



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

The Commission on Labour Standards must be wounded up

M K Pandhe

The Commission on Labour Standards and International Trade appointed by the Government of India was a clear attempt to please the international monopoly capital which is pressurising the third world countries to include the so-called social clause in the GATT agreement. Though the Indian Prime Minister V Narasimha Rao expressed his opposition to link trade with the "social clause," the Government was trying to appease the same forces by appointment of this Commission.

The selection of the chairman of the Commission Subramanian Swamy was indicative of appointing a person acceptable to the multinational companies. It was also an attempt to reward him for the services rendered to the ruling party, despite formally being in the opposition. The selection of S L Passey as a workers' representative was done without consulting any trade union, not even the INTUC to whom he belongs. The third nominee of the Government, who preferred to remain aloof from the Commission. The chairman of the Commission was given a status of a Cabinet Minister while the member, a minister of State. All this to suit the desires of the World Bank and the IMF.

The Ministry of Labour is already having a Tripartite Committee on the ILO conventions to deal with the terms of reference for which the Commission has been constituted. The Committee does not meet regularly and its functioning has been casual. The CITU has been repeatedly demanding that the committee should function properly so that ILO conventions are ratified in an expeditious way. It has also demanded that the committee should also be given the responsibility to periodically review the implementation of the ILO conventions already ratified by the Government of India. This committee has top most representatives of Labour, employers and the

Government and more competent to deal with the subject than Subramanian Swamy.

The trade unions have therefore rightly criticised the appointment of the Commission and decided not to cooperate in its proceedings. The point was made clear during the discussions in the Indian Labour Conference held on 3rd and 4th January 1995. The ILC discussed at length and unanimously decided to oppose any linkage of the "social clause" with the world trade agreement. At the same time trade unions demanded that effective machinery should be introduced to go into the question of ratification of the ILO convention. They also demanded that to begin with the government should ratify the basic ILO conventions relating to freedom of association and right to organise and collective bargaining.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the Government of USA which talks so much about the ILO standards has ratified so far only 11 ILO conventions whereas India has ratified 35 conventions. Its real intentions are clear that it wants a right to impose sanctions on the exportable products of the developing countries on the plea of lower wages and unfavourable working conditions. "The social clause" is therefore a protectionist measure by the advanced capitalist countries against the products of the developing countries.

The continuation of the Swamy Commission after the unanimous decision of the Indian Labour Conference was totally unwarranted. Moreover, it was the jurisdiction of the Labour Ministry to go into the question of ILO standards but the Swamy Commission was working under the Ministry of Commerce. It appears that even the Union Labour Ministry was not happy about the constitution of the

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The Growing Phenomena of Child Labour

P K Ganguly

Of late there has been a clamour on the problem of Child Labour both on national and international level. The issue is being raised and discussed both by Governmental and non-governmental organisations in various fora. While concern is being expressed over the scourge of child labour, some imperialist countries headed by the USA guided by their political motive of further exploiting the developing countries by way of sanctions, are trying to utilise this scourge by linking it to international trade by inclusion of a social clause in the recently concluded GATT agreement. The Government of India, which has been progressively surrendering to all pressures from these imperialist countries in economic and trade policies, however, has held the fort against this motivated offensive. In the recently held Indian Labour Conference, the idea was unanimously rejected. The NAM Labour Ministers' Conference also adopted a resolution against it.

The purpose of this article, however, is to throw some light on the scourge of child labour, and not to deal with the question of social clause.

Particularly since the last couple of years a number of seminars, workshops and meetings have been held in the country on the issue. These were mainly organised by the ILO, the National Labour Institute and the Government, in which the CITU also participated. The All India Coordination Committee of Unorganised Sector Workers of the CITU has been discussing the issue, as child labour is predominant in the sector, and also organised an workshop during this period, which was helped by the ILO. Now the CITU has taken up a project on child labour on national level, which is being helped by the ILO under its project, entitled, "International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour(IPEC).

Origin and Magnitude of the Problem:

Although various opinions were given regarding the causes and approach towards elimination of child labour in the aforesaid seminars and workshops, the general consensus that emerged was that child labour cannot be abolished in one stroke by making laws only, nor by declarations adopted by the United Nations or its agencies.

Child Labour is largely the product of poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment, which are the direct results of class divided society. In the pre-

industrial revolution period, child labour was prevalent all over the world. During the post industrial revolution period, it became a growing phenomenon both in the industrialised countries, and more so in the developing countries. The problem has become more acute with the economic recession. And now with the structural adjustment programmes under a policy of globalisation and liberalisation, it has become a growing phenomenon with persistent poverty particularly in the third world countries and in India.

According to studies made by the ILO (World Development Report, 1992-93), millions of child labour are there in the western advanced capitalist countries like in Italy, Spain, UK, Belgium, USA, etc. In Russia it has become a growing phenomenon after it embarked upon the path of capitalism.

But in Asian, African and Latin American countries, the number is highest. According to ILO, India has got the highest number of child labour in the world. There is no proper data available. Although the Government estimates it as around 17 million, according to ILO it is about 44 million. Several non-Governmental agencies estimate it to about 100 million.

During the past two decades the Indian economy has undergone a structural change in favour of the unorganised manufacturing sector. The process has taken a sharp acceleration with the new economic policies under the aegis of globalisation and liberalisation. The growth rate of population, particularly below the poverty line, is also on the higher side.

The rural sector being the hardest hit by such policies, rural-urban migration rate has also visibly increased, and there is increase in the number of slum dwellers. There have been technological innovations, the fruits of which have been concentrated in the higher echelons of the society, increasing the number of the have-nots. The growth rate in the agricultural sector has relatively gone down, accentuating the problems of both regional and sectoral disparities in development. The number of landless agricultural labour has been continuously rising.

The field of education has developed so unevenly that the existence of a large population of illiterates has become a feature of the Indian society. Unemployment has grown to such an extent that there has been an overpopulation of jobless gradu-

lates. Closures and reduction of workforce have become a matter of policy of the government under the structural adjustments in such a manner that it cannot even protect the existing jobs. There is no national wage policy, no minimum wage, let alone the question of need based wage. Coupled with these is the unabated price rise of all commodities that make it impossible for the teeming millions to make the both ends meet.

Whatever development the Government may boast of, the fact remains that under such developmental process the socio-economic status of various demographic groups have further widened, particularly deteriorating the stigmatized groups. The problem of child labour is naturally the by-product of such developmental process of the society. By squeezing the organised sector, squeezing the employment potential and by laying emphasis on the already over populated unorganised or informal sector and on so-called self-employment and home-stead industries, the Government has aggravated the problem of child labour.

Government Policies Run Counter to Constitution:

The policies of the government thus run counter to the provisions of the Constitution enshrined in the chapters of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The series of laws concerning child labour thus have no effect on its protection, let alone elimination. On the contrary, it is increasing to alarming proportions.

The National Policy on Child Labour, 1987(NPCL) has therefore become a fraud on child labour. The provisions in the NPCL, drawn from the Constitution, include measures for elimination of child labour, such as steps for employment generation, poverty alleviation, all round development of rural and urban areas, extension of adequate facilities for both formal and non-formal education, free compulsory education to children, free tiffin, books, exercise books, etc, coverage and extension of social security, health schemes, welfare schemes and so on. But the economic and developmental policies of the Government are just in the reverse way.

Nature and Magnitude of the Problem:

The nature of child labour in India is very complex and the magnitude is very vast, because it is mostly prevalent in the unorganised sector. And the unorganised sector, according to National Commission on Labour(1969) is almost endless. Nearly 90 per cent of the Indian workforce are in the unorganised sector. This is the most exploited section of the

Indian work force, gnawed by stark poverty. Parents, who are workers themselves, are forced to send their children to work to augment the family income. According to studies conducted by the ILO, over 90 per cent of the parents assert that the family needed children's income. When the family survival is at stake, everyone has to lend a hand. It is the phenomenon of a dual society in the country, where extreme wealth has been juxtaposed against extreme poverty.

However, the employers of these units find it so cheap to employ the children, quite often without wages or in kind. According to studies made by National Labour Institute, their earnings vary between zero to Rs 300/- per month. They work under heat, damp or dusty conditions, leading to communicable diseases. In most manufacturing units they are exposed to toxic substances adversely affecting the health. The examples are in brass ware, match stick, fire works, carpet, beedi, diamond and precious stone cutting and polishing, quarries, etc.

According to ILO's Committee of Experts, children are trapped in debt bondage. Also, there are several millions of child bonded labourers. An estimated one million children work as bonded labourers in brick-kiln, stone quarrying, construction and carpet weaving only. Schools, according to the parents are too expensive.

The real attraction of children is that they will work for long hours for low pay and make little trouble. The girls are particularly exploited.

According to a study conducted by the National Labour Institute, the following is the workload on a child labour:

Workload on a child labour

Sl.N.	Time	Activities
1.	Around 5,00 a.m.	Getting out of the bed
2.	5.00 a.m. to 5.30 a.m.	Toilet, etc.
3.	5.30 a.m. to 6.00 a.m.	Breakfast of previous night's left-over rice
4.	6.00 A.M. to 6.30 a.m.	Leaving for work place
5.	6.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.	Working
6.	1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	Lunch
7.	1.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.	Back to work
8.	7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.	Preparation for next day
9.	8.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.	Dinner and rest.

This is the most shocking way in which poverty can drive children to hard labour. In this situation, it is natural that they are malnourished. But the hard labour they do increases their caloric requirement,

which they do not get from mal-nourished food. The result is that they suffer from anaemia, fatigue, inadequate sleep, and become susceptible to all sorts of diseases. A WHO report on child labour cites other physical health hazards like bony lesions, postural deformity, poor eyesight, etc, besides psychic problems, as they are separated from parents, family and social life and education. With growing age they become lumpens.

