

CALL FOR PAPERS:

NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LABOUR HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN LABOUR HISTORIANS, 22-24 MARCH 2012 AT V.V. GIRI NATIONAL LABOUR INSTITUTE, NOIDA

The Association of Indian Labour Historians in collaboration with the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute invites participation in the Ninth International Labour Conference to be held on 22-24 March 2012 at the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, India.

The theme of the conference is 'Work and Non-Work: Histories in the Long term'. This theme is particularly relevant in a present when the scenario of work is undergoing dramatic transformation. The future of the world of work is now very much a part of academic and policy discourse. Not only are definitions of what constitutes work and what is excluded from it of central importance, so also are practices and policies surrounding them. What is legitimate work and what is illegal has been for long a matter of state policy. Between labour and crime the line of demarcation has always been fuzzy, shifting and adjusting to needs of regulatory regimes of state and market. In the same manner the demarcation of work and leisure so starkly contrasted in the modern period is getting blurred as new forms of work acquire shades of leisure while leisure itself has been industrialised.

What can we say of that other great division between paid and unpaid work, the work outside as opposed to inside households, or simply put the work of men and that of women? Have not the home and the domestic sphere always been the sites for evolving the regimes of discipline and deployment of labour?

The question then is: are these divisions that are being invented, abolished and resurrected regularly only of recent vintage? We know that modern work relations of employers and employees emerged as distinct from self employment only in the late-nineteenth century. Re-emergence of the category of consultant and independent contractors in the contemporary period has again cast doubts on these self-evident natural distinctions. We can perhaps find several such examples where distinctions of work and non-work have either been erased or have been invented only recently. It may

then be worthwhile to cast a look backwards and have a long-term perspective on the division between work and non-work. We urge that exploration of this important theme must take into account temporal and spatial dimensions of the question. Studies on work and work relations must attempt to dislodge these themes from their secure moorings limited only to the modern era. At the same time work and non-work must be understood as having culturally specific meanings. So a comparative perspective will be enriching.

We welcome empirically rich and theoretically challenging papers which explore the theme of work and non-work and its many sided histories. We are specially interested in three themes that flow from the above broad rubric:

1. The first relates to the interesting and intertwined histories of war and work. Is military labour or work for war a genuine form of work? One may say they produce nothing but destroy everything. But historians of work and labour as well as philosophers have long noted that war and military have often been incubators of specific forms of work and work relations. Many of the designations of workers and work intermediaries in India are rooted in the world of military and warfare – lascar, jamadar, sirdar are only a few that come to mind. Payment of soldiers with salt has famously given the name to salary and salariat. Military labour also need to be studied on their own terms. They include soldiers as well as camp followers. The world of war and work must be studied together.

2. A second theme that has engaged us for quite sometime is the question of law and labour regulation. This is a question that has been addressed in AILH conferences in the past. In this conference we would like to look at how social regulation connects histories of work and ‘non-work’. Here the multiple ways in which state law and other regulatory regimes define what is included in categories of work and what is excluded from it, is of interest to us. Why have social regulations changed over time, and under what pressures? How are welfare and social control mutually related? Do all social regulations emanate from the state? What are the ways in which the state and non-state modes of regulation are articulated? A comparative and long-term history of social regulation is needed to answer these and related questions.

3. The third theme of interest relates to the question of archives. The AILH began as an organization to enable historians to engage in the task of archiving labour history. It will be useful to bring back into focus a theme that has been of enduring interest to us. What has been the experience in India and other countries of the south in archiving labour history? How do we build on that experience to enrich the archives, the oral history of labour movements, the task of interfacing the historical with the contemporary in the life of the working class? What are the technical problems and have we missed out in India solutions which are available elsewhere? Is it possible to bring about an interface? We need to think of the variety of records that we can explore to document the histories of work and non-work. What are the possibilities opened up with oral, visual and literary sources? How do we read such records and what are the problems historians encounter in using such records?

We invite papers from scholars, activists, and individuals who have engaged intimately with the world of labour and work to participate in this conference. International and comparative experiences will be especially welcome. While the conference organisers will be able to host all the selected participants for the duration of the conference we are unable to finance international travel costs.

Submission of papers:

A short abstract of no more than 500 words of the proposed paper indicating the main arguments and theoretical empirical grounding will be the basis for our selection for participation.

We expect abstracts to be sent to us by 15 November 2011.

Selected participants will be informed by 15 December 2011.

Full Papers are expected without fail by 20 February 2012.

All communications must be addressed to Chitra Joshi, Rana Behal and Prabhu Mohapatra at the address: Ailhconference2012@gmail.com