



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## Editorial

### Liberalised Recipe for Economic Offenders

Indian Press is agog with stories of leading captains of Industry indulging in serious economic crimes involving hundreds of crores of rupees. The unimaginable loss to public exchequer and of national resources has been brought to light. What is exposed is only a tip of the iceberg and the totality of the crimes is indeed aghast. This is happening in a country where majority of the people do not get two square meals a day.

Dhirubhai Ambani has amassed huge wealth by issuing duplicate share certificates, Chaparia had siphoned tonnes of money of Shaw Wallace company to his undisclosed coffers, bleeding the company white and throwing it on the verge of bankruptcy. The gang of ITC directors indulged in committing millions of dollars worth fraud in foreign exchange through underinvoicing racket. Cases of mushroom companies without any technical expertise getting government orders at a much higher rate than the market prices by bribing the ministers and bureaucrats are on the increase.

While an unemployed and hungry man involved in petty theft case finds it extremely difficult to get a bail; persons who are involved in economic crimes amounting to crores of rupees either get anticipatory bails or pretend to fall sick and land themselves in five star luxury nursing homes. If they go to jail they continue to get every facility through corrupt jail officials and can keep contact with outside world through cellular phones.

The employers organisations such as FICCI, CII, Assocham have raised a hue and cry at "Raid Raj" and have asked for human treatment to these economic offenders. The value of shares of companies involved in economic crimes came down drastically underlining gloom in the shares market. The spokesmen of market economy did not condemn these malpractices since others who were not caught were also indulging in the same practices. They,

therefore, called for change in the legal framework so that such illegal acts are legalised.

If financial tycoons have to shuttle between jail and courts, how the process of liberalisation will continue in the country—the pontiffs of structural adjustment go on arguing. If such raids continue on industrial houses there would be demoralisation among the industrial circles and the rate of invest-

#### Joint Appeal by Scope and National Trade Unions

A calamity in the shape of cyclone of unprecedented fury has struck the East Coast of India in Andhra Pradesh in November 1996, causing widespread loss of life and damage to property. In this hour of distress, it is the duty of each Indian to contribute his mite to alleviate the sufferings of the affected people and help in their speedy rehabilitation by supplementing the efforts of government.

SCOPE and the National Trade Unions, therefore, jointly appeal to all the public sector employees to:

- a) Contribute liberally at least a minimum of one day's wage equivalent.
- b) Volunteer their services for the Relief/reconstruction work
- c) Donate in the form of medicines, clothes blankets which may be sent direct to the local authorities.

The appeal is also made to the managements of PSUs to liberally donate to the relief fund as well as encourage their employees to volunteer for the relief work.

Sd/- (M Gopalakrishna)

Chairman, SCOPE

Sd/- (MK Pandhe)

General Secretary, CITU

Sd/- (R A Mittal), Secretary, HMS

Sd/- Ram Lal Thakar)

Secretary, INTUC

Sd/- (Ashok Rao)

President, NCOA

ment would be drastically brought down. Foreign capital would be hesitating to come on the soil of India and NRI would be taking back their investments. All this scare is created to pressurise the government to be lenient to these economic offenders. After all in a deregulated economy how can there be regulations to check misappropriation, embezzlement and garnering of ill gotten wealth?

The United Front Government is very much receptive to these pressure tactics. P Chidambaram, Union Finance Minister has not time to condemn the malpractices indulged in by the big business house and warn them of stern action if such practices are continued. He, however, has strong words to use against the Left forces who criticise his policies that hurt the common man in the country.

The FERA was enacted in the country to check pilferage of scarce foreign exchange but it was not strictly followed in the past. The case of ITC is one of the rare examples of action taken by the government. Instead of enforcing the law strictly against the culprits the government is now considering the proposal of loosening the grip of FERA to facilitate drain of foreign exchange resources out of the country. As reported by Financial Express on 20 November 1996, "The government is keen to review FERA regulations in order to make the foreign exchange regulation regime suitable for the liberalised Indian economy."

Shri N K Singh, Revenue Secretary, Ministry of Finance in a pre-budget meeting with the representatives of big business houses on 19 November said that the corporate sector need not feel insecure or concerned in the wake of recent action by the Enforcement Directorate against a few companies. While admitting

that the FERA regulations were "draconians" and not designed to meet India's need the Revenue Secretary stated, "I assure you that the government has no intention of carrying out large scale raids or large scale punitive action. This is not the revenue department's agenda."

Thus the government of India in a shameless manner has told the top industrialists not to be scared with the symbolic action taken against some big business houses. The government's intention is crystal clear that it desires to legalise these malpractices in the near future.

The FERA violations will be brought down by permitting the violations which ITC bosses did during the regulated regime. The government will permit in future such violations by making them legal.

The government will have to explain to the people why it permits the unscrupulous industrialists to garner hundreds of crores of rupees by resorting to economic crimes when it does not provide adequate funds to overcome the sickness in industrial undertakings or fails to provide essential commodities at subsidised rates through FDS to people below the poverty line as committed in CMP.

If the logic is carried further to a ridiculous extent, the government may end corruption in the country by legalising it. Meanwhile, people continue to die due to malnutrition and lack of medical attention, education becomes a luxury of a few privileged, child labour continue to thrive, unemployment grows unabated—cruel logic of market economy and liberalisation. Multinationals will not find better atmosphere for deeper penetration in Indian economy.

## Com.Sagarika

Com.Sagarika, a leading activist of CITU in the Dist of Kokrajhar, Assam and of Namoni Asom Chah Mazdoor Sangh, was dastardly murdered on 26th, Sept 1996 mid-night by armed hoodlums of INTUC conspired by the Garden management.

Com.Sagarika came in contact with the CITU about a year ago. Braving suspension, dismissal, intimidation, forceful eviction and denying kickback of lucrative amount by the management and the INTUC leadership, Com.Sagarika devoted herself in championing the cause of tea workers of Mornai Tea Garden under the leadership of CITU. She launched struggles for realisation of prescribed wages, concessional ration, normal working hours etc for the workers of Mornai.

She was not only a trade union activist but also a social worker. She was courageous, amiable, and a good organiser, therefore loved and respected by all.

Her popularity among the toiling masses of the area was reflected in the huge funeral procession parading a distance of 7 km despite foul weather. Various organisations from Kokrajhar town and Hatidhura namely CPI(M), CITU, Namoni Asom Chah Mazdoor sangh, DYFI, Thela Chalak and Shramik Union, Krisak Sabha paid their last tributes to Com.Sagarika.

The CITU and All India Plantation Workers' Federation dip their red flags paying homage to Com.Sagarika and send their heartfelt condolences to her minor children.

# NATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ECONOMIC REFORMS ON DECEMBER 16

The National Platform of Mass Organisations met at Delhi on 13th November evening at the AITUC Office. The meeting was presided over by R G Karnik of All India State Government Employees Federation. All the constituents of the National Platform representing the Central Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas, Agricultural Workers' Unions, National Federations and organisations of students, youth and women attended the meeting.

The meeting at the outset adopted a resolution expressing condolence at the death of large number of people due to the cyclone which devastated the coastal belt of Andhra Pradesh and called for extending relief by all units to the affected people. In another resolution it condoled the death of 351 people due to the crash of the airplanes of Saudi Arabia and Khazakistan in air near Delhi.

The meeting discussed at length the serious repercussion of the economic reforms being pursued by the government, on all sections of the people.

There has been continuous price rise of all commodities. There is no improvement in the Public Distribution System. The commitment made by the UF government to distribute the essential commodities to the poor sections at half price has not been fulfilled.

Likewise, the commitments made with regard to 33 percent reservation for women, central legislation for agricultural workers, secret ballot by workers for recognition of trade unions, etc have remained unimplemented.

No positive steps have been taken for land reforms to alleviate the conditions of the poor peasants. On the question of floor level minimum wage for the workers in the unorganised sector, the government has made an unilateral announcement of only Rs 35/- a day flouting the demands of the trade unions in the Indian Labour Conference for Rs 50/- per day and linking it to price index for full neutralisation.

Furthermore, the government has not taken any policy move on the question of mounting unemployment which has adversely affected all sections of the people. The so-called structural adjustment programme leading to closures and sickness have further aggravated the problem.

The meeting further condemned the commercialisation and privatisation of education and called for halt to such policies. Despite opposition by all mass organisations and other sections of the people, the government, on the contrary, have accel-

erated the pace of the economic reforms. It has further resorted to disinvestment of the most profit earning public sector units, and now has thrown open the so-called non-core and non-strategic public sector units for privatisation, taking a move to give away 74 percent of the equity to multi-nationals. It has also not retraced from the path of amending the Indian Patent Act, which would be extremely detrimental to the agricultural, pharmaceutical and other sectors.

The National Platform further pointed out that the policy of liberalisation and privatisation has opened up the floodgates of all round corruption, on which the government is simply soft pedalling.

## Action Programme

In the above background the meeting noted that the mass organisations of women, workers, peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth and the industrial federations have taken up mass action programmes on the above issues.

The meeting unanimously decided to take phasewise countrywide united and militant actions programme on the above issues and against the economic reforms as follows:

1. A National Convention at Delhi on 16th Dec, 1996
2. State level and industrywise conventions to be completed within two months thereafter.
3. Picketing and Jail Bhara all over the country and other agitational programmes.
4. A march to Parliament at Boat Club, New Delhi during the Budget Session of the Parliament
5. Countrywide industrial strike and Hartal at a later date.

The meeting formed a committee to concretise the demands. The dates of the countrywide picketing and the strike or any other programmes will be finalised by the National Convention.

Sd/- M.K. Pandhe      K.L. Mahendra      R.A. Mittal  
(CITU)                      (AITUC)                      (HMS)

## CITU GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

The postponed meeting of the CITU General Council will now be held at Vishakhapatnam from January 5 to 8, 1997

# Anniversary Celebration of Pension Scheme Condemned by Workers

November 23, 1996, New Delhi, the biggest loot on working class, designed by the Employees Pension Scheme was commemorated by the celebration ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation and the employers Organisation with much fanfare, on the occasion of one year completion of the Govt Pension Scheme. It is a matter of shame that leadership of some of the central trade unions were reported to have taken part in such celebration. A book written by Sri Parduman Singh, Vice President of AITUC glorifying the govt scheme of compelling the workers to purchase their pension at a very high price was supposed to be released on the occasion alongwith another book on the same subject by the actuary of the scheme Shri Bhudev Chatterjee.

But common workers could not appreciate the move by the Govt to celebrate anniversary of the design of loot on their PF by the Govt pension scheme and participation by some trade union leaders in such celebration. They protested in a befitting manner.

On 23rd Nov 1996, hundreds of workers got suddenly mobilised at the main gate of Vigyan Bhawan, the venue of the pompous Celebration of the scheme of day light robbery on the workers, defying prohibitory orders. In the high security zone of Vigyan Bhawan, hundreds of workers suddenly got thronged taking the authorities aback and shouted slogans demanding withdrawal of the retrograde scheme and pension as a third retirement benefit.

The demonstration continued for around one and half hours. Workers condemned the scheme whose anniversary was being celebrated by some TU leaders alongwith employers and bureaucrats and ministers inside Vigyan Bhawan. Who knows, whether workers' voice could reach their ears already full of praise of the scheme of loot on the

workers.