Approach to the Problem:

In the above background it can be seen that the problem of child labour is extremely complex, vast and deeply rooted in the society as a custom, and therefore an intractable scourge. Since workers themselves are involved in it as parents, the problem becomes more complicated. It therefore requires a planned and cautious approach and struggle. Since it is the direct result of a class divided society, being further aggravated by the current globalised structural adjustment programmes in pursuance of unbridled development of capitalism with the slogan of privatisation, the struggle has to be directed against the causative factor. Therefore the struggle against child labour has to be a struggle against poverty and the causes of poverty.

Alongwith this struggle, there has to be a thorough going educative campaign among all sections of the people. Since workers themselves are involved, the trade unions have a major role to play in this struggle and campaign, so as to raise the consciousness of the people and of their own.

The Government and the employers are certainly directly responsible for this scourge. It is to be noted here that despite shedding crocodile tears, the Government has not involved the trade unions in the matter. The Government claims that it has spent lot of money for elimination of child labour. But all the money have been mostly allotted to non-Government and voluntary organisations with little output. Recently the Government has constituted a National Authority for elimination of child labour. But the trade unions have been excluded from this forum. Even the National Advisory Board for elimination of Child Labour does not have the representation of even all the major Central Trade Unions. Its pick and choose policy exposes its sham objectives.

The approach by the trade unions therefore should be planned on the following lines as a matter of consensus arrived at the various seminars and workshops:

1. Investigation of the various aspects of child labour in the vast unorganised or informal sector which should include the industries in this sector, trades, services, in the homestead cottage indus-

tries, among the self-employed people, etc, where child labour is rampant.

2. Special attention has to be given to girl child labour.

3. Educative campaign to be launched especially among the workers and parents.

4. Demand for free and compulsory primary education for the children with free tiffin, materials, etc. The formal and informal education have to be expanded to cover the working children in the entire unorganised sector.

5. Demand for ensuring basic sanitary, health, social security and welfare measures.

6. Demand for genuine poverty alleviation programmes, which must include land reforms.

7. Demand for employment generation programmes

8. Demand for a national wage policy and implementation of need based wages and equal pay for equal work for all.

9. Suitable amendment and implementation of the laws and strict punishment to the employers violating the provisions of law.

10. Seek cooperation of all mass organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth and women and other interested groups and institutions.

Action Programme: The CITU has taken up a project on national level. The project has been sanctioned by the ILO-IPEC. The duration of the project is for 15-months and is to be completed by 31st March, 1996.

To move in a planned way, the CITU for the time being has targeted 9 industries in the unorganised sector where child labour is very rampant. The industries are Match, Carpet, Beedi, Construction, Quarry, Hotels & Restaurants, Handloom, Brick Kiln and Agarbatti. The States which would be involved in the project at the outset are UP, W Bengal, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Assam, Haryana, Tripura and Bihar.

The programme includes holding of a national symposium, state symposia, industrywise symposia, union level workshops and training of leaders in the targeted industries, printing of posters and brochures, video films and campaign. The programmes will be implemented with the above approach so as to strengthen the struggle against child labour.

The issue has been discussed in the Secretariat and in the All India Coordination Committee of Unorganised Sector Workers of the CITU. The Secretariat has constituted a National Committee of the CITU specifically to implement the programme in a systematic manner.



CITU's Project on Elimination of Child Labour

Placed by: Centre of Indian Trade Unions(CITU)

Date: 15.10.94

Location: India, on national level

Starting Date: 1.1.1995

Duration: 15 months

1. Objectives:

1. To sensitise the members of the CITU Trade Unions in 9 selected States and 8 hazardous industries on child labour.

2. Using the sensitised union members spread awareness against child labour amongst other workers and the public in the selected States and industries.

2. Outputs

1. Conduct one National Level, 9 State level and 8 industry level symposia for the leaders of the CITU of the selected States(Appendix A) and selected industries (Appendix B) in order to sensitise them on child labour and plan the awareness campaign (January to September 1995);

2. Develop and print 1,25,000 posters and 62,500 brochures in various languages(Appendix C) targeting child labour in the different selected States and industries (January to September 1995).

3. Develop 3 video films in 3 selected industries, dub them into various languages(Appendix D) (January to September 1995).

4. Conduct 200 union level training on child labour in the 8 selected industries for union level office bearers of CITU(Appendix E) (January to September 1995)

5. Each of the 200 trained unions conduct 2 worker or public level local campaign against child labour per month(from the month of October 1995 to March 1996) - $6 \times 2 \times 200 = 2400$ local campaigns.

3. Activities

Output 1: Conduct one National Level, 9 State level and 8 industry level symposia for the leaders of the CITU of the selected States(Appendix A) and selected industries (Appendix B) in order to sensitise them on child labour and plan the awareness campaign(January to September 1995):

3.1.1 Conduct one National Symposium to sensitise Central, State and Industry level leaders of the CITU on child labour and plan the national campaign;

3.1.2 Conduct 9 State level symposia(one in each of the 9 identified States given in Appendix A) to sensitise State and district and industry level leaders of the CITU on child labour and plan the State campaign;

3.1.3 Conduct 8 industry level symposia (one in each of the 8 identified industries given in Appendix B) to sensitise the industry level, district level and union level office bearers of the CITU on child labour and plan the industry- wise campaign.

Output 2: Develop and print 1,25,000 posters and 62,500 brochures in various languages (Appendix C) targeting child labour in the different selected States and industries (January to September 1995).

3.2.1 Develop and print 1,25,000 posters in 8 industries and 9 languages;

3.2.2 Develop and print 65,000 brochures(Folders) in 8 industries and 9 languages.

Output 3 Develop 3 video films in 3 selected industries, dub them into various languages(Appendix D) (January to September 1995).

3.3.1 Develop 3 video films against child labour in the industries shown in Appendix D;

3.3.2 Dub these 3 films into the languages shown in Appendix D;

3.3.3 Take on an average 50 copies of each of the 3 films in each languages.

Output 4: Conduct 200 union level training on child labour in the 8 selected industries for union level leaders of CITU(Appendix E) (January to September 1995)

3.4.1 The Central level, state level, industry level and district level leaders of the CITU sensitised through the National, State and industry-wise symposia (and others) train 30 to 40 members of 200 union level workers on child labour in the selected States and industries as in Appendix E);

3.4.2 Distribute the posters, brochures and videos developed in Outputs 2 and 3 to these 200 unions

Output 5: Each of the 200 trained unions conduct 2 worker or public level local campaigns against child labour per month(from the month of October 1995 to March 1996) - $6 \times 2 \times 200 = 2400$ local campaigns.

3.5.1 Each of the 200 trained unions conduct 2 local level campaigns against child labour every month from October 1995 to March 1996 targetting other workers and the general public.

3.5.2 The posters, brochures and videos developed in Outputs 2 and 3 widely used and disseminated during these 2400 local level campaigns against child labour.

P S. The entire Action Programme will lay special emphasis on the girl child.

4. Inputs: We shall contribute our input through our voluntary activities by Central, State, District and Union level organisations.

4.1 Money, support, materials, services to be provided by the ILO:

APPENDIX A

TARGET STATES

1. Uttar Pradesh
2. West Bengal
3. Tamil Nadu
4. Karnataka
5. Andhra Pradesh
6. Kerala
7. Maharashtra
8. Orissa
9. Punjab
10. Assam
11. Haryana
12. Tripura 13. Bihar
14. Rajasthan

APPENDIX B

TARGET INDUSTRIES

1. Match
2. Carpet
3. Beedi
4. Construction
5. Quarry
6. Hotels and Restaurants
7. Handloom
8. Brick Kilns
9. Agarbatti

APPENDIX C

Number and languages of Posters and Brochures

Industry	No. of languages/ States	Number of	
		Postes	Brochures
1. Match	1	5000	2500
2. Carpet	1	5000	2500
3. Beedi	8	25000	15000
4. Construction	9	30000	15000
5. Quarry	1	5000	2500
6. Hotels & Restaurants	9	30000	15000
7. Handloom	5	15000	7500
8. Brick Kilns	3	10000	5000
9. Agarbati			
Total	37	125000	65000

APPENDIX D

Industry and languages of 3 Video Films

S.No.	Industry	Original Language	Dubbed lan- guages
1.	Match	Tamil	
2.	Beedi	Bengali Tamil	Telugu, Kannada, Marathi Malayalam, Oriya Urdu, Hindi(7)
3.	Construction	Hindi	Bengali, Punjabi Tamil, Malayalam Telugu, Kannada(6)
Total	3	3	11

APPENDIX E

Number of Unions to be covered in each industry

S No.	Industry	Number of unions
1.	Match	5
2.	Carpet	5
3.	Beedi	100

4.	Construction	40
5.	Quarry	5
6.	Hotel	25
7.	Handloom	15
8.	Brick Kiln	5
9.	Agarbatti	2
Total		202

(P K Ganguly)
Secretary

Decisions of the National Committee

The meeting of the National Committee constituted for implementation of the CITU's project on Child Labour met at Delhi on 19.2.95 and took the following first phase of programmes to be implemented by 31st July, 1995:

1. National Workshop will be held at Delhi on April, 19 20 and 21, 1995. 50 leading comrades from all the states including 8 women representing the various targetted industries will participate in the workshop.
2. Five industrywise national workshops will be held from May to July at Punjab, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Bengal, the Brick Kiln, Hotel & Restaurants, Beedi, Handloom and Construction industries. Each workshop will be participated by 25 leading comrades in the respective industries from various states. The workshops will be 3-day duration.
3. Three State level workshops will be held in June and July at UP, Haryana and Karnataka, to be participated by 50 leading comrades from the respective states representing the different industries. The workshops will be of 3-day duration.
4. Poster competition will be held on the menace of child labour. All the artists will submit the entries in multicolour or monochrome in 20 "x 30" size to reach the CITU Centre by 30th April. Three prizes will be distributed during the 25th Anniversary of the CITU at Calcutta on 30th May, 1995. All the posters will be exhibited during the General Council meeting of the CITU at Calcutta from May 27 to 29, 1995.
5. The CITU will produce four video films on child labour in India in general; child Labour in Beedi, in Construction and in Match industries. Scripts are invited from experts.

