Northern India Union Section

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Northern India Union Section is part of the Southern Asia Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Northern India Union Section was organized in 1919 and reorganized in 1938, 1955, 1970, 1983, 1991, 1998, 2009, 2011, 2016 and 2018. Its headquarters are in New Delhi, India. It covers the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal; and the union territories of Chandigarh, and Delhi; comprising the Eastern Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, North Bengal, North India, Rajasthan, South Bengal, Upper Ganges, and Western Jharkhand Sections; and the Bihar, Central Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi Metro, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kolkata Metro, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand Regions.[1]

Statistics (June 30, 2019): Churches, 474; membership, 157,765; population, 822,372,982.[2]

Organization as Northwest Union

When the Southern Asia Division organized in 1919, it combined the 78 members of three churches in the Bombay Presidency (mainly Maharashtra today), with the 215 members in the four churches of the North India Mission into the North West India Union Mission.[3] The territory included Bombay, Central India, Rajputana, Hyderabad, and extended northward to Punjab, UP, the Northwest Frontier, and Baluchistan (presently in Pakistan).

Separation of Bombay

Once the division headquarters moved from Lucknow to Poona (Pune) in 1920, the work accelerated in the Bombay Presidency to the point that leadership reorganized it as a separate union in 1929. The loss of some territory did not affect the name of the union since it still contained territory farther west, including present-day Pakistan.[4]

In order to economize during the Great Depression years, officers and departmental personnel of the Northwest Union also served for the Northeast Union (now reduced to mission status 1932-1937) though based

at the headquarters of the Northwest Union. Even as a mission, however, Northeast retained its constitutional relationship with the division.[5] At the same time, leadership reorganized the Northwest Union. The North Agra (Upper Ganges) Mission would continue, a Punjab Mission would largely encompass the territory now known as Pakistan, and the union would administer the remaining territory.[6]

While the union leadership desired to establish headquarters in Delhi, the division advised that since funds were insufficient, the union's administration should continue to lease/rent office space.[7] Minutes of the union committee show that it met in such diverse places as Delhi, Hapur, Roorkee, Bombay, Poona, Mussoorie, and Lahore, while the headquarters were in turn at 12 Prithviraj Road, later at the Regal Building in Connaught Place, next for about 10 years on 23 Curzon Road (now Kasturba Gandhi Marg), and then for a brief period at 76 Queensway (Now Janpath), Delhi, when several buildings on Curzon Road had to be vacated.

Merging again with Western India Union

In 1952 the territory of the Western India Union which the Bombay Union had transformed into was reattached to the Northwest Union. The union administration asked the division for some of the funds kept in reserve to renovate the Bombay facilities,[8] and the headquarters for the enlarged union moved to 16 Club Road. (now Maratha Mandir Marg). The merger, however, didn't last long.[9]

Final Break with Western India

In 1956, following political reorganization of the Bombay State based on language, all the Marathi-speaking territories of Madhya Pradesh shifted to a newly formed Western India Union. The Abu District, now appended to Rajasthan, would continue to be part of the Northwestern Union. At that time administration also voted to transfer 11 districts of the Northeast Union to the Northwestern Union so as to conform to new political boundaries.[10] Several workers returned at this time to their original unions.

Meanwhile, the union had finally purchased property in Delhi at 27 Barakhamba Road.[11] It vacated the rented 23 Curzon Road property and moved to the Barakhamba location before the end of the 1955[12] and built a new chapel and evangelistic center, inaugurated February 16, 1967. Having obtained property in a residential area on nearby 11 Hailey Rd in 1960,[13] the union sold the site at 27 Barakhamba Road that housed its headquarters in 1965 and used part of the proceeds to construct new facilities on Hailey Road.[14] Demolishing the bungalow that had stood at 11 Hailey Road, they replaced it with centrally air-conditioned offices and an auditorium. Apartments for the officers and other staff completed the complex that the union occupied in 1967.