The rally was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, S B Bharadwaj, general Secretary, Delhi state Committee of CITU, Sri R K Sharma of UTUC(LS), V S Shukla of AICCTU and Ramakant Pandey of HMP. Speakers condemned the shameful act of the govt in commemorating the design of day-light dacoity on workers provident fund and making a mockery of social security benefit. There is definite justification for the govt to rejoice over the govt pension scheme since it will ensure supply of huge funds to them at cheaper rate of interest of 8.5% at the cost of workers PF. There is also reasons for the employers to be delighted over the scheme since they are bailed out from the responsibility for making any additional contribution for pension to workers. But what can be the justification for some trade union leaders to rejoice over the disastrous scheme which robs the workers, they are supposed to represent, from the good part of their provident fund generation in lieu of pittance as pension? These basic question was raised by the workers in the demonstration. It was also pointed out that the workers are being looted and the same was being celebrated by spending the workers' money in the custody of Employees Provident Fund Organisation.

It was also declared by the speakers that struggle will continue to defeat the retrograde scheme of loot. Mass signature campaign against the scheme is going on all over the country. And crores of signature collected will be submitted to Lok Sabha during the next session of Parliament. Speakers called upon the workers irrespective of affiliations to prepare for further intensifying the struggle in the days to come.

## Com. Amiya Das Killed by Miscreants

Com. Amiya Das, the Secretary of the Orissa State Committee of CITU, Secretariat member of Steel Workers Federation of India and the leader of the mining workers of Orissa was shot dead point blank by miscreants on 29.10.96 at Sundargarh.

Com. Amiya was returning to Rourkela after attending a court case at Sundergarh when he was fired while sitting inside the car. The miscreants, all known anti-social elements were chased by the people around and handed over to police.

Com. Amiya had joined the student movement in the early seventies and thereafter joined the trade union movement. He was Organising the steel workers in Rourkela and the iron ore mining workers in Sundargarh district and led many heroic and militant struggle facing the onslaught and attack of the contractors, employers and their gangsters. He played notable role in organising the adivasi and tribal workers in CITU and was immensely popular among the tribal workers of that area.

Com. Amiya Das was also a member of Orissa State Committee of CPI(M) and played notable role in consolidating CITU after disruption made by the renegades.

The funeral procession of Com. Amiya Das at Rourkela was attended by several thousands of workers.

CITU Secretariat condoled the death of Com. Amiya Das and demanded exemplary punishment of the murderers and their abettors.

## ILLUSORY DEFENCE AND HARD REALITY

□ TAPAN SEN

The 76th Foundation Day Special Number of 'Trade Union Record', the fortnightly journal of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) has carried a special supplement on 'The New Pension Scheme For Provident Fund Subscribers' authored by Shri Parduman Singh, Vice President, AITUC.

The whole write-up aspired to justify and rather glorify the 'Scheme' imposed on the Provident Fund Subscribers by way of ordinance by Narasimha Rao Government followed by legislation in the last session of Parliament. After long pages of explanations as to how this novel scheme is beneficial to workers in dire poverty, whose provident fund remains are generally 'fittered away' after superannuation, it is concluded "AITUC can legitimately claim credit for being the first to propose such a pension scheme for nearly two crore workers....and for having consistently fought for not only its adoption and implementation and also for securing vital amendments in the Original Scheme"

### CREDIT ON OTHERS' ACCOUNT

Let us start from the end. It is regarding claim for "having fought for securing vital amendment of the Scheme". The ordinance for diverting 8.33% share of workers PF to the so called pension fund was first declared on 16th October 1995, and alongwith the pension scheme was circulated to the trade unions and other concerned. Probably during end-November a meeting of the Central Trade Unions was called by the then Union Labour Minister Shri G. Venkatswamy. In the said meeting CITU and few others opposed the scheme and others including AITUC pressed the Labour Minister to implement the scheme. Till that time there was no amendment. Without any amendment they expressed their readiness to accept the scheme.

Then in the 32nd Indian Labour Conference held on 23rd-24th November 1995, Union Labour Minister stated that since CITU is opposed to the pension scheme, Govt. would not press for the scheme. At this, one senior central TU leader stated "Sir it is not your scheme so that you can withdraw. It is our own scheme". When those Central TU leaders were certifying the retrograde Govt. Pension Scheme as there own scheme, till that time no amendment to the original scheme was notified. Still they claimed the credit for those amendment. Only on 28th February 1996, certain amendments to Pension Scheme were notified.

It is a fact and everyone understands, that it is because of the strong opposition of CITU to the

retrograde scheme and all out resentment against the scheme down below among the workers, some improvements were announced in the scheme with a sole motive to soften the opposition. It is such opposition among the workers against the scheme that compelled the Govt to declare some improvements, although such improvements do not alter the basic retrograde character of the scheme. It is not fair to claim credit for something on others' account.

But definitely they can claim the 'onus' of first proposing such a disastrous scheme which compels the workers to purchase their own pension at a price much higher than it deserves. It is like 'administered price' of essential commodities imposed on the common people. The only difference it got the certificate of the 'Leadership' (and not workers) of few Central TUs.

### THEY CALL IT BENEFICIAL: FIGURES SAY THE OPPOSITE

The whole write up pleaded the immense beneficiality of the scheme. But the main complaint that the scheme takes away from the workers much more amount by way of diversion of Workers PF to pension fund than it returns in the name of pension was never dealt on or sought to be replied, to establish their shower of praise' on the Govt. Pension Scheme. If a worker drawing 1000/- to start with and getting annual wage rise of 10% gets a pension of Rs.2286/- only at the end of 30 years of service where as during the same period the diverted amount of provident Fund towards pension fund (at 12% interest per year) would offer him a monthly income of Rs.5353/-, how could the scheme be beneficial to him? The above calculation is not CITU's discovery but application of simple arithmetic based on the formula and provisions devised by 'their' pension scheme, certified, justified and glorified by them.

### IS IT PF VERSUS PENSION!

The Govt pension scheme, the manner it is drawn and being funded, poses a virtual alternative to Contributory Provident Fund System and hence the efficacy and merit of the scheme has to be judged by weighing the outcome of the scheme with that of the pre-scheme P.F. situation. And that can be done mainly by applying the formula provided in the scheme on concrete cases with figures and calculation. Instead of doing that, the supporters of the scheme move round the periphery without dealing on the concrete application of the scheme itself. It is but natural for them to do so, since once the scheme is

put on paper in terms of concrete figure and compared with the prospective accumulation of the diverted PF, it becomes impossible for any sane person to discover any benefit worth its name from the Govt Pension Scheme, sorry "their pension scheme". But what to do, once owning the paternity, it is difficult to disown!

While justifying the scheme, Shri Singh sought to argue that "PF is not an old age benefit because the real value of PF deposit goes on eroding with passage of time due to continuously rising inflation" And hence a Pension is a better alternative.

But both pension and PF are calculated and paid in terms of Rupees and it is the value of rupees which gets eroded over time due to inflation, and when pension scheme does not propose pension to be paid in kinds but in rupees only, it also becomes the victim of same erosion. The comparison of pension amount and the probable monthly income from the accumulated amount of diverted PF amount from the time of superannuation shows that the latter amount is much higher than the former and if inflation erodes the value, it erodes the value of the both and still difference remains.

This may be countered by the argument that pension scheme would be reviewed annually and there would be change in pension amount over time. But similar review is also possible and expected of the provident fund and the rate of interest on it.. In fact over the period the PF contribution has increased from 6.25% to 8.33% to now 10% and the interest on PF money has also increased number of times over the years.

#### **FAMILY PENSION TO PENSION SCHEME**

And let us not forget the fate of the Family Pension Scheme which also had provisions of review and during last twenty five years what had happened to such review is well known to those who are supporting the present Pension Scheme.

In this respect it is curious to note that while justifying the present pension scheme, Shri Singh commented about the Family Pension Scheme as "The Govt paid 1.16% of pay roll for financing the family pension scheme with one hand but took away much more on the other hand" Irony is that when the family pension scheme was first introduced in 1971, only CITU had opposed the scheme also on the above ground as expressed by Shri Singh and Shri Singh's organization AITUC and other trade unions refused to accept such logic and grouped together with other Central TUs to oblige the then Govt to thrust the family Pension Scheme on the new entrants in 1971 onwards. After twenty five years, they are now endorsing the statement of CITU on family pension scheme, that too as a plea of their support to present pension scheme. But they refuse to recognise that the present pension scheme is built on the same

basis, only funding is different in amount.

Who knows again twenty five years after, they would again repeat the same arguments CITU is forwarding now to oppose the Govt. pension scheme, but meantime workers would lose again enormously, just as they had lost on account of family pension scheme during last twenty five years facilitating accumulation of Rs. 9000 crore as cheap-fund at Govt. disposal. If at all they want to represent Govt. interest, let them do so directly but not under the guise of representing workers!

#### **EMPLOYERS' SHARE TO PF: NOT THE WORKERS' PROPERTY?**

While dealing with the question of option Shri Singh referred to the constitution of India which envisages that property of individual cannot be taken over without his consent. Shri Singh claims that the Govt Pension Scheme satisfies such stipulation of the constitution of India since the provident fund accumulation of the workers (both sides contribution) till 15-11-95 is kept intact and not diverted to pension fund. Shri Singh refused to acknowledge that employers' contribution to the PF of an individual worker on future dates (ie. after 15-11-1995) is also the property of that worker and hence allowed it to be taken over without his consent. Such innovative pleading for justifying the unjust also gives licence to the employers and the Govt to take away earned right of the workers in other cases also and as such the very concept of "existing right" stands confiscated.

#### **WHO PROPOSES WHO DISPOSES!**

While concluding the article Shri Singh listed out certain demands like indexation of pension, higher interest rate of deposits etc. and declared their resolve to fight for achievement of those demands. But in Parliament their MPs voted against those demands raised by CPI(M) MPs in the form of amendment of the concerned bill. The amendments to the EPF amendment bill moved by Shri Jibon Roy in Rajya Sabhas and Shri Ajoy Mukherjee in Lok Sabha included the provision of linking the pension amount with consumer price index (which they call indexation). And even the proposal for indexation has also been voted against by the MPs having allegiance to AITUC alongwith some others. This clearly exposes their real attitude behind the "demands for improvement" raised by themselves.

#### **THIRD BENEFIT: IS IT IMAGINARY?**

Sri Singh considered the demand for pension as a third retirement benefit imaginary and unachievable in the foreseeable future. And hence he argued for the present pension scheme to enable the Indian Worker to get pension.

Is the pension as third retirement benefit totally unrealisable. Then how in SAIL, NTPC, ONGC, Airlines, Oil Sector, bipartite agreements could be drawn for funding a pension scheme for the concerned

workers without disturbing the contributory provident fund scheme, to which Sri Singh's union is also a party. Then how in Coal Industry employing Seven lakh workers, separate pension legislation could be enacted which in reality ensured pension as a third benefit. And there are many more such examples. Above position clearly reveals that concept of third benefit is not at all unimaginable and had the trade union movement taken up the matter seriously enough with unified voice and united action, the long cherished demand of the industrial worker for pension as a third benefit could be taken towards fruition. Instead of doing that some trade unions preferred to raise question about achievability of the demand, and net result is that employers and Govt have been bailed out. A real "pro-worker" stance indeed!