Labour Standard—

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Commission.

The 5th Conference of the Labour Ministers' of the Non-aligned and other developing countries further discussed at length the same question and rejected any linkage of "social clause," with the international trade agreement. This was a major collective expression of opinion by the Labour Ministers of the Third World countries and India played an important role in achieving this unanimous understanding.

After the unanimous decisions in these two important meetings what is there to decide about the policies on the question of Social clause? The World Summit on Social Development to be held in Copenhagen from 6th to 12th March 1995 will further debate this question and final attitude will be taken by all the countries.

The CITU is therefore of the opinion that the Subramaniam Swamy Commission must be wound up by the Government of India. If the government does not take such a step S L Passey who also represents INTUC should resign from the commission and allow it to die a natural death. It looks indeed ridiculous to stick to the post as a member of the Commission when the entire trade union movement has told Passey in a forthright manner that they totally disapprove the Constitution of the Commission.

Will INTUC leadership apply its mind to these aspects and take suitable steps in the matter?

Editorial Board

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NEP: DESIGN FOR EMPLOYMENT REGRESSION

Swadesh Dev Roye

According to the agenda notes, the issues dealt on unemployment in the recently held Indian Labour Conference have been sought to be made too restrictive as to give vent an idea that the whole gamut of unemployment problem being confronted by the country is a matter to be tackled by so called rejuvenating (in reality diluting) the network of Employment exchanges with unrealistic stress towards Self-employment generation.

CITU does not agree to the above perception. By any stretch of imagination, making 'Self Employment' a major thrust for employment generation to tackle the alarming rate of unemployment in the country is nothing but hoodwinking the reality of the problem, and that too, deliberately.

Moreover 'Self employment' may only supplement the over-all effort for generating gainful employment in production and service, but cannot replace the same nor can become the major thrust. After all sellers of goods and services must be in reasonable proportion to the number of buyers and cannot outnumber it for any model to be realistic, functional and sustainable.

REAL DIMENSION

To seriously deal with the employment policy and to address to the ever growing problem of unemployment, it is necessary to undertake an in-depth discussion on the matter instead of putting a cap on it and diverting the whole attention to self-employment and making futile attempts to find a solution in that.

Whatever the manner in which the figures and statistical fabrications on jobless people, one fact stands out starkly that with the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the problem of joblessness and unemployment has been manifesting itself with never seen before rapidity and dimension. The urban registered unemployment during the period of three years of NEP has already risen from 34 million to 40 million. The Planning Commission itself has estimated that this figure may reach a colossal number of 94 million by 2002. However, the estimated number of unemployed in the rural areas, where there is no employment exchanges or any other mechanism is by no means less than 70 million. Thus actually 110 million people in the country are cur-

rently without job.

It has been pointed out that the mad drive for privatisation, financial de-regulation and liberalisation of trade in the name of achieving higher growth, greater flexibility and improved productivity and efficiency has not consistently delivered higher growth. On the contrary unemployment continues to rise at alarming rate.

Out of the 870 million population of the country, the people at the age group of 18-58 years are roughly estimated to be around 400 millions. Thus 25% of the workforce is not having any work as on today and the number has been increasing everyday. One very significant emerging feature is the high rate of youth unemployment which is a matter of serious concern for the society. According to the World Labour Report, in India young unemployed account for 80% of the chronic male unemployment in rural and urban areas. This problem is obviously acute in the case of educated youth who constitute 12% of the Labour force in India.

PROJECTION AND EXPERIENCE

On the issue of employment, the ILC agenda paper has referred the estimate of the Planning Commission that in order to reach a near full employment by the year 2002, the country need to create 9.4 million jobs every year (from April, 1992). However, that the projection is wishful and not realistic is supported by the despatch of UNI under the caption - Unemployment eradication by 2002 a distant dream.

The despatch (Business Standard 17.11.94) quotes official sources, "additional employment-opportunities upto eight to nine million per year, on an average, during the eighth plan and upto nine to ten million per year during 1997-2002 are expected to be generated..." But what is the record of 1992-93 according to the report - "It is estimated that six million additional employment opportunities were generated during 1992-93." Incidentally, during 1991-92 such employment generation was estimated to have been a mere three million.

Whereas as per the Planning Commission's projection employment should grow at the average annual rate of about 2.6 to 2.8 per cent over the period upto 2002, "The crux of the problem is that over the last fifteen years labour force has been increasing at

an annual rate of 2.5% whereas employment growth rate has been only 2% (Prof. D. Narasimha Reddy - 1994)

Another disturbing factor for the 'imaginative' planners is that, "According to the data compiled from all the employment exchanges in the country, the vacancies notified by the organised sectors that include Central, State and quasi Government organisations, local bodies and public and private sector organisations employing 10 or more workers have continuously been decreasing from 8.97 lakh in 1981 to 4.59 lakh in 1991 and yet to 4.19 in 1992. And these data are indeed a true indicator of the worsening employment situation in the country." (K.B. Sahay, June '94).

Thus it is not difficult to understand the real intention behind the move to dilute the role of Employment Exchange and the game plan to rename it as Employment Promotion Centres aimed to help generation of Self-employment. Here it would be worthwhile to note that Self-employment schemes are also in serious jeopardy under the onslaught of the programmes of stabilisation and structural adjustment and more specifically as a result of the reforms undertaken in the financial sector coupled with the strict credit squeeze by the Government.

POTENTIAL JOB-LOOSERS

Added to the figure of the millions of unemployed hanging around the labour market in search of jobs, there are lakhs of workers who are targeted victims of redundancy due to the structural adjustment programme. According to a study report of ILO/SAAT under the title - 'Social Dimensions of Economic Reforms in Asia (1994)', there are 4,07,781 employees in the rolls of 58 Central Public Enterprises termed as 'Chronically sick' (1991). The report notes, "This may be taken as a measure of potential labour redundancy in Central Public Enterprises. It amounts to 18.2 per cent of total employment of 60 lakhs persons in quasi-government organisation for the country as a whole yields an estimate of 11 lakhs potentially redundant employees in public enterprises in 1988-89." Apart from the above, the report also studied the situation in private sector and noted, "...total private organised sector unemployed yields an estimate of about 13 lakhs potentially redundant employees in the private organised sector in 1988-89.

Pooling together the estimates of potentially redundant labour in public and private enterprises, the total estimate of redundant labour in the organ-

ised sector works out to 24 lakhs in 1988-89... It is possible that by now the number of employees in sick enterprises has grown larger."

Thus, the question is not only to find job for the unemployed but also to protect the job of lakhs of employees seriously facing the danger of being thrown out of employment. Thanks to the de-regulated, market oriented New Economic Policy of the Government!

STAGNANCY IN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

It has been said that in any modern economy, it is the growth of the non-agricultural sectors which provide the avenues for employment of a growing labour force. However, the situation in India is altogether different. According to ILO's World Labour Report, 1992, "of the total working population, 71, 13 and 16 per cent were employed in agricultural, industrial and service sectors respectively". It has further been pointed out that 58 per cent of the non-agricultural workers and 44 per cent of the agricultural workers were employed for wages and thus no major role for self-employment. It is amazing to note that as far back as in 1901 also the percentage of the share of employment in these sectors were 71.2, 12.6 and 15.7 respectively. Such a position clearly projects that ever since independence the employment potential of non-agricultural sectors and industrial sector in particular had little growth compared to the agricultural sector. What spectacular advance indeed made by the country to become a modern economy after attaining political independence!

The organised sector which consist of public sector companies, registered private companies, banks and financial institutions, railways, government departments etc. is expected to provide stable employment. But the share of this sector in total employment remained stagnant at 8.5 percent throughout the seventies and eighties, growing at around 2.3 percent per annum from 1972-73 to 1983-84 and around 1.5 percent thereafter.

In this connection it would be pertinent to note that under the NEP with the free entry of sophisticated capital-intensive technology there is no scope for appreciable employment generation. Hence the Government projection about growth of employment in the organised sector have no realistic basis.

Another important factor is the role of public and organised private sectors in generating employment. It is to be noted that within the organised sector the growth of employment was largely in the public sector. While over the period of 1977-78 to 1987-88,

employment in public sector grew at 2.58 per cent per annum, in the private sector the corresponding growth rate was only 0.48 per cent per annum. However during the period of 1983 to 1988 while the in private sector employment actually declined with a negative growth rate of (-)0.43 per cent per annum, the public sector witnessed an increase of 2.17 per cent per annum (ILO/SAAT).

Thus it is crystal clear that the liquidation of public sector and mad drive for privatisation will not only adversely effect the self-reliant uniform industrial growth of the country but on the question of generation of employment also this suicidal policy will have serious negative impact.

While advocating market-oriented economy it is argued that increased profitability would contribute generation of employment. The Labour Minister has been quoted as having said, "...If labour is rationalised, profitability would increase and this could be ploughed back to generate new jobs." However the reality is different. According the survey conducted by the IDBI, the net profit of the private corporate sector has jumped by 88.7 per cent during the first half of the current financial year. In the year 1993-94 also as per a study on 1200 private sector companies revealed that profit grew by 83%. This has resulted from increased sales, lower interest rate, reduced cost of production etc. But despite that employment generation in the private sector has witnessed negative growth.

Thus the moot point is that the private corporate sector has reaped well taking full advantage of the de-regulated market oriented economy but certainly not helped to generate employment.

This is a pointer to the fact that state intervention and hence public sector has to play important part on the issue of generation of employment.

