

## ***Resurgence of trade unions in the US.***



*Food workers strike at San Francisco airport.*

The United States never fails to project itself as the champion of human rights. But, recent media reports have exposed its ugly track record of suppressing basic trade union rights. The big corporations of the United States don't take kindly to trade unions. Trade union-busting activities is reported to be a routine affair of these corporations. As a part of this, every employee has to attend anti-union meetings. In the recent past, Amazon alone has spent more than \$4 million for union-busting activities.

At the same time, media reports say that, the American working class has started defying their corporate masters and are taking to trade unions in a big way. Even in the multinational giants like Google, Apple and Amazon, trade union activities have started picking up. Workers have started trade unions in 200 Starbucks outlets throughout the United States since last December. Apple stores in places like Oklahoma and Maryland have witnessed the starting of trade unions.

Interestingly, as stated above, trade union activities have gathered momentum in the new-age companies. Experts say that, young, college-educated workers are the driving force in organising trade unions. What is the reason? It is because, they are over-educated, overworked, but underpaid.

At the time of Covid-19 pandemic, the US corporations reported huge financial gains. At the same time, even basic safety measures are not provided for the workers. For example, unionisation started at a large Amazon warehouse in New York's Staten Island, over the lack of face masks and other safety measures for the workers. This only exposes the cruel face of capitalism.

Experts say that, workers are not only looking at wages, but also want respect. They want to be treated with dignity. The labour shortage created by the pandemic, has provided the leverage to the workers and they have become less fearful in organising trade unions.

However, even as of now, workers' participation in trade unions remains abysmally low in the US. As per the report of the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, only 10.3% of the workforce has become members of trade unions in 2021. This figure remained at 20% in 1983. At its peak, workers participation in trade unions was close to 35% in 1954. These figures speak volumes of how basic trade union right is being trampled down in the US.

As per reports, since the 1970s, productivity in the US has risen much faster than wages. Between 1979 and 2021, productivity (income generated in an average hour of work) grew by 62.5%. But, the hourly wage has grown only by 15.9% during this period.

Policy decisions are largely responsible for this. While rises in the minimum wage became smaller and rarer, tax rates for the higher slabs fell and the government failed to change labour laws as employers grew more hostile towards unions. So, the corporations and their executives reaped the most of the economic benefits of growing productivity. The average worker fell behind and income inequality soared in the US.

*[ Source: Times of India dated 20-10-2022]*

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