the labour issues. The emerging challenge from the NGOs has also compelled the trade unions to go ahead with new strategies. The need to change traditional thinking, working style and activities of unions has become more relevant as a result of globalisation, expansion of TNCs, offensive monopoly capital, intensifying consumerism, informalisation of labour, changes in the patterns of employment and sharply weakening protectionism in international trade.

GEFONT is constantly evaluating the realities and is always prepared to reorganise & systematise its vision, mission, programs and plans in accordance with the new realities. So GEFONT has determined its vision statement to be 'Socialism for dignified working class and prosperous life'. In order to translate this vision into practice, GEFONT has reviewed and revised its policies.

1. Politics, Political Party and Trade Unions

This decade is quite different from the previous ones with regard to political realities. The form of Nepali politics has undergone significant change in

this decade. Absolute Monarchy is now transformed into Constitutional Monarchy. Party-less autocracy has collapsed and multiparty parliamentary system has been established. This outstanding change is the outcome of the continuous political struggle and sacrifices of the people.

However, political parties and political leadership could not work to satisfy the expectation of people. Honesty and cleanness of the leadership have come under question marks. Political morality has weakened and corruption has flourished in an effort to become institutionalised. Unstable government is also one of the salient features of this decade.

Division and heavy contradictions within political parties have been effective in national politics. During the period, even CPN-UML, in spite of its strong organisational structure, had to face division in its parliamentary party. Though UML was able to minimise quickly the adverse effect of division on its party organisation, a psychological frustration crept into the feelings of the people. Resultantly, it has to come down from the strong probability of forming majority government to limit itself in the position of main opposition party in the general election of May 1999. Just before UML, National Democratic Party also became divided into two factions of two top leaders of that party. Ruling Nepali Congress is facing extreme conflicts between Bhattarai and Girija groups, which resulted into the division of its sisterhood organisation Nepal Trade Union Congress, but party itself is like a broken glass into hundreds of pieces just in the unity based on poor old wood frame.

Splinters of the political parties with new name and flag were totally disqualified by the people in the general election of May 1999. The CPN-ML, the dividers' group of CPN-UML and NDP (Chand), the dividers' group of NDP could not gain even a single seat in the parliament.

The later half of the decade has faced terrorist activities launched by CPN (Maoist) based on its ultra leftist thought in the name of peoples' war and it has also become a part of national politics in this decade.

With the use of extremely unfair means, Nepali Congress has acquired majority anyhow in the parliament and its government is just in existence in a situation of very serious internal conflicts of the party. The government does not seem to dig out any path strategically for the socio-economic development of the country.

CPN-UML and Nepali Congress are the two mainstreams if we analyse present national politics. However, there were effective self-centred activities and power sharing by small parties during the previous hung parliament, but it proved to be a short-term phenomenon. Therefore, it is clear that national politics of Nepal is moving ahead through the two mainstreams, though there

may be giant contradictions and factions in the two parties in their internal politics.

NC represents the interest of big businessmen and feudal landlords in national boundary and serves imperialism internationally. CPN-UML, on the other hand, is committed to scientific socialism and its pro-worker approach has shaped its role to be favourable to the labour movement of the country. Nine-month minority government of UML and its participation in seven-month coalition government was a period of pro-worker legal reforms.

National political environment is favourable for labour movement to expand the size and take a dynamic shape. Through the proper utilisation of this favourable environment, there are adequate opportunities to dynamise labour movement and to increase successful intervention in national policies.

Labour movement, now, has developed itself as a national and planned movement from an uncontrolled, spontaneous and scattered among the enterprises. From the limited activities in organised sector, the coverage of the movement has now widened to include agriculture, white-collar services and the entire informal sector. International relation has been developed very fast and the image of GEFONT is established as an active and energetic organisation.

The process of policy intervention has moved ahead. Participation in various forums has increased for policy and implementation with regard to a number of labour issues including labour laws and labour policy. GEFONT is, now, well established as the effective social partner.