And yes, Govt want to make it unachievable and hence is creating hurdless/obstacles in granting exemptions to many company based pension schemes, drawn on the principle of third benefit on the plea that those schemes are inferior to Govt pension scheme. While doing so Govt. refuses to recognise that such separate pension schemes do not encroach the contributory PF but offers pension in addition to the full provident fund benefit, almost half of which is being sought to be appropriated by Govt. Pension Scheme. And in that respect, their argument of unachievability of third benefit complements the design of the Govt.

#### **PENSION AT WHAT COST?**

And further, even if third benefit is considered as

unachievable in immediate future, does that mean, anything in the name of pension has to be imposed on the workers just to bring them under the nomenclature 'pensionable'. Should not the trade union worth its name consider at what price workers are being compelled to purchase their own pension, when the price of pension the workers are being compelled to pay is much higher than its real value meaning thereby that by the present pension scheme, benefit is being withdrawn in net term and concept of contributory provident fund is being given a virtual go by to fatten the Govt exchequer at throw-away rates of interest. Sri Singh diligently built up scores of justification in support of the scheme but did not tell us whether the calculations showing much less pension than the prospective monthly income of the accumulation of diverted PF is wrong. Or whether that even the capital return scheme under the new pension scheme cannot ensure full return of the capital contributed by individual workers to pension fund by way of diversion of almost half of their PF generation, meaning thereby the appropriation of the good part of the capital amount of the Govt., is correct or not. If such observations based on arithmetic are correct, then the 'Govt. Pension Scheme' for which such stout defence is being built up in the article cannot be termed as benefit but as the biggest loot on the workers in the present century. Does that design of loot deserve such defence that too from a trade union?

## **Textile Workers' Demonstration at Delhi on December 5**

The Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers comprising of the INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS, BMS and UTUC notes with serious concern the total apathy of the United Front Government to implement the unanimous agreement on modernisation of the NTC mills.

The Government further has not yet written off the loans of the four subsidiaries of W.Bengal, UP, MP and Gujarat as asked by the BIFR to enable it to approve their revival schemes. Closure notice has therefore already been served on these four subsidiaries, which will render about 55,000 workers jobless.

In the private sector also, closures have increased from 132 to 159 in the last one year. The sufferings of the workers in the handloom and powerloom sectors also have increased due to no improvement in their below poverty level wages.

The Ministry of Labour and Textiles have taken no steps to convene meetings of the NTC Committee or the Tripartite Committee in Textiles despite assur-

ances.

The Government on the contrary has taken a move to open up the NTC mills to the private sector including multinationals to the tune of 74 per cent of equity. The managements have renewed their offensive to force VRS on the workers or face closure by 31st December, 1996. Wages in the NTC mills are not being paid in time and withheld for several months. PF, ESI and other dues are not being cleared.

In the above background, the JAC decided to hold a mass demonstration of Textile workers drawn from all Textile centres of the country before the Labour Ministry at Delhi on 5th December, 1996. The demonstration will be preceded by a national convention at Constitution Club, New Delhi on the day.

Sd/- Haribhau Naik (INTUC)	Sd/- B D Joshi (AITUC)	Sd/- P K Ganguly (CITU)
Sd/- R A Mittal (HMS)	Sd/- Sunil Sengupta (UTUC)	

# MEMORANDUM BY WOMEN'S COMMITTEE OF INSURANCE EMPLOYEES ON RESERVATION OF WOMAN

*(We are publishing hereunder a memorandum submitted by the women's Sub-Committee of Insurance Corpn. Employees Union, Coimbatore Division to the Joint Committee on the constitution Bill, 1996, on the issue of 33 percent reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative-Ex.)*

4.11.1996

The Chairperson,  
Joint Committee on the Constitution  
(Eighty-first Amendment) Bill 1996,  
C/o Lok Sabha Secretariat,  
Parliament House Annexe,  
New Delhi 110 001

Madam,

Re: Hearing of the Joint Committee on the Constitution (Eightyfirst Amendment) Bill 1996.

The communication No.2/2(1)/C 11/96 dated 14.10.1996 from Lok Sabha Secretariat calling for our comments/Suggestions was received by us late and hence we could not comply with requirements by the stipulated date, viz 25.10.1996 with a request to condone the delay, we, on behalf of the women's Sub-Committee of Insurance Corporation Employees' Union, Coimbatore Division place before you our considered views on the issue of reservation of one third of the seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislature as follows:-

We wholeheartedly welcome the Bill providing for reservation of one third of the seats in the house of the people and legislative assemblies of the states. We earnestly appeal to the committee to recommend for early enactment of this bill into Act without allowing anytime to the detractors for delaying the enactment.

We also wish to point-out that our experience eight and the performance of the elected women members in Panchayats and other local Self-Government bodies in states like West Bengal have been very satisfactory and the women elected to such posts have proved well that they are capable of doing the job entrusted to them by people. Hence, the reservation for women in all fora of the democratic set-up of Government is not only justified but also comes up as necessity for widening the base of

democracy.

We also wish to submit that a democracy to be broad based it requires representation of all sections of the people. Women in society form fifty percent of the population. Such a section should have a say in determining the developmental priorities of this country. This apart, female-literacy, employment opportunities for women, prevention of social oppression of women all these issues-call for massive mobilization of all sections of populace including women. Conscious and unrelenting governmental action in this regard is the crying need of the hour for the emancipation of women who continued to be the oppressed section of the Indian society today. Society has grown from the concept of right to vote to only the privileged sections of the people to the concept of one vote for one citizen with adequate safeguards by way of reservation for socially backward sections of the population. Such a concept should logically be extended to encompass women by way of specific reservation for women in all elected bodies of Government. Appreciation of such a point of view alone has led to all the political parties committing in their manifestos to work for providing reservation of one third of seats in elected bodies. This is the most welcome features. The common minimum program of the United Front ruling at the centre has also reiterated this commitment. This being the case, there in no reason to dither on the question of enactment of a suitable legislation to provide for reservation for women. The introduction of a bill is welcome and all sections of society are now anxious that such a progressive legislation should not be delayed for any reason and put in cold storage.

We also hear the disturbing news of the suggestion made by some persons in high offices to the effect that reservation of seat for women could be confined to just 15% of the seats in the House of the people and legislative assemblies of states and that women should not infringe on the remaining 85% of seats. Strange view points are articulated through some of the national dailies that reservation of Constituencies for women will be a discrimination against men and that rotation of such reserved constituencies for women in every round of General elections would not only disable active men-political activists in the

respective constituencies, but also act as a disincentive for women-political activists to establish themselves in particular constituencies on a permanent basis. A cry is also raised that contemplated reservation for women is undemocratic and result in poorer executives and legislatures due to absence of eminent men of long standing record. All these outpourings arise due to the male chauvinistic out look predominant in the society, denote the obstinacy of the vested interests to accord equality to women and deserve to the ignored with utmost contempt. Any attempt from any quarters to deny the enactment of legislation for reservation for women in elected bodies under the above pretexts should be resisted, defeated and the law must be enacted. In our view, reservation in the house of the people and state legislatures to the exclusion of the Rajya Sabha would not result in any disability for women since elections to Rajya Sabha are through state legisla-

tures and the fact or reservation for women in state legislatures would take care of the composition of Rajya Sabha vis-a-vis the interests of women.

In fine, on the basis of above submissions, we earnestly appeal to you to recommend this Bill in its pristine form, without allowing any diluting in content and spirit for approval in the parliament.

We profusely thank you for allowing us an opportunity to express our views on this bill and request you to accord due consideration to our submissions as above

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,  
Sd/-

(M. Girija), Convenor  
Women's Sub Committee Insurance  
Corporation Employees Union  
Coimbatore Division

## Women Demonstrate Before Parliament Demanding 33% Reservation in Assemblies and Parliament

□ Pramila Pandhe

Hundreds of women activists from AIDWA, AIWC, CWDS, MDS, NFIW, JWP, and YWCA, under the banner of "Joint Women's March to Parliament" marched to the Parliament on 20.11.96 demanding legislation on 33% reservation for women in assemblies and Parliament.

The procession started from Mandi House with women foisting placards depicting the demands for 33% reservation and to remind the Deve Gowda Govt to fulfil the promise given in the election manifesto to give 33% reservation to women, if it comes to power.

The procession was concluded in a big meeting which was addressed by the leaders at seven women's organisations. It was asserted by the participants that they are determined to intensify their struggle if the govt does pass the bill during winter session which was willfully scuttled in the last session by the other political parties except left parties, despite the whip to the MPsto be present in the parliament during voting by their respective high commands.

This was the first time that women from all sections expressed their anger against the government on a particular issue other than common issues. During the meeting it was decided to intensify the

struggle till the govt accepts the demand.

The issue of 33% reservation for women was hotting up since long. AIDWA was campaigning for this demand and state units were also campaigning among the people for the support. In a joint meeting of women's organisations it was decided to start signature campaign to mobilise the support for the just and genuine demand and to demonstrate before the parliament during winter session. Seven lakh signatures were collected and were submitted to the Lok Sabha Speaker after the meeting was over on 20.11.96.

The 33% reservation bill for women was on the agenda during last session. All the women's organisations and National Commission for women were trying to convince the Prime Minister to place the bill before the Parliament. However the lukewarm attitude of the Prime Minister forced the women's organisations to put more pressure on the Prime Minister to place and pass the bill during the budget session itself. However, the bill was scuttled in last session and sent to the Select Committee. If the bill is not passed during this session women have decided to intensify the struggle till the demand is met.

# The Glorious Seven Day Strike by Central Govt. Employees

Ten Lakh Post and Telegraph employees all over India conducted indefinite strike from 6AM on 23-10-1996 for realising the justified demand for removing eligibility ceiling limited for payment of Bonus. Massive participation of P&T employees surpassed all previous records and created a history of the P&T Trade union movement. Post and Telecom services were completely paralysed throughout the country. All central Trade Unions, fraternal organisations and political parties wholeheartedly supported the striking employees. The print and electronic media also gave wide coverage to the developments during the period of strike.

The strike was called off on 29-10-1996 late evening consequent on the decision of cabinet to remove the eligibility ceiling limited for Bonus to the P&T and other Central Govt. employees.

The Minister for Communication, Beni Prasad Verma did not take any initiative for a negotiated settlement either before commencement of the strike or during the period of strike. But on the contrary, declared the strike as "illegal" and announced handing over the Post and Telecom services to the Army. This had aggravated the situation. However the striking employees maintained absolute peaceful atmosphere.

