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NEW TRENDS IN TURKISH UNION MOVEMENT IN THE GLOBAL WORLD

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Abstract

While the union movement has been transforming within the extent of the needs of the post-industrial society, Turkish union movement is fact to face with a representation crisis even without being an effective part of the industrial relations.

As far as the historical background of Turkish union movement is concerned, it is possible to point out that the unionist conflict has not been experienced owing to nonexistence of the industrialization and democracy in pre-Republic era. With the multi-party system in 1946, the union movement commenced with legal arrangements, went through its organization and enlargement process between 1946 and 1960, and reorganization and gold age in 1960-1980. Nineteen eighty and afterwards is the third period of Turkish union movement and it covers noticeable distinctions within itself.

Current union structure does not meet the expectations of the workers. Furthermore, it makes it formidable for them to adapt to existent conditions. This structure and external factors bring about the acceleration of the loss of members. However, it is a reality that Turkish union movement has been under the effect of the local factors rather than global ones.

Keywords: Turkish trade unions, Turkey, New trends, Globalization and Turkish trade unions

1. INTRODUCTION

When assessing the historical development of Turkish union movement, we classify the period of 1946-1960 as

organization and getting stronger, 1960-1980 as reorganization and golden age, and post-1980 as prohibitions, loss of power and member.

In the process of globalization, while

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intensification of the competition and dependency, weakening of the nation state structure bring the international actors into the fore, it is observed that capital attained power and trade unions lose power. Making the liberal economy principles single standard all over the world, increase of the tendencies to protect capital instead of labor and emergence of labor-based competition have rendered the international factors effective rather than the local ones. On one hand, common principles are being put into the practice with the acceptance of the ILO convention and other international standards, on the other hand remarkable divergences turn out among the countries far from these principles.

Over the recent years through which the foundations of the work life are laid, while the developments such as technological change, lean production techniques, rise of the numbers of white, pink and steel-collar workers have undermined the organization in the work life: as in other countries, union movement in Turkey, is also under the effect of these developments. While union movements in the world are being reorganized within the context of the needs of post-industrial society, Turkish union movement faces to a representation crisis without being an impressive actor.

2. CHALLENGES FOR THE UNIONS

It is not possible to say that there happened a great role of workers' class in the acquisition of the union rights, just as in all social changes. Therefore, the story of trade unionism until 1970s is a story of organization rather than a movement (Koray, 1994, p.157). The transformation wave appeared in the world since 1970s and the

change winds that have become effective in Turkey since 1980 have brought about the profound changes in the economic, social, political and cultural structure.

The most important change in Turkish Unionism after 1980 is increase of centralization, conflict in public sector until 1995, generally conciliation after 1990 and intensifying and formidable member loss after 1990. For the white-collar workers whose number increased together with the quick expansion of service sector, trade unionism has been perceived neither as a tradition and inheritance, nor has solidarity been high. Workers in the service sector prefer individual trial to union trial because of working conditions and having middle-class values (Koray, 1994, p.83). Therefore, the increase in the number of white-collar workers affects trade union movement adversely.

Labor unions generally view privatization as a move to weaken an ultimately the labor movement (Dereli, 2000, p.445). Availability of anti-union movement in trade unions, increasing attractivity of underground economy and practices like privatization accelerate the leakage from the system. In addition, when we take into consideration that the unions are largely organized in public sector, the decrease of number of employees in SEE brings a great danger for the unions (Tokol, 2005, p.291), affects the number of members negatively.

Discussions about the inclinations towards to the membership in private sectors in place of public sector, and towards the new organizations strategies and services to make the membership of the unions attractive take attention. But not decrease of anti-unionist perspective in the non-union sector, increase of the wage-cost ratio in the workplaces with union and non-union ones,

increase of the attraction of the unregistered economy and privatization accelerate the escape from the unionist system. Consequently, some businesses within the extent of the collective bargaining choose the way to keep out of the collective bargaining system and to use sub-contracting method; the number of the workplaces in which collective bargaining is applied, the workers using the right of union and collective bargaining and union rates decrease. While 1.463.880 workers benefited from the collective bargaining in 1990, this number decreased to 862.737 in 2002 (Urhan, 2004, p.138).

Turkey's union regulations are criticized due to obligation of 10 % representation barrier to be authorized union in the related work branch, prohibition of workplace and occupational unionism, and the limitations put on the freedom of organization by the Labor Act issued after 1980 in Turkey. The work branch unionism that is considered pertinently when the union division experienced before 1980 is considered is an adverse development when the workplace and occupational unionism gaining importance in the world are considered.