Trade union movement is gradually gaining high political importance and the sensitiveness of the political parties has increased with regard to their relationship with labour movement.

In this situation, whether trade unions should be political or apolitical is an irrelevant question. Trade unions can not be non-political. Trade unions are the representatives of working masses and working masses are in majority in every society. If militant organisations having involvement of majority people become non political, there will be no participation of majority people in the policies and programs of the state, which is to be strictly avoidable in democracy with the viewpoint of socio-economic development.

Trade union movement in itself is an active form of working class politics. Trade unions may be inseparable organ of any political party or may have independent status in close relationship with any political party/parties or the independent umbrella of federations having different party affiliation. But there should not be the conflicting games of political parties within the structure of a trade union.

The trade unions may have partnership and hand in hand relationship with political parties or any particular political party. Active orientation towards this type of relationship is the ideal of trade union movement. We are determined to go hand-in-hand with the mainstream of Nepalese left politics.

We believe that there should be a simultaneous balance between independent functioning and intimacy in the relationship of political party and trade union. If both party and trade union maintain honesty with respect to the partnership and hand in hand relationship, independent functioning of trade unions and intimacy between political party and trade unions can be maintained. We are in strong favour of this type of relationship.

On the basis of these realities, we believe that CPN-UML may be a good partner as it is going with a firm belief in clear pluralistic socialist ideology through its program of People's Multiparty Democracy, which is favourable for the interest of workers and for the labour movement.

2. International Trade Union Movement

World politics and trade unions: While reviewing the world through a political perspective, we find the past two decades as the decades of important events. The period of 1980-1995 is a period of the end of cold war power balance and defensive socialism & offensive capitalism. But the half of the decade (1995-2000) has been a period of the symptom of the revival of socialism.

Offensive capitalism in the form of Globalisation is being opposed even within capitalism itself. But this voice within capitalism is just based on liberal humanitarian approach and it does not advocate for fall of capitalism in favour of socialism. It is also because of the fact that several past decades have created distaste in people in one party image and bloodshed change associated to the former exercise of scientific socialism.

Pluralism is the living reality at present. Change based on arm is not the only way for change. Patience and continuous effort is more important for change. These decades have also proved the reality that arm and force are to be used only if inevitable.

Contemporary politics should be viewed through these realities and we should be free from the impatience for hasty violent change.

In contemporary world politics, Socialism is again on rise after pushing off the failures of the past, though imperialism and capitalism are still offensive. New process of thought has started. A new phase of socialism hand in hand with pluralism has begun. Now, the thought of considering socialism as a destination has gone to a corner and the thought of considering it as the continuous process & a great journey is being gradually accepted. Therefore, vio-

lence based traditional path for change is not the only route and a number of alternatives are now opened.

Resultantly, revolutionaries and advocates of drastic change & social transformation have now started to adopt democracy with pluralism in one way or another for the continuous journey of socialism. We have always accepted socialism as the way of life and a continuous journey for the achievement of certain objectives. We are committed to the democracy with pluralism and to the concept of using multiple methods and alternatives.

Moreover, There have been outstanding changes in the trade union movement of the world. ICFTU, as a centre of anti socialist groups, has expanded itself to a large extent. WFTU, shouldered by the former USSR, is under crisis and has become weak. The role of other international trade union centres in world trade union movement is not effective, whether it is Christianity based WCL or Anarcho-syndicalist IWA.

Absolute non-alignment has also lost its importance. In every issue, involvement and resistance has become an inevitable truth. Opposing in an isolated manner from a far outside corner, now, doesn't have any role. Therefore, the old method of boycott in case of differences with respect to thought & working style is not practical. Instead of boycott and isolated opposition, **respected involvement and firm resistance** in various international forums is our stand for the days to come.

