

## ACTIVITIES OF VIETNAM TRADE UNIONS AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

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### ABSTRACT

*In this study, the author focuses on clear viewpoints about Vietnam Trade Unions and grassroots Trade Unions organized in state agencies, political organizations, socio-political organizations, professional socio-political organizations, professional social organizations, establishments, enterprises, cooperatives, other organizations employing workers as prescribed by labor laws and regulations, foreign agencies, organizations, international organizations operating in the Vietnamese territory. The grassroots trade union is responsible for implementing the following tasks: propagating and mobilizing workers to improve their qualifications, skills, careers, and law observance; Protecting the legal and legitimate rights and interests of employees; Participating in state management, socio-economic management, inspection, examination and supervision of activities of state agencies, organizations, units and enterprises; developing membership; building strong grassroots trade unions and participating in Party building. From these above goals, the author uses scientific research methods such as analysis and synthesis, interpretation and inductive, abstracting and generalization, logic, and history, history, and comparison to come to the conclusion proposed to the work of the Vietnam Trade Union at the current grassroots level.*

**Keywords:** Activities, Vietnam Trade Unions, Grassroots.

### INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam Trade Union is a socio-political organization of the working class and the employees established voluntarily, representing workers, caring for and protecting workers' legitimate rights and interests. It participates in State, socio-economic management. It also participates in examining, inspecting, and supervising activities of state agencies, organizations, units, and enterprises on issues related to the rights and obligations of employees. It propagates and mobilizes workers to study, improve their professional qualifications and skills, obey the law, build and defend the country.

Trade unions and other socio-political organizations have made many positive contributions to developing the working class, but their efficiency is not good, and they still have many weaknesses. The working class itself has made many efforts to rise, but they have not met the requirements of the industrialization and modernization of the country. Enterprises and employers of all economic sectors have contributed positively to job creation and income for workers, but in many cases, they have still violated policies and laws against employees. Therefore, studying Vietnam trade union activities at the grassroots level is necessary to summarize theory and practice, and contribute to an overview of the activities of this organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Characteristics and Purposes of Vietnam Trade Unions

The characteristics of Vietnam Trade Unions: Vietnam Trade unions is an organization established by workers to gather the strength and protect the rights and interests of the union members and workers (Central Committee for Mass Mobilization, 2016). In the early years of the twentieth century, the establishment of the Vietnam Trade Union was associated with the formation and development of the working class and the activities of leader Nguyen Ai Quoc - the person who laid the foundation of politics, private thought and organized for the formation of Vietnam Trade Unions organization (Central Committee for Mass Mobilization, 2007). Vietnam Trade unions have two characteristics: class and mass. These two characteristics are closely related to each other, expressing the nature of the Vietnam Trade Unions (Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, 2018).

Regarding class nature, since its inception, Vietnam Trade Unions has brought full the class nature of the working class, which is expressed in the organization and activities of the union. Under the leadership of The Communist Party of Vietnam, (implementing the Party's political objectives, organizing principles, and cadres following the Party's line), it is always loyal to the interests of the working class and the nation (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2014). Vietnam Trade unions include unions of the working class. It is a gathering center, uniting a workforce to protect the rights and interests of the working class and workers (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2017).

The Tonkin Red Federation of Trade Unions was the forerunner of the Vietnam Trade Unions. In 1917, Nguyen Ai Quoc operated in London and joined the British Overseas Trade Union (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2013). At the end of 1918, he returned to France to join the French Socialist Party, then became a member of the French Metal Trade Union organization. In 1919, he showed the way and helped Nguyen Tao (overseas Vietnamese in France) to establish the Crew Union of Vietnamese people in Marseille, Le Havre. During his time abroad, he learned and researched the principles, purposes, forms, and contents of the operations of the trade unions of European countries. At the same time, he also learned about trade unions in some Asian colonial countries such as India, China, Turkey to draw lessons for the establishment of union organizations in Vietnam (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2011).