The post-strike situation however was aggravated on issuance of wage cut order from the salary of October 1996, on 30-10-1996 when employees returned to duty after 7 day strike. This created resentment among the employees. The Joint Council of Action met the Chairman, Postal Board on the evening of 30th October and urged upon him to postpone the recovery of strike wages. The demand of the workers were brought to the notice of the Government by Com. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Secretary, CPI(M) who urged upon the Govt. to concede the demand of the workers. There after the Govt. agreed to consider postponement of recovery of strike wages from the salary of Oct.96. But the bureaucracy, the Dept. of post created a situation by way of incorporating a condition that each individual strike participant should submit a declaration stating inter alia that "He or She agrees to accept recovery wages for the period of strike from the pay of November 1996". This resulted in injury to strike participants. The condition put forward by the department of Post was opposed by the workers through out the country.

The Department of Post was finally compelled to withdraw that retrograde declaration. This was another victory of the striking postal workers.

It was after 36 years that the Central Govt. employees could organise a massive indefinite strike action. By the sheer participation, it has surpassed the 1960 strike, the first of its kind in the post independent era and has carved out a unique position and status in the trade union movement of the country. The struggle was not only for Bonus but in a broader plane to end the invidious discrimination perpetrated by the previous regimes to divide the C.G. employees at the instance of certain leaders of the C.G. movement themselves.

The strike was organised not only for raising the ceiling limit but also for the formulation of a formula by which the Bonus quantum should be computed year after year. The Govt. has, by referring the matter to the pay commission seen the justness of the demand by the central Govt. employees, who expect that the pay commission will be guided by the Bazle Karim Committee's report on account of which the C.G. employees in the Administrative offices could get Bonus in 1983.

In the history of CGE movement this was the only strike action that resulted in the complete settlement of the demand for which the strike was organised.

## MP CITU Assails Govt's Move to Curb Right to Strike by Govt Employees

Madhya Pradesh State Committee of CITU severely criticised the State government's move to take assurance letters from workers that they will not go on strike in future.

Badal Saroj and S Kumar, the State CITU President and General Secretary, respectively termed this move of the state government as an outright attack on the trade union rights and the right to strike of the government employees. They called it undemocratic, authoritarian and unconstitutional. They demanded from the Chief Minister that such move should be withdrawn immediately, and called upon all trade unions and workers to lodge protest against the move.

# INDEFINITE STRIKE BY GUWAHATI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION EMPLOYEES

3185 Employees of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation resorted to indefinite strike since October 4 demanding Bonus, which the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Authority has refused to pay this year. The employees of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation have been enjoying Bonus since 1982, which was granted by the then Non-Congress (I) elected body by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation authority this year refused to Pay Bonus on the ground of financial crisis and further contended that the same was not permissible as per provision of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act. But the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971, clearly stated under section 74(2) "The Corporation may, in accordance with the regulation framed under sub-section (I) grant-(a) Pensions, Allowances, Bonuses and Gratuities to Municipal Officers and staff".

The Government of Assam promulgated Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) 1980 on the services of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation on October 18 and dismissed 105 employees arbitrarily. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation is now led by A.G.P. Further a meeting of the elected body of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was held on October 30 which instead of paying Bonus to the striking employees took a decision of Pay-Cut for No-Work,

No-Pay. Surprisingly Councillors belonging to Congress (I), BJP and others, who formed a majority in the elected body, earlier staged walk-out and this facilitated minority group of AGP Councillors to pass such Anti-working Class resolution. The strike of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has already crossed one month. The morale of the vast chunk of striking employees is still high, though they have not received their salaries for the months of September and October, till this date. The strike is being spearheaded by three organizations, belonging to CITU and AITUC.

The CITU expressed solidarity with the striking employees of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and has been making all-out efforts to mobilise other Trade Unions in support of the just demand of the striking employees of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and for a negotiated settlement. Various mass actions have already undertaken solidarity actions.

The Police arrested more than 1,000 employees of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation on November 4 but had to release them all because of mass protests and courting arrest. All these are being meted out by the Govt. none other than the AGP. The ongoing strike of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation employees has already paralyzed civic life of Guwahati.

(The strike has since been settled - Ed.)

## PWD Muster Roll Workers Meet

The 4th Conference of All Assam PWD Muster Roll Workers Union was concluded on 24th & 25th October 1996 in a befitting manner at Rangia. The conference began with the hoisting of red flag by Sarbeswar Das, President of the Union followed by a colourful procession of workers culminating in a public meeting. Several local cultural group performed Bihu dance, Kheria dance and Rava dance before the public meeting. The public meeting which was held under the presidency of Sarbeswar Das was addressed by several speakers including Debanjan Chakraborty, General Secretary, CWFI, Amal Ghosh Dastidar, General Secretary, CITU, Assam State Committee, Tosheswar Chetia, a prominent literary person and trade union leader and Kamini Mohan Sarma, a veteran freedom fighter.

The delegate session of the conference started in the evening of 24th October, 1996, which was inaugurated by Amal Ghosh Dastidar, State Secretary of CITU.

Mathura Das, General Secretary of the union placed the report wherein the activities and achievements of the union were highlighted. The demand of regularisation of all

MR workers and also to pay their all pending wages immediately was discussed in the report. 22 delegates participated in the discussion on Secretary's report which was adopted unanimously with some minor amendments. The Chief Guest of the conference Debanjan Chakraborty, deliberated on the problems of the workers in the light of All India perspective. He informed that in several states, the muster roll workers have been compelled to approach High Court to get the order of regularisation.

The conference adopted resolutions on regularisation of all MR workers; on overall development of the state; on the demand of repair and development of roads and bridges; in support of the strike of Guwahati municipal workers' and against the imposition of ESMA.

The delegates session of the conference was presided over by a presidium consisting of Sarbeswar Das, Monoranjan Bhuyan and Tosheswar Chetia. The conference elected a new 31 member executive committee with Tosheswar Chetia as Hon'y president, Sarbeswar Das as president and Mathura Das as general secretary.

# CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

(BASE 1982 = 100)

Centre	Linking factor			Centre	Linking factor		
	Aug.96	Sept.96	for Old Base		Aug.96	Sept.96	for Old Base
All India	343	344	4.93	Barbil	335	333	5.00
Gudur	360	344	4.33	Rourkela	310	310	3.59
Guntur	340	344	5.60	Amritsar	309	313	5.19
Hyderabad	313	314	5.23	Ludhiana	304	310	—
Visakhapatnam	325	323	—	Ajmer	345	343	5.01
Warrangal	334	336	—	Jaipur	328	332	5.17
Doom-Dooma Tinsukia	320	318	4.05	Coimbatore	332	333	5.35
Guwahati	348	348	—	Coonoor	362	361	4.80
Labac-Silchar	307	309	3.96	Madras	369	364	5.05
Mariani-Jorhat	336	336	3.95	Madurai	352	356	5.27
Rangapara-Tezpur	335	336	4.29	Salem	367	361	—
Jamshedpur	329	331	4.68	Tiruchirapally	376	373	—
Jharia	295	298	4.63	Agra	320	326	—
Kodarma	300	303	5.43	Ghaziabad	327	333	—
Monghyr	323	327	5.29	Kanpur	335	339	4.69
Noamundi	316	321	4.58	Saharanpur	314	316	5.06
Ranchi-Hatia	332	334	—	Varanasi	356	365	5.12
Ahmedabad	343	345	4.78	Asansol	315	315	4.77
Baroda	345	343	—	Calcutta	354	351	4.74
Bhavanagar	364	366	4.99	Darjeeling	300	301	4.55
Rajkot	340	341	—	Durgapur	354	359	—
Surat	365	366	—	Haldia	372	375	—
Faridabad	337	345	—	Howrah	358	358	4.12
Yamunanagar	322	331	5.53	Jalpaiguri	307	313	4.16
Srinagar	330	330	5.47	Raniganj	306	307	4.40
Bangalore	340	341	5.66	Chandigarh	328	331	—
Belgaum	357	355	—	Delhi	350	353	4.97
Hubli-Dharwar	347	344	—	Pondicherry	395	403	—
Mercara	349	351	—	Additional series of Labour Bureau			
Alwaye	348	355	5.19	Kothagudem	374	351	3.25
Mundakayam	361	360	—	Himachal Pradesh	321	327	3.75
Quilon	367	370	—	Bhilwara	344	346	3.20
Trivandrum	390	376	—	Chindwara	358	353	2.59
Bhalaghat	336	337	5.24	Tripura	324	330	4.37
Bhilai	308	311	3.49	Goa	385	382	3.40
Bhopal	363	365	5.46				
Indore	358	356	5.18				
Jabalpur	351	351	6.41				
Mumbai	366	369	5.12				
Nagpur	347	350	4.99				
Nasik	360	362	—				
Pune	363	364	—				
Solapur	368	370	5.03				

Note: Figures on old base can be obtained by multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the linking factor given and rounding off the result to nearest whole number.

—Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series,

# CITU CALLS FOR COUNTRY WIDE MOVEMENT FOR REMOVAL OF CEILING ON BONUS

The Secretariat of the CITU has issued the following statement to the Press on Oct 30:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions welcomes the decision of the Government, though belated, to remove the ceiling on payment of Productivity Linked Bonus of 18 lakh Central Government employees. After accepting this demand for Port & Dock and the railway workers it was unjustified not to extend it to other Central Government employees.

The CITU congratulates the Central Government employees for their united and determined struggle in support of the demand for removal of ceiling on bonus.

All trade unions had demanded in the recent session of Indian Labour Conference that the ceiling in the Payment of Bonus Act should be removed. However, the Central Government has not acted on this demand due to the opposition from the employers' side.

The CITU, therefore, appeals to all the trade unions to jointly launch a countrywide movement to get the ceiling on bonus removed in the Act itself so that all workers in India achieve the demand for bonus without any ceiling.

## Joint letter to PM

The representatives of five major Central TUs viz CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and BMS met on 4th November at New Delhi and decided to jointly write to Prime Minister demanding removal of ceilings on bonus for all workers.

It has also been decided to observe "All India Bonus Demands Day" on 26th November 1996, all over India in all the industries and establishment through demonstration dharna, rallies, etc.

November 24, 1996

Shri H D Deve Gowda  
Prime Minister  
Govt of India  
New Delhi

Dear Sir,

This is to draw your attention that all the National Trade

Unions, during the 33rd session of the Indian Labour Conference, unanimously pressed for the removal of ceilings on payment of bonus both coverage as well as rate. While this has been our demand all along, it has become discriminatory after the removal of ceiling only to Port & Dock workers, Railway, Post, telecommunication and other govt employees.'

It is to be pointed out that in the public sector and in most of the organised sector, far below 10% of the employees are now eligible for bonus, because of the existing ceiling on eligibility which has totally become outdated and the very concept of bonus has become a mockery as the most productive workers are deprived of bonus.

We, therefore, urge upon the govt to effect the following changes in the payment of Bonus Act immediately and bring an ordinance to the effect as Diwali is approaching very near.

- i) Removal of the ceiling on eligibility of bonus
- ii) Enhancement of the rate of bonus prescribed

If the govt persist on the discriminatory policy on payment of bonus, the trade unions all over the country will be left with no other alternative except launching nationwide agitation.

It is hoped that you will realise the gravity of the situation and take necessary positive action.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

Sd/- (KL Mahendra)                      Sd/- (Venugopal)  
General Secretary, AITUC              Working President BMS  
Sd/- (MK Pandhe)                      Sd/- (RK Mittal)              Sd/- (RL Thakar)  
Gen. Secretary, CITU              Secretary, HMS              Secretary, INTUC

It is unanimously resolved by all Central Trade Unions to observe "All India Bonus Demands Day" 26th November 1996 conducting dharna, gate meetings, demonstratio, morcha, etc.

