



THE WORKING CLASS

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EDITORIAL

Defeat Congress(I), BJP Ensure Victory of the Left, Democratic and Secular Forces

The announcement of poll schedule by the Election Commission sets in motion the countdown to the next general elections in April-May that will naturally plunge the country into a fierce political battle. The outcome of this crucial political electoral battle would not only decide the political complexion of the next government, but also what the life of the millions and millions of the poor and dispossessed and the working men and women would be like.

Never in the past in free India's history a government that began its journey as a minority, but with the passage of time 'managed' to acquire majority was so over head and ears in charges of bribery and corruption, used the enormous powers to line up their pockets as also those of their shadowy accomplices, companions and cohorts.

It is a sickening list of systematic and carefully laid schemes of violating and evading laws of the land abusing the powers vested to stash public money, distribute favours to favourites—both in India and abroad, to shield the corrupt to launch elaborate cover-up operations and men at the helm of affairs of the nation sitting pretty on mountainous heaps of tainted money. As these honourable men who are charged with the responsibilities of guiding the destiny of a nation of 930 million people remain devotedly engrossed in their discharge of "duties", newer and newer accounts of scandals kept hitting the headlines of newspapers. Each one of these stories has rudely jolted the people with closely guarded mechanism to cheat the exchequer, power-brokers regaling in opening up new channels of unlawful, out-of-account accumulation of unearned money. The flow

of vast sums of money in shadowy channels has made the contact men, the go-betweens, the go-getters and all of the ilk more and more powerful and dauntless: no layer of administration is inaccessible to them, no barrier is strong enough to deter them and no investigative agency of the state or law-enforcing authority is above their manipulative tentacles. All can be and indeed are being brought into submission and subservience. The tainted money does the trick! What had begun as stray incidents of doubtful deals (remember the Kuo Oil deal!) developed into a more well-oiled, elaborately connected system of cheating and looting finally blossoming into an institutionalised, perfected system of all-pervasive corruption. With the passage of time, the St Kitts forgery, the still unresolved Bofors kickbacks, the share market scandals, the public sector disinvestment scandal, the sugar scandal, the Bailadila scandal, the telecom scandal, out-of-turn allotment of government accommodation scandal, the export-import scandal and lately, the hawala scandal, etc have all become shining jewels in the crown of the present government. How many more are yet to be revealed is anybody's guess. It is also in the realm of absolute uncertainty as to how many more government files will be "lost" or become "untraceable" at the crucial time and how many upright officials will be shunted out to irrelevance at the most significant stage of investigation, how many more emissaries of the celebrated God-man Chandraswami with stable connections with the international arms dealer Adnan Khasoggi and the likes will criss-cross the world and

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MASSIVE RESPONSE TO PENSION STRIKE, FEB.23

□ M.K. PANDHE

The nationwide call for a one-day strike given by the CITU, AITUC, UTUC, UTUC(LS) and IFTU in protest against the anti-working class pension scheme on February 23, received spectacular response from workers belonging to all affiliations. United action from below was witnessed all over India, expressing the deep resentment prevailing among the workers against the pension scheme.

Despite repeated announcements from the government of India that it would make modifications in the scheme, the basic character of the scheme remained unaltered. The central government and those central trade unions opposing the strike have miserably failed to judge the simmering discontent about the withdrawal of the 8.33 per cent contribution from their PF money and the quantum of pension falling much below the contributions workers were making to the pension fund. The participation of large numbers of unorganised workers in the strike has completely exploded the myth that the pension scheme was beneficial to unorganised workers.

From the time the decision for a one-day strike was announced by the CITU, an intensive campaign was launched by the CITU unions all over India explaining the derogatory nature of the scheme. The CITU campaign was very well received by workers of all affiliations who were openly coming out against the scheme. In some places despite the directives of the central organisations, the local unions gave strike notices along with CITU and actively worked to make the strike call successful.

In fact, wherever due initiative had been taken to mobilise the workers against the scheme, the response has been tremendous. Cutting across the barrier of affiliation at many places the workers jointly formed "Save CPF Committees" to carry on the campaign against the design of the government to take away even the second retirement benefit of CPF in the name of pension scheme. In almost every factory, gate meetings were held to explain the background of the strike. Several of such meetings were also attended by officers in the undertakings, who enthusiastically extended support to the CITU stand-

point. On the all India scale, the National Confederation of Officers Association and All India Bank Officers' Association have openly come out against the pension scheme. The All India Newspaper Employees Association as well as the Association of Working Journalists have also opposed the scheme.

The unions belonging to the DMK, MDMK, AI-ADMK opposed the pension scheme while Datta Samant's Kamgar Aghadi, Sarva Shramik Sangh, HMKP and Philips Union actively campaigned against it.

Though opposition to the pension scheme was initiated by the CITU, wide support soon emerged all over India, which greatly contributed to making the strike call successful.

AITUC'S STAND: SAD & SURPRISING

Were coming out openly against the scheme, they could see through the game of the government of India hurrying to implement the scheme through ordinances for reaping electoral advantage. In this context, it was both surprising and sad that a senior trade union leader of the standing of A.B. Bardhan of the AITUC should have come out with a statement, characterising the government of India's approach towards the pension scheme as positive. If the AITUC had joined the strike more pressure could have been brought to bear on the government of India to make the pension scheme a genuine one! But even the AITUC which opposed any joint movement on the pension scheme, has been forced to give a call for dharna on March 1, for "improvement in the pension scheme." On the one side the leadership of the AITUC and other trade unions talk about building the movement, on the other they oppose the call for strike when it comes.

On February 6, a joint meeting of four central trade unions held in the HMS office, decided to agitate for improvement within the framework of the scheme, and also decided to oppose the strike call on February 23, characterising the call as "unilateral." The CITU then offered to agree to any other date if a joint decision was possible. However, these trade

unions did not show any inclination for a joint strike call, so the CITU decided to go ahead, along with the unions supporting the strike action.

It is to be noted, however, that none of the four central trade unions was to be seen in the field opposing the strike call. Some press statements were issued by individual leaders, but no noticeable campaign, against the strike, among the rank and file workers was to be seen.