On the basis of these analyses, we have been participating in various ITSS related to ICFTU. We have adopted the policy of affiliation of our federations with the ITSS, which extend their friendly hands. CUPPEC Nepal representing construction workers and NICIWU of chemical & iron sector have been affiliated to IFBWW and ICEM accordingly.

However, it does not mean that the validity and role of independent national centres is declining. The role of ACFTU China, CITU India, KMU Philippines and so and so forth have significant role in the trade union movement of the world. As an independent national centre, the role of GEFONT is also being recognised by the outside world and our relative importance in South Asia has increased.

The Need of Network Formation: Isolation in each and every sector has become irrelevant and interdependence has become the reality of human life. As a result, formation of networks & blocs and protection of common interest is going internationally in a number of aspects like military, political, economic-commercial, religious-cultural etc.

Networking is necessary for the protection of working class interest against the adverse effects of globalisation. There will not remain any alter-

native than to surrender in front of MNCs if we could not globalise our solidarity, our struggles and our activities of resistance.

The networks may be effective not only in international level, but also in regional and sub regional level. It may prove to be of high importance to create effective structure among the trade unions of socialist perspective working against imperialism. Even without any mass base, NGO alliances have played significant role in building public opinion on social and consumer issues. Therefore, if we launch forward the alliances of the mass based trade unions with real commitment & concrete work plan; it will be possible to persuade imperialism, TNCs and their obedient national governments to kneel down on various contemporary issues. If the mere campaigns like Clean Cloth Campaign and Ethical Trading Initiatives can play significant world-wide role, why not the role of effective trade union alliances will be gainful ?

Considering acute poverty, similar life style and common nature of the problems in SAARC countries, the need of forming an open & liberal trade union network is evident. It has become relevant after the establishment of World Trade Organisation. We should be ready to play our role in order to form such a South Asian Network, if it becomes possible.

3. Unified Trade Union Movement

Why Unified Movement: Globalisation has blurred the life, interrelation, activities and the world in such a manner that it is, now, useless to oppose from a far corner and in isolation. It is possible to resist offensive campaign of capitalism and imperialism in the form of globalisation and to develop socialism only through the continuous and wide unity of workers. The only solution is the formation of integrated national movement based on elimination of existing divisions and unity of all types of workers. A New World on the solid ground of justice and equality can be built on through strong national trade union movement and strong international solidarity.

National movement cannot be strong without integrating the workers of vast majority agriculture, fast expanding service sector and comparatively slow & stagnant manufacturing in our realities. Otherwise no effective and decisive intervention is possible. Moreover, without effective & decisive intervention, neither the resistance movement against imperialism nor safeguarding the working class interest & active journey towards socialism is possible.

Thus, tricolour unity and the movement are the need of the day. Only through this unity, the great campaign for the development of socialist humanitarian world based on justice & equity can be launched forward in order to gain a prosperous life for working masses by developing resistance movement

against capitalism-imperialism and by social transformation. We are committed to translate it into practice from our part of responsibility.

How To Go Ahead? It is a topic of discussion what process in our country will be suitable to realise the above mentioned tricolour unity and unified movement. In other countries, such kind of unity has already gained momentum and the differences between white collar and blue collar workers are no more in existence, although the degree of effectiveness may differ. There are complications to launch it ahead in our country. There is an illusion that professional organisations are totally different from trade unions. Thus, the unions of service sector workers in public enterprises, though registered under Trade Union Act, are still in isolation instead of coming within the wider unity of trade unions. However, rightist unions in the same PEs are directly affiliated to Nepal Trade Union Congress. But in a meaningless effort to form non-congress front in enterprises, left trade unions are in isolation. In the effort to create an umbrella, Professional confederation was established, but it includes all organisation registered under Social Organisation Act, National Direction Act and Trade union Act and does not deserve the legal status to function as a trade union.

