

## **Let us make a Single Union!**

*Chairperson,  
Distinguish guests  
Comrades, Friends, Brothers & sisters!*

It is my immense pleasure to address your Second Central Congress. Considering time constraint of your August Ceremony, let me limit in 4 major points.

### **First, Right At work!**

Destruction of existing Mixed Economic System begins after 1990 popular movement; which stopped policy of 'permanent jobs' and withdrew limited state-owned subsidies as well. Resultantly it pushed workers in the market as the commodity; you will get more wages in the labour scarcity and under pay if there is surplus a labour.

This anti-worker tendency didn't stop here. In the name of making cost-effective production, all burden has been imposed over the workers--- cutting down facilities which the worker were enjoying and a process of formalisation of labour began in the formal economy as well.

Known as 'liberalisation' this system adopted exploitative forms of labour practice, which only prioritise voiceless workers who are ready to sell their labour in whatever condition the employers want.

In my view, Liberalisation and Capital's globalisation means a nexus of opportunity & difficulties and success & the mess for trade union. It is a trend where strong would be strongest and weak would be weakest.

The mismatch of huge crowd of unskilled labour force and scarcity of skilled professionals in the Nepali world of Work is the result of this unjust system. Post February 1 further intensified the process, which only adds the agony to the working population.

### **"Second issue is Right to Wage!"**

How much should be the workers wage in classical term how much should be in practical life. Ironically we are following poverty wage system rather than the fair wage. Fortunately if you got a job today you will solve today's hand to mouth problem any way; however next dawn will bring in front of you similar challenges where you have to work; what will be the rate of your labour. This is the fate of majority of our working population.

I stress Right to Equity as the **third** priority of trade unions.

Let me touch upon existing discriminatory practice in the world of work in Nepal based on gender, ethnicity and geographical region. Our humanity has been polluted in the name of *Dalit* and shamefully we are practicing '*touchability-untouchability*' in our employment relationship.

As we all know the union rights such as to organise, collectively bargain, peaceful assembly have been curtailing in present day Nepal. Thus, I would emphasize Right to Freedom as the **Fourth** right!

These all issues are interconnected, not an isolated! We cannot address these issues in the absence of Democracy and the peace. These issues are intertwined with politics, thus labour agendas are political not an apolitical. Therefore ongoing movement for democracy and peace is the movement of trade unions not the movement of political parties only.

I would like to comment briefly on contemporary debate of what is and what is not the independent trade unionism. We have heard, some of our colleagues believe that apolitical unions or 'unionism free from politics' would bring prosperity in the workers life. GEFONT feels it as erroneous notion, however. If our colleagues are indicating 'party and the trade union' relationship as 'patron and the client', it is fine. We do believe that labour movement cannot be limited in the periphery of a political party; rather it must be capable enough to influence entire politics.

In this outset, I think the DECONT congress should be able to answer issues such as whether unions is a political movement or the apolitical; how much labour agendas relate to politics and how should be relationship between political parties and the trade unions?

Let your congress discuss what the boundary of the trade union movement is and what are the value and the principle of a trade union!

Let me put a question before this august gathering—"if above mentioned points are the issues of the entire trade unions, why there is a division in the movement? Is it possible to create an independent dynamic umbrella of trade unions, which follows the values of participatory democracy & diversity and supports Welfare-state as the social system?

If you ask us, our answer is YES! It is possible, that's why we are saying- One Union- One Voice! That's why we are working with you hand in hand!"

Let me communicate you why GEFONT didn't support multiple centre in the international trade union movement, why it deny to favour any existing centres based on "profit" and "ism"?

"Let us Unite, becoming a slogan for GEFONT in its entire tenure. Today, we are proud to say that GEFONT would one of the founding unions along with other

democratic independent national trade union centres of proposed **New Trade Union International**, which is going to be launched later of this year by merger of ICFTU & WCL. It is almost sure that all of the recognised Nepali trade unions will share that platform equally."

If it is becoming possible in international arena, why not we could launch such umbrella having similar value and the principle?"

Let me conclude with a remark- "GEFONT has decided it from its 4th National Congress 2 years back. Now it is your turn, may your congress think and decide to forge unity in the trade union movement and creation of a single union in Nepal.

Have a very successful Congress!

Bishnu Rimal,  
Vice-chairperson, GEFONT

(Address to the Second Central Congress -2006 of the Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions -DECONT)