## The top 20 Indian Groups: The Changing Stakes (Rs crore)

	Turnover		
1. Tata	26,898.41	13. K K Birla	2,220.43
2. BK/Aditya Birla	9,503.35	14. Videocon group	2,179.96
3. Reliance	7,813.71	15. Mafatlal	2,162.18
4. LM Thapar	4,899.31	16. GP/C K Birla	2,159.94
5. Bajaj	4,566.86	17. Murugappa group	2,137.17
6. RPG Group	4,549.16	18. Essar group	2,080.41
7. ITC Group	4,185.33	19. Escorts group	1,986.32
8. Mahindra & Mahindra	3,099.75	20. UB group	1,935.66
9. MAC group	3,059.61		<b>Gross profit</b>
10. SL Kirloskar	2,637.27	1. Tata	4,137.13
11. Jindal (Strips) group	2,629.58	2. BK/Aditya Birla	2,249.55
12. Hindujas	2,326.30	3. Reliance	1,837.73

(On page 21)

# New Challenges Before Bank Employees Movements

□ M.K. PANDHE

The programme of Structural Adjustment of economy imposed on

India by the World Bank and the IMF has posed new challenges before the Bank Employees Movement. The future of the movement largely depends on how far it will face these challenges in the forthcoming period.

The united movement of the bank employees has played an important role in sphereheading the campaign for nationalization of banking industry in India. The movement culminated in Government of India nationalizing Indian commercial banks but the foreign banks were allowed to remain in the private sector. The bank employees movement continued to campaign for nationalizing foreign banks also but before the campaign could reach a culminating point the drive for globalisation intervened and foreign banks were given green signal to enter the financial sector and gain a place of strategic importance.

The Narasimham Committee Report was a preplanned attempt to impose privatisation on the banking sector of our economy. A cursory glance of the report makes it clear that the conclusions were drafted in advance and the report was only a padding done by the committee to bolster the conclusions. The trade union movement of bank employees and officers campaigned against the report which evoked support from the general trade union movement. It merely slowed down the process but the thrust of the policies continue unabated.

A vociferous campaign was launched against the public sector banks indicating about their so called inefficient functioning without taking into account the accumulation of bad debts to the tune of Rs.39,000 crores due to political patronage received by the big business houses. The utter lack of seriousness on the part of the central government to recover these "non-performing assets" and even refusal to publish the names of those big business houses who have swindled hundreds of crores of rupees of the bank funds only points out the fallacy in these arguments. The Governments taking recourse to Bank norms was only a futile attempt to mislead the public about the real culprits for the malaise that made the public sector banks less effective.

In the name of liberalization the Central Government tried to give up the social aspects of the banking policies. The small scale industries who were getting benefits of differential rate of interest became victims of this policy. The threatened closure of bank branches on the plea of their being uneconomic was only a device to deride the public sector banks.

Despite dubious rule played by Stanchart, ANZ Grindlays and other foreign banks in share scam and Hawala racket the Government did not take any firm step against these defaulting banks. The foreign banks have been indulging in under invoicing and over invoicing result-

ing in loss of several thousands of crores of rupees of foreign exchange every year. The Central Government however behaved like a silent spectator to all these developments which adversely affected self-reliant development of India's economy.

If these policies are allowed to continue the future of Indian banking industry would be at stake. The top brass of the Finance Ministry who are hankering for the post in the IMF and the World Bank with lucrative pension are totally unconcerned about the harmful effects these policies are creating on the Indian Banking industry.

The top post in the banking industry who got their present assignments due to the favour bestowed on them by the satraps in the Finance Ministry are not showing any interest in defending the banking industry. They require protection from the same bosses from the Ministry when they get involved in scandals in banking operations. Many of them are looking at foreign banks to give them some berth after their retirement.

Under these circumstance the future of Indian Banking Industry particularly those in the public sector is wholly dependent on the role the trade union movement in the banking industry will play to defend it. It is therefore paramount duty of the united movement of the bank employees to rise to the occasion and oppose privatisation of banking sector and strengthen the public sector banks by providing adequate autonomy worth the name.

The working and living conditions of the bank employees very much depend on the efficient operation of the banks and hence the TU movement is vitally concerned with improvement in the operation of the banking industry in India to-day.

Development of friendly relations between the bank employees and officers movements acquires significant importance in this task. This can be achieved only by working out common policies on all aspects relating to the bank employees movement.

On the occasion of Golden Jubilee Celebration of the All India Bank Employees Association one cannot but remember the glorious traditions of the bank employees movement in India in which AIBEA had played an important part. Despite dark clouds hovering over the Indian Banking Industry to-day I am confident that the united bank employees movement has sufficient strength to overcome the obstacles in the development of our banking industry in India. The general trade union movement will certainly support the struggle of the bank employees movement in protecting the national banking industry and effectively check the advance of the MNCS on the soil of India.

The golden jubilee celebration of AIBEA is a solemn occasion to take a pledge to rally round with one voice in defence of public sector banks and Indian Banking Industry.

# NGOs in India

*(A report on activities of some NGOs in the country)*

Non-Governmental Organisations, better known as NGOs, are very much in the limelight today. According to official estimate there are many thousands of them in India while unofficial estimates exceed a lakh. Whatever be their actual number, with lavish patronage from our government as well as from the international forums like the ILO and the UN, with funds flowing profusely into their coffers from the national exchequer as also from dubious foreign sources, the NGO phenomenon is one of which the country can ill-afford to remain unaware.

In the eyes of a casual observer activities of the NGOs would appear to be of the nature of innocuous social service, not exactly in the old tradition of our country but a modernised version. Appearance, however, was never regarded as a very reliable guide: as the old adages goes 'all that glitters is not gold'. In his revealing articles about the NGOs in a recent issue of *The Week*, R Prasannan also reminds us that appearance is often deceptive and the "wolves, too, have often been found donning shipskin. The articles captioned "Great NGO Fraud" and "Beware the Wolves" give startling information not only about the big loot of Indian exchequer the NGOs generally are engaged in, but also reveal the enormous inflow of foreign fund to their coffers and their meddling in political activities of dubious nature, with an eye to the interest of the donors. And everything in the name of service to the people.

"The phenomenon of the proliferation of the voluntary agencies and actin groups," the NGOs, is not an absolutely new phenomenon. The process started quite some time back and certainly did not escape the notice of vigilant eyes. In an article published as early as in 1984, which was later expanded and published as a booklet in September 1988 with more material which was available later Prakash Karat, who is now a member of the CPI(M) Polit Bureau presented a penetrating analysis of the background, character and role of the NGOs. The significance of foreign funding and the implication of the phenomenon to the working class movement. Karat, Prasannan noted, as did Karant in his booklet that "in the mid-80s Rajiv Gandhi empowered the NGOs to implement the Govt's rural development programme." Prasannan has pointed out that with the Govt adopting this policy "NGOs mushroomed overnight."

## **The looting spree**

Prasannan informs us that in the last nine years the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) which channels government funds to NGOs "has sanctioned about Rs 330 crore to about 7,500 NGO, for rural development projects. (This is in addition to crores given away by other ministries, for instance the welfare ministry sanctioned 76.11 crore to

1,872 NGOs for social welfare schemes in 1994-95 and another 71.26 crores to 1,730 organisations the next year). Many of them just pocketed the first installment and vanished.

Having started a thorough audit CAPART has during last two years "unearthed malpractices to the tune of Rs 15 crores auditing the books of just 2000 NGOs. Black listing of 564 agencies (on charges of fraud, misappropriation and moral turpitude) followed. In effect one out of every three NGOs had swindled CAPART! The cases of 61 in Bihar and Karnataka were referred to the CBI. CAPART estimates that atleast 300 of the 554 do not exist" Prasannan goes on to furnish a few instances, too, from Kolar and other places:

"Several of those in CBI list in Kolar seem to have disappeared without trace. For instance an NGO called Amar Association in Gowribidanur was found to have two addresses....Of course there was no sign of the association at these addresses.... Its secretary Shanta Kumar (tracked by *The Week*)...was found working as project director of Pinakini Rural Development Society which too is in the CBI list! among the achievements of Pinakini, that he reeled out, was the distribution of 10 hybrid cows with Rs 2,42,975 given by NORAD, Norwegian funding agency. The cost of one cow, over Rs 24,000! Another such example was Chetana, also in Gowribidanur "Its prime mover Lalitha, had closed shop and moved to the Rural Development and Training Society."

In Patna the investigators "failed to trace the Guru Govind Singh Mahila Samiti which had been receiving regular women's development grants. The Samajik Saikshanik Viksh Kendra in Madhubani district of Bihar had been taking money from six state and central agencies for the same project for 10 years. Villagers in Kuddappah district Andhra Pradesh, have never seen a handpump supposed to have been installed by NGOs, with funds from the Centre. Many have been showing dozens of full time employees on records and showing salary expenses but never had any."

In another instance mentioned by Prasanna the Anand Marg Universal Relief Team "floated by the Anad Margis, the main suspects in Purulia arms drop" at one point of time received \$ 500,000.

"Apparently crores of rupees are being swindled every year in the name of development. Even money given for humanitarian causes is laundered. For instance a Congress affiliated trade union complained to the Union Welfare Ministry against the All India Deaf and Dumb Society in Delhi. Officials, still looking into it, said that the ministry had given the organisations Rs 72,500 in 1994-95."

## Foreign funding: Political intervention

Among the several instances of the big loot involving NGOs, that have been quoted above, Prasannan has referred to cases in which fund acquired from foreign sources also was involved. Prasannan also cites examples of NGOs receiving foreign funds meddling in political life of the country. In his 1988 booklet Prakash Karat had drawn the attention of the nation to the dangerous political implication of the foreign funded NGO activity, exposing and explaining that there was "a sophisticated and comprehensive strategy worked out out imperialist quarters to harness the voluntary agencies/action groups to their strategic design to penetrate Indian society and influence the course of its development." Karat wrote "There are, according to our estimate, over ten thousand such organisations which are receiving funds from different agencies in the Western imperialist countries to finance their activities. The figure runs into millions of rupees every year." Prasannan quotes the Union Home Ministry that "there are 10,201 foreign funded associations which together received Rs 1,865.7 crores in 1993-94. That works out to rs 18.29 lakh for each NGO. This of course is a gross underestimation and yet the amount as per official estimate itself is a formidable figure. Prasanna's report on how these foreign funded NGOs are meddling in politics confirms Prakash Karat's study pointing to imperialist design vis-a-vis the NGO activity.

According to Prasannan "it was only during the 1994 assembly elections in Karantaka that politicians actually work up to the danger of the NGO waywardness. In those elections many party candidates found that their rival independent were spending lakhs. Some of these independents had been working as voluntary activists." Similarly in Andhra Pradesh "35 independents were openly supported by one of the biggest foreign funded NGOs. The chairman of organization was himself a candidate and had allegedly spent Rs 7-8 lakhs on his campaign" Similar cases were reported from Bihar and Maharashtra also.

