



State Banks' Staff Union

(CHENNAI CIRCLE)

(Regd. No: 883)

(Affiliated to All India State Bank of India Staff Federation)

POST BOX NO.1754
STATE BANK BUILDINGS
84, RAJAJI SALAI
CHENNAI - 600 001.

CIRCULAR NO.114

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May Day 2019



May Day for trade unionists means, celebrating the unity and solidarity we manifest towards each other in all our diversity. On this historic day, we convey our revolutionary greetings to all.

This year's International Workers' Day coincides with the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organization. When we consider the changes that have impacted the world and the world of work, the successful longevity of International Labor Organization cannot be ignored since its early beginnings.

Marc Blecher, a professor of politics and East Asian Studies at Oberlin College argues in his contribution to the collection that rather than holding that the glass is half-full and celebrating the heroic resistance of labour to enhanced exploitation, or on the other hand lamenting that it is half-empty because resistance has been quite limited, we do better to analyze and understand the different patterns in the responses of labour to the forces of liberalization and globalization.

On May 1st we celebrate the achievements of workers throughout the world and renew our commitment to the struggle for workers' rights and against exploitation. This special occasion is also an opportunity to dwell on our present and the future.

It is relevant today to recollect the marathon struggle of our employees. In 1946, the Bengal Comrades went on strike from 1st August onwards. It was the first ever direct action programme successfully conducted in the Banking Sector. The Strike continued for 46 days. At that time, Industrial Disputes Act did not come into being. Under the West Bengal Conciliation Act, the Conciliator was appointed. During the course of the proceedings, the Industrial Dispute Act was passed and the Conciliation was converted into a Tribunal. It was perhaps the first Tribunal for Bankmen headed by Shri S.Gupta, Secretary Government of Bengal. A small award was given by the Tribunal. We were able to achieve two significant things viz., (a) Regulation of working hours (b) same pay for same work for each category of employees.

Today we find that our members at Branches both seniors and juniors are constrained to work beyond stipulated working hours. The instructions of the Bank with regard to work-life balance remains only on paper. In reality, there is severe pressure on the workforce.

We reproduce hereunder the relevant provisions of the Desai Award given in the year 1962 governing our working hours. We enjoin upon all our members to follow the award provisions meticulously:

- (1) For workmen other than members of the subordinate staff, the actual hours of work exclusive of the recess period on week days (excluding Saturdays)* shall not exceed 6½ hours a day. The actual hours of work on Saturdays shall not exceed 4 hours.
 - (2) For the members of the subordinate staff, the working hours specified in clause (1) stand modified to the extent that they will be required to attend duty half an hour earlier and stay half an hour later than the normal working hours fixed for the other workmen.
 - (3) There shall be a recess for lunch which shall not be less than half an hour and not more than one hour for week days (excluding Saturdays)*, subject, however, to the requirements of any statutory provisions like the Shops and Commercial Establishments Acts. Primarily it will be for the workmen to decide the actual length of recess within the limit fixed as aforesaid and the majority decision of the workmen in any branch or establishment shall be adopted in case of difference of opinion with the management.
- ⊗ 2nd & 4th Saturday since declared as holiday and other Saturdays as full working day.

The outcomes of these struggles endure to this day but they are under threat due to lack of awareness on the part of the younger generation.

Thanks to the struggles and sacrifices of our predecessors who didn't take 'no' for an answer to their demands. Only because of their militancy, we are enjoying so many benefits and privileges. As a first step let us rise up to protect our rights with regard to the stipulated working hour as per Desai Award.

We must realize that May Day is not just as a yearly ritual or as a propaganda tool but as a platform on which to gather, rethink and reorganise the struggle for our rights.

Revolutionary greetings to one and all.

(S.M.SELVARAJ)
GENERAL SECRETARY

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