

REGIONAL CONVENTION OF UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION (NORTH EAST REGION)

ORGANISED BY
GAUHATI UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION
ON 29TH NOV, 2008

Dear General Secretary
All University Officers' Association:

One Regional Convention will be held on **29th Nov'08** in **Gauhati University** Guest House to discuss the detail programme to be taken by the University Officers in protest against the injustice taken by the 6th Pay Review Committee. So, you are requested kindly to nominate any two representatives preferably President and General Secretary of your Association. Please confirm for accommodation.

No TA/DA but food and accommodation will be provided by GUOA. It is for your information that S.K. Basu Vice President, AIFUOA will be present in the Convention.

Please contact Dr Ramani Barman, General Secretary, GUOA and Regional Secretary, AIFUOA, Organizing Committee (94353-09349), Fax: 0361-2700311

University Officers in protest movement:

A sad saga of deprivation and denial of equity

Responding to the Call of All India Organisation AIFUOA, academic administrators of different universities of India observed 'protest day' on 17th October, 2008. While the programme was absolutely successful in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and parts of South India, it also gained momentum in nearly 200 Universities throughout the length and breadth of India. Two principal demands as upheld by the organization are:

- 1) A formal declaration from U.G.C. stating scale of pay and other facilities of officers at par with University and College teachers – a status already enjoyed by University officers.
- 2) To designate University Officers as 'academic administrators' instead of 'non academic staff'.

There is hardly anything novel in these two demands as they had been upheld by 5th Pay Review Committee but denied for reasons hitherto unknown in the report of the 6th Pay

Review Committee. As such, our protest is to gain back our snatched away rights and privilege.

A cursory look at the past will substantiate the fact that the 6th Pay Review Committee, constituted in October 2007, in its report submitted in September 2008, included a few University officers within its purview while a large section was unceremoniously excluded. It is indeed surprising that in the “Terms of reference” of 5th Pay Committee, Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Finance Officer, Librarian, controller of Examination and other equivalent officers were referred to under the title “other academic staff”, but all on a sudden the same Registrar and others were excluded from the purview of ‘academic staff’ in the “terms of reference” of 6th Pay Committee. It is therefore a deliberate attempt to demean, humiliate and deprive us of our legitimate rights and may be taken as a glaring example of “equity denied” – an illustration hardly evinced in the history of independent India.

A few disparities:

- 1) If Librarian, System Analyst and Sports Director can come under the purview of “academic staff”, how can one justify the exclusion of Registrar who is in charge of the entire administrative and academic machinery of the university or Controller, shouldering the responsibility of examination procedure or F.O., in charge of the financial matters from the purview of ‘academic staff’?
- 2) If a College Principal, who for all practical purposes is strictly an administrator, can be designated as an academic person, how can a University Registrar or Controller of Examinations or Inspector of Colleges be termed as non-academic person?

The minimum qualification stipulated for a Registrar or Controller is 55% marks in P.G. level, a Ph. D. degree and publications which is at par with the qualifications deemed necessary for a university teacher. Moreover, most of the academic administrators hail from the teaching background and possess profound academic experience, without which it is virtually impossible to run the academic administration and provide befitting leadership in the field of higher education. How can U.G.C., which has sought the opinion and advise of academic administrators from time to time in different phases can remain silent at the exclusion of the university officers from the purview of the “academic staff”? We are therefore constrained to raise doubts about the motivation of the bureaucrats in summary exclusion and denial of legitimate rights of University officers.

Our stand and the present situation:

It is indeed unfortunate that our old committee became rather ineffective at the time of publication of the report of the 6th Pay Committee. The All India Federation of University Officers Associations (AIFUOA) which was formed in Bidhan Chandra Agricultural University through a national Convention in 2003 and since then started functioning on All India basis observed that excepting West Bengal, Tripura and a few other states, the appointment of University officials is mostly on contractual basis and in the case of lower grade officers strictly on promotion. It has also been noted that in some universities there are separate organizations based on the gradation of officers, notwithstanding all their obstacles, we tried our level best to convert the association into a national forum and ventilate our grievances

before U.G.C. Pay review committee in a concrete form. On December 9, 2007, we presented our charter of demands to U.G.C. in the presence of the Hon'ble Speaker of Parliament, Sri Somnath Chattopadhyay in a programme held in Calcutta University. Several meetings and conventions were held in Tripura, Assam, Delhi and many other places prior to that. We tried to pursue our cause in a convention held in Jadavpur University before the Pay Review Committee, but unfortunately we were debarred from making our verbal presentation despite the fact that our papers were accepted.