SSI AND SERVICE SECTORS

The small scale sector is another area which account for around 50% of the country's industrial production and about 40% of our export earnings. With regard to generation of employment, it is to be noted that according to Government's Handbook of Industrial Statistics, 1992, in the manufacturing sector 52.4% employees belong to the Small Scale Sector. Now, this sector has been hit hard by the NEP. All protections including concessions on account of duty and tax have been almost withdrawn by the Government under the new policy. The result has been that out of the total sick/weak industrial units as on September, 1992 nearly 99% are SSI units.

However, in terms of outstanding bank credit, the share of SSI units is only 26.6% and that of the non-SSI units is 73.4%. With the narrated situation in this sector which is labour intensive, the vast scope of employment generation would be very seriously affected and thus further aggravate the problem of unemployment. As per a study of small scale industry, it has been estimated that 10 lakh small scale units may have to be closed down with 8.5 million workers rendered jobless, as a result of reform. (ILO/SAAT-1994)

The service sector has been the major source of employment generation in our country. But with the introduction of NEP, the Government has been implementing its declaration to reduce the number of employees in the central and state government offices by 10 to 20%. This is apart from the continuing moratorium on recruitment in the central government offices. The Railways has been the single organisation to employ the largest number of employees. Here again the authorities have targeted to bring down the number of employees to 9 lakhs from the current about 16 lakhs. It is 3 years that nationalised banks have enforced an embargo on fresh additions. Same is the trend with the entire financial sector.

From the foregoing it is absolutely clear that all avenues of stable employment have almost been sealed and at the same time the employees are being systematically thrown out of employment through various means, namely, lay off, retrenchment, so called voluntary retirement and adoption of various job killing devices in the name of restructuring the economy. Thus any serious move to address the problem of unemployment cannot be effectively undertaken without making sincere and honest introspection of the policies pursued by the Government.

AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Given the acute negative prospect of employment generation in the industrial sector, the agricultural sector is looked upon with too much high hope. The government is claiming that agricultural and informal sector will contribute the major share of employment generation. It is to be noted that though industrial growth has been gradually outstripping agricultural growth, the former has failed to absorb labour proportionately. Result has been that abnormal pressure is growing on the agricultural sector on the question of employment. On the other hand employment growth have been fast decelerating in this sector. It was 1.87% in 1977-78-83 and has come down to 0.76% in 1983-1987-88. The ILO/

ARTEP report has noted, "Moreover, this has happened in the context of a rapidly growing labour force so that agriculture has served as a residual sector absorbing all the extra labour supply which is not absorbed in the non-agricultural sector. It signifies failure to exploit a potential source of growth, namely, transfer of labour from low-productivity to high-productivity sectors. In principle, it could also lead to rising income disparities (till the turning point of the so called Kuznets curve is reached), as also rising unemployment or underemployment and deterioration in standards of living in the agricultural sector."

The pro-landlord agricultural policies has resulted in continuous rise of landlessness and casualisation of labour in the rural sector. As per data provided by ILO/ARTEP study the share of labour households in all rural households has gone up from 25 per cent to 39 per cent. "a sharp increase of over 50 per cent in proportionate terms."

Not only for effectively dealing with the question of unemployment but for the success of any real growth-oriented economic reform aimed at modern industrial development, generation of employment and establishment of a strong domestic market, thorough-going land reform is a most essential precondition. But this is one task which has been deliberately neglected by the Government.

GROWING CASUALISATION

Growing casualisation has been causing a serious problem in the employment scenario. The share of casual wage employment has increased from 23% to about 30% during the last 15 years as against the decrease in regular salaried employment from 15% to less than 14% during the same period. In rural sector this decline is from 9% to 8% for regular salaried and for self-employment it has declined from 65% to 59%. The rural casual employment has increased from 25% to 33%. But in urban sector the casualisation is much steeper and has increased from less than 13% to 17%. The urban salaried employment has decreased from 46% to 40%. (Prof. Narasimha Reddy, 1994).

The foregoing facts are the reflections of ever growing anti-labour practices of increased use of casual, temporary, contract and other types of labour and also offloading of jobs.

Now this phenomenon of increasing casualisation of employment is also one of the major causes for reduction of stable employment in organised sector and indicative of the fact as to how exploitation of labour is on the increase. Because these casual

workers have neither job guarantee nor have benefits accruable from various labour legislations. Without fighting out this danger of casualisation and increasing stable employment there cannot be real solution of the problem of unemployment.

THE VR FACTOR

Yet another serious factor which is aggravating the problem of unemployment is the so called voluntary retirement. Apart from the fact that such retirement is not really voluntary, the experience and current status of VR accepted workers present a dismal picture.

As per report of a study conducted by Maniban Kara Institute, Bombay to find out the position of the workers who have accepted VR, a very revealing picture has emerged. The report has noted, "Vast majority of the workers who opted for voluntary retirement scheme and resigned their jobs are having a bad time. Many of them were left with only a small portion of the lumpsum, the major portion having gone in repayment of loans or expense on marriages or having spent on petty unnecessary items. Thereby their standard of living has gone down considerably. The whole family is living under financial and social strains. Hence they are repenting for having retired voluntarily. One more reason of the lowering of standard of living is the ever-increasing prices while their income remaining static. Yet there are a few, amongst them, who have reconciled to the situation and feel that there is no point in repenting because what they did was not a voluntary decision of theirs, but was a compulsion of circumstances."

The report has pointed out that many of such retired workers have been in search for new employment and out of them 57% could not get employment despite persistent efforts. Even those could manage some employment were under contractors "who pay very less, transfer workers from one place to another and constantly keep the sword of being thrown out hanging over their heads."

Yet another study report as quoted by Dr. Pravin Sinha is that, "Patel's study of displaced textile workers in Ahmedabad has indicated that "about 2/3rd of 60,000 out of job workers have become hawkers and lari-wallas; a large number had taken to autorickshaw driving; and several others were self employed as petty traders. Still others were jobless looking to other family members' earnings for sustenance." In a nutshell, the displaced worker in whatever trade or profession he/she may now involved in were much

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Multinationals Capture Indian Telecom

V A N Namboodiri

The Indian Telecom Department, which was functioning directly under the government of India for about a century is being fragmented and handed over to multinational corporations.

The induction of new technology made it possible for vast expansion and introduction of new services. Within the last few years the telecom services have expanded manifold. With more than a ninety lakh telephones thousands of telephone exchanges and telegraph offices sand its infrastructure, the telecom is poised for more growth with a potential demand of millions of telephones.

NEW TELECOM POLICY

The New Telecom Policy was announced in the Parliament on 13th May 1994, just before the Prime Minister's visit to US where he was scheduled to meet big business for negotiations.

The NEP revised the targets for the VIII Five Year Plan so as to provide the following by 1997, the end of the plan.

1. Phone on demand
2. All villages to be covered
3. PCOs to be provided for 500 persons
4. Value added services to be introduced with world class telephone services.

The target of providing 75 lakhs telephones have been revised to 100 lakhs. In order to make available resources to fulfil the targets, private entry will be allowed in the basic telecom services.

The Guidelines for private entry into the basic services were announced at the time of communication minister's visit to Japan. The main points are as follows:

The private companies registered in India will be allowed to provide competitive network to the existing DoT network under license for 15 years. The foreign equity can be upto 49%/. The size of such competitive network will be that of a Telecom Circle - roughly co-terminus with a state Long Distance and International calls will be with DoT and VSNL (Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd) at present, but this will also be re-examined later. A Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) will be appointed.

On the basis of the above policy and guidelines, tenders have been called for from Indian companies for providing telephone service on licence on non-exclusive basis in the 20 Telecom Circles, including

Delhi and Bombay MTNL. The opening date of the tenders is fixed on 30.3.1995.

But even before the tenders are opened, a hasty decision has been taken by the Government of India to hand over four Secondary Switching Areas of Tamil Nadu viz Coimbatore, Salem, Erode and Dharmapuri to US WEST (INDIA) Ltd, a private company completely controlled by the telecom MNC, US WEST INTERNATIONAL, in the name of encouraging pilot projects. A letter of intent has been given to the company with the assurance that the licence will be issued within six weeks. It is not known what are the terms and conditions. It is no coincidence that the intent was granted at the time of the visit of US Commerce Secretary, Ronald Brown, to New Delhi.

The developments right from the start of the announcement of the National Telecom Policy to the present letter of intent to US WEST are shrouded in mystery. The decisions have been taken on false premises and without necessary debate and consultations.

REVISED TARGETS ON FAULTY PREMISES

As per VIII Five Year Plan targets, the waiting list of telephones is assessed as 75 lakhs and the required resources could be found from internal resources and through leasing of switching equipments (6th report, Standing Committee, Lok Sabha Secretariat). But the NTP asserts that there will be a waiting list of 100 lakhs and since the resources for providing the above are nto available with the government, the private sector is allowed to enter thebasic telecom services. A close examination of the trend of thewaiting list for the last several years, as assessed for the VIII Plan clearly shows that the NTP assessment is not correct. It can be seen that a false premises is created to justify private entry.

The Indian Telecom had a growth rate of 17% which can be increased to 25% if proper care is taken. The revenue, inspite of the low local call rates comes to about Rs 8 crores a day. There is a work force of about 4.75 lakhs with more than 20,000 highly skilled engineers. instead of developing and mobilising the existing infrastructure and human resources, the NTP seeks private entry as the only panacea.

SECURITY OF NATION

Only handful of nations have privatised their basic telephone services. The countries who have priva-

tised are having 30 to 40% density of telephones. No country with such a low density of telephones (0.9 % for India) has privatised since it would not be in the best interest of development.

It is mainly with due consideration to the National Security that other countries have not even considered privatisation of telecom.

US has imposed a 20% cap on foreign holdings, while the EEC countries generally do not allow foreign ownership at all. Allowing 49% foreign equity, as decided by India, will be tantamount to handing over the complete control to MNCs.

HOW MANY COMPANIES?