SPECIAL DRIVE IN HINDI BELT

The CITU centre planned a special drive in the Hindi speaking regions for the strike. Two meetings of leaders were held to supervise the campaign. The well-attended rallies in the region were addressed by central leaders which created a good impact. The CITU centre brought out 10,000 posters and one lakh leaflets, to popularise the strike action. In addition to this, lakhs of leaflets were brought out by local unions to help mobilise for the strike. Never before has a CITU campaign received such popular response among workers of all affiliations. The CITU has consequently been able to make an effective dent in the Hindi speaking areas during the preparations for the strike.

Just one day prior to the strike, i.e. on February 22, a convention was held by the four central trade unions, opposing the strike, to which representations of the Provident Fund Commissioner's office were invited to explain the pension scheme. But even in this convention, some speakers supported the CITU stand.

With some of the major trade unions opposing the strike, the strike was naturally only partial in many factories and establishments. Some workers were still influenced by the official propaganda in electronic media and elsewhere, backed by these unions. This only emphasizes the need to carry forward the propaganda with more vigour among the workers who are still affected by the disinformation campaign launched by the official agencies.

SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE

It must, however, be noted that in several units where the CITU is a minority union, the strike was complete. Such an outcome is just not possible without active cooperation of local non-CITU unions. This experience gained by the CITU unions is therefore of great significance in building united actions of

the working class on common issues.

Reports also received by the CITU centre indicate that in most of the places where Provident Fund offices are situated, the workers spontaneously demonstrated in protest against the pension scheme. In the coal mines, covered by a separate pension scheme which does not deduct the 8.33 per cent of the Provident Fund of the workers, the CITY unions organised dharnas on February 23 to express solidarity with the striking workers.

They also demanded improvement in the coalmines' pension scheme. In several other places, bank and insurance unions expressed solidarity with the strikers.

Picketers were arrested by the police in Delhi, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and other states, but this could not prevent the strike actions of the workers. Otherwise, by and large, the strike was peaceful. There was physical resistance in some centres but due to the appeal from the CITU picketers they did not insist on opposition.

The CITU and other unions encouraged by the massive response of the working class will strengthen the agitational programme so that a real and genuine pension scheme is introduced in the country, which will ensure effective social security measure to the old workers after their retirement.

State Govt Employees Contribution to Cuba Solidarity and Relief Fund

The State Government employees, organised under the All India State Government Employees Federation have so far donated an amount of Rs 14,32,000 (Rs Fourteen lakhs Thirty Two thousands) to the Cuba Solidarity and Relief Fund. The break up is as follows:

W.Bengal -	Rs 11,10,000.00 (out of this Rs 10,000.00 were donated in kind like medicines baby food, etc)
Kerala -	Rs 3,00,000.00
Punjab -	Rs 10,000.00
Tripura -	Rs 10,000.00
Orissa -	Rs 2,000.00

The Tamilnadu affiliate of the AISGEF has also donated a substantial amount.

CITU'S APPEAL TO PRESIDENT NOT TO REPROMULGATE PENSION ORDINANCE

As a result of massive agitation including the 23rd Feb 1996 industrial strike and other effective steps taken by the CITU Govt could not get through the EPF ordinance in the Parliament and with the adjournment of current session the Ordinance has automatically lapsed. Since it is expected that the Govt of India would go for repromulgating the ordinance, it is necessary to speed up the agitation against such government move. The trade unions are advised to send telegrams and letters to the President of India requesting him to exercise his good office in preventing the government of India from repromulgating the ordinance on EPF amendment and pension. The draft of a letter to be addressed to the President of India in this regard is being published hereunder:

Draft Letter to the President

The Hon'ble President of India
Rashtrapati Bhavan
New Delhi

Respected Sir,

By now, the detrimental effects of the Employees Pension Scheme which was compulsorily enforced by way of an Ordinance, are well known to all right-thinking citizens of the country.

The Government tried to seek approval of the Parliament when the Bill was first introduced in Parliament in 1993, and again in the winter session of Parliament in December, 1995, and again in the special session of Parliament which has just concluded. On account of the wide spread opposition to the Scheme when it was first introduced, it had been shelved and the Government had not tried to get it passed, for nearly two and half years. After the Ordinance was promulgated in October 1995 making the Scheme compulsorily effective from November 16, 1995, claiming urgency as one of the reasons for the promulgation of the Ordinance while the Bill was still pending before Parliament, it was incumbent on the Government to pass a Bill approving of the Ordinance, at the earliest. This the Government failed to do in the Winter session of Parliament in November/December 1995. A fresh Ordinance was promulgated in January 1996, to replace the old Ordinance. The Government failed ONCE AGAIN to pass the required Bill even in the last session of Parliament which ended on 12th March, 1996. This Ordinance too will lapse. It is in the interests of workers that a

fresh Ordinance is not promulgated.

Workers all over the country have taken to the streets and have lodged their strong opposition to the Scheme by launching effective agitations protesting against the Ordinance. Workers cutting across party lines have come together and have organised MORCHAS, RALLIES, BANDHS, RASTA ROKO AND JAIL BHARO programmes, besides COUNTRYWIDE INDUSTRIAL STRIKES, and have forcefully expressed their deep resentment over the Government's action of snatching away their primary retirement benefit of Provident Fund.

The opposition to the Ordinance has also resulted in more than 100 Writ Petitions in the various High Courts throughout the country. To name a few, the Madras High Court, the Calcutta High Court, the Delhi High Court, the Gujarat High Court, the Mumbai High Court and the Kerala High Court have been inundated with such petitions, and some of these Courts have already granted injunctions staying the operation of this illogical and draconian Ordinance which seeks to take away the hard working employees' first and most important retirement benefit of Provident Fund. Other Hon'ble High Courts are likely to follow suit to enforce the protection accorded to the Provident Fund savings of workers by Section 10 of the Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

In view of the foregoing, WE THE WORKERS OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY, INDIA, REQUEST YOU NOT TO PROMULGATE THE ORDINANCE FOR THE THIRD TIME. You will agree that it would be an impropriety and an act against all democratic norms if the Ordinance is repromulgated. For, if a new Ordinance comes into existence for this purpose, it would have to be dealt with and finalised by, and its ultimate fate would lie with, the next session of Parliament which would be after the coming elections. Besides, repromulgation of the Ordinance would mean imposition of the terms of the Ordinance on the working class much against their will and would also create avoidable complications for the next Parliament which would be forced to decide on the issue not on merits but on extraneous circumstances and a deliberately created fait accompli situation.