The unionist efforts made by the government officials have turned out to be a hopeful development despite the unwanted developments experienced after 1980. Because the union movement of the public workers who struggled by seeking justification on a social basis and officially gaining important things have been one of the most important developments. But the public services, who have gained their unions organizational right by the Public Serviced Union Law code number 4688 in 2001, have not gained right of collective negotiations and strike. Rightness of collective negotiations that is not bound for

public services do not contribute for solving their problems. Besides establishing of public service unions', public services have been divided into groups according to this political basis. The upper organizations according to this political basis decreased the power of public serviced unions'.

But since the outbreak of the movement, the division on political basis and upper organizational structure put off this light as well. Due to lack of collective bargaining and strike rights, there are public workers' unions called unions but in practice associations.

It could not stop the loss power of the unions and affect both the thrust and the expectations of the society adversely that the unions are not aware of the developments having been occurring since 1970 and try to behave reactively. The unions, which cannot find alternative owing to criticism, follow the challenges with the policy of "wait and see". In the end, economic structure in Turkey has a form, which, on one hand, makes the union organization difficult and, on the other hand, increases the need of organization.

In spite of the increase in conflicts from time to time, the non-existence of important strikes and lockouts after 1995, the achievement of some legal arrangements by reconciliation, similar attitude of employers and employees toward some social problems hint at trends toward reconciliation. The president of T?SK (Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations), Mr. Baydur defines this change like this: Confrontational trade unionism has been replaced by reconciliation and responsible trade unionism (Baydur, 2000, p.538). Besides, arguments for private sector- trade unionism instead of public-sector trade unionism, search for new organizational strategies, concentration on services making membership to trade unions

are important developments. Yet it is not possible to say that these efforts are sufficient to start the positive developments necessary for trade unionism.

The unions in Turkey are the ones which value just the collective bargaining for their members, divided, ineffective and far from the representation of the workers.

3. NUMBER OF THE UNIONS' MEMBERS

In parallel with the shrinkage of the member numbers and power of the unions, Turkish union movement is going through similar events. Single market tried to be composed with the studies in the international area, unlimited movement capacity given to the capital, flexibility inclinations and deregulation attempts are felt by both national and international companies' attempts, the institutions particularly unions are studying to prevent these developments. While preference of the informal sector and the realization of the production in the small workplaces shrink the scope of the unions, being the high of the unemployed, preference of the unregistered employment, pressures on labor through flexible work models rule out the use of the rights assured by the constitution and acts.

Especially employers' making ineffective of their attitudes against the unions by non-unionization, sub-contracting, making the right to make collective contracts invalid, escaping from the collective work contracts, making the strike and arbitration ineffective affect the system adversely. while the rate of workers utilizing from collective labor agreement to total wage-earners was 19 % in 1990, this rate fell to 8,3 % in 2002 (Urhan, 2004, p.138). When the number of the members benefiting from the collective

contract is taken into account, member loss around 50 % within 12 years . 1998-development report published by the World Bank the unionization rate is 9.1 %. Unionization rate of employees out of agricultural sector is 22 % according to UNDP's Human Development Report (Petrol-Is, 2002, p.58).

According to the 2006 data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the number of the workers with insurance is 5.088.515, as for the number of the workers with unions is 2.989.431, and the union rate is 58.71 % (ÇSGB,2006). All of the sides, however, agree on the fact that these figures do not reflect the truth.

Future developments in the Turkish trade union movement will depend widely on internal political and economic change; they can be influenced and supported by external factors (Büyüksü, 1994. p.286). While the companies make their workplaces non-unionized in the sake of gaining competitive advantage and through low-cost and high-productivity, replacement of the dialog in the public sector until 1980s with the conflict led to the alienation of the unions to the society and being a minority of the members of the unions. In sum, the increases in the foreign capital investments neither relieve the unemployment challenge nor create an appropriate environment for unionization (Kutal, 1996, p. 16).

While the companies in Turkey were non-unionizing to have international competitive power by having lower cost and higher productivity, the changes like replacement of dialogue by conflict, increasing privatization, changes in the workers' protection policies by governments, expansion of underground economy, contraction of employment narrowed the activity area of trade unions and led to

minority of trade union members and to the alienation of trade unions to society.

4. WORKERS' AND MEMBERS' CONSIDERATION OF THE UNIONS

As in their number of members, there is transformation in the unions' structure. It increases the number of white and pink-collar workers and young workers in the union structures based on the blue-collar female workers increase and the potential member base changes. In connected with these transformations, unions try to diversify their activities to respond to these but these demands have not been reflected to the practice, yet. Therefore, there is a decrease in the number of members of trade unions rather than an increase, and the net result is a decrease.