## National Security and the NGOs

Security agencies are according to Prasannan, perturbed by recent reports that foreign funders are looking for an NGO that would work on disarmament issues in India. Is the latest campaign against India's nuclear installations any indication? - asks Prasannan. If it is so, then it is a clear evidence of imperialist complicity. Prasannan reports that a recent workshop on depletion of resource bases, riots, insurgency and revolution which focuses on Bihar—conducted at Neemrana Fort Palace Hotel in Rajasthan caught the attention of the intelligence agencies. It had been co-sponsored by Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, a US-based disarmament project! Other cases of interference in matters relating to defence department have also been reported.

## In service of foreign commercial interest

Prasannan tells us, "Critics say that issues are selected depending on interest of foreign donors. One recent instance was of the International Planned Parenthood trying to push contraceptives like Norplant which are banned in the West. One Bharat Bhusan said to be an activist working against Polavaram project is quoted as saying "Child labour was a big issue when western corporate interest were thought to be affected by the cheap goods from India..." Again "it took a lot of govt money and effort to promote breast feeding and thus limit the damage done by nutrition propoganda of International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) which promoted tinned food as a substitute. later it was found that IBFAN was funded by babyfood companies.

## Ominous pattern

Dr. Alagh is quoted by Prasannan as saying "If you want to see a pattern, there is one. The opposition of many to the environment NGOs has been against some of the best planned projects in India". What fits in will with this pattern is the effort of many of the NGOs to denigrate the mass organisation. Such as trade unions, Kisan Sabha etc. and disrupt mass movements. Taking advantage of the class mass organisations they invade with a high financial resources at their disposal the urban unorganised industrial sector and particularly the rural agrarian sector, often taken pseudo-radical posture in respect of one or the other vital issues which demands immediate solution in the process malign the existing trade unions and peasant organisation in their attempt to alienate workers and peasants from them. Prakash Karat had a lot to say about the political motive of these voluntary organisation.

## A note of caution

These are only a few examples of the character of, and the role played by, the NGOs in our country, gauged from wider range of material presented by Prasannan. But they leave no doubt in anybody's mind that they represent only the tip of the ice berg and that the phenomenon warrants serious investigation. While R Prasannan's article has drawn our attention to it afresh, and for which he deserves appreciation, his work reminds us of the urgent need for pursuing further the in-depth study in proper perspective which was initiated by Prakash Karat in his 1988 booklet "Foreign Funding and the Philosophy of Voluntary Organisations." All this however does not mean that all NOGs, all voluntary organisations are engaged either in money making or servign foreign interest politically and/or economically or both. Since the days of our freedom struggle India has been having a rich tradition of voluntary service to the People. Karat has rightly stressed the need for caution, "caution should be exercised to discuss the genuine social work and charitable organization.

# Successful Bonus Struggles in Tamilnadu

□ A K Padmanabhan

Bonus struggles in Tamilnadu during this year's festival season have been successful. As usual, in the private sector, workers could force the employers to pay bonus, irrespective of the obsolete provisions in the Bonus Act. In general, this has been the situation in the state for the last few years. While the employers organisations have been opposing any demand for removing eligibility and other ceilings in the Bonus Act, in practice, payments were being made to the workers, in many industries, without taking these ceilings into consideration. In addition to bonus, exgratia payments and other gifts are also being paid as part of the Bonus Payments. (In a Cement factory 20% bonus 20 gram gold and 1 bicycle were given).

During the last few years, major problems have been in the public sectors under central and state governments. Thanks to the historic strike of the Central Government Employees, State Government issued a GO directing Bonus Payment to the workers in the state government owned establishments without applying the eligibility ceiling.

At present, unsettled issues regarding Bonus payments are there in Central government owned establishments including NTC mills. Trade unions of

NTC mills have been demanding bonus as per the existing regional industrial settlements as has been the practice.

Workers in the state government owned establishments could get more bonus this year. State Transport and electricity workers could get 17% last year (8.33 as bonus and 8.67 as ex-gratia). This year they were paid 18% without any eligibility ceiling. CITU has decided to continue the campaign for removal of all ceilings for bonus payment.

## Child Labour Rally

As part of the CITU-ILO campaign against Child Labour, a child labour rally was organised on 14th November. Nearly five hundred child workers participated in a procession to the state secretariat. They came from various parts of the Chennai city and adjacent districts of Anna and MGR. Boys and girls engaged in beedi rolling, handloom utensil manufacturing and engineering industries participated in the procession. The processionists were led by S Chandrasekaran, Secretary, CITU State Committee, T Narayanan, E Ponmudi, T N Nambirajan, K Narayanasami, B Sundarajn, and V Kumar. A memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister's Office, listing out various demands of the the children.

## Workers Struck Work in Russia Over Non Payment or Wages

Five crore workers struck work all over Russian Federation on 5th November 1996. The demand was not the 'rise in wages' but payment of wages for the work done.

The strike crippled production in various industries mines and establishment all over Russia. Russian Workers throughout the country have not been getting wages regularly and in most cases non-payment of wages have been continuing for 4 to 6 months. Even the Russian Govt could not but admit the incidence non-payment wages in a wide scale and as per their own statistics one out of every four workers in Russia is not getting wages for more than three months. But in reality incident of nonpayment is much more as confirmed by Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, which embraces overwhelming majority of Russia workers ranging for more than 4 to 06 months.

Philosophy of Market Economy established on

the collapse of Socialist Economic set up instead of bringing affluence is spilling misery and hunger. And the Russian Prime Minister Mr Chernomydrine could shamelessly state This non-payment crisis is inherent to all countries with a transition economy. Its main courses are: general recession, the breakdown of economic links, inflation, budget shortcomings, the slow pace of structural adjustment etc" workers are not getting wages for last six months, but the neo-capitalists in Russia and foreign companies have been minting crores even in the economy in transition!

Russian workers expressed their firm resolve to fight against non-payment of wages by the massive strike on 5th November 1996. In a message to federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, M K Pandhe General Secretry, CITU has communicated the support and solidarity to the struggle of the Russian Workers on 5.11.96

# MUMBAI CONFERENCE OF CENTRAL GOVT. EMPLOYEES & WORKERS

□ P.R. KRISHNAN

The Association of Central Government Employees and workers union held a successful 2 day state level conference in Mumbai on 6th and 7th October 1996. Apart from delegate sessions the inaugural conference in the morning on 6th October and the concluding rally on 7th October were the highlights of the 2 day programme. Both the inaugural session on 6th and open rally on 7th were preceeded and followed by local cultural squad songs. The discussions held, resolutions passed and the speeches made in the inaugural session, delegate sessions and the open rally related to the problems faced by the employees in different sectors, regions, establishments and offices. Questions of consolidation of unity and organizational problems also came up for in-depth deliberation amongst the delegates.

Governmental apathy towards the mounting grievances of the employees, non filling up of vacancies caused due to retirements, resignations, transfers, etc. have created burning problems almost in all departments in the government services. This, coupled with the policy of "no-recruitment" and large scale introduction of contract system became the subject of debate. The inadequate quantum of interim relief granted and the abnormal delay in the publication of the final recommendations of the 5th Pay Commission also dominated the discussions.

The delegate sessions were conducted by a presidium consisting of B.N. Mukherjee, K.D. Pawar and Chandhari. Convenor of the preparatory committee M.S. Raha placed the work report while R.K. Srivastava presented the charter of demands requiring immediate solution by the government.

The delegate session on 6th October was chaired by B.N. Mukherjee. It was inaugurate by K.G. Karnik, President of the Maharashtra State Government Employees Federation. P.S. Ramankutty, President of Clase III Postal Employees Union and K.K. Thekkedath, President of Mumbai University and College Teachers Union greeted the delegates and extended solidarity support to the employees.

The concluding open rally in the afternoon on 7th October was addressed by M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary of Centre of Indian Trade Unions. Pandhe in his speech dwelt on the major problems faced by the working class in the back ground of the new

economic and industrial policies adopted and followed by the previous Narasimha Rao Government which were now being pursued by the Untied Front Government of H.D. Deve Gowda.

We have to strongly oppose the governmental actions when it proposes anti working class measures like disinvestment of public sector units, privatization of insurance sector, Enron project, curtailment of trade union rights etc. and strengthen trade union unity and solidarity amongst various sections of the toiling people, he said.

Addressing the open rally S.K. Vyas, Secretary General of the Central Govt. Employees Confederation dealt with the various anti-employee aspects of the proposed recommendations of the 5th Pay Commission, the delay caused in the publication of its final report and appealed to the government employees to remain untied and get prepared to launch struggles to get justice. Other speakers who addressed in the rally were P.R. Menon of National Railway Mazdoor union, B.N. Mukherjee, Ms. Savithry Anand, R.P. Singh and Maharashtra State CITU Secretary P.R. Krishnan.

Earlier, the delegate session had unanimously elected the office bearers and organizing secretaries.

## DHARNA ON 27 SEPTEMBER

The trade unions joint action committee, in response to the call given by the convention held in Delhi on 27.8.96 under the auspices of Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions had organised a DHARNA at Churchgate near Mantralaya in Bombay on 27th September. The participating organizations of the Dharna were CITU, AITUC, UTUC and HMS. Earlier, the representatives of these organizations held a meeting on 23rd August and had endorsed the call given by the Delhi Convention for the all India action. The participants were addressed among others by Ahilya Rangnekar, K.L. Bajaj, Sayed Ahmed, P.M. Vartak and P.R. Krishnan of CITU, Dada Samant of Kamgar Aghadi, Jaiwant Chavan of Serva Sramik Sangh, Pushpa Mehta of UTUC and Suryakant Bagat of HMS. The leaders in their speeches highlighted the problems of the working class on the demands of the Delhi Convention.

# Facing Stagnation

□ SWADESH DEV ROYE

A multi-country study mission for trade union leaders on productivity movement was organized in Japan during 30th September to 12th October '96. All total 19 delegates representing the trade unions from 14 Asian Countries including India participated in the programme. The mission was sponsored by Asian Productivity Organization and the delegates were deputed by the National Productivity Organizations of their respective countries. Amongst the three central trade unions selected from India one was CITU which was represented by S Dev Roye.

The major part of the activities of the study mission were carried out in Tokyo, the capital city of Japan. However for field visit the delegates were taken to Yokohama and Osaka the second and third popular cities of Japan, respectively. Japan Productivity Centre for Socio-Economic Development was the implementing agency.

The scope of the mission was the concept of productivity, its significance in the economy, industry and workers of the country, the perspective of productivity movement from the view points of Government, Trade Union and Management. The methodology adopted in the study mission was presentation of resource papers and country papers, discussion, visits to industry, trade unions and employers' organisations.

In course of the interaction with trade union leaders, employers' organisation, managers of industries, government officials and other resource persons and also on going through the materials obtained in the process some informations could be gathered about the current economic situation of Japan and the developments in the trade union movement in that country.

## Bird's eye-view of Japan's Economy

It has been accepted on record that "the bubble economy" of Japan has collapsed and it is "clearly in a stagnant phase". One of the major problems of the economy is too much appreciation of yen.