We sincerely hope that you would consider this earnest appeal of the working class in the country.

Thanking you, we remain,

Yours faithfully,

Massive Rally of Unorganised Sector Workers at Bhopal

Thousands of workers belonging to the unorganised sector took out a huge procession in state capital which culminated into a militant demonstration before State Assembly. Later on this big mass of men and women workers courted arrest while attempting to break section 144. Demonstrators had collected at Shahazahani Park from where the procession began paralysing the road traffic for a long time. The call for this action programme was given by the Madhya Pradesh State Committee of CITU.

The workers belonging to the unorganised sector industries, PHE, irrigation, PWD, forest and civic bodies from all over the State started in pouring in since morning. They were gathering at Shahazahani park where one after another speaker was addressing the organised mass meeting.

All India secretary of CITU Com.P K Ganguly, who was the main speaker charged the government of shedding crocodile tears keeping the ensuring elections in view. Criticising the economic industrial policies, being pursued by the Central Government for last five years, he held them responsible for the deterioration of workers conditions.

He said that the price rise had registered an increase of over 100%. Factories are closing down and Rao government was making a false rhetoric of achievements. Com.Ganguly informed that due to these policies about 10 lakhs of workers in PSU were threatened with their jobs and sovereignty and self-reliance were being compromised through handing out profitable PSU to multinational corporations. Registered unemployment had increased from 3.4 crores to more than 4 crores during the period.

Referring the worsening conditions of unorganised workers, he pointed out the open violation of labour laws in this area. workers of small scale industries, bidi and anganadi were deprived of even the minimum wages. Government was silent over the issues like payments of pension, gratuity, etc to these workers. Com.Ganguly appealed to the workers to bear lesson from the situation in other states, particularly West Bengal where several achievements have been made in the implementation of labour laws and facilities to workers. He exhorted the workers to strengthen and broaden their struggle unitedly with other trade unions and mass organisations so that they were also able to achieve their rights.

CITU state president Badal Saroj and General Secretary S Kumar also addressed the meeting. Other 22 speakers who took the dias included district

and local functionaries of different industries and unions.

This rally of unorganised workers raised five main demands which included the revision of minimum wages, the fixation of wage rate for Bidi workers at 50 rupees per thousand bidi, DA payment to bidi workers and implementation of labour laws, regularisation of daily wages, contract and casual workers, increase in the honorarium for Anganwadi workers, their regularisation as government employees and withdrawal of privatisation steps, and formulation of appropriate labour laws for porters after seeking view of the trade unions.

CITU state president handed over the above five point demand charted to Chief Minister who instructed Labour Secretary to prepare a government's response to that. Regarding Anganwadi workers also Chief Minister assured of shortly arranging a meeting in his own presence.

One of the important achievement of CITU rally was the government announcement of dearness allowance for Bidi workers which was hanging for last two years. During the rally itself, the Chief Minister chaired a tripartite meeting in the Vidhansabha Kaksh which discussed the condition of Bidi industry and its workers. CITU state president was also present in this meeting.

The tripartite meeting resolved that the dearness allowance of Bidi workers which had been due since January 1994, should be added to the wages with immediate effect. Thus a decade old demand was ultimately achieved. Beside, DA the 15 other issues were also accepted like the prevention of arbitrary and indiscriminate scrutiny of Bidi, implementation of all labour laws and full payment of wages.

In the course of discussion in meeting the CITU leader also explained the report of the tripartite committee which had gone to study the working conditions in West Bengal bidi industry.

The Chief Minister, on the request of the meeting also agreed to write to the Prime Minister, demanding the withdrawal of the exemption in excise duty on mini cigarette. He also assured to re-consider the issues related to the current exemptions for raw bidi.

CITU has termed this achievement as a victory of the workers long struggle and their first state conference of its affiliated bidi workers unions being held on 23-24th March at Sehora is going to finalise the future course of action.

**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
(BASE 1982 = 100) Centre**

	Linking factor for Old Base			Linking factor for Old Base			
	Oct '96	Nov. '96		Oct '96	Nov. '96		
All India	317	315	4.93	Barbil	312	311	5.00
Gudur	318	322	4.33	Rourkela	292	290	3.59
Guntur	320	317	5.60	Amritsar	281	276	5.19
Hyderabad	298	296	5.23	Ludhiana	291	286	—
Visakhapatnam	314	311	—	Ajmer	310	309	5.01
Warrangal	312	310	—	Jaipur	302	300	5.17
Doom-Dooma Tinsukia	293	290	4.05	Coimbatore	313	309	5.35
Guwahati	329	325	—	Coonoor	336	324	4.80
Labac-Silchar	275	266	3.96	Madras	338	332	5.05
Mariani-Jorhat	313	310	3.95	Madurai	331	324	5.27
Rangapara-Tezpur	306	296	4.29	Salem	329	317	—
Jamshedpur	294	300	4.68	Tiruchirapally	341	342	—
Jharia	274	270	4.63	Agra	294	292	—
Kodarma	273	270	5.43	Ghaziabad	310	308	—
Monghyr	304	293	5.29	Kanpur	310	305	4.69
Noamundi	286	284	4.58	Saharanpur	291	289	5.06
Ranchi-Hatia	306	298	—	Varanasi	325	321	5.12
Ahmedabad	313	311	4.78	Asansol	299	292	4.77
Baroda	314	313	—	Calcutta	334	322	4.74
Bhavanagar	331	326	4.99	Darjeeling	287	282	4.55
Rajkot	310	306	—	Durgapur	333	332	—
Surat	335	335	—	Haldia	347	340	—
Faridabad	304	304	—	Howrah	341	331	4.12
Yamunanagar	296	286	5.53	Jalpaiguri	288	282	4.16
Srinagar	309	308	5.47	Raniganj	292	283	4.40
Bangalore	313	314	5.66	Chandigarh	307	303	—
Belgaum	339	338	—	Delhi	332	327	4.97
Hubli-Dharwar	324	323	—	Pondicherry	364	360	—
Mercara	320	316	—				
Alwaye	321	333	5.19	Additional series of Labour Bureau			
Mundakayam	332	334	—	Kothagudem	319	319	3.25
Quilon	337	347	—	Himachal Pradesh	299	294	3.75
Trivandrum	340	351	—	Bhilwara	314	314	3.20
Bhalaghat	311	305	5.24	Chindwara	332	330	2.59
Bhilai	284	286	3.49	Tripura	316	305	4.37
Bhopal	322	332	5.46	Goa	351	349	3.40
Indore	323	322	5.18				
Jabalpur	326	321	6.41	Note: Figures on old base can be obtained by multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the linking factor given and rounding off the result to nearest whole number.			
Bombay	346	346	5.12	—Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series,			
Nagpur	320	321	4.99				
Nasik	329	334	—				
Pune	345	348	—				
Solapur	338	336	5.03				