From the practice of the Vietnamese revolution and mass movements, to help propaganda, mass mobilization at that time, Nguyen Ai Quoc wrote the work "Revolutionary Path" (Duong Kach Menh) (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). This work includes his lectures for the training classes for Vietnamese revolutionary cadres in Guangzhou - China, published by the Ministry of Propaganda of the Union of Oppressed Peoples in Asia in 1927 (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006). He spoke about the nature and duties of the union organization and emphasized: "The first organization of the Union was for workers to get together to have feelings; the other is to study together; third is to improve the way of living of workers to be better now; four is to keep the interests of the workers; the fifth is to help the nation, to help the world" (Minh, 2011).

Under the leadership of "Vietnam Youth of the Revolutionary Comrades", directly comrade Nguyen Ai Quoc, many revolutionary cadres returned to the country to work in the worker's movement. Therefore, in the years 1927-1928 and the first half of 1929 in our country in general and the worker movement in particular in some places such as Hon Gai, Cam Pha, Hai Phong, the rubber plantations of the Southeast had thrived and led to the birth of the "Indochinese Communist Party" (June 1929), "A Nam Communist Party" (October 1929), and "Indochina Communist Party".

From the unions in factories and mines, the "Indochinese Communist Party" quickly built a system of unions across the country, especially in Hanoi, Nam Dinh, and Dong Trieu. The revolutionary movement of the masses in general and the working class, in particular, needs to be linked and gathered to increase strength (Central Committee for Mass Mobilization, 2006). From the need of revolutionary practice, the Provisional Central Executive Committee "Indochinese Communist Party" decided to convene the Congress to establish the Tonkin Red Federation of Trade Unions on July 28, 1929, at number 15 Hang Non-Street, (Hanoi Academy of Politics - Administration Region I, 2013). There were representatives of the General Unions of the provinces and cities: Hanoi, Nam Dinh, Hai Phong, Dong Trieu, Mao Khe attending the Congress. The Congress elected the Provisional Executive Committee of the Tonkin Red Federation of Trade Unions including seven comrades headed by Comrade Nguyen Duc Canh, member of the Provisional Executive Committee of the "Indochinese Communist Party". The congress approved the program, the charter and published the newspaper "Labor" with the magazine "Red Association" as its mouthpiece (Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, 2018). The birth of the Tonkin Red Federation of Trade Unions has influenced the revolutionary movement, domestic and democracy movement in France. The birth of the Vietnam Trade Union has great significance, marking the growth of the worker movement and the maturity of the Vietnamese working class. To complete its political mission, the Trade Unions has changed its name 7 times as follows:

Red Guild (1929 - 1935)

Ai Huu Union (1936 - 1939)

The Counter-Emperor Worker (1939 - 1941)

National Salvation Worker (1941 - 1945)

Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (1946 - 1961)

Vietnam General Confederation (1961 - 1988)

Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (1961 up to present)

Regarding the mass nature, the Trade Unions is a socio-political organization created by workers to gather the strength and protect the rights and interests of the union members and workers. Therefore, the Union is popular (The Charter of Vietnam Trade Union, 2020). The expression of the mass nature of the trade union is that the Union admitted a large number of workers to the Trade unions regardless of occupation, composition, or belief; union cadres mature from worker movement and union activities; activity content met the requirements and aspirations of the majority of employees; Trade union leadership agencies at all levels are elected by union members, representing the voice of union members and workers (Central Propaganda Department, 2016). Trade Unions join with the State to solve several social issues such as poverty reduction, sustainable enrichment, crime prevention, social evils, and national protection. The Vietnam Trade Union, formerly known as the Red General Association of Tonkin, is now the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor - The anniversary of its establishment on July 28, which is a large socio-political organization of the working class. Employees, cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers (hereinafter referred to as workers) voluntarily establish for gathering and unifying forces, building strong Vietnamese working class (Government. Decree No, 2013).

Purpose of Vietnam Trade Union: Vietnam General Confederation of Labor has always been loyal to the interests of the working class and the nation, while promoting international traditions, strengthening and expanding cooperation with trade unions of other countries and international organizations on the principles of friendship, solidarity, equality, and mutual benefit

cooperation striving for the following objectives: For the legitimate interests of workers; for peace, democracy, national independence, social development, and progress.