To analyze the conditions in which the unions are, initially, it is required to specify the relations, expectations and view of the members of the unions to the unions. Otherwise, the solution will be look for at incorrect places and methods and this leads to new challenges. In this context, when analyzing the consequences of a research carried out by taking work branch and the difference between the unionized/non-unionized workers, there proves important results. In face to face research covering 411 workers, 273 unionized and 138 non-unionized (Urhan, 2004, p.220), working in the sectors of chemical-plastic, weaving, metal and food which was made in a quota model to cover 640.694 unionized and non-unionized workers in those sectors, 52 % of the workers who were non-unionized and had membership experience said that they didn't thrust to the unions as a reply to the question that why they were not a union member, and 60 % of them said that unions

were unable to meet their expectations. Meantime, 45 % of the non-unionized workers never until then said that they did not become a member due to the employers' pressures (Urhan, 2004, p.234).

When the not becoming a union member is analyzed by the variable of gender discrimination (Urhan, 2004, p.237), 38.2 % of the males and 50 % of the females showed employer pressure as reason. 36.1 % of the females and 32.4 % of the males shows the fact that their friends aren't member of the unions as reason. As understood from these data, the interaction is stronger among the females. The fact that the workers do not become member for fear that they can be dismissed or pressured by the employers is meaningful to emphasis the union aspiration. Meanwhile, 35.3 % of the males and 16.7 % of the females say that they do not become a member due not thrusting unions. There is the fact that the reason why the males do not become a member due to not thrusting the unions is the most important obstacle in front of the unionization. The number of those who think that their position will not change by becoming a union member is 30.4 % for males and 25 % for females. If the unions in which the males are dominant cannot meet the demands of these workers, it shows which levels the unions are in a precarious situation.

Intra-union democracy is one the inextricable principles of the union organization and the opposite do not comply with the philosophy of the union organizations. When analyzing the consequences in Turkey, we see that the results are not satisfactory and that the intra-union democracy does not operate as required when the data are analyzed. We see that 40 % of the union members think that there is no union democracy and 18.4 %

seems to be indecisive (Urhan, 2004, p.265). The union organization in which the members do not have a say and are excluded cannot be an attraction focus for organization. This is an important problem for the unions in Turkey.

The fact that the intra-union democracy has not improved enough expands the scope of the union leaders and enhances their power. Union members whose democratic benefiting from the collective bargaining and do not exert themselves on developing union democracy (Uçkan, 2002, p.175) .

Thus, the trend of union movement is not only loss of members, but also loss of reliability.

5. TRANSFORMATION IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

When we analyze the union organization models historically enterprise, occupational, and work branch were existent and union, federation and confederation at the level of upper-organization. In the years of emergence of the unions while occupational and enterprise unionism were preferred, later the work branch unionism was founded.

While enterprise and business level union organization was dominant in the first years of the unionism, at the same time, attempts to realize the work branch unionism and to bring all of the unions into an upper organization were made for long years, and as a result of these in 1952 with the foundation of Türk-İİ (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions) the aim to found an upper organization was accomplished but the aim of organizational union was not reached. As the single confederation representing the workers across Turkey until 1967, and later, it has maintained its mission of being an institution representing vast majority of the

workers. With the establishment of Türk-İİ, the establishment of a higher organization goal has been achieved; but the organizational unity goal is still quite far.

Work branch unions preferred to bring the unions under a single roof were realized only after the issue of Trade Unions Act 2821, in 1983. Therefore, the background for realization of strong unionism instead of scattered and weak one was performed, but in spite of this legislation, scattered union structure wasn't refrained and the union structure which was desired, dependent on the workers' preferences, realized with conscious not with legal obligations wasn't reached.

As of 2004 there are 96 unions acting, 33 of them committed to Turk-İİ, 7 to Hak-İİ, 19 to DİSK and 37 independent. According to the Labor Ministry's statistics, the 71.18 %, 13,83 %, and 11,48 % of the workers are members of Türk-İİ, DİSK , and Hak-İİ respectively (ÇSGB, 2004, p.99). While analyzing the union division before 1980, we see there were 912 trade unions in 1978. Regression of this number to 93 today is meaningful but not enough. While in 1979 the number of the trade unions confederation was seven, it's positive as compared to the past that this number is 3 as trade union confederation but not compatible to Turkey's facts. When we take into consideration the numbers of workers and confederations respectively, we see that dispersed and poor trade unionism originated from dividing into more labor unions is still prevalent. This division is not suitable for Turkish realities.