It has been said that "the exaggerated rise in the strength of the yen has brought crisis to the Japanese economy". The large current account surplus has been identified to be the direct cause of strong yen. The domestic market is shrinking and flight of capital from the country is increasing. As a consequence of yen appreciation the Japanese investment in overseas branches are increasing. According to Short-term Economic Survey of Enterprises in Japan as of February '96 the total production to offshore production ratio in manufacturing was 20.6% in 1995 and increased to 21.2% in 1996 while such ratio in plant and equipment investment increased to 28.4% from 27.8%. This is what they call, "production is moving offshore as a means of cutting costs."

## Incompatibility of Price and Purchasing Power

It is an acknowledged fact that Japanese products are cheaper in foreign market than the home market. Thus it has been observed that, "abnormally high differences between world and domestic prices are preventing the public from enjoying better lifestyle."

On the other hand the increase in wages of the workers have remained stagnant as a result of which the purchasing power of the people and price level have become incompatible. Mr. M. Aihara an IR expert has noted, "during the recession, wages have not risen, so people are buying less, causing drop in the consumption level." Thus the workers in Japan are demanding increase in real wages and also asking for lowering of price level by narrowing price differences between domestic and foreign markets. Under such peculiar market situation the Japanese people are asking for opening the market for consumer products.

Above position brought to light certain glaring facts. The scenario of domestic price of the same product being higher than the Japanese exportables in the foreign market clearly reveals that the Japanese Common People are being made to suffer and subsidise the maintenance of profit level of the Japanese big business.

Secondly the very fact of Japanese domestic price being higher than its export price also exposes the clandestine dumping of Japanese material in foreign market in gross violation of WTO regulation, much to the detriment of the interest of the domestic economy of the receiving countries. It is but natural that Japan can escape punishment for violation of WTO rules by way of dumping and protectionism, since WTO rules are there only for the developing countries to implement and powerful industrialized countries to flout.

## Passing the burden on the people

The tax revenue of Japan is suffering from continuous decline. This is mainly due to tax evasion by corporate concerns. The general account of tax revenue for the fiscal year 1995-96 has been estimated to 50.8 trillion yen which is 0.5% less than the previous year, marking the fifth consecutive year of falling tax revenues. To make good the deficit the Government has decided to raise the consumption tax from 3% to 5% in April, 1997. However passing on the burden of economic crisis on the people, the private corporate concerns are continuing to increase their profit. As per report published by NIKKEIREN, "The business result for companies listed in the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange there has been a 20.76% increase in current pretax profits and a 31.27% increase in net profit." Well, the name of the game is capitalist economy.

## Employment Situation

Serious changes are taking place in the employment scenario of Japan. Apart from growing unemployment, casualisation of employment is also taking place at rapid pace. According to recent labour statistics the rate of unemployment is 3.4% and "if the employment within companies is added then the figure would be over 5%". It has been reported that unemployment among the young people is relatively higher than previous years and "this is the source of great concern".

A notable development is that employment in manufacturing sector is declining fast. It has gone down below the number of service sector. The figure in the former is 1,45,60,000 while that of latter is 1,56,60,000. The international competitiveness of Japan's manufacturing sector has declined due to high labour cost and various other factors. The manufacturers are shifting their plants out of the country and importing finished goods. The result is that in the past the manufacturing sector used to employ largest number of workers which declined so much that now it barely exceeds that in wholesaling and restaurants.

The casualisation of employment has become a matter of serious concern in Japanese society. The number of permanent workers in the enterprises is going down at alarming rate. The entire employment pattern has been divided into three categories viz., long-term employment or permanent worker, professionally specialised workers on fixed-term contract and flexible pattern of employment or part-timers. The part-time workers are also called as "Despatched Workers". These workers are regulated through various agencies which can be compared with the contract labour in our country.

In this connection it would be relevant to note that excessive computerization and robotisation have created serious concern in Japanese society. It is propagated that robot can produce but cannot eat and hence do not expand domestic market. Again with regard to computer, alongwith soft-ware, hard-ware one more term has been added i.e. human-ware. The message is loud and clear, without providing employment and increasing the purchasing power of the people the economy cannot grow, and cannot sustain growth already achieved.

## The Trade Union Movement

As on June, 1995 the total trade union membership of Japan stood at 1,26,14,000. This constituted 23.8% of the total workforce of the country. It is reported that trade union membership is declining. Generally there is one union in one enterprise and then there are the industrial federations.

There are two major central trade union organisations in Japan. These are RENGO and ZENROREN. These have come into existence in 1987. RENGO has emerged as result of merger of SOHYO, DOMEI, SHINSANBETSU and CHURITSU-RODU. In 1989 KANKORO the union of public sector workers also merged with RENGO. From membership point of consideration RENGO is the biggest central trade union in Japan. However this trade union is

reported to be very close to the big business of the country and enjoys the confidence of employers' organisation. But ZENROREN is ideologically pro-left, progressive and fighting trade union centre.

The government and the Employers' organisations have granted all representations to different bipartite and tripartite bodies to RENGO only. It conducts conference with Prime Minister at least four times in a year. It also conducts regular meetings with 18 different ministries.

## Joint Consultation

Although there is no legal framework for participative management in Japan, what they call "Joint Consultation" has spread widely. As per report 55.7% of all establishments have some joint consultation bodies. The larger the companies the higher is the percentage of consultation. 72.4% of the establishments having 5,000 or more employees are having consultation bodies.

The subjects of the joint consultation include the basic management policy, the plan for production and sales, the establishment or closure of company organisation, introduction of new technology, machines or equipments, rationalisation, training and of course wages, working hours, health and safety.

## Attack on Wage Negotiations

In Japan wage revision takes place every year. The popular term is "spring offensive". The spring offensive comes to its climax at the end of March when settlements are signed. The wage revision has been NENKO system or seniority based wage system.

But the managements have been demanding the discontinuation of both the years old practice. They are pressing for new system under which wage settlements should be for 2/3 years and no seniority based wage. Further the industries are also asking for reviewing uniform wage-setting and pressing for productivity linked wage and also according to ability of the company to pay. But the workers are refusing to accept the demand of the employers.

## Social Security

A most widely spoken issue these days in Japan is that the Japanese population is aging at unprecedented speed. Population growth is declining. Number of aged persons in the working people is increasing. Such situation is going to have adverse impact on the question of funding the social security schemes. Due to reduction of young workers rate of contribution in pension fund shall have to be increased. Now there are 4 young people supporting one old man. But this ratio is going to be changed to 2:1. In Japan pensionary benefit is extended at the age of 60 years. It has been estimated that the rate of contribution to employees pension fund shall have to be enhanced to 19.5% in 1999 and may have to be further increased to 30% in 2025 against the existing 14.5%. Thinking is going on to grant pension at the age of 65 years instead of the present practice of 60 years. The present rate of pension is equivalent to 60% of the wages. Thus the amount of monthly pension at 1995 rate is slightly more than 2,10,000

yen(100 yen = Rs.33.00).

Now the employers are demanding that the social security benefit should be scaled down, because they are opposed to bear the additional burden of contribution. On the other hand the workers are crying that due to high cost of living real value of social security benefits are going down and it must be protected by enhancing the quant of pension. Thus the working people are facing an attack on social security.

### Drastic Change in Labour Laws

At the instance of the big business the Japanese Government have taken initiative to drastically change the Labour Laws. Some of the laws targeted for change are Labour Standards Law, Law of Despatching Labour, Em-

ployment Security Law, Trade Union Law, Equal Employment Opportunity Law etc. The trade unions are opposing the move of the Government. They are demanding revision of Labour Laws to plug the loop-holes in the existing laws for ensuring effective trade union right and protecting the interest of workers.

The workers have started voicing strong protest against the pro-big business and anti-labour move of the Government. A national convention was organised on 11th July, 1996 on the matter. Representatives from trade unions, women's organizations and lawyers' organizations attended the convention wherefrom A National Liaison Council against Drastic Revision of Labour Laws was constituted with the aim to fight back the dangerous move.

## JOINT TRADE UNION DELEGATION VISIT CHINA

At the invitation of All China Federation of Trade Unions, a joint trade union delegation consisting of representatives from CITU, AITUC, INTUC and BMS visited China during 18th to 24th September 1996. Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, represented CITU in the delegation, where as Gaya Singh Secretary AITUC, R.C. KhuNtia, Vice President INTUC and N M Sukumaran, BMS were the other members of the delegation.

The delegation had a long session of discussion with Li Qi Sheng, Vice Chairman ACFTU alongwith other comrades of its international deptt. Ms. Xiomei, Liming Wang, Cheng Quing Lin, Yao Li and others. Com. Li Qi Sheng gave a detail account of the economic reform going on in China and the role of ACFTU in defence of the interest of the working class and the country. Suggestion and opinion of the trade unions have been given serious consideration in the reform process and in drafting labour related legislations - Com. Li Qi Sheng mentioned in particular. He also mentioned about the need for greater co-operation between the trade union movement of the developing coun-

tries in the face of the design of the imperialist forces to creat hurdles for their development by various means. Com.Li Qi Sheng also reiterated the resolv of ACFTU in uphold the socialist system and values.

Indian delegation also reported about the experience of the Indian working class regarding the kind of economic reform going on in India under the dictates of World Bank and IMF and its severe fall out on the workers and common people and the struggle of working class against those policies.

The delegation visited the Hunan Province & Guangdong Province during their seven days stay in China & had visits in various factories (both state owned and in private sector) township enterprises, departmental stores and workers cultural centre. They also had discussions with the enterprise level trade unions and common workers during their visit in the factories. Also the delegation visited Musolium of Mao Tse tung at Tien-anmen Square and the Great Wall of China and also the birth place of Com.Mao Tse Tung in Hunan Province.

(From page 13)

4. Bajaj	801.25	2. BK/Aditya Birla	2,890.63
5. ITC group	737.61	3. Reliance	1,980.13
6. K K Birla	441.13	4. ITC group	1,067.13
7. L M Thapar	439.70	5. Bajaj	898.83
8. RPG group	418.21	6. K K Birla	878.89
9. Essar group	413.25	7. RPG group	803.96
10. Mahindra & Mahindra	345.55	8. Mahindra & Mahindra	677.50
11. Jindal(Strips) group	329.05	9. Essar group	663.01
12. Escorts group	315.66	10. LM Thapar	637.13
13. Hindujas	272.14	11. MAC group	458.94
14. MAC group	267.67	12. Mafatlal	437.80
15. Mafatlal	248.98	13. Jindal(Strips) group	420.95
16. SL Kirloskar	237.87	14. Escorts group	415.56
17. GP/CK Birla	223.53	15. SL Kirloskar	385.24
18. Murugappa group	213.37	16. Hindujas	381.26
19. Videocon group	196.24	17. Murugappa group	317.62
20. UB group	84.58	18. GP/CK Birla	314.92
	<b>Operating profit</b>	19. Videocon group	246.92
1. Tata	5,436.44	20. UP group	226.76

# ILO Calls for Immediate Action Against Intolerable forms of Child Labour

*(We are publishing hereunder a statement issued by ILO, Geneva on November 12, 1996 —Ed).*

Some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are working in developing countries, nearly double previous estimates, the International Labour Office (ILO) says in a new report.