### **Viewpoint on Functions and Duties of Vietnam Trade Union**

The Vietnam General Confederation of Labour has the following functions: to represent and protect workers' legitimate and legal rights and interests, to participate in state management, socio-economic management and in the inspection, examination, monitoring of activities of state agencies, organizations, establishments, enterprises, to propagate, encourage workers to study, improve qualification, professional skill, to observe laws and to build and defend the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam.

The function of representing, protecting legal and legitimate rights and interests of employees: to perform the function of representing and protecting rights and interests, the trade union needs to focus on building and monitoring the current laws, regimes, and policies towards employees; the interests of employees must be linked with those of enterprises and units (Government. Decree, 2018).

Functions participating in state management, socio-economic management: Trade Unions organizes labor emulation movements and production so that employees can directly participate in management; mobilize and organize for employees to participate in formulating production and business plans, working tasks, labor management, finding jobs, and creating working conditions for them, improving the material lives, quality and spirit for the employees; inspect and supervise the formulation and implementation of regimes and policies related to employees, activities of employers, governments at all levels, economic organizations; fight bureaucracy and corruption (Government. Decree, 2015).

The function of Propaganda, mobilization, and education for employees: Propagating the Party's lines, undertakings, and policies, State laws related to trade unions, employees, and trade union regulations. Propagating, mobilizing, and educating workers to study, improve their political, cultural, professional skills, awareness of law observance, internal rules and regulations of agencies and organizations, enterprise; practice thrift, fight wastefulness, fight against corruption, actively prevent social evils (Government. Decree, 2013).

### **Viewpoints on Organizational and Operational Principles**

Organizational and operational principles are standard provisions for the organization and operation of trade unions at all levels. The principles of the Trade Union organization are ensuring the democratic centralization, the leadership of the Party, the close relationship with the employees, and the voluntariness of the employees.

Article 6, Trade Union Law 2012 stipulates the organization and operation of the trade union according to the principle of democratic centralism. The leading agency at all levels of the trade union is established by-election. The highest decision-making power of each trade union level is the trade union congress at that level. The leading body of the trade union at each level between the two congresses is the executive committee. The trade union executive committee at all levels operates on the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibility, in which the minority obey the majority, the subordinates obey the superiors, the individuals submit to the organizations. The resolutions of trade unions at all levels are passed by the majority and must be strictly enforced. The above principles guide the entire organization and activities of the Trade unions throughout the process from its inception to the present period (Law on Trade Union National Program Publishing House, 2012).

An organizational system is a dynamic system with many constituent components, with a very close connection and the right principles to ensure smooth operation and development. Therefore, referring to the organizational system structure means discussing the arrangement of the elements that make up the organization in a uniform manner, in different ways to well perform the functions and tasks of the organization. In other words, the organizational structure is the internal structure and the relationships between individuals, the constituent parts of the organization expressed as an operating and coordinating mechanism in the operation of the organization.

The organizational system of the Vietnam Trade Union is a unified organization with 04 levels, including central level: Vietnam General Confederation of Labor; Labor Confederation of provinces and cities directly under the Central Government, trade unions of central branches and the like; Labor Confederation of districts, urban districts, towns, and provincial cities; local industry unions; trade unions of industrial parks, export processing zones, economic zones, high-tech zones; trade unions of corporations and some other direct superior grassroots trade unions with specific characteristics (hereinafter referred to as direct superior grassroots trade unions); Grassroots trade unions, unions (collectively referred to as grassroots trade unions).

### **OPERATION OF TRADE UNION AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL**

#### **Propagate and Educate Workers, Officials and Employees**

Propagating the Party's lines, undertakings, and policies, the laws of the State related to Trade Unions and employees; regulations of the Union. Propagating the Party's lines, undertakings, and policies, the laws of the State related to Trade Unions and employees; regulations of the Union. Propagate, mobilize and educate employees to practice thrift and fight against wastefulness, and corruption.