Beedi Workers to launch countrywide picketing on 2nd April

The All India Committee of Beedi Workers (CITU) met at Madras on the 28th and 29th of Feb 1996, with Com.C Kannan, president presiding. Com.P K Ganguly, Secretary CITU and representatives of various states participated.

The committee noted with concern the effect of the excise duty concessions granted in manufacturing mini-cigarettes in reducing the off take of beedies by 25% resulting in large number of beedi workers being given work for only two or three days in a week, hitting them very hard. All representations made to the government of India by the trade unions and the employers to withdraw the excise duty concession granted to mini-cigarettes, so as to save lakhs of beedi workers from starvation have fallen on deaf ears. This is a direct off shoot of the policy of liberalisation pursued by the Govt of India, affecting the beedi workers. The committee decided to organise picketing at the Govt of India offices all over the country on 2nd April 1996, to press for withdrawal of excise duty concession granted to mini cigarettes and also to demand extension of PF coverage to all Beedi workers and for formulating a pension scheme as a social security measure. The committee also demanded that the exemption from payment of excise duty by beedi manufacturers producing less than 20 lakh beedis be withdrawn. The All India Committee will approach other Trade Union Centres also for conducting the picketing jointly.

By another resolution the committee decided to raise the demand of a Uniform wage of Rs 50/- per 1000 beedies, a dearness allowance of Five paise per points over the above 1300 points (1960=100 base) and other demands before the Chief Labour Commissioner, New Delhi.

The Committee noted with satisfaction that several lakhs of beedi workers have joined the strike on 23rd Feb called by CITU and other trade union centres demanding pension as a third benefit, pension to all workers in the unorganised sector and congratulated the workers on this unique response. The committee decided to carry on an intensive campaign among the workers for realising the demands.

NTC Workers Stage Dharna Demanding Writing Off Loans

About 500 workers, technicians and officers and other employees of the National Textile Corporation mills of the four subsidiaries of NTC, namely W.Bengal, UP, MP, and Gujarat staged a day-long dharna at Jantar Mantar Park, New Delhi on 12th March, demanding of the Govt of India to write off the loans of these subsidiaries as directed by the BIFR.

The BIFR has already issued show-cause notices to the NTC and asked the Government of India to write off the loans or convert them into equity, so that the modernisation scheme for these subsidiaries can be approved. However, the Government has taken an adamant stand not to write off the loans. The four subsidiaries are threatened with winding up by the BIFR. In that case 53 mills will be closed down and 55 thousand workers will be retrenched.

A joint delegation of the Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers, consisting of Haribhau Naik, B M Lambert, S S Yadav(INTUC); P K Ganguly, Kailash Limbodia, Subhasini Ali (CITU); D L Sachdev, Pritam Chokse (AITUC); V Tiagi(HMS); and Bhagwan Das Gondane (BMS) met the Prime Minister, accompanied by Basudev Acharya, MP and Dipankar Mukherjee, MP. The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding writing off the loans. The Prime Minister assured to look into the matter. Earlier the dharna was addressed by the leaders of all the trade unions and Members of Parliament, namely, Basudev Acharya, Mrs Malini Bhattacharya, Saifuddin Chowdhury and Susanta Chakrabarty. The Joint Action Committee called upon the workers to further intensify the united struggle and resist any move by the Government to close the mills. Joint rallies and mass stay in at the mill premises will be launched in all the subsidiaries in the country.

Sd/- Haribhau Naik
(INTUC)

Sd/- P K Ganguly
(CITU)

Sd/- D L: Sachdev
(AITUC)

Sd/- V Tiagi
(HMS)

Sd/- Bhagwan Das Gondane
(BMS)

Sd/-Sunil Sen Gupta
(UTUC)

Victory for Anganwadi Employees in Andhra Pradesh

□ K Hemalatha

After a prolonged struggle the anganwadi workers and helpers in Andhra Pradesh won most of their state level demands.

The Chief Minister Sri Nara Chandra Babu Naidu made a categorical announcement agreeing to many of the points in the charter of demands presented to him at a massive rally of anganwadi workers and helpers held by the Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi workers and helpers union near the State Assembly on 19.2.96.

The demands agreed to by the Chief Minister are:

1.. The State government will remove the treasury control on the honorarium of the Anganwadi workers and helpers totally, so that they will be paid honorarium regularly, every month.

2. The anganwadi workers and helpers will get 4 months maternity leave.

3. The anganwadi workers and helpers will get 15 days summer holidays. However, this will have to be utilised separately by the workers and helpers, so that the centres will remain open.

4. Rs 100/- pm will be paid as fuel charges (at present, it is Rs 70 pm).

5. Condiment charges will be paid at the rate of 0.10 ps per beneficiary per day (from the present 0.07 ps per beneficiary per day).

6. Festival advance of Rs 500 will be paid to anganwadi workers and helpers

7. Anganwadi workers and helpers will be permitted to function as elected people's representatives in local bodies like Panchayats, mandal and zilla parishads. Those anganwadi employees who have been removed from service for contesting in the local bodies election in 1995 will be taken back.

8. A per centae of posts falling vacant in the women and child welfare department will be reserved for anganwadi employees.