In US, UK, Japan, etc, the few countries where privatisation has taken place, there are only one or two companies, whereas in India, about 20 private companies are going to enter the basic services. Already eight companies have been allowed for Cellular Mobile Phone in the Metro cities of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Each Telecom circle will have a private company in parallel with DoT. In the name of Pilot Projects more companies will be allowed. The issue of connectivity, sharing of tariffs, etc will be complex issues.

INCREASE IN TARIFF

It was stated in the guidelines that the companies will have the same tariff as DoT. But the indications from the recent statements of the communication minister is that they will be allowed to increase or reduce the tariff.

The present installation charges of Rs 3,000/- (for ordinary) and Rs 10,100/- (for OYT) may increase to Rs 30,000/- or more. (The expenditure for installing a telephone connection is Rs 47,000/- as per National Telecom Policy.) The local call charge of Re 1/- (Rs 1.250 is one of the lowest in the world. It may increase three or four fold. There will be no free call. The telecom services will only be available to the rich, who can afford it.

BALANCE BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

The guidelines condition that the private companies should ensure that balance is maintained in urban and rural areas will only be in paper, as no company would be prepared to invest their capital in rural area, where the profit will only be marginal. The private operators have already pointed out that it would be arbitrary to ask to serve uneconomical areas where there might be no demand. The Communication Minister's appeal "not to forget about social obligations of a balanced coverage of urban, rural and hilly areas" will be falling on deaf ears.

PUBLIC SECTOR BANNED FROM ENTRY

It is surprising that public sector companies are

not allowed to participate in the tenders for basic telephone services. Eventhough it is stated that Indian companies will be granted licence, the condition that they must have experience of having operated 5 lakhs telephones have put them at the mercy of MNCs, as no Indian company is having earlier experience. They will have to tie up with the foreign companies. in the Communication Minister's open house discussion with private representatives on 6.12.94, the Indian manufacturers opposed any mandatory requirement of a financial or technological tie up with a foreign company. But the condition of '5 lakhs experience' has done exactly that. Even with the required 10% equity, the MCs will control the Indian companies.

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Neither the proposed regulatory authority has been appointed nor its powers defined. The Minister has only indicated that the DoT will be divested of the policy making powers.

JOB SECURITY

In UK and the the few countries where telecom privatisation has taken place, thousands of workers were retrenched. Can India take such a risk with its large unemployed people? Can the workers allow such a situation to develop?

IMF WORLD BANK PRESSURE

The New Economic Policy with its slogans of globalisation, privatisation, competition, etc as dictated by the IMF-World Bank combine has actually made the life of the common people miserable. The National Telecom Policy is also part of this general policy of surrendering to the dictates of the imperialist countries headed by the US. As pointed out earlier ever the annoucments of the NTP, the guidelines etc have been timed so as to please the MNCs. Each and every decision is taken in favour of these.

PUBLIC DEBATE AND THOROUGH APPRAISAL REQUIRED

In short it can be concluded that the National Telecom Policy and guidelines for private entry are ill conceived and based on faulty premises. The task of improving the quality of service and expansion of network with a balance in rural and urban areas cannot be entrusted to the MNCs who are interested only in exploiting and accusing huge profits. Security of the nation will not be safe with the crucial telecom sector in the hands of the foreign companies.

A thorough appraisal of the entire telcom policy on a scientific basis and adoption of the same after a serious public debate is required. The country's future cannot be mortgaged.



Conference of Reserve Bank Employees

The twentyeighth conference of All India Reserve Bank Employees Association was held at Nagpur from 7th to 9th January 1995.

The inaugural session was held on 7th January. A colourful procession with banners and slogans for working class unity and struggle against all sorts of injustice and oppression, wended its way through the main thoroughfares in the afternoon. Some distance from the office, at the spot where innocent people belonging to the Gowari tribal community fell to dastardly police brutalities on 23-11.94, the big procession stood in anguished silence for two minutes to pay respect and resolve to fight against atrocities and injustice of all sorts on the downtrodden people. On the way the procession was greeted with floral tributes by various organisations, viz CITU, Insurance employees, NCBE unit of Bank of Baroda, SFI/DYFI, Maharashtra State and Central Government employees organisations and others, who also joined the procession.

The inaugural session was presided over by T K Ghosh, the President of AIRBEA and greeted among others by Dr Ashok Mitra, the noted economist and Justice V R Krishna Iyer.

Dr Mitra appreciated the role of AIBEA in highlighting the maladies afflicting the country's central bank as well as the nationalised banking sector and desired continuance of our good efforts. Inaugurating the conference, Justice Iyer deprecated the government's recent unilateral amendment of the Patent Act through an ordinance bypassing the Parliament, terming it as beginning of the process of losing our sovereignty. He apprehended that our Supreme Court and the Parliament, the symbols of our independence, might soon be made sub-ordinate to the US sponsored World Trade Organisation and other "tryst with destiny" of freedom in August 1947 would be reversed, most unfortunately.

The conference was greeted by warm message from World Federation of Trade Unions(WFTU), several trade unions, abroad, central trade unions viz, CITU, AITUC, HMS, BMS, TUCC, bank unions—BEFI, AIBEA, NCBE, AIBOC, AIRRBEA, AIRRBOF, AIRBOA, besides All India State Govt "Employees' Federations, All India Nabard ?Employees' Association, Confederation of General Insurance Officers' Association, AIIEA, All India IFC Employees Union, etc. On behalf of BEFI, Com.S S Pillai, vice president,

greeted in person; also warm felicitations were received from all state and constituent units of BEFI. Many prominent personalities and economists viz Sarvashri Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Benal, Dr Ashim Dasgupta, Finance Minister(WB), EMS Namboodiripad, Dr Amiya Bagchi, S B Sen, Dipak Nayar, Dr Arun Ghosh, etc wished the conference a total success with valuable opinions.

The delegates' session participated in by about 250 delegates and observes including ten lady members from all units commenced on 8th January 1995. The session paid condolences to departed colleagues, national and international personalities, leaders of working class and people's struggles at home and abroad, victims of communal riots, bomb blasts, caste conflicts, atrocities on downtrodden people, natural calamities, etc. Thereafter was placed the General Secretary's report as endorsed by the CEC.

The report strongly opposed governments current policies endangering the vital national interests and public sector in particular and demanded balanced regional developments, particularly the economically backward states, taking the people into confidence.

In the banking/financial sector, the report firmly opposed privatisation of nationalised banks and resolved to continue participation in common struggles. it demanded appropriate punishment of the guilty in securities scandal and recovery of banks' bad debt from big borrowers; hailed the broad-based joint movement for pension as 3rd benefit but expressed disappointment over the outcome; expressed happiness at the entry of BEFI in the bipartite forum in industry, and strongly supported insurance employees' fight against privatisation.

In Reserve Bank, it recalled the steps forward in certain areas, intense efforts to protect the job of banking supervision in RBI, and stressed on the issues being confronted now viz early wage revision, superannuation benefits, job security, proper career progression, expansion and autonomy of Reserve Bank, recruitment, problems related to promotes, ex-servicemen, SC/ST/OBC employees and lady colleagues.

On organisation, the report appealed for most broad based purposive struggling unity of employees under the banner of AIRBEA, commonality of percep-

tion and perfect amity to meet squarely the situation ahead, as also active involvement with the democratic movement.

About 70 delegates/observers including lady delegates enthusiastically participated in the discussion, supported the report and enriched it by numerous suggestions. The Conference also adopted several resolutions

The conference elected T K Ghosh as president, Samir Ghosh as General Secretary and other office bearers. Central Executive Committee and general Council were also elected unanimously.

On 9th evening, the host unit organised a unique cultural function, which focused on national unity in diversity.

Bank Employees Sign Agreement

Four Bank employees organisations, viz All India Bank Employees Association, National Confederation of Bank Employees, Bank Employees Federation of India and Indian National Bank Employees Federation signed a settlement with the Indian Bank Association on 14th in respect of pay scales, DA and other allowances. The settlement will cover about seven lakh bank employees in the clerical and subordinate cadre in the public and private sector banks both in the Indian and foreign sector.

The settlement is valid with retrospective effect from 1.11.92 for five years. The monthly increase ranges from Rs 200/- to Rs 985/- per month in individual cases. This was the sixth industry level settlement in the banks.

A special feature of the settlement is Conveyance allowance at the rate of Rs 100/- per month to all sections of the workmen staff. The other features are granting of additional fourth stagnations increment for clerical and sub-staff employees; deconsolidation of special allowances and introduction of another category of Tellers with higher responsibility and higher allowance. It has also been agreed upon that there would be no restriction on designations in semi-urban areas as now existing in rural area branches.

In a joint statement the leaders of the four organisations congratulated the bank employees in the country for their determined united struggle which led to the settlement.

NEP: DESIGN . . .

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worse off than in their previous job.

Therefore it is clear that the VR factor is contributing to aggravation of unemployment problem.

REVERSE EMPLOYMENT REGRESSION POLICY

If the country has to reach even a semblance of full-employment situation, employment avenues have to be created mainly in the industrial and service sectors, and the economic policy has to be attuned in that direction in real term and mere market-reflex cannot serve that purpose. The three years period of NEP has established beyond doubt that the new policy may do manythings but the direction already set by its impact reveals its incapacity to improve upon the overall employment situation in net term repeat in net term. Rather it had already generated a trend towards loss of jobs in the sizeable part of the industrial economy.

The real solution of this cancerous problem of unemployment has to be traced in the need for reversal of the policy of employment regression, in the cover of NEP. Perhaps those in Governance also realise that NEP can do little to generate overall employment in industry and service as a whole and hence their thrust in "Self employment", which cannot even touch the fringe of the problem.

Finally, the trade union movement cannot remain indifferent to the alarmingly growing unemployment problem. Accordingly to Mr Michel Hansenne, the Director General of ILO, "However, they are no longer sufficient to promote the protection of labour, so consideration must be given to the states' obligations in promoting employment. In other words, social problems cannot be considered apart from the economic context, nor can an analysis of labour legislation be separated from a deep reflection on economic policy. Labour rights and the right to work must be dealt with simultaneously. The ILO and its constituents must adapt in order to face this double requirement."