#### **Organize the Protection of the Legal and Legitimate Interests of Workers and Employees**

Guide and advice employees on their rights and obligations upon entering into and performing labor contracts and working contracts with employers. Represent the workers' collective to negotiate, sign and supervise the implementation of the collective labor agreement. Join employers to build and supervise the implementation of payroll, labor norms, salary payment regulations, bonus regulations, labor regulations. Have dialogues with employers to resolve issues related to the rights and obligations of employees. Organize legal consultancy activities for employees. Join agencies, organizations, and individuals to settle labor disputes. Propose competent state agencies and agencies to consider and settle cases when the lawful and legitimate rights and interests of the employees' collective or employees are violated. Represent the workers' collective to initiate lawsuits at the Court when the legal and legitimate rights and interests of the employees' collective are violated; represent the employee to initiate a lawsuit at the Court when the legal and legitimate rights and interests of the employee are violated and authorized by the employee. Represent the employees' collective to participate in the procedures in the labor, administrative, and bankruptcy cases to protect the legal and legitimate rights and interests of the employees' collective and employees. Ask for permission from the superior to organize and lead the strike by the law.

#### **Join Management**

Participate with state agencies to formulate policies and laws on socio-economic, labor, employment, salary, social insurance, health insurance, labor protection, and other policies and laws related to trade union organization, rights, and obligations of employees. Coordinate with

state agencies in researching and applying science, technology, and techniques of labor protection, developing standards and regulations on occupational safety and sanitation. Join with state agencies managing social insurance and health insurance; settle complaints and denunciations of employees and employees' collectives according to the provisions of law. Participate in building harmonious, stable, and progressive labor relations in agencies, organizations, and enterprises. Participate in building and implementing democratic regulations in agencies, organizations, and enterprises. Coordinate in organizing emulation movements within branches, localities, agencies, organizations, and enterprises. Participate in and coordinate with competent state agencies in inspecting, examining, and supervising the implementation of regimes, policies, and laws on labor, trade unions, cadres, civil servants, public employees, and insurance workers, social, health insurance, and other regimes, policies, and laws related to the rights and obligations of employees; investigate labor accidents and occupational diseases in the activities of agencies, organizations, and enterprises.

### **Membership Development**

Grassroots trade unions have rights and responsibilities to develop trade union members in agencies, organizations, and enterprises. Over the past time, grassroots trade unions have implemented many programs, plans, and specific solutions to organize surveys, grasp the development situation of enterprises and employees in the area to build plans to develop trade union members, and establishment of grassroots trade unions. Trade unions at all levels coordinate with functional agencies to renovate contents of propaganda, mobilize admission of union members, establish grassroots trade unions according to new methods, associated with improving the quality of grassroots trade union activities and implementing the exchange of union membership cards to strengthen management, implementing preferential policies for trade union members.

### **Build Strong Grassroots Trade Unions and Participate in Party Building**

The Trade Union propagates the Party's lines and resolutions. Educate employees to well implement the Party's line and resolutions for the employees. Reflect the aspirations of the employees to the Party so that the Party can lead the State to perfect regimes and policies towards the employees. Foster elite workers in the Party, increase the composition of workers in the Party. Mobilize employees to participate in building a strong and clean Party.

## **CONCLUSION**

Trade unions play a great role in contributing to building and improving the efficiency of the socialist political-socialist system. Strengthen the close relationship between the Party and the people, ensuring and promoting mastery of the working people, step by step perfecting the socialist democracy, ensuring law enforcement, and allowing the State to become the State of the people, by the people and for the people. To ensure political stability, specifically in this study, the author comes to the two following conclusions:

Firstly, the study has pointed out the views on nature, the purpose, the functions and duties of the Vietnam Trade Union, on the principles of the organization and operation of the Trade Union Organization in Vietnam today. These views contribute to the orientation of the Organization to operate in the right direction of Socialism in Vietnam

Second, the study shows that Vietnam Trade Union activities at the grassroots level contribute to building and improving the efficiency of the current socio-political system in

Vietnam. This organization performed relatively well in propagating and educating workers, officials, and employees, such as: Propagating the Party's lines, undertakings and policies, and State laws related to the Government. Union, workers. Activities to ensure the organization of the protection of legal and legitimate interests of workers, officials, and employees, such as: Guiding and advising employees on their rights and obligations upon assignment. Concluding, performing labor contracts, working contracts with employers. Participation in management activities, such as: Participating with state agencies to formulate policies and laws on socio-economic, labor, and employment. Implement well the development of union members in agencies, organizations, and enterprises. Perform well the role of building strong grassroots trade unions and participating in Party building today.

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