9. Steps will be taken to clear the legal hurdles and for speedy filling up of supervisor posts by eligible anganwadi workers.

10. Extra money will be paid for extra work

11. House sites will be provided and houses under weaker section housing scheme will be given to all eligible anganwadi workers and helpers.

12. All the eligible anganwadi employees will be

given ration cards.

13. The children of anganwadi employees will be admitted to welfare hostels and provided education.

14. The demand to appoint eligible anganwadi employees as teachers in non formal education centres will be considered after consulting the concerned departments.

15. The 'women policy' of the state govt declared that creches will be started in anganwadi centres, to enable girls to go to school. The Chief Minister agreed to pay extra money to the anganwadi employees in the centres where creches are started. The amount will be decided later.

16. The anganwadi centres will be provided with pakka buildings in a phased manner, under the Indira Awaz Yojana. The State government will recommend to the Central Government that the rents for the anganwadi centres should be enhanced to Rs 200/- pm in towns and Rs 50/- pm in rural areas.

17. The Chief Minister agreed to recommend to the Central govt that the Anganwadi projects should be run by the govt that the anganwadi workers and helpers should be recognised as government employees and then paid honorarium of Rs 1200/- pm for workers and Rs 800/- pm for helper.

The Chief Minister promised that the relevant government orders will be issued within 3-4 days.

The anganwadi employees in the state could get these promises after a prolonged struggle. The AP anganwadi workers and helpers union has been conducting struggle on these issues since the last 4-5 years. We had organised processions and dharnas in front of the state assembly, every year with the number of anganwadi employees participating in the dharnas increasing every year. On 19th Feb, the mood of the anganwadi employees was quite evident as soon as the procession started. Determination was writ on the faces of the more than 10,000 anganwadi women, who came from all the districts of the state. They marched from the Indira Park to assembly raising full throated slogans like "No to honorarium give us salaries to lead honourable lives, recognises as govt employees, enhance wages, gives us festival allowance and other demands. Many marched barefoot in the scorching sun.

The Chief Minister who initially promised to

address the Anganwadi women near the assembly could not come as he was busy with the Rajya Sabha elections and deputed his minister for information and broadcasting Sri Venugopalachari, who gave some vague promises. But the anganwadi employees were in no mood to return with vague promises and declared that they were prepared to sit and wait for the chief minister. So, the minister had to go back, and report the mood of the women to the chief minister.

Ultimately the chief minister came at about 5.00 pm and addressed the rally.

Before the rally, the union representatives met the chief Minister, the women welfare minister and the panchayat raj minister many times and submitted memorandum. Discussions were held with principal secretary, women child welfare and also the joint secretary to the govt looking after ICDS. Memoranda were also submitted on behalf of the CITU state committee. CITU state secretary and MLA Com. M A Gaffoor helped in the discussions, project level processions and dharnas were held in January. Thousands of signatures were collected on the memorandum to the Chief Minister. Peoples representatives like panchayat members, presidents, MPP & ZPP members were approached and their signatures taken on letters addressed to the Chief Minister, supporting the demands of the anganwadi workers. Representatives were given to the collectors and other official participating in the Prajasa Vaddaku Palana (Government to the people) programme.

The State Committee of the union which met at Hyderabad on the 20th Feb congratulated the anganwadi workers and helpers who participated in the rally and demonstrated their unity and determination. It has decided to bring out a leaflet on the victory achieved and take it to all the anganwadi employees in the state through sector and project meetings. It has also decided to launch a membership campaign and to enrol more than 15,000 anganwadi workers and helpers as members of the union by April. District and project level trade union classes will be conducted in the month of March and April and State level classes in May. It was also decided to have Zonal classes in five zones in June.

The committee appealed to the anganwadi workers not to rest till the promises are implemented and also to continue the struggle against the Central Govt for regularisation, enhancement of honorarium and against privatisation.

It thanked Com.N Prasada Rao and B V Raghavulu, president and Gen Secretary, CITU State Committee, Com.B Venkateswara Rao, CPI(M) floor leader in assembly, Com.Gaffoor, and Ranga Reddy MLA, Com.K Satyanarayana, Secretary CPI(M) State Committee, Com.M Swarajyam and S Punyavati, President and Gen Secretary A P Mahila Sangham and other leaders of the CITU agricultural workers union and SFI who were present throughout the rally and lent help and support in many ways.

Release DA to 15 lakh Industrial Workers Immediately

Com.S B Bhardwaj, General Secretary of Delhi State Committee of CITU has issued the following statement:

15 lakh industrial workers of Delhi strongly protest against the BJP government's policy of curtailment of Dearness Allowance which has become due w.e.f. 1.2.96. According to Minimum Wages Act, DA has to be enhanced every six months on the basis of rising price index. But the Govt of Delhi has been denying this legitimate right of the workers and impounding the DA as in previous year which benefited the industrialists of Delhi to the tune of over Rs 100 crores. Each worker was denied a DA of Rs 75 per month during the previous year.

Now another Rs 124/- as DA has fallen due which has to be disbursed alongwith February 1996 wages but nothing has been done so far. Earlier Khurana Govt refused to implement the labour laws and now his successor is following the same policy.

In Delhi the work of regular labour is being done by

temporary and contract labour with a view to deprive the workers of the wages and status of regular workers. Disparity in the wages and service conditions of women and men is being openly followed. Even minimum civic facilities in the residential areas of jhuggies of workers are not provided and are being continuously neglected. Over one lakh industrial disputes are pending in the labour court some of which are as old as 20 years.

In many industrial disputes, it has become a practice in Delhi that police intervene at the instance of and on behalf of managements against the workers. Labour laws, constitutional provisions and recommendations of Labour Advisory Board, Minimum Wages Advisory Board, Housing Board, Contract Labour Supervisory Board, etc, have not been implemented and made non-functional. CITU demands immediate release of DA of Rs 124 alongwith March 1996 salary to the 15 lakh industrial workers of Delhi failing which agitation will be intensified.