Kerala Newsletter

Telecom Sector Paralysed

Telecom sector in the state was paralysed on January 23 due to the countrywide tools down strike call given by the national federations in the telecome sector.

The strike was in protest against the handing over of the telecom sector to the multinationals.

In the state all the Group-C and Group-D workers, including junior telecom officers participated in the strike. Telephone and telegraph sector were paralysed. Trunk-special service did not work.

The striking workers staged dharna in front of telephone exchanges and offices all over the state. Several federation leaders greeted the workers. They demanded immediate withdrawal of the privatisation move of telecome sector.

Transport Workers Stage Dharna

The transport workers staged massive dharna in front of district headquarters on January 24 all over the state. The dharna call was given by the KSRTC Employees Association. The main demands of the workers were withdrawal of ESMA case against transport workers, resignation of the Chief Minister K Karunakaran, who patronised the Police DIG involved in the ISRO spy case.

In Trivandrum the dharna was inaugurated by Com.K N Ravindranath, State CITU General Secretary. Others who spoke on the occasion were KSRT Employees Association general secretary K K Divakaran, P Vamadevan Nair and K Murukesan. Divakaran greeted the transport employees for their massive participation in the dharna.

CITU Union Wins Recognition

The CITU and INTUC unions have got recognition in the referendum held in Milma, a milk producing unit in the cooperative sector in Kerala. The Milma Employees United Organisation, a representative organisation of the Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Employees Federation, got 41.4 % vote in the polling.

Out of 1599 vote polled, the CITU got 662 vote while INTUC 674. The AITUC union did not get recognition though it was supported by BMS and other organisations. AITUC union got only 263 votes.

In a press statement the federation president K Thulazidharan and General Secretary K Chandranpillai congratulated the workers. They said this is a warning against the corrupt administration of the management run by Cong(I) since last 12 years.

Aspirin Plant Employees on Hunger Strike

The workers of Aspirin plant at Kazhakootam in Thiruvananthapuram district are continuing their Satyagraha in front of State Secretariat building in protest against State

government notification to sell the plant to private parties. Though the plant is not closed, work has been paralysed in the plant several months back.

The hunger strike was launched by the Joint Action Council of the trade unions in the Aspirin Plant. The Joint Action Council consisting of Kerala State Salicylitters & Chemicals Employees Association (CITU) Aspirin Plant Employees Congress, (INTUC) and Aspirin Plant Employees Union (AITUC), have been on the path of struggle since last several months demanding protection of the plant. Workers are not getting their wages since last ten months. They also did not get bonus. The leaders accused the management for their irresponsible attitude towards the workers.

The JAC leaders said that the notification of the government is against the assurance given by the Industry Minister when they met him recently. The Industry Minister assured them that time that the government will provide financial assistance to the plant. However this was floated by the government through its notification. The State CITU Secretariat which met on Feb 10 adopted a resolution demanding amicable settlement of the Aspirin plant workers' strike. The meeting demanded for retainment of the plant in the public sector and urged the government to take urgent step for ending the strike.

Total strike by Plantation Workers

Nearly 3 lakh plantation workers observed a one-day strike on January 31 in protest against the anti-worker policy of the Plantation owners.

Workers from plantation areas like Rubber, Coffee, Cardamum participated in the strike. The strike was complete in these areas. The strike call was given by CITU, AITUC, UTUC and HMS.

The demands of the workers include settlement of bonus issue in A V George Company, in protest against government's decision to leave the bonus issue of Harison Malayalam Company for adjudication and also in protest against the lock out declared in Hoase plantation. Insurance Employees Staged Dharna

Through out the State, Insurance employees staged massive dharna and protest march on January 30 against privatisation and handing over of the insurance sector to multinationals. The dharna call was given by the national federations of the insurance employees.

In Ernakulam the dharna was staged in front of the Divisional office. It was inaugurated by K Chandran Pillai, CITU Ernakulam Dist Secretary. In Calicut the dharna was inaugurated by TP Kunchikannan. Hundreds of employees participated in the dharna. Several other mass organisations greeted the workers.

Second All India Conference of Federal Bank Staff Union(BEFI)

The second all India conference of Federal Bank Staff Union (BEFI) was held at Kozhikode on January 28. The conference was inaugurated by the noted economist Dr Thomas laisac. Staff union president V S Jose presided over the meeting. Reception Committee chairman K J Thomas welcomed the delegates. 250 delegates from all over the country participated in the conference. Union general secretary M P Kosi placed the report and discussion took place on it.

Inaugurating the conference Dr Thomas laissac criticised the liberalisation policy of the Rao Government. He said as a result of the policy pursued by the government the Agricultural sector is on a declining path. He said the banks have drastically reduced the financial assistance given to the weaker sections of the agricultural and small scale sector. He warned that this will adversely affect the development of these sectors.

In the afternoon BEFI joint secretary P Sadasivan Pillai spoke on the subject "Banking Sector and Bilateral Discussion." Later in the evening a procession and public meeting was held in the city. The procession was led by

Staff Union president V S Joseph, General Secretary M P Kosi and BEFI Joint Secretary P Sadasivan Pillai. CITU All India Secretary V B Cherian inaugurated the public meeting.

CITU Union demands reopening of Kunnathara Textile Mills

A meeting of the Kunnathara Textile Workers Union(CITU) held on Feb 10 demanded the reopening of the Kunnathara Textile Mills (Kozhikode) immediately. The mill was closed since last five months. The meeting also decided to launch joint action programme to pressurise on the State government for reopening the mill.

As a result of the closure more than 600 workers were thrown out in the street. The meeting noted the statement of the former chairman and Kozhikode Dist Collector Amitab Kanth that the mill have the order of thousands of meters textile cloth from abroad and it can be run smoothly without any difficulty. The State Industry Minister also said recently that the government had allotted Rs 1.9 crore for the restructure of the mills. But despite all these the mill is still closed. □

J & K Employees Achieve Major Success after strike

The State government employees of Jammu and Kashmir achieved a major success after their 19 days continuous strike paralysed the State administration including the civil secretariat from January 5 to January 23 particularly in Jammu region.

The struggle was conducted by a united platform of 55 departmental unions and associations under the name of Employees Joint Action Committee(EJAC) and the lower grade employees union of civil secretariat on their seven point charter of demands. The demands were for grant of Rs 100 per month as interim relief from September 1993; grant of time bound promotion; implementation of SRO 6d4 regarding regularisation of daily wagers and enhancement of their wages; merger of 20 per cent DA with the basic pay scale for pensionary benefits; revision of LTC; declaration of B-2 status to Jammu city and removal of anomalies in SRO 75.

The strike was preceded by a mass rally of more than 7000 employees held on November 23, 1994 at Jammu by the EJAC which gave the call of two days token strike on December 16-17 which was successfully conducted. While noticing the mood of employees in mass rally of over 15,000 employees of Jammu district alone on December 17 at Parade Ground, and similar rallies at other district headquarters, the EJAC gave the call of one week strike from January 5 to 11 which was further extended upto January 25.

In the meantime, the State government came out

with a unilateral decision on January 14 to grant the interim relief from January 1995 and enhancement of medical allowance from Rs 50 to Rs 75 per month which the EJASC rejected. it decided to continue the strike. The employees gave a big rebuff to this unilateral decision of the J&K government and thronged to the winter capital, Jammu in thousands to hold militant demonstrations and rallies. This forced the State government to call the representatives of EJAC and secretariat union for negotiations on January 19. After the negotiations held continuously for five days, a settlement was reached on January 24 on major demands. As per the settlement, state employees will not get Rs 100 per month as interim relief from August 1994. The committee formed by the government will submit the report regarding time bound promotion within two months and its report will be implemented within a month thereafter. Medical allowance was increased to Rs 80 per moth from January 1995 while daily wagers will get an increase of Rs 3 per day from January. An understanding was reached on other demands also.

This struggle of the State government employees of J&K has created a positive atmosphere in the present turmoiled situation in the state and has strengthened the traditional bonds of unity and secularism in the employees movement. The struggle has also generated a positive atmosphere in the Kashmir valley and will help in reviving the normal trade union activities which stood virtually paralysed during th last five years. □

STEEL WORKERS STAGED DHARNA ON JANUARY 31 ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

31st January '95 the Steel Workers all over the country staged Dharna in the Steel Plants and offices all over the country at the call of Steel Workers' Federation of India. The Steel Workers Federation of India had called upon the steel workers to express their protest over the inordinate delay in concluding wage revision in Steel Industry which has already fallen overdue.

The current wage agreement expired on 31-12-91 and inspite of passage of three years thereafter, negotiation could not take off as yet, except payment of interim relief. As per report received so far, massive Demonstration and Dharna was reported to have been organised in all the major steel plants at Durgapur, Burnpur, Rourkela, Bokaro, Jamshedpur, Salem, Vizag, and also in the offices of marketing organisation of SAIL at Calcutta, Ghaziabad, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Indore etc. Also on demands of contract workers engaged in Steel Industry, massive demonstration by the contract workers was held in Durgapur, Burnpur and Bokaro on 10th, 12th and 13th February 1995 respectively under the leadership of Steel Workers Federation of India.

CITU WINS BEL ELECTIONS

The CITU panel has swept the trade union elections in the Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) unit of Hyderabad.

S Narasimha Reddy was elected president while Madhu Murthy Reddy and V Prakhakar were elected vice presidents. J Raghava Rao won the general secretary post while Saundarya Raj and Premnath were elected joint secretaries. B H Kumara Raj was elected organizing secretary and MM Ravubb was elected treasurer.

BEL is a central public sector undertaking having units in several parts of the country.

