

All India Bank Employees Association, the oldest and largest national trade union centre of bank employees in India, was founded in 1946 on the 20th of April in Kolkata. They were being paid paltry wages with no regulated service conditions at all. It was a rule of hire and fire. Bank employees were groaning but did not have the necessary courage to form unions. They saw the workers in the factories fighting and making some progress in terms of wages and betterment in service conditions. Bank employees also gathered some courage here and there and started to organise themselves into unions in a sporadic way. Some protest actions and strikes were undertaken but the disputes were referred to tribunals and employees did not get justice or satisfaction.

Hence unrest and dissatisfaction amongst the employees were brewing and many Unions were formed during the period. With the advent of AIBEA on the scene, this gave a fillip to the formation of unions in different banks. With the formation of the Unions, there were innumerable agitations, struggles and strikes in the banks. Banking was a State subject at that time and hence there were number of Tribunals and Awards. The growing discontentment amongst the bank employees was sensed by the management and the authorities and banking was made a central subject.

Consequently, there were All India tribunals. The unduly long periods of awaiting, the unsatisfactory awards and the bias of the authorities made the AIBEA in 1964 to demand direct bilateral negotiations and settlement. AIBEA succeeded in this effort when in 1966 the first ever industry level Bipartite Settlement was signed between the AIBEA and the bank management's across the table. Today this bilateral agreement constitutes a landmark achievement in the banking industry and 7 Bipartite Settlements have been signed so far by the AIBEA.

Thus from 1946 to 1966 - nearly two decades were the periods of organising unions and fighting before the Tribunals.

From 1966, it has been an era of consolidation. Bank unions were recognised by the management's and in each bank many policy issues on recruitment's, transfers and promotions were regulated by mutual agreements.

Along with the struggle for improvements in wages and service conditions, AIBEA also campaigned for nationalisation of Banks. After years of continuous efforts and struggle, AIBEA achieved its objective when major 14 banks were nationalised in July, 1969. Subsequently in 1980 another set of 6 Banks were nationalised.

AIBEA has always been governed by its twin policies - concern for the progress of the banking industry and concern for the betterment of the interests of banking staff.

Even today AIBEA is guided by these principles.