Coal Unions at Dhanabad are on the Path of Joint Movement Against the Declaration of BCCL as sick industry by BIFR

A joint meeting of the representatives of Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union (CITU), Koyla Ispat Mazdoor Panchayat(HMS), Janata Mazdoor Sangh, AICCTU, BMS, UTUC(LS), UTUC, IISCO Colliery Mazdoor Union (CITU), CMSI(Nirsa Branch, CITU), Chalak Samity, Dhanbad Staff Coordination Committee, and Coal Employees Union was held at Adersa Hindi Vidyalaya(Madhya), Purana Bazar, Dhanbad, on Sunday, the 25th of February, 1996 to discuss the development consequent upon declaration of BCCL as sick industry by BIFR. Com.S K Bakshi of BCKU presided over the meeting.

The meeting unanimously condemned the unilateral decision of the BIFR declaring BCCL as sick without holding any discussion with the trade unions. The meeting observed that papers and balance sheet submitted by the management before BIFR are erroneous and real picture could have been revealed before BIFR if the unions were also simultaneously given chance to hear. It was therefore resolved to send a letter of protest to this effect to BIFR.

The meeting also discussed the so-called 'Revival Plan' submitted by BCCL management to BIFR and observed that BCCL have decided to have recourse to declare surplus and retrenchment of workers, curtailment of workers' legal benefits and due and closure of mines as the only way to revive the company. While it is revealed that at the time of nationalisation BCCL had a workforce of 1.65 lakhs it has now come down to 1.435 lakh on the otherhand the production has gone to 229 lakh mt from 75 lakhs mt during the period of nationalisation. So it was not correct that the workers and the poor productivity are responsible. The meeting therefore held that this declaration of BCCL as sick industry is a political decision w making ground for privatisation of coal industry at the distaste of world Bank , IMF, multinationals and imperialist powers, and for that BCCL has been declared sick, EACL has been referred to BIFR and conspiracy is going on to run CCL and WCL on loss as a prelude to refer them to BIFR an as early as possible. The representatives were of unanimous opinion that the endless corruption, nepotism, favouritism, theft shortage of coal misuse of power and inefficiency of management lack of quality control, unnecessary import of foreign machineries etc are reasonable for making BCCL potentially sick. The

meeting warned the management not to resort to any step rising at against the worked interest. It was decided that any step to retrench workers to curtail legitimate due of workers and to repress the workers would be jointly fought.

The meeting noted Coal Minister's declaration at Parliamentary Coal Consultative Committee in the matter of writ off of accumulated loss of CIL and the right to fix up the coal prices by the coal companies and considered it as an election stunt. However, the meeting observed that there must be some sort of control in deciding the coal price.

The meeting further resolved that a joint leaflet would be distributed among workers and employees spelling therein the effects on workers in the event of BCCL being declared as sick, the real causes of BCCL's sickness, in the opinion of trade unions, to make BCCL viable. The meeting further decided to hold a broad based convention/seminar of all trade unions, political parties, democratic forces and intellectuals at Dhanabad on 17.3.96 to decide the further course of actions. It was decided that attempts would be taken to bring INTUC, AITCU and officers representatives in this joint struggle. It was also resolved that a campaign against corruption, theft, shortage of coal, heavy management, curtailment of unnecessary expenditure including administrative cost, withdrawal of CISF etc should be started. An appeal was also made to all workers to play their due role in the field of prodcutin. A Committee consisting of one member from each of the participating unions was formed to carry forward the joint struggle.

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Massive Struggles of Workers in Tamilnadu

□ A K Padmanabhan

While one phase of the State level campaign against the anti-worker, pension scheme concluded with the successful strike on 23rd February, various sections of workers in Tamilnadu are on struggle, in support of their demands.

Massive Picketing:

More than 15,000 contract workers in the State Electricity Board picketed the offices of the Electricity Board in various parts of the state, on 28th February and courted arrest. The struggle under the leadership of Central Organisation of Tamilnadu Electricity Employees (COTEE) was in support of various demands of contract workers including speedy implementation of the Khalid Commission award, regularisation of all contract workers, equal wage for equal work implementation of labour welfare measures including PF, etc.

The picketing in more than 50 centres was led by leaders of CITU and COTEE. Extensive campaign was undertaken all over the state, in preparation to the court arrest programme.

State wide dharnas:

Regular workers in the state electricity board led by CITU under the banner of COTEE, organised massive dharnas in more than 50 centres in the state on 7th March.

The dharnas included filling up all vacancies in the Board, stoppage of privatisation efforts, transfer policy, etc. More than 6000 regular workers of the Board had participated in dharna. Both these struggles of the Electricity Board workers were the decisions of the Silver Jubilee conference of COTEE, held in December 1995.

Transport Workers:

State Transport workers in the State, under the banner of State Transport Employees Federation (CITU) organised hunger fast in front of all the Transport Corporations in the State on 28th February. The demands included, regularisation of all casual work-

ers who have worked for 240 days, proper implementation of the existing agreement, etc.

Handloom Workers court arrest

Handloom workers all over the state, participated in large numbers in the court arrest programme, on 5th March. The call for the struggle was given by the Joint Action Committee of trade Unions. Consisting of CITU, ATICU, LPF and INTUC. Nearly 10,000 handloom workers were arrested in the handloom centres all over the state. IN Kanchipuram state leaders of the trade unions including V Karmegam (CITU), C Kuppusami (LPF), K S Som (AITUC), Damodaran (INTUC) greeted the volunteers.

The demands of JAC includes, the implementation of 22 item reservation for handlooms, implementation of the handloom workers Welfare Act (1981) by the State Govt, increase in minimum wages and index based DA to handloom workers.

Present phase of the struggle was conducted after the massive weavers march in Madras in October 1995. a delegation of the JAC is to meet the Textile Minister at Delhi on these demands and then the further actions are to be planned.

Powerloom:

First State level Conference of Powerloom workers led by CITU was held in Komarapalayam in Salem district on 26th Feb. 250 delegates including 12 women from 9 districts participated in the conference. P M Kumar, Asstt General Secretary of State CITU submitted the report. Among those who addressed the conference were a Soundarajan, C Govindhasami, and M Sreerangan, A procession in which more than 2000 workers participated, culminated in a public meeting.

The conference has elected a State level coordination committee, with 18 members P M Kumar is the convenor. The conference has given a call for state level campaign in support of a charter of demand. Massive dharna is to be organised on 25th March.