In order to unify left unions registered under Trade union Act and to make them effective and decisive in policy intervention, four alternative way outs may be suggested for the time being (though affiliation is inevitable after some years):

- Direct affiliation to those, which can be affiliated.
- Developing new federations by GEFONT itself through the mobilisation of workers of the concerned service sector.
- Developing relationship with those, which cannot come in affiliation, as associated federations with autonomy of functioning and GEFONT control on their international relation and trade union education.
- Creation of a Progressive Labour Senate as a common forum for all progressive left unions to discuss the labour issues and to work for wider unity.

Among these alternatives, any single alternative or a mixture of more than one can be launched forward for a successful campaign of unified trade union movement.

4. Contemporary issues and our position

Expanding Globalisation: Although it began in the name of Structural Adjustment Program through IMF in '70s, Globalisation accelerated only after the defensive position of socialism in '80s. It is further speeded up after the collapse of socialist model of Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We have categorised the carriers of Globalisation into four groupings:

- IMF, World Bank and WTO
- TNCs
- NGOs/INGOs
- Means of Communication

These carriers have launched economic, social, cultural and environmental globalisation and created few favourable and mostly adverse effects in the life of the people. Technological changes beyond imagination mainly in the area of communication have accelerated the speed of the process of globalisation. In this process, world-wide flight of capital is uninterrupted and everything is being channelled towards the hands of TNCs. Social and cultural life of the people is also adversely affected. The hegemony of TNCs is gradually being established even in rural agricultural sector and agricultural products. Permanency of employment and job security is under heavy attack. Advanced nations and TNCs, through IMF-WB-WTO in economic & financial front and NGO/INGOs in socio-cultural-environmental front, are harvesting high profits and intervening in the life style of the people. Thus, it is necessary to resist adverse effects of globalisation in sub regional, regional and international level through the joint effort of trade unions, POs, genuine NGOs and consumer organisations. In accordance with the norm 'respected involvement and firm resistance', we should be active to safeguard the interest of Nepalese working masses from the adverse effects of globalisation. For the purpose, it will be practical to accelerate the process of developing unified movement of workers of agriculture, industry and service sectors in order to develop national resistance movement.

Privatisation & informalisation of labour: Privatisation and informalisation of labour are problems emerged through the process of globalisation. We believe in selective approach with respect to privatisation. We reject the common style of blind opposition and blind support of privatisation of PEs & SOEs. We think the blind privatisation launched in Nepal is absolutely wrong and against national interest. Strictly speaking, privatisation should not be extended towards public utility services (basic services like drinking water, electricity, and telecommunication), schools & hospitals; culture related enterprises, Financial & banking enterprises already working in rural areas, enterprises & services associated to sovereignty of land & natural resources. While privatising others, too, there should be consultations with trade unions and overall homework. Privatisation intended towards closure or liquidation for undue benefits cannot be accepted at any rate. Besides, prior to privatisation of any enterprise, attention should be paid to the following:

- Maintaining wages & facilities, safeguarding the interest and job security
- Provision of strict restriction to close or liquidate at least before five years

Increase in capacity utilisation

Strictly 'no' to the individuals and firms with too little capacity to operate the enterprise.

Similarly, in order to stop informalisation of labour in the form of casualisation & contract and to ensure the job security, union activity in enterprises has to be intensified and the issue of job security is to be raised in all bipartite & tripartite forums.

WTO: The World Trade Organisation established in 1995 has joined hands with IMF and WB and has become more offensive. It is active in favour of trading interest of advanced nations by an endeavour to restrict the export trade of developing nations through the creation of linkage between labour & international trade and between environment & international trade. As we believe in simultaneous upliftment of national interest and workers' interest, we oppose the policy of WTO to link labour & international trade. We feel it practical to activate the role of ILO effectively and to develop suitable mechanism with respect to labour standard. The implementation of labour standard through the framework and mechanism of WTO is just a showpiece in our analysis. Thus we view the activities of WTO in connection with the resistance against the adversities created by globalisation.