The AITUC, the break away group of BMS and some naxalite organisations joined hands to defeat the CITU. In a bid to defeat the CITU and woo the electorate, CITU's opponents got the workers arrears sanctioned a day before the elections, thereby breaking the norms.

The CITU east zone president and secretary, Yadagiri Rao and Abdul Khadar respectively, thanked the voters for electing CITU without succumbing to the last minute luring by opportunist groups.

CITU WINS IN VISL ELECTION

In the annual election of the VISL Workers Association, in Visheswariya Iron and Steel Ltd a subsidiary of SAIL, Com. L. Rangegowda the leader of Steel Workers Federation of India. Bhdrabati unit was elected president of the union. Com. Rangegowda got 2425 votes, ie more than 50% of the votes polled in the election. Com. M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary CITU and Com. Mrinal Banerjee General Secretary, Steel Workers' Federation of India Congratulated Sri Rangegowda and the local CITU unit for such decisive victory in the election.

BIFR PROCEEDINGS INDICATE REVIVAL PROSPECT OF SCOOTER INDIA

The BIFR hearing held on 28-12-94 on M/s Scooter India Ltd, a public sector unit, indicates possibility of revival of Scooter India with the promoter (Government of India) showing willingness to infuse funds for the revival project. As per records of proceedings of the last session of BIFR, it was noted that "the bench noted that Govt is willing to support the revival package of SIL. Though govt's approval is available for the projections as indicated in the last hearing namely 12000 units and 1200 employees, they are willing to consider higher targets and increased level of employees. The OA (operating Agency, IC IDBI) is therefore directed to revise the report taking into account the production level of 18000 nos (three wheelers) as proposed by company/promoter as well as employees"

It is relevant to mention here that in the BIFR hearing the unions and the Officer's Associations unanimously maintained that the production level of 18000 assumed by the company is feasible and further reduction of employees level from existing 2026 is not necessary.

The entire workforce of M/s Scooters India Ltd comprising the employees union and Officers Association have long been struggling unitedly for revival of this premier PSU and against the move of the interested quarters for privatisation. It is because of this all out united effort the situation has taken a positive turn.

For Anganwadi Women

Anganwadi Women workers will hold a demonstration on May 5, 1995 in New Delhi against privatisation and for regulaisation

Gratuity Recent Amendments X-Rayed

Nirmala L Bhawnani

How official machinery moves at the snail's pace and that too in haphazard manner, is quite evident from the fact that though the Minister of State for Labour reportedly announced government's intention some where in mid-1992, to bring about improvements in the Payment of Gratuity act 1972, the Ordinance was issued to raise the ceiling of the qualifying wages from 2,500 to Rs 3,500 w.e.f Dec 1, 1992, without effecting corresponding increase in the quantum of gratuity, which without taking into account inflation, in normal course, should have been 20 times of the wages, i.e. Rs 70,000, as against Rs 50,000. However, it was then reported that the hike in Gratuity is under active consideration of the authorities.

After agonising period of one year, the august house of the Rajya Sabha, on the eve of 1993 christmas, (December 23 to be precise) offered gift to the toiling masses by completely removing the restriction on ceiling of Rs 3,500, introduced from Dec 1, 1992, and by doubling the gratuity, stagnating at Rs 50,000, since Oct 1, 1987, to Rs one lakh, and forwarded the amendments to the Lok Sabha, which could not pass them as the winter session was coming to an end. However, the Lok Sabha ultimately gave its nod in the following budget session, and the revised provisions came into force w.e.f May 24, 1994—a long span of almost 2 years to fill the gap between promise and performance, that too far from satisfactory.

It may be recalled that the Payment of Gratuity Act saw light of the day on Sept 16, 1972, when All India Average Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (Base Year 1960 = 100) stood at 192 points for the Financial Year 1971-72. The social security measure statutorily ensured maximum gratuity of Rs 20,000, worked out at half monthly rate of terminal wages (Basic pay + Dearness Allowance) not exceeding Rs 1,000 for each year of completed service or part thereof beyond 6 months. It is pertinent to note that in the light of upward movement of 92 points over the base year 1960, the rupee value had dipped to 52 paise in 1971-72, according to which, worth of Rs 20,000 slid down to Rs 10,400.

No doubt, in view of raging inflation, initial level of wages of Rs 1,000 and that of gratuity of Rs 20,000 was revised to Rs 1,600 and Rs 32,000 respectively

from July 1, 1984, but since purchasing power had declined to 18.3 paise, as derived from 547 index for 1983-84, Rs 57,000 and not Rs 32,000 would have preserved the real value of the original gratuity.

However, one favourable provision was introduced at this juncture, whereby in the backdrop of Supreme Court's judgement, 15 days' salary has to be worked out by dividing the wages by 26 working days and not 30, as the employees toil and moil for 26 days.

Again, the above ad hoc improvement was followed by further similar move from October 1, 1987, when wages of Rs 2,500 could fetch the gratuity of Rs 50,000. But, here also owing to spurt in the index to touch the height of 674 mark, during 1986-87, the worth of a rupee had slid down to 14.8 paise, bringing the real value from Rs 10,400 to Rs 7,400. As such, quantum should have been raised to atleast Rs 70,000.

At this stage the authorities developed an innovative idea and came to the rescue of those whose breadwinner, during active service, was snatched away by the icy hands of death, as succour, based on the terminal salary, was "insured" for the residual part of service, i.e. till normal date of retirement.

As already stated, by extending only cover to the employees, drawing salaries upto Rs 3,500, as against Rs 2,500, w.e.f December 1, 1992, the authorities did offer solace, but regrettably, the same was confined to microscope minority, while real value of gratuity of Rs 50,000 went on declining to reach lowest ebb of paltry sum of Rs 4,200 by 1992-93, thanks to rupee's worth as 8.4 paise.

While the salaries have fattened due to grant of Addl. DA to protect and preserve to some extent, the absic wages, the qualifying ceiling all along has remained suppressed not withstanding periodical revisions. Resultantly, even DA of a single rupee worth 7.9 paise drawn in excess of the statutory ceiling has been responsible to snatch away statutory right to gratuity for residuary service. That means the employees could receive gratuity for that part of service, during which their salaries remained within Rs 3,500. As such, the employees, deprived of the financial cover, have till recently, treated the DA as "present value of gratuity," which they were obliged to encash to have some respite from sky-rocketing

prices.

Reverting to the latest amendments, it can be safely said that hence forth the toiling multitude will heave a sigh of relief, because the so-called high salaries will not serve as a stumbling block; and irrespective of wage level, they can aspire to receive gratuity for each year of service, of course, subject to overall monetary limit of Rs one lakh.

Accordingly, retired employees, in receipt of terminal salary and with number of years' service to their credit, as illustrated below, can claim full benefit of Rs one lakh:

Rs 8670 (20), Rs 6935 (25), Rs 6195 (28), Rs 5255 (33), Rs 4960 (35), Rs 4565 (38), Rs 4335 (40) and Rs 4130 (42).

Doubling of gratuity with one stroke of pen may appear as a progressive step in the interest of workforce, but if one views the cascading impact of inflation that has adversely affected the economic conditions of the working class, during the last 22 years, it will be observed that the recent improvements leave much to be desired.

In final financial analysis, one is very much concerned with what is due and not what is doled out half-heartedly to soothe the ruffled feelings. The working class does not count the hefty sums but their purchasing power which will enable it to meet social and economic needs.

It may be borne in mind that during the span of 22 years, the index has marched from 192 points (1971-72) to scale the peak of 1272 mark by 1993-94, and as a sequel to astronomical rise in index, the purchasing power of a rupee has dwindled from zenith of 52 paise to touch the nadir of 7.9 paise.

If we dive a little deep, we will find that while RS 20,000 were equal to Rs 10,400 in absolute terms during 1971-72, the worth of the gratuity, revised thrice, to bring to the level of Rs one lakh, does not go beyond Rs 7,900 due to erosion—a clear cut loss of Rs 2,500, not in the inflated sum, but in 100 p.c. sound gratuity. In other words, the authorities while improving the benefit have halted mid way and have linked the same to the index of 961 (Oct 90) and ignored further index of 311 points by 193094 i.e. 1272-961 = 311 (though latest index for Dec '94 has touched the mark of 1425.) If you desire to know present value of Rs 2,500 (1960), hold your breath the same works out to Rs 32,500. It is therefore urged that the authorities should

- a) treat 1971-72 as a base year,
- b) accept inflation as revealed by 192 as a starting point,

- c) delink the raised ceiling of gratuity of Rs one lakh from index of 961 as prevailing in October 1990,
- d) link the same with index of 1272 for 1993-94,
- e) raise the quantum of Rs 1,32,500, and
- f) review the position every year in the light of inflation.

It is surprising that the authorities have borrowed the statutory ceiling of RS one lakh from the service rules applicable to the government employees, but have preferred not to bring them under the purview of the Gratuity Act, and put them on better footing by offering the gratuity not only on Basic Pay but also DA for entire service period, as against 33 years.

And last but not the least. It is earnestly hoped that once considered to be a "Cushion" for evening in life, will not be turned into a "bait" in the mad rush for "liberalisation and economic reforms" to lure the gullible employees to opt for voluntary (?) retirement at middle age, when in fact they look forward to climb up a step or two of the official ladder, before their normal career comes to end, at the turn of superannuation age.

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(See rule 8)

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Crisis Developing in the Beedi Industry

P K Ganguly

With the onset of the new economic and industrial policies, which have allowed the monopolists to penetrate into the small, tiny and unorganised sector of industries, crisis is gradually developing in the Beedi Industry in the country, in which over 70 per cent of the workforce are women. Child labour is equally rampant in this hazardous industry.

The industry is already under the control of the big monopoly capitalists in all the states. It employs over 50 lakh workers. Besides, millions of agricultural labour are engaged in tobacco growing in the rural sector and equally large number, mostly tribals are engaged in Tendu leave production and plucking.