Türk-İİ preferring being a union in every work branch performed to realize this but did not reach conclusion. The fact that there are two unions in even the workplaces committed to the Türk-İİ is an important point to bring out the union division.

The organizational structure of Turkish union movement has stayed rather weak on account of the adverse affects stemming from the legislation, economic structure and the contest among the unions.

6. UNION ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

From the beginning of the establishment of the industrial relations system in Turkey in 1960s as bargainers with state and employers, unions tended to be considered as an indication of "business" unionism, albeit not often in the American sense, because, unions also pursued militant wage and social policies. As result of ideological developments, the attempts for centralization for union structure and militant wage claim, effort for a "social contract" was witnessed in the late 1970s. However, in the Turkish context, in comparison with most European countries corporatism did not become a significant notion as a part of social democratic ideologies of macro economic policies rather, it appeared as a consequences of the pragmatic needs of government to come to terms with the power of unions and their members to disrupt as Hyman (1989;172-173) described it for English case (Büyüksulu, 1994, p.13).

Under the light of these developments, when we evaluate the activities and services of Turkish trade unions, we see that the bureaucratic and classical tasks became the obvious character due the fact that the unions in Turkey were founded by the support of government and intellectuals and under the protection of the law as to be called "wage unionism", "phone unionism"¹ and

"collective bargaining unionism". There is an understanding of unionism that value the workers according to the contract they sign and strange to other activities. Collective bargaining and wage increases aren't so obvious just because of the unions' preferences but also Turkey's chronic inflation has affected them profoundly.

In Turkey, the relations between trade unions and political parties have been a matter of conflict. Because of their structures that cannot build-up a tradition and is lacking in model, trade unions seem to have been under the command of political parties. The independence of trade unions from this interaction process has been impossible. In particular, political parties always show a great performance for having a word in the management of trade unions and other non-governmental organizations (Lordo?lu, 2003, p.296). This structure hindered the activities of unions' political functions. The unions whose political functions have been decreased since 1980s, tried to decrease their power to 1990s. After 1990's, unions are in a period that their political activities decrease rapidly.

With a resource made on 37 unions in 1998, it was observed that the unions were ineffective in education, resources, cooperativism, investment, social security, the activities related to the cultural and social services (Ersinadim, 2001, p.172). To the question "what are the most important factors hindering your unions' activities" related to the investigation activities important in the union activities, 36 % of the unions responded as "they did not leave enough resource to investigation activities, 28 % as" the managers did not attach enough attention to them", 12 % as " the members'

¹ The habit of doing union activities without going out of the unions

education level was low", 11 % as "they did not surpass facing the knowledge society and 14 % did not answer (Ersinad?m, 2001, p.93).

In the research made in 1995 by Türk-Ar called "Youth Problems and Young Workers", the question to identify the attitude of the young's about the unions, 24.5 % of the participants responded as "the unions did not attach attention to the workers enough, 22.8 % as "the unions didn't show enough performance against the employers, 12.1 % as they didn't know what the union was (Türk-Ar, 1995, p.89). When considering the young labor force in Turkey, it appears that an important part of the problem of the unions being unable to organize stems from the unions.

The results of the research made by Urhan in order to determine the service diversification and effectiveness of the trade unions (Urhan, 2004, p.255) show that there are some remarkable developments. The questions for the sufficiency level of trade unions' services are replied negatively. As for the facilities of the trade unions, the 70, 4 % of the answers are negative. Health supports of the trade unions are insufficient for 63, 8 %, and indefinite for 16,1 %. According to the survey, the satisfaction level of the educational services is 23, 5 %. As understood from the results of this research, the unions could not carry out their service functions and the members are unsatisfied from this situation.

Great majority of the trade union leaders have neglected the effects of new technologies and health and job security subjects, and evaluated trade unions' activities and services from a narrow margin, while they could not manage the labourers' social and political demands. Besides, we can conclude that the workers could not

effectively manipulate their leaders in these areas.

Though the difficulties in which the unions are, a change is occurring a reality. Unions are in search of new services in spite of their inadequate services. For instance, to make women and young workers more active, committed unions especially confederations made attempts and wanted to give priority to find solutions to the problems of the women by founding the committee of "Woman Worker Bureau". On this issue, while the developments such as the women committees, education and publications for the women were provided, the activities for young workers stayed low. It is impossible to assess this situation as Turkish unionism inclines to new activity fields but it is possible to say that there are new inclinations.