Kalakot Coal Mine Workers' Strike

Workers of Kalakot Coal Mines suspended their strike for two months after reaching an agreement with the management of J&K Minerals Corporation Ltd, regarding the regularisation of piece rate workers and other demands. The struggle was led by Bharatiya Coal Khan Mazdoor Union, Kalakot (CITU).

More than 500 piece rate workers were on strike from 18th Dec 1995 in Kalakot Coal Mines which had paralysed the production of coal completely along with other related activities. During the period of strike the workers held demonstrations at project site, mass rallies, dharnas and gharoed the management twice at Kalakot tower. These rallies and demonstrations and other actions were addressed and led by Mohd Maqbool, Om Parkash (CITU) Vijay Singh Prakash Chander and others of BKKMU.

On 24th Dec a big rally of workers was held which was addressed by Com. Jibon Roy, MP, all India secretary of CITU and Com. Mohd Maqbool, convenor, CITU Coordination Committee, and other comrades.

Different trade unions of J&K State came in solidarity with the struggling workers of Kalakot and staged a dharna outside the Raj Bhawan at Jammu on 21st Jan 1996.

20 workers went on fast unto death from 5th Dec at Kalakot town. The workers' resistance together with the support of different trade unions, social and

political organisations forced the state govt to change the managing director and the new managing director after assuming the charge immediately started the negotiations with the workers' representatives which ended in a settlement on 17th Feb 1996. The management has agreed to regularise the services of piece rate workers and final decision will be taken in the next board meeting within one month.

Bonus and gratuity will be paid as per the Central Acts fall back wages for the strike period, transport facilities and repairing of residential huts, etc were agreed also. Massive Rally: A mass rally was held on 8th March at Kalakot town which was attended by hundreds of workers of coal mines. This rally was held to press for implementation of the agreement.

Com. Mohd Maqbool convenor CITU Coordination Committee while congratulating the Kalakot workers for their successful strike urged upon the management of J&K minerals to implement the agreement within the specified time.

The rally was also addressed besides others by Com. Yousuf Tarigami, Om Prakash, Org Secretary CITU, Vijay Singh, Romesh Chander, Pati Raj and Ashaq Hussain (BCKAU). They thanked all the trade unions, social and political organisations who have supported the struggle of Kalakot workers and expressed the hope that the management will honour the agreement within the stipulated time.

Demonstration by Safai Karmacharis of Air Port Authority

Several thousands Safai Karmacharis of the Indira Gandhi Airport, Terminal 2 under the Air Port Authority staged a demonstration before Parliament on 13th March at the call of the CITU.

The demonstration was organised demanding reinstatement of all the terminated contract employees and regularisation of all the contract workers and abolition of contract system. The Safai Karmacharis who are working under three contractors, were dismissed. Due to constant agitation by the CITU affiliated Air Port Employees Union, which included continuous seven days dharna, two contractors had to take back all their employees. The other contractor however refused to do so and dismissed 210 em-

ployees without any reason.

The demonstrators assembled at the Jantar Mantar Park and proceeded towards the Parliament. The Police however raised heavy barricades near the Parliament Street Police Station. The workers held the rally at that spot. The demonstration was addressed among others by S B Bharadwaj, Delhi State CITU General Secretary, Mohanlal, General Secretary of the Union, Ranjit Singh, Secretary of the Union, Jibon Roy, MP and P K Ganguly, Secretary, CITU. Later a delegation led by Jibon Roy, MP met the Union Labour Minister and submitted a memorandum to him.

CONDITION OF SAFETY IN COAL MINES

□ S Kumar

The safety conditions in coal mines in deteriorating day by day. The Management is giving more emphasis on production than safety. The accident figures given in the safety Board meeting show that there is no improvement in accident rates due to Roof fall and side fall, particularly in green roof area. In 26th meeting of the CIL safety Board when it was asked that why there is no reduction in the accident due to roof and side fall, when modern methods like roof bolting and roof stitchings are being used extensively. The D.G.M.S explained that "in roof bolting anchorage testing should be done regularly to ensure that three roof bolts take desired loads. He informed that in many cases tests by D.G.M.S officials have indicated roof bolts fails to take 2.3 tonnes of load. Hence, roof bolting, particularly Cement grouted roof bolts can not be taken for granted and regular anchorage testing should be done to ensure reliability of such systems. He expressed his doubts as to why roof fall accidents are not reducing when S.S.R. reports indicates that the supports in most of the mines are of desired standings.

There is seldom anchorage testing being done and roof bolting is below standard.

Another cause of accident in recent days is travelling in haulage road. In number of mines, the maintenance of travelling road is worst. The workers can not travel by the road. The worker had to travel by haulage road or by the side of conveyer belt. There is no proper fencing by the side of the conveyer.

Now in open cast also the accidents are increasing day by day, particularly by heavy Earth Moving Machinery. In open cast in majority cases there is no separate travelling road the workers have to travel by haul road. There is no regular water spraying in the haul roads. The maintenance of Dumper by Haulpacks are not upto the mark. The Management is not paying attention in these problems.

The new development is that accident due to Contractor vehicle is an increase. The main cause of these accidents are that there is no specific working hours for contractor's drivers, soem time they have to work for 24 hours at a stretch. 2. There is no speed restriction, this is mainly due to incentive paid to the workers, per trip. The maintenance of vehicles. There is no check up from managements

aside, the contractors are given free hand, and they are doing what they like. In the 26th meeting of the CIL Safety Board, it was discussed, and it was being decided that the Contractor's vehicle drivers and cleaners will be given training. In the 27th meeting, the figure given just eye wash. In the 26th meeting of the CIL Safety Board, it was also discussed that 8 hours working will be introduced for Drivers and Cleaners working in Contractors vehicle, but that remain on paper.

Safety Audit: After the new Kenda accident the Government ordered for safety audit in each mine. In the CIL Safety Board meetings the question about safety audit is being raised regularly, but no proper reply is given by the Management nor the safety audit report is discussed at any level or it is known that how safety audit is being done.

Safety Audit:- In CMD's meeting held on 22.8.89 it was agreed that "Safety Budgets have to be framed seperately for each of the area as a part of overall materials budget.

