

The NUJ (I) and Me

Mr. R. Rajendra Prabhu is a senior journalist and trade union activist with more than 50 years in the profession. He started as sub-editor cum reporter in Bhopal English daily *M.P.Chroicle* and rose to be special correspondent/assistant editor. Some of his bylined stories created a big political impact. Later, he moved to Mumbai where he was in *Indian Express* editorial page. He joined the *Hindustan Times* in Delhi as special correspondent. Besides covering parliament, various ministries and political parties he also established science reporting in the newspaper. HT assigned him for various reporting jobs in Soviet Union, Italy, Germany, France, USA and Japan regarding scientific and industrial technology. After retiring from HT he worked with several dailies and magazines specialising in technology reporting in information technology and telecommunications. In trade union field, he along with B.M. Bharati set up the first trade union in the Nav Bharat group in Bhopal. In Delhi, he was founder member of NUJ(I) and later its secretary-general and president in turn. He led the wage board team of the Union at the national level using power point presentation before the last three wage boards in an effective projection of working journalists case.

R. RAJENDRA PRABHU, FORMER PRESIDENT

■ What made you become a journalist?

The urge to be at the cutting edge of events, report and analyse them and help bring about desirable changes in society.

■ What other job might you have done?

An economist or trade union leader.

■ When did you join the NUJ (I) and why?

Right from its founding day, because I believe in working journalists solidarity against all kinds of threats to their profession, especially low wages and uncertain future. Also then existing union had become handmaid of a political party that did not believe in liberty.

■ Are many of your friends and family in a union?

Many friends from the profession are.

■ What's been the best moment in your career?

The best moment in my career was one when a common reader whom I did not know who refused to accept any payment from me for the affidavit he had tried out saying that he and his father had been reading my dispatches on science especially on the space journey of Indian astronaut in a Soviet spacecraft in 1984 and that he was thrilled that he could meet me. Also when I was able to expose the event when the then Union Law Minister Dr. Swamy threatened the Speaker of Lok Sabha with arrest. The story ran for three consecutive days as the Parliament was stalled and finally Swamy had to apologise.

■ And in the Union?

In the Union my proud moment was when we in a delegation led by Mr. Prithvis Chakravarti met Indira

Gandhi in July 75 at her invitation soon after the Emergency was imposed and we not only refused to tow her line but Mr. Chakravarti told her on her face that she was wrong to post herself as above the Constitution and impose censorship. Also NUJ (I) team's presentation in successive wage boards arguing the case of working journalists had received appreciation from many quarters. Ours has been the only journalists' trade union that used innovative methods of presentation like powerpoint and contents to boost our case.

■ And the worst one?

Worst experience in the Union was when ever leadership sought to build personality cults or groupings.

■ What is the worst place you've worked in?

I did face hostility at work place in some cases but was able to overcome it through solid contributions that gained recognition across the board.

■ And the best?

Converting the worst into the best is the challenge every journalist must face to be successful in the career.

■ What advice would you give to someone starting in journalism?

Advice to newcomers would be to remain a credible journalist and not be either a politician or believe that you can advise politicians.

■ What advice would you give a new freelancer?

The same.

■ What are your hopes for journalism in the next one decade?

I believe journalism has a great future as the newspaper moves