Merger of the Northeast and Northwest Unions

A move in 1970 that affected all the unions of the country of India occurred when church administration reconfigured four unions into three. Adventist growth had progressed much faster in the south, reaching more than 30,000, whereas the combined membership in the Northeast, Northwest, and Western Unions totaled just a little more than 10,000. Most of the territories of the Northeast and the Northwest shared the Hindi language and both unions exhibited similar challenges to the progress of the gospel. It made sense to place them under a common administration. Nevertheless, some resistance to the merger rose from both the Northwest and the Northeast unions.[15]

The newly constructed office at 11 Hailey Road was the logical choice for the headquarters of the larger union. The headquarters of the Northeast Union had been in Karmatar, India's first outpost mission station. The campus had provided ample space for a school, a dispensary, and an orphanage. The publishing house had moved there to provide learning opportunities for students of the training school. But very soon leaders realized the need for direct rail connections with other parts of the country. The union felt the same concern. Ranchi, too, did not offer adequate connections, and the climate of Calcutta eliminated that as a choice. Furthermore, the cost of living in Calcutta made that decision easy.[16]

Communication was most difficult with the northeast hill states on the other side of Bangladesh. The work there had grown so much that they could soon become a union of its own. Since the language of the remaining area was Hindi, it seemed expedient to join those territories with the Northwest Union which had the same language. [17] Eventually leadership created the Northern Union by merging all the territories of the Northwest Union except the south part of Madhya Pradesh, and all of the Northeast Union except Orissa.

The southern part of Madhya Pradesh and the state of Orissa from the Northeast Union was attached to the territory of the Western India Union which also received the states of Andhra Pradesh from the South India Union in exchange for the state of Goa. The enlarged union would be known as the Central India Union. New Delhi became headquarters for the Northern Union and Bombay for the Central India Union.[18]

The uneven membership of the earlier unions may have partly motivated the realignment. While the South India Union had a membership of 31, 968 at the end of 1970, the Western India Union's membership was 2, 878, the Northwestern India Union's 3, 157, and the Northeast Union's 4, 713.[19] After the territorial adjustment, by the end of the first quarter of 1971 the South India Union had 22, 240, the Central India Union had 14, 861, and the Northern Union 8, 289 members.[20]

Splitting of the Northern Union

Though the work in the northeast hills had started officially only in the 1930s, it had developed rapidly to the point at which several missions were on the verge of being self-supporting. The whole of the northeast hill area also was isolated from the rest of India, lying largely beyond Bangladesh, and travel if not by air took an extra day. The territory was more than 2,000 km from Delhi, the headquarters of the Northern Union.

In 1983 the division took the step of dividing the Northern Union. The Northern Union would retain the original name and the new union would be called the Northeast India Union. Its territory would consist of what was known as the "seven sisters," the hill states of the northeast India: Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, thus comprising the Manipur-Nagaland, the Meghalaya, and the Mizo sections.[21]

Northern India Union Section Institutions

Bahraich Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
6, Police Line Road; Bahraich 271 801, Uttar Pradesh.

Hapur Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
Meerut Road; Hapur 245 101, Uttar Pradesh.

Indore Seventh-day Adventist Higher Secondary School.
Kanadiya Road, Near Vaibhav Nagar; Indore 452 016, Madhya Pradesh.

Jalandhar Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
C-I, Cantonment Road; Jalandhar 144 005, Punjab.

Khunti Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
P.O. Khunti 835 210; Jharkhand.

Kolkata Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
36 Park Street; Kolkata 700 016, West Bengal.

Lucknow Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
17 Vidhan Sabha Marg; Lucknow 226 001, Uttar Pradesh.

Raymond Memorial Higher Secondary School. Falakata
Post; Jalpaiguri District 735 211, West Bengal.

Sri Ganganagar Seventh-day Adventist Senior Secondary School.
Ganganagar, SH-3, Sri Ganganagar Road; Suratgarh Bypass Road;
Sri Ganganagar 335 001, Rajasthan.