NGOs: Most of the NGOs and INGOs are working under a tendency of 'Project just for projects'. However, a few have also worked in favour of working people. In this process, the campaigning of some NGOs with heavy publicity on particular labour issues has affected the effectiveness of & attraction towards the trade unions. So we should have a balanced approach towards NGOs. We may have to work in collaboration with those raising labour issues genuinely. Likewise, we should be alert towards their undue activities going against workers in the name of the benefits of workers.

Export of labour: In order to balance the uninterrupted flight of capital, export of labour has become necessary for developing & least developed countries like ours. But it is to be noted that mobility of workers of all countries in every country is not practical. Considering our socio-economic conditions and the structure & level of employment, Nepalese economy does not have a status of importing labour from outside. Therefore, in spite of export of labour being necessary in our case, our country cannot import labour excluding some technical difficulties.

Industrial policy: Existing industrial policy, though focussed towards attracting FDI, has not been successful in this regard. On the one hand, the policy of liberal market economy is adopted and on the other, incentives (if 'protection' may not be the correct word) are necessary to native entrepreneurs in various sectors. In the absence of adjustment & proper balance

between liberalisation and incentives, industrial environment of the country is not inspiring neither to the native entrepreneurs to flourish, nor to the FDI to come ahead without hesitation. Therefore, it is essential to revise the existing industrial policy by making it more practical in priority sectors as well as export-oriented production. Incentives should be given to the areas of labour intensive technology.

Education policy: Existing education policy of the government has continuously remained in a transitional phase instead of being stable, balanced and farsighted. As a result, in this race of liberalisation, higher education and technical education is gradually going within the fold of only high-income families. On the contrary, even primary education is gradually going out of the access of poor masses, though it is declared free. However, employment - income oriented and skill oriented education and development of self-employment is always given high emphasis in policy level, but practical aspect is very weak. So our emphasis is on this practical aspect.

Public Health Policy: Health facilities are concentrated in urban areas, because the investment of government in health sector is low and public health policy is also limited to formalities. As the expensive health facilities of private sector are out of the reach of working people, public health policy of the government must also include the development of health co-operatives. It has become necessary to launch health co-operatives also by trade unions, health NGOs and consumer organisations.

Employment policy: Looking at the present position of unemployment, the rate is approximately 5%. The major sector of employment is agriculture, where underemployment is nearly 45%. Since majority of the labour force will remain in agriculture for a long time also in future days, employment policy to promote agricultural employment is necessary. Similarly modern service sector is expanding and size of construction sector is increasing in informal sector. So opportunities of employment can be increased through technical skill training. State should pay equal emphasis to industrial employment with respect to quality and productivity, though the size of industrial employment is limited in our country.

Wage policy: At present, government has no clear & concrete wage policy with an exception of ad hoc fixation of minimum wages and its review. Suitable and practical wage policy is an urgent need, because wages cover a large proportion of aggregate national income. We are of the opinion that existing four-category minimum wage tradition should be replaced by single national minimum wage system. Above the national minimum wage, sectoral minimum wages can be fixed in different sectors of production and services. Besides, fair wages and higher wages should be based on collective bargain-

ing and productivity. But it is to be noted that wages should be balanced with price hikes and inflation through wage indexation.

Population & environment policy: Representative workers' organisation cannot ignore the problems emerged because of population growth, environmental deterioration and increasing urbanisation. These problems are associated also with occupational safety and health. Trade union movement is sensitive in this regard and is positive for the genuine national and international efforts.

Policy of resource mobilisation: Problems in proper mobilisation of resources are acute in existing economic condition of the country. Our tax administration has not proved itself capable in the mobilisation of internal resources. Although VAT has a significant role to play in internal resource mobilisation, its implementation cannot be made effective for the fulfilment of national interest without a capable, honest & active tax administration. In addition, business community in the name of VAT is exploiting consumers. So the government must be sincere and alert towards the consumer angle. With regard to the mobilisation of external resources, the ill culture of every successive government to feel pride in fetching more and more foreign loans should be put to an end. External debts must be used productively. External financial assistance and aids should be channelled towards those sectors, where maximum utilisation is possible.