7. THE CAPACITY OF UNIONS TO USE NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

As machine replaced manual power and brought a new social order in the industrial society, computer technology creates knowledge society order, and technological developments affect every part of the society. This prepares a process requiring the emergence of new structures and institutions in parallel to the collapse of former ones.

In recent years, the relation between trade unions and new communication technologies has been studied, and the positive and negative effects of communication technologies on trade unions have been evaluated. It has been claimed that the anti-technological attitudes of the trade unions changed and the vitality of technology adaptation for survival of the trade unions is

accepted (Senkal, 2003, p.33). Yet to be able to utilize from new opportunities, it is necessary to have knowledge and technological qualification. Focusing on the adverse aspects of them, the unions are not aware of the important part of the opportunities they can offer. In recent years, while new sources, particularly e-union, are on the agenda in the developed countries, the inadequacy of Turkish unionism takes attention.

According to the consequences of the resource made in 2004 over 42 unions on the capacity of the unions to use new communication technologies, while 97.6 % of them have computers, 61.9 % don't have a communication technology department. In 88.1 % of the unions, there is not Intranet connection among the union headquarters, region and branches. A resource made by internet, it was specified that only 26 of 58 trade unions had web site and that web site was working. According to the results of the same survey, the trade union publications and bulletins are not issued on the web page by 76, 9 % of the syndicates. The rate of the trade union suing the lists of the agreements signed is 19, 2 %, the rate of the trade unions giving its members a discussion forum is 7.7 %. They are insensitive for the e-publication, since the rate of the trade unions issuing upgradation date on the web page is 7,7 % (Selamo?lu & ?enkal, 2004, p.12,25, 40,43).

These are important indicators of the insufficiency of trade unions in perceiving the positive effects of technology over trade unions. It has determined that while the resources to make the use of the services and communication highly effectively possible were physically existent, they could not be used effectively.

The unions are behaving too slowly at benefiting from the information and

communication technologies and are unable to adapt themselves to the needs of the age and themselves. This indefiniteness shows itself more clearly when Turkey was compared to the other countries. When compared to developed countries, the low-level usage of the technologies by workers and insufficiencies of the trade unions affect the adaptation to new technologies negatively.

8. CONCLUSION

In parallel with the development occurring in the world, Turkey have gained the principle of increasing the economic wealth in a liberalized world, the strategy of liberalizing its market to increase its competition capacity instead of import substitution strategy, liberal foreign trade strategies instead of protective foreign trade strategy, EU membership in place of close economic relations and took up a process from the state interventions to liberal policies. So, from the integration with the world economies point of view, it has taken part in the globalization movements and realized regional cooperations.

A private sector-based economy structure was preferred to increase the competitiveness of Turkey, which preferred to be integrated with the world markets, and privatization studies were made to prevent the adverse affects of Public Economic Organization's on the economy and macro instabilities by restricting the scope of the state. Due to these developments, there have important changes in the role of the state in the industrial relations.

While the maximum limit of the social state expenditures are being debated, Turkey , without putting the minimum requirements

of being a social state, is taking part in these debates. Being unregistered of the majority of the economy, prevalence of the workers without social security, inadequateness of the employment guarantees, increase of the unemployed, working of majority of the labor as official or contract workers, restriction of the scope of the unions' activities have brought about the reduction in the number of the union member. In adequate industrialization and intervals in the pluralist democracy at times, besides, prevents the organizational and permanent development of the unions, brought on a union movement shaped by the law.

Turkish union movement has a structure that is used to the preservation of the law even if not enough, based on the public sector, far from representing the majority and lack of a high organization level. While the union are paying effort to solve the challenges formed by the globalization in the 1980s, the fact that the Turkish union should be in an organization model compatible with new union act has showed the agenda difference of Turkish unions and affected their development adversely. The fact that the union act issued by 1983 necessitated the work branch organization and prohibited enterprise and occupational unions created a dichotomy with the fact that the latter came to the fore in the world.

There are two strong options for trade unions. Firstly, they will provide good rights for members by keeping existing structures and policies, but secondly, in the long-run they will lose their effectiveness and, by changing, they will re-structure for new needs, and will apply new strategies. Turkish trade unions chose the second option, but could not carry out the requirements efficiently. Although they had emphasized the change, they have practiced this change

by keeping the old structure.

If trade unions aim at small targets like just arranging working life, or just defining working conditions, it will be inevitable for them to alienate from the society. To improve the quality of life should be added to the basic targets of trade unions. Consequently, Turkish trade unionism is under the influence of local conditions rather than global conditions, and in the near future it is inevitable for it to go under the global conditions.

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