We met Hon'ble Central Minister Sri Arjun Singh in his residence in the presence of Hon'ble M.P. Sri Basudev Achariya. The Hon'ble minister was kind enough to admit the logic behind our arguments and commented 'I fail to understand why you are not included in the purview?' He also tried to contact the Chairman of U.G.C., but unfortunately he was not available. However, in our meeting with Prof. Thorat, Chairman U.G.C., he was courteous enough to give us a patient hearing but admitted that he was yet to receive any instruction from MHRD in this matter. It is our sheer misfortune that the same central Minister who was sympathetic to our demands informed us in his letter dated July 26, 2008 that 'teachers and officers' can not come under the same bracket.

Our representation to various bodies:

We had appealed to all Vice Chancellors including Ex M.P. Saugata Roy had supported our demand in presence of members of Chhadda Committee in Jadavpur University. AIFUCTO and Principal's Association also expressed their solidarity with our cause. The Non Teaching Employees are also with us. We are also immensely indebted to Hon'ble M.P. Prof. Basudev Achariya who took the initiative of approaching the Central Minister on our behalf.

But unfortunately, our demands were not fulfilled. We were excluded from the purview of Chhadda Committee and recommendation of U.G.C. We are therefore left with no option but to raise our voice of protest in the form of a movement. In its first phase we had observed a sit-in demonstration nationwide on 17 October, 2008. We are indebted to both print and visual media as they have given wide coverage to our democratic movement.

Our next plant of action:

It goes without saying that academic administrations, who are part and parcel of University administration are hardly in favour of agitation, in whatever form it might be. At the same time, we strongly believe, that higher education in its different phases starting from publication of result can hardly be jeopardized by coercive measures. We are hopeful that the hon'ble minister of Human Resource Development will realize the veracity of our proposition and will extend his kind cooperation and assistance to our justified cause. However, we are apprehensive of a few bureaucrats who are in the habit of creating an artificial barrier and forge absolutely unwarranted and uncalled for division.

We therefore, crave for support and cooperation of all crusaders of education and democratic people to foster our cause.

We once again state and reiterate that we hardly intend to take recourse to agitation. We only demand our legitimate rights in the form of financial and other benefit of which we have been mercilessly deprived. You are aware that university officers meagre in number have to shoulder tremendous responsibilities on account of the phenomenal growth of higher

education. Recently, in the globalised scenario, Indian Universities have to compete with the expertise of foreign universities and as such the officers have to remain ever agile to offer best service to the stake holders. If the officers are deprived of their legitimate demand, the consequence may be disastrous for the entire nation. We will march for Delhi within a couple of days for redressal of our grievances. We will also try to ventilate our note of discontent to Hon'ble President of India through Hon'ble Governors of various states. The Hon'ble Speaker of Parliament has already supported our cause in his letter addressed to Hon'ble Minister for Human Resource Development.

Sit-In-Demonstration

For Information of All Concerned that a team of the officers from different universities of the country is representing A.I.F.U.O.A., met Mr. Arjun Singh, Honourable Minister of Human Resource Development on 23rd October 2008 under the leadership of Mr. Basudev Acharyya, Honourable Member of Parliament (Loksabha) stating our demands in regard to pay revision of the university officers. Mr. Arjun Singh has assured that he will look into the matter. On the very next day, a few officers met Mr. Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary, MHRD to discuss on the same matter. Prior to that, the team also met Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, Honourable Speaker of the Loksabha on 22nd October 2008 briefing him about the deprivation of the Academic Administrators of the universities by the UGC, while prescribing pay revision for the university teachers. The fact had already been brought to the notice of all the members of the Parliament by sending email on 3rd October 2008 and also by distributing copies among the MPs through Mr. Basudev Acharyya, Honourable Member of Parliament (Loksabha). We also shared our views with the teaching fraternity of the Delhi University and JNU. We acknowledge our heartfelt thanks to MR. Basudeb Barman, Honourable Member of Parliament (Loksabha) who raised the matter before the floor of the Parliament (Loksabha) on 23rd October 2008 at 4-48 pm. Further, the members of the A.I.F.U.O.A. have decided that a

Sit-In-Demonstration

Followed by a

convention

would be held on

16th December 2008

at

New Delhi

in protest against the exclusion of the University Officers by the University Grants Commission from their 6th Pay Review Committee recommendations for the university and college teachers. All members of your University Officers' Association are requested to join us in the protest. The exact venue and time will be intimated later. Please keep watch on this site.

Our hope and aspiration:

We hope that our movement against injustice will be crowned with success with active participation of officers of all Universities and cooperation as well as blessings from all.

Nitish Biswas, Convenor and
Dr Ramani Barman, Regional Secretary (NE Region),
Organizing Committee, AIFUOA