Of this total, some 120 million children are working full-time, and 130 million work part-time, says the ILO report, *Child Labour: Targeting the intolerable*.

"We all know that child labour is one of the faces of poverty and that many efforts over many years will be required to eliminate it completely" says Michel Hansene, Director-General of the ILO. "But, there are some forms of child labour today which are intolerable by any standard. These deserve to be identified, exposed and eradicated without further delay."

The ILO says that because the problem of child labour is so enormous and the need for action is urgent, choices must be made about where to concentrate available human and material resources.

"The most humane strategy must therefore be to focus scarce resources first on the most intolerable forms of child labour such as slavery, debt bondage, child prostitution and work in hazardous occupations and industries, and the very young, especially girls," the ILO report says.

Some 61 per cent of child workers, or nearly 153 million, are found in Asia; 32 per cent, or 80 million, are in Africa and 7 per cent or 17.5 million, live in Latin America.

There is evidence that child labour also exists in many industrialised countries, including Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. The problem is also emerging in many East European and Asian countries that are in transition to a market economy.

The results of an ILO survey published earlier this year showed that some 73 million children between the ages of 10 and 14 years were working full time in some 100 countries. The latest estimates are based on a new and more accurate methodology recently tested by the ILO on Ghana, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Senegal and Turkey. This takes account of part-time as well as full-time work and covers all working children between the ages of 5 and 14.

Children may be crippled physically by being forced to work too early in life. For example, a large-scale ILO survey in the Philippines found that more than 60 per cent of working children were exposed to chemical and biological hazards, and that 40 per cent experience serious injuries or illnesses.

In addition, a comparative study carried out over a period of 17 years in India on both children who attend school and children who instead work in agriculture, industry or the service sector showed that working children grow

up short and weigh less than school children.

In studies carried out in Bombay, the health of children working in hotels, restaurants, construction and elsewhere was found to be considerably inferior to that of a control group of non-working school children. Working children exhibited symptoms of constant muscular, chest and abdominal pain, headaches, dizziness, respiratory infections, diarrhea and worm infection.

## Sexual Differences

Girls more often work in domestic labour, boys work in construction, fields and factories, leading to sexual differences in exposure to hazards.

Girls, because of their employment in households, work longer hours than boys each day. This is one important reason why girls receive less schooling than boys. Girls are also more vulnerable than boys to sexual abuse and its consequences, such as social rejection, psychological trauma and unwanted motherhood. Boys, on the other hand, tend to suffer more injuries resulting from carrying weights too heavy for their age and stage of physical development.

The ILO survey focuses on unsafe and abusive working situations for children. Some of these examples include:

Slavery and forced child labour—Of all working children, those bound in slavery and forced child labour are the most imperiled

These practices are often underground, but the ILO report points out that children are still being sold outright for a sum of money. Other times, landlords buy child workers from their tenants, or labour "contractors" pay rural families in advance in order to take their children away to work in carpet-weaving, glass manufacturing or prostitution. Child slavery of this type has long been reported in South Asia, South-East Asia and West Africa, despite vigorous official denial of its existence.

Prostitution and trafficking of children—The commercial sexual exploitation of children is on the rise, even though the subject has in recent years become an issue of global concern, says the ILO report.

Children are increasingly being bought and sold across national borders by organised networks. The ILO report states that at least five such international networks trafficking in children exist: from Latin America to Europe and the Middle East; from South and South-East Asia to northern Europe and the Middle East; a European regional market; an associated Arab regional market; and a West Africa export market in girls.

In Eastern Europe, girls from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine are being transported to Hungary, Poland and the Baltic states, or to Western European capitals.

Several well-defined child trafficking routes have been identified in South-East Asia—Myanmar to Thailand;

internally within Thailand; from Thailand and other countries to China, Japan, Malaysia and the United States; and other routes.

Some one million children in Asia alone are victims of the sex trade, with reports showing the trafficking in young girls on the rise in Thailand and other countries. In Latin America, a large number of children work and live on the streets, where they become easy victims of commercial sexual exploitation. A number of African countries, including Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe are faced with rising child prostitution.

**Agriculture**—Children work in agriculture throughout the world and often face hazards through exposure to biological and chemical agents.

Children can be found mixing, loading and applying pesticides, fertilizers or herbicides, some of which are highly toxic and potentially carcinogenic. Pesticides exposure poses a considerably higher risk to children than to adults, and has been linked to an increased risk of cancer, neuropathy, neuro-behavioral effects and immune system abnormalities.

Mortality among Sri Lanka children farm workers from pesticides poisoning is greater than from a combination of childhood diseases such as malaria, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and whooping cough.

The operation of farm machinery by children also leads to many accidents that kill and maim.

**Mining**—Child labour is used in small-scale mines in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Child miners work long hours without adequate protective equipment, clothing or training. They are also exposed to high humidity levels and extreme temperatures.

Mining hazards include exposure to harmful dusts, gases and fumes that cause respiratory disease that can develop into silicosis, pulmonary fibrosis, asbestoses and emphysema after some years of exposure. Child miners also suffer from physical strain, fatigue and musculoskeletal disorders, as well as serious injuries from falling objects. Children working in gold mines are endangered by mercury poisoning.

**Ceramics and glass factory work**—Child labour in these industries is common in Asia but also can be found in other regions. Children often must carry molten loads of glass dragged from tank furnaces at a temperature of 1500-1800 degrees centigrade. They also work long hours in rooms with poor lighting and little or no ventilation. The temperature inside these factories, some of which operate only at night, ranges from 40 to 45 degrees C. Floors are covered with broken glass and in many cases electric wires are exposed. The noise level from glass-pressing machines can be as high as 100 decibels or more, causing hearing impairment.

The main hazards in this industry are exposure to high temperatures leading to stress cataracts, burns and lacerations; injuries from broken glass and flying glass particles; hearing impairment from noise; eye injuries and eye strain from poor lighting; and exposure to silica dust, lead and

toxic fumes such as carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide.

**Matches and fireworks Industry**— Match production normally takes place in small cottage units or in small-scale village factories where the risk of fire and explosion is present at all time. Children as young as 3 year of age are reported to work in match factories in unventilated rooms where they are exposed to dust, fumes vapours and airborne concentrations of hazardous substances— asbestos, potassium chlorate, antimony trisulphide, amorphous red phosphorous mixed with sand or powdered glass, tetraphosphorous trisulphide. Intoxication and dermatitis from these substances are frequent.

**Deep-sea fishing**— In many Asian countries, especially Myanmar (Burma), Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, children work in muro-ami fishing, which involves deep-sea diving without the use of protective equipment. Children are used to bang on coral reefs to scare the fish into nets.

Each fishing ship employs up to 300 boys between 10 and 15 years old recruited from poor neighborhoods. Divers reset the net several times a day, so that the children are often in the water for up to 12 hours. Dozens of children are killed or injured each year from drowning or from decompression illness or other fatal accidents from exposure to atmospheric pressure. Predatory fish such as sharks, barracudas, needle-fish and poisonous sea snakes also attack the children.

**Child domestic workers**— Child domestic service is a widespread practice in many developing countries, with employers in cities often recruiting children from rural villages through family, friends and contacts. Violence and sexual abuse are among the most serious and frightening hazards facing children at work, especially those in domestic service. Such abuse leads to permanent psychological and emotional damage.

There are no estimates on how many children are employed in domestic service because of the "hidden" nature of the work, but the practice, especially in the case of girls, is certainly extensive. For example, studies in

### Child Malnutrition % of Malnourished under-five

Mongolia	12
Malaysia	23
Philippines	30
Myanmar	31
Sri Lanka	38
Cambodia	40
Lao Rep	40
Pakistan	40
Vietnam	45
Nepal	49
India	53
Bangladesh	67

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Indonesia estimate that there are around 400,000 child domestic workers in Jakarta and up to 5 million in the country as a whole. In Brazil 22 percent of all working children are in domestic service, and in Venezuela, 60 percent of all working girls between 10 and 14 years are in domestic service.

The majority of child domestic workers tend to be between 12 and 17 years old, but some surveys have identified children as young as 5 or 6 years old. For example, a Bangladesh survey of child domestic workers found that 38 percent were 11 to 13 year old, and nearly 24 percent were 5 to 10 years old. Other surveys found that 11 percent of child domestic workers were 10 years old in Kenya; 16 percent were 10 years old or less in Togo; and 26 percent were less than 10 years old in Venezuela.

Hours for domestic child workers are very long. In Zimbabwe, the work day is 10-15 hours long; in Morocco, a survey found that 72 percent of such children start their working day before 7 a.m. and 65 percent could not get to bed before 11 p.m. Surveys in many countries uncovered alarming evidence of physical, mental and sexual abuse of adolescents and young girls in domestic service.

Construction—Children undertaking heavy work, carrying massive loads and maintaining awkward body positions for a long time can develop deformation of the spinal column. Sometimes, the pelvis can also be deformed, because of excessive stress being placed on the bones before the epiphysis has fused. Children working in construction and other fields are exposed to other toxic and carcinogenic substances, including asbestos, one of the best known of human carcinogens.

Priorities for action: The ILO wants to focus attention on the invisibility of endangered children. One reason why modern societies and governments have not been more active in curbing the most harmful forms of child labour is that working children are often not readily visible. It is a matter of out of sight, out of mind," the ILO report says.

One of the most important tools available to the ILO for improving the legislation and practice of its member state in the fight against child labour is the adoption and supervision of international labour conventions and recommendations. The ILO adopted its first convention of child labour in 1919, the year of its foundation, and several more over the decades.

The ILO is now calling for a new convention that would add specificity and focus on the worst forms and most hazardous types of child labour, including slavery, servitude, forced labour, bonded labour and serfdom, and the measures taken to eradicate them.

ILO action against child labour also includes a technical cooperation programme, the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) now active in 25 countries on three continents. □

## Demonstration Against Anti-Labour Policies of BJP Govt

Thousands of workers held demonstration against the anti-labour policies of BJP government of Rajasthan on Nov 2 in front of State Secretariat. They came from Sri Ganga Nagar, Sekar, Kota, Khetri, Jhunjhunu, Kankroli, Udaipur, Alwar, Ajmer districts, etc. There was complete bandh in different industrial areas.

The CITU had organised this state level demonstration and rally in favour of the retrenched workers of auto-light, Rochise watch factory, employees of Soni Hospital, etc. Rally was addressed by State CITU President Het Ram Beniwal, General Secretary Ravinder Sukhla, Secretary Navrang Singh Chaudhury, Bhanwarilal Bapna, Wquar Ul Ahad, Hari Ram Chauhan, etc.

All the leaders including Com. Hari Ram Chauhan severely criticised the police atrocities on workers' movement. They unearthed the conspiracy of BJP government to crush the trade union rights of workers. They called upon the workers to launch a powerful statewide agitation against the anti-labour policies of the state BJP government.

There was a programme to present a memorandum to the Chief Minister Shri Bharon Singh Shekhawat by a deputation. But Chief Minister and other ministers were not available. Bennial deplored the irresponsible behaviour of ministers. He announced that CITU will not allow to hold any public function of ministers in future who are reluctant to accept memorandum of the workers. □

## BOOK POST