Communication & cultural policy: The effective mobilisation of mass media in favour of working people of the country and for the protection of sound cultural values is an urgent need of the day. On the basis of competition and efficiency, it is imperative in our part to defend the humanitarian aspect of our culture, which is being polluted by the impact of western mass media. Unfortunately, the existing activities of government in the areas of communication and culture do not show any vision and direction. This situation should be changed and led towards a way out through intensive discussion and continuous interaction. We are always conscious to play our role for the development of democratic culture.

Workers Participation in Management: The provisions and mechanism included in Labour Act with regard to workers' participation in management have not been effective in practice. But it is a need to activate the existing ones and to develop new mechanism for the protection of workers' interest. Our emphasis is towards effective participation, because it will be fruitful to launch different aspects of workers' interest through it, but if participation becomes inactive, it will be harmful for the entire movement. We are in favour of fruitful and effective type of participation.

Ownership in the enterprises: Sharing the ownership may also be a measure for working class dignity and prosperous life. However it cannot be implemented in general. Efforts in accordance with the situation may be desirable in this regard. But while acquiring the shares in the enterprises, we should be alert towards the danger of misutilisation of the workers investment in a situation of declining enterprises. In addition, we should pay attention to its impacts on class structure and class transition. Therefore, long-term impacts cannot be ignored only by focussing attention on short-term positive aspects of share ownership.

Social security and Labour Laws: A negative approach in employers towards job security and their voice for hire & fire policy is increasing from their corner. They are raising their demand for revision in labour laws from this approach. So the question of social security has become more relevant in this regard. It is the urgent need to establish social security system and social security fund to operate a number of schemes covering both formal & informal sectors of work even in a phase-wise manner. It is important also from the viewpoint of poverty alleviation and workers' welfare. It is essential to extend the social security system, because existing provisions are insufficient, solely employer dependent and limited to a small portion of the total workforce. For the purpose, labour laws are to be revised to establish contributory fund for social security.

Productivity: Technical skill and efficiency is most important in the present era of competitiveness. Suitable productivity policy is essential to improve work culture and to develop multi-skilling, because collective bargaining will be strong on the basis of higher labour productivity and competitive capacity. The productivity policy of government is more formal instead of being practical. Also the non-government sector has very little and negligible contribution & investment for the growth of productivity. There is very important role to be played by employers and the government with regard to on-the-job-training, retraining and to create sound working environment. Our emphasis is to launch special technical & skill training for productivity increases even within our trade union education program. Favourable impacts can be created for the socio-economic development & transformation and also for the desirable development of productive forces, if all concerned work for productivity movement.

Social discrimination: Our ideal is to eliminate all kinds of social discrimination including gender discrimination and to develop equity based society. In order to create an environment of gender equality in the work places, equal opportunity in education, training, employment and wages is extremely important. We are committed to participate actively in social reform campaigns for the recognition of work & contribution of woman workers in fam-

ily & society. The entire movement is sensitive against inhumane activities and crime related to girls trafficking. It is our priority to establish gender equality and move forward pro-worker social transformation. Caste discrimination is also a part of social discrimination and the movement against it is a part of the responsibility of trade union movement.

Participation in politics: With the viewpoint of policy intervention and effective implementation, representation & participation of labour movement in various political entities and forums is essential. From this angle, advantages and disadvantages of the participation in House of Representatives, National Assembly, DDC, Municipalities and VDCs have to be calculated. But it is to be noted that no one can misuse the political posts & prestige for their own benefit. While sending the representatives from the union movement in such political units, main agenda should be the interest of the union movement. The leaders and workers should not have an approach to leave labour movement while participating in these political units. Instead, they must have a mentality of shouldering responsibility as a division of work of the labour movement. Thus it is imperative to move on for lobbying in order to send those leaders & workers, who are clear, determined and committed. In spite of this policy in national level, decisions to participate in local political units like DDC, VDC & Municipality should be taken under the local needs & benefits of the organisation.