Executive Officers Chronology

Superintendants/presidents: I. F. Blue (1920-1927); A. H. Williams (1928-1934); Gentry G. Lowry (1935-1937); T. J. Michael (1938); I. F. Blue (1939); Eric Meleen (1940-1941); O. O. Mattison (1941-1946); Ray L Kimble (1946-1950); D. W. Hunter (1951-1953); A. F. Jessen ((1953-1954); T. R. Torkelson (1954-1959); A. J. Johanson (1959-1962); Oliver W. Lange (1962-1966); Edward A. Streeter (1966-1969); Ivan D. Higgins (1969-1971); Gerald J. Christo (1971-1975); W. H. Mattison (1975-1980); Robin D. Riches (1980-1985); John Wilmott (1985-1987); Saudagar

Chand (1987-1991); Prabhu Das Kujur (1991-1997); Sadanand G. Mahapure (1997-2000); M. C. John (2001-2005); Hidayat Masih (2006-2010); Ezras Lakra (2011-2015); Vijay P. Singh (2016-).

Secretaries/secretary-treasurers: F. J. Buttler (1920-1921); A. E. Nelson (1922-1924); Marion Belchambers (1925-1936); Cyril A. Hart (1937-1941); Marion Belchambers (1941-1946); J. L. Shanon (1946-1948); L. E. Allen (1948-1952); R. l. Juriansz (1953-1954); S. M. Moses (1954-1955); L. E. Allen (1955-1959); Harry Osmond (1959-1961); C. N. John (1961-1966); James M Campell (1966-1975); I. M. Chand (1975-1976); Saudagar Chand (1977-1985); Gulreiz R. Bazliel (1985-1989); S. J. Edward (1990); T. R. Gill (1991-1999); Michael G. Kisku (1999-2003); Ezras Lakra (2003-2010); Robin Ram (2011-2018); Mohan Bhatti (2018-).

Treasurers: Marion Belchambers (1923-1924); C. N. John (1966-1968); Solomon M. Moses (1968-1973); Jon L. Konghat (1974-1980); Bobby C. Kurian (1980-1985); S. J. Edward (1985-1997); Dilip K. Baroya (1997-2001); Lall Dass (2001-2004); Vijay P. Singh (2004-2005); Alamgir Khan (2006-2011); Attar Singh (2011-2015); Derald Bhengra (2016-).

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NOTES

1. "Northern India Union Section," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, accessed April 16, 2020, https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13227&highlight=Northern|India|Union.
2. Ibid.
3. "Statistical Report of the India Union Mission for the Year Ending Dec 31, 1919," *Eastern Tidings*, May 1, 1920, 4.
4. "Bombay Union Organization," Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, March 29, 1929, #2276, 659.
5. Torrey, "The Spring Meeting of the Division Committee," *Eastern Tidings*, April 1, 1932, 3
6. Ibid.
7. "Northwest Union Headquarters in Delhi," Minutes of the Division Committee, February 27-March 3, 1938. #6202, 1584.
8. Minutes of the Northwest Union Committee, March 6,1952, #83.
9. The *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks* for 1953 and 1956 shows the short-lived merger.
10. Minutes of the Year-end Committee of the Southern Asia Division, December 10, 1956, # 56-610, 231.
11. 'Miscellany," *Southern Asia Tidings*, July 15, 1955, 15.
12. "Miscellany," *Southern Asia Tidings*, November, 1, 1955, 15.
13. Northwest Union Committee Minutes, March 28, 1960. # 60-123, 53.
14. Northwest Union Committee, Jan 20, 1966. # 66-8 and "Distribution of 27 Barakhamba Property Sale Fund," Division Committee Minutes, December 19, 1967. #67-505, 141.
15. Gerald J Christo, *Out of the Clay Pit* (Hosur: Thomson Graphic, 2009), 66, 67.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Cecil B. Guild, "India Unions are Re-aligned," *Southern Asia Tidings s*, January 1971, 1.

19. Quarterly Statistical Report for the Quarter Ending December 31, 1970, *Southern Asia Tidings*, April 1971, 8, 9.

20. Quarterly Statistical Report for the Quarter Ending March 31 1971, *Southern Asia Tidings*, July 1971, 8, 9.

21. Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Executive Committee, November 2, 1983 # D 83-107/369. The action was to request the GC for authorization and for this to be effective January 1, 1984.

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