Production is being done through intermediaries by the monopolists without direct appointment of labourers. Instead of establishing factories and engaging workers under their own control, these monopolists engage contractors and sub-contractors to employ labourers, and have turned the dwelling houses of the labourers as the centres of producing Beedis. This is being done to exploit the workers to the maximum and deprive them of minimum wages, labour laws, social security and other welfare measures.

As over 70 per cent of the workers are women and child labour, the exploitation in totality is acute and ruthless. The wages are as paltry, as merely Rs 12 to Rs 25/- per thousand Beedis on an average, varying from the rural sector to the urban sector. The women workers are discriminated blatantly. There is no question of equal wages, or welfare measures, let alone the question of maternity benefits.

Apart from minimum wages and other deprivations, one of the major problems of the Beedi workers is that they do not get even the Identity cards. Out of over 50 lakh Beedi workers, less than 24 lakhs have been given Identity Cards. The home-stead workers, particularly in the rural sectors, who constitute the overwhelming majority, are almost totally excluded from this. Thus they automatically go out of the purview of even the fringe benefits of the Beedi and Cigar Workers(Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, and also out of the welfare measures under the Beedi Welfare Fund Act, 1976.

The vast tribal population similarly is caught in the web of the racketeering with the Tendu leaves, the most important raw material of Beedi. Nearly 70 per cent of Tendu leaves are produced in Madhya Pradesh alone. Other Beedi producing states there-

fore have to depend largely on Madhya Pradesh for supply of Tendu leaves. Although the Government of Madhya Pradesh nationalised the entire operation of Tendu leaves, it failed to stop the racketeering or the increasing prices of Tendu leaves. The big Tendu leave merchants who do not produce Beedi themselves, corner the lion's share of the Tendu leaves and export them abroad. This process has been accelerated since the beginning of the liberalisation policy. This has created crisis for the small and medium manufacturers, who employ majority of the Beedi workers. The home-stead production particularly has been badly affected causing unemployment among the Beedi workers.

Last year, on an application filed by the Tirunelveli District Beedi Workers' Union (CITU) the Supreme Court in its verdict called upon the Government of India to ameliorate the conditions of the beedi Workers all over India. But the Government has not yet implemented the verdict. Similarly the Parliamentary Committee also made several recommendations in this respect, which remained unimplemented.

But the Government is still not content with the above deplorable situation. To further help the monopolists and the multinationals under the new economic policies at the behest of the IMF/World Bank, the Government has recently reduced the Excise Duty on Cigarettes of length below 60 mm, manufactured by the ITC and other giant monopolists. The price of these small cigarettes have thus become almost equivalent to Beedis. Under the strong lobby of the multinationals, the Government proposes to further reduce the Excise Duty on small cigarettes which will ruin the Beedi industry itself. This step has been obviously taken to counter the efforts of the Beedi workers to form cooperatives in the line of Kerala and West Bengal to avoid exploitation by the monopolists. New technological innovations are also being thought of to capture the vast home market of Beedi in India and ruin the small and medium manufacturers. Thus crisis is developing in this age old traditional industry also.

The story does not end here. There is another move by the government, obviously, at the behest of the World Health Organisation, which will affect the industry in another way. Although the Government has done little to stop or even reduce the occupational hazards in the industry, or to extend the

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Seminar of SAARC Countries' Trade Unions

A Seminar on Transport Policy in SAARC countries organised by the Preparatory Committee comprising of transport trade unions of the SAARC countries was held from 13-15 February at New Delhi.

The seminar was inaugurated by Shri Shyamal Chakraborty, Transport Minister of West Bengal and chairman of the Preparatory Committee on 13.2.95 and was attended by 55 delegates from 29 transport Trade Unions of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan. 15 experts from different fields of Transport Sector also participated in the seminar.

In his inaugural address Shri Shyamal Chakraborty stressed the need for a common approach to Transport Policy in the mutual interest of all the South Asian countries for their economic, industrial agricultural, commercial and social development. he also projected the transport infrastructure as the top priority sector in respect of planned development of a country.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU pointed out that there were common factors for the protection of national interest, transport workers' interest and others for the SAARC countries. There lay the need for proper Transport Policy in the region.

S S Basu, TUI, demanded participation of the transport workers in formulating the national Transport Policy and ILO instruments for transport to be its components. Iswar Singh, NFIRTW hoped that the seminar would bring the transport workers more closer. A B Bardhan of AITUC opposed the privatisation of transport in the name of liberalisation.

DK Ganguly WFTU pointed out that objective of the Transport Policy should be decided and an exhaustive document be prepared accordingly.

Prof Iswar Prasad of JNU pointed out that privatisation in the Transport Industry was not aimed for improving of the transport infrastructure, but for condemning trade union movement.

Several experts like Dr M Seshagiri Rao, Chairman RITES, TR Krshjna Moha, Scientists, CSTR Bangalore, Dr A C Roy, PH D, Director, Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management, Calcutta and former chairman, Calcutta Port Trust, participated in the discussions and presented their papers.

Four Commissions were formed in respect of the four modes of Transport—Road Transport, Water Transport, Railways and Civil Aviation. The members of the different Commissions had a fair amount of interaction and exchange of views and informations.

In the Commission on Railway Transport, India was represented among others by Sheogopal Mishra of AIRF, N S Bhangoo of AIREC, S K Dhar of AILRSA. Kanai Banerjee, Editor, 'The Railway Worker' also took part in the discussion.

Programme Adopted:

1. To organise national level seminars in each country with all trade unions associated with transport along with the managements and experts;
2. Memorandum to be submitted to the Heads of the nations for each SAARC countries.
3. A Consultative committee of temporary nature has been formed with Shyamal Chakraborty as chairman, Kanai Banerjee and Isher Singh as Jt convenors. (A third post of convenor will be filled up later).

Following were nominated as members of the temporary consultative committee.

Sukkur Ahmed, A Rauf Mia, Shajahan Khan, Sirazul Islam (Bangladesh); Musarrat Hilali (Pakistan); Pritam Dass (Nepal); R P Ranga Rao, S K Dhar, N S Bhangoo (India).

The organisations which could not decide their nomination now send the names of the representatives within two months. Those organisations who did not participate in this Seminar will be requested to join the Consultative Committee;

4. To publish a book which will contain proceedings of the seminar and other related matters. □

Seminar on Legislation for Construction Workers

The National Safety Council (West Bengal Chapter) will organise a national seminar on Legislation for Construction Workers at Durgapur on April 17 and 18.

The seminar will be attended by various trade unions, other organisations and eminent individuals. It will highlight the deplorable conditions of nearly 80 lakh construction workers in the country, who have been kept deprived of a central legislation since independence, despite continuous demands and struggles by the trade unions and other organisations.

Comrades connected with construction workers unions should immediately contact and send articles related to the problems of construction workers to Com. P K Das, Vice Chairman, National Safety Council (WB) and Secretary, Steel Workers' Federation of India; 1, Vidyasagar Avenue, Durgapur-5. □

Assam CITU Leader Arrested under TADA

Com.Suresh Deka, General Secretary, All Assam Vaneer & Plywood Saw Mill Mazdoor Union(CITU), member, State Committee of CITU, District Secretary Member of CPI(M) Dibrugarh, who was elected as a delegate to 15th Assam State Conference of CPI(M) to be held 14th onwards, was arrested under section 302 IPC and 3/4/5 TADA on 10.2.95 at Jeypore and detained in the Dibrugarh district jail.

Com.Suresh Deka, was presently organising and leading a democratic trade union movement in the plywood industry to implement minimum wages.

In spite of repeated assurances given in the parliament by the Hon'ble Union Home Minister that TADA will not be used for suppressing legitimate political and trade union activities, the Dibrugarh district authorities detained Com.Deka in false and fabricated charges hatching conspiracy with the plywood owners to refrain Com.Deka from such movement.

Com.S K Haudique, MLA, president of Assam State CITU in a statement demanded immediate release of Com.Deka without any pre-condition and withdrawal of all charges against him. □

Beedi Industry...

(From page 22)

medical, health and welfare measures to all sections of workers, it recently sought to introduce a Bill in the Parliament to put a check to the robust way of advertisements of tobacco products in the name of reducing health hazards. The Bill however had to be withdrawn due to determined opposition in the Rajya Sabha in the last Winter Session. But the Government has not given up the move. The Bill if enacted, will undoubtedly effect the millions of workers and tobacco growers. While health hazards are put forth ostensibly, and the purpose apparently appears to be innocuous, yet the move is bound to hit the growers and workers ultimately. The CITU has demanded of the Government to convene a broad based meeting of the trade unions and the tobacco growers' associations to discuss all pros and cons of the issue, including alternative jobs for the workers and alternative pastures for the growers before taking any such move again. The situation demands intensified struggle by the Beedi workers uniting all the trade unions with particular attention devoted to the women workers. □

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Successful Countrywide Strike by Insurance Employees Against Privatisation

The Insurance industry employees and office observed one day's token strike all over the country on February 16 against privatisation in the Insurance industry and penetration of multinationals in it. The strike call was given by the Joint Action Committee of Employees' and Officers' organisations in the LIC and GIC. Over 70 per cent of the employees joined the strike in all the states.

Apart from privatisation, the demands raised were for wage agreement, collective bargaining right, implementation of pension scheme as per the agreement, rejection of the Malhotra Committee report against the new economic policy of the government.

At Delhi before the Headquarters at Connaught Place the employees held a rally, which was addressed among others by P K Ganguly, Secretary, CITU; Harish Sharma, Secretary, BEFI; T A Francis, Secretary, ATIUC and S R Saini and Umed Singh, the Joint Convenors of the JAC.

At Calcutta another massive rally was held in the Hare Street office. In Bombay nearly two lakh employees joined the strike. In all other States also successful strike was reported, joined both by employees and officers. Work was totally paralysed in the country. Rallies and processions were held in different places.

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