Workers Co-operative: During the last term of the NEC, we could not exercise workers co-operative in practice. Study of different experiences and of practices was conducted. For the coming days, concept of developing service oriented co-operative and launching workers co-operative program with basic priority to health co-operatives has now become desirable.

5. Class structure & Struggle

New changes have been observed in the class structure of Nepalese society and new layers are emerging. Now, the working class is being converted into working class groups because of the emerging new layers within the class itself and entering new layers with widening process of integrating labour movement. Within the working class, the group of proletariat is very small and under this, too, industrial proletariat is negligible in number in comparison to the number of rural landless agri-laborer. Now, the various income groups of petty bourgeois working community are coming under the fold of working class. The major portion of the industrial workforce is still based on its paternal land property. Therefore, GEFONT cannot go ahead with outdated class analysis by ignoring the changes in class structure while reviewing & modifying policies and setting programs. So we are conscious towards the need of launching struggle in wide range and through various measures. Our

belief and experience is clear that social transformation and change will be led by class struggle based on practical & farsighted approach instead of lip based offence.

Local struggle can be developed in rural areas on the basis of issues of land, wages, social security and human self-respect. Likewise, local struggles in urban & formal sector can be developed on the basis of wages, social security, job security and human dignity. On the strength of local struggles, movement in the national level can be made more energetic. Again through the movement of national level, local struggles can be made more effective and energetic. This will dig out easy route for reforms and will enhance the morale of the working class. It will in turn strengthen the power and form the base for overall transformation of Nepalese society. By moving forward through this track, we are active and committed to achieve our mission of 'Socialism for dignified working class & prosperous life'.

6. Action focused policies:

Based on above analysis, our activities for the forthcoming days have to be moved forward through the following action policy categories:

Agriculture focused policy - Agriculture is still the major occupation and way of life of Nepalese working class. The large proportion of wage earners is dependent on agriculture. So it is natural to give priority to the task of unionisation of agricultural workers. Focus point of our activities in future will be to ensure large participation of agricultural workers in labour movement through our efforts to have a sound structure of wages & social security for them.

Service focused policy - A number of unions related to various white-collar services are still outside the mainstream of trade union movement. Our activities will be centred on making the service sector workers to enter the unified movement and on protecting their interest effectively through different measures.

Social issue focused policy - The list of the responsibilities of trade union movement related to social transformation is increasing. We will extend our activities on various issues of child labour, woman workers, forced labour, unfair labour practices, socio-economic aspects of consumer life and environment.

General union work focused policy - Under general union work, membership of our organisation will be categorised into paid up membership, signatory membership and supporting membership. With the viewpoint of the protection of the rights of all types of members and non-member workers, our

general union activity will be focussed on trade union education, collective bargaining, social security and labour laws.

Big Business House focused policy - Suitable mechanism and the steps accordingly will be taken to establish uniformity in minimum facilities and wages in the enterprises of big houses. The policy of single collective bargaining with each of the big houses for all of its enterprises will be forwarded.

TNC focused policy - Policy of direct collective bargaining by confederation itself with TNC enterprises and Joint Ventures of their involvement will be launched forward in order to create suitable mechanism for uniformity in terms & conditions of employment, wages and facilities

Member focused policy - It is essential to develop union movement & organisation itself as a common home with high humanitarian sensitiveness. So, the organisation has to play appropriate role to solve individual as well as family problems of the members. It will inject more energy to the dedicated activists. Thus it is necessary to start suitable programs through financial department of GEFONT.