It remained on paper, and when ever it is being raised in the safety Board meeting the management avoided to reply. So there is no safety budget. It can be imagined, that how the management is serious about Safety Board recommendations.

The recommendations of the Safety Board meetings are not communicated to lower level and not discussed either in Area Safety Committees, where ever it exists or in Pit Safety committees. The meetings of the pit safety committee in majority places are just formal, the Area safety committees do not exist to have Area Safety committees in each area. This decision is not taken seriously, by the management. The suggestions of workers representatives are not taken seriously.

Safety Condition in Workshops: The workshops are most neglected as regards safety is concerned. There is no machinery to discuss the safety in workshop. Though according to the management the workshops attached to the mine, the safety will be discussed in tripartite safety committees, and separate safety committee will be formed, in these workshops and workshop not attached to the mines will come under Factory Act, and safety will be discussed seperately. It is never been done. The workers are

nt being provided with uniforms not even welders, grinders, machine operators, the worker who is overhauling the engines of HEMM. Safety shoes are not provided regularly to all worker.

Quality of Gum-boots and safety shoes:- The quality of Gum-boots and safety shoes has deteriorated very much, some time it does not last for more than a month. The main reason is that Contact is given to concern, without testing the quality of the product. Substandard quality is being supplied, without even ISI mark. A committee was set up by CIL as per the decisions of the standings committee for safety in coal mines. The committee submitted its report, it is just a technical report, nothing is recommended about the quality of safety shoes and Gum-boots. In the Safety Board meeting it was decided that the workers will be given new shoes or boots on producing worn out shoes or boots, and there will be no time limit for that, but this is not being implemented. No supplier who are supply in inferior 'quality' is black listed so far.

National Dust Prevention Committee: It was formed with a view that in future there will be Mechanisation in Mines, the problem of dust is likely to aggregate, which required constant surveillance and system to take corrective action, Specific objective and functions of NDPC.

1. Consider and formulate guidelines for setting up research projects on dust exposure in mechanised open cast and below ground mines from time to time.

2. Oversee and monitor the efficiency of the dust prevention measures taken in the coal mining companies, safeguard the workers form harmful effects of airborne respirable dust.

3. Consider proposals for making rules, regulations by-laws and standing orders pertaining to the prevention and control of dust in coal mines.

A Technical sub committees was set up under NDPC. The Terms of reference:-

- a) Type and number of equipment to be kept for a group of miens, say an area of CIL companies.
- b) Laboratory equipment - number and type required.
- c) Manpower - Type and number
- d) Frequency and type measurement for identified locations.

The third meeting of the NDPC was held on the December, 1993. The sub committee recommended this DMPC should meet quarterly and that should be

the body through which the dust control strategy is coordinated. In the third meeting of NDPC another sub-committee was set up to find out at what level change of job with respect different categories of work.

Instead of quarterly meeting of the NDPC the committee met after two year on 15th January 1996, that too for 3 hours. Most of the recommendations are not implemented, the sub-committee to find out level change of job never met. In the 4th meeting, the convener of this sub-committee has been changed. This is the seriousness for prevention of dust in coal mines.

The dust problem is increasing, besides open cast, in underground mines particularly in coal face, another area where dust problem has increased in CHP and workshops where due to the movement of Dumpers and Dozers the problems of dust become accute there is no effective method for dust seperation.

The roll of DGMS is also responsible for the deterioration of safety condition in mines. Inspection of mines by Mines Safety department has become a formal affair, no proper checking is done, no action is being taken on persons concerned responsible for accident in mines. Number of circulars are being issued by DGMS, but they are not informed to the workers. Before implementing any Circular this should be made known to the workers.

The safety become the most neglected subject in Coal Mines Industry. There are number of accidents in which large number of workers died. The workers should be safety conscious and they should assert for proper implementation of safety norms. This should be one of our main task.

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Railway Accidents Do Not Happen, But are Caused

S K Dhar

Secretary General, All India Loco Running Staff Association and CWC member of AIREC.

(We are publishing hereunder in abridged form a Theme Paper for the seminar on Safety of Train Operation and Travelling Public held at Kanpur on 31st Dec, 1995, submitted by S.K. DHAR-Ed).

The increased number of accidents in the Railways has already drawn the attention of the whole of the nation and has become the cause of serious concern. The nation is rapidly losing confidence in the main slogan of The Railways—Punctuality, Safety and Security. These accidents lead to serious damage to the national properties and loss of lives of travelling Public and workers.

The Indian Railways, the major Surface Transport System in the country, the largest one in Asia and second biggest in the world is closely wedded to the national economy, people's lives and living. An efficient functioning of the system is solely dependent on contented efficient workers, efficient machines, materials, and on the efficiency of rules, regulations, workable procedure and policy according to which the workers, the machines and the materials are being utilised, for functioning, keeping safety first as watch dog. The Indian Railways is changing from the concept of public utility service to commercial service at a time when the changes were required to cater the needs of the society and in conformity with social changes. Despite tall claims of running Railways with safety, security and punctuality, in all the three fields it has failed miserably.

The life line of the nation has become the line of national horror. Safety first has become the safety last. As a result the accidents are not only on the increase but abnormal late runnings of the trains have become the feature of even the prestigious trains. None can deny that any improvement in the direction of achieving safety has some financial implications. On examination, it will be revealed that the Railway Board (Ministry of Railways as a whole) is reluctant to incur reasonable expenditure for safe working to keep this system accident free.

It is really a pity that many of the recommendations of Shahnawaz Khan Committee (1954), Kunzru Committee (1962) Wanchoo Committee (1968) and Sikkri Committee (1978) on Raiway Accidents al-

though accepted and even notified have not been implemented as yet. Even on some of the vital accepted recommendations Railway Board is delaying the implementation on one plea or other for years together. For example, excuse of the paucity of wooden sleepers is impeding progress of traffic circuiting for over two decades. In reality, if track circuiting as per recommendation of the Accident Enquiry Commission and Commission of Raiway Safety (200 stations per year) had progressed, then many of the major accidents for receiving trains on occupied lines might have been averted, that is what Commissioner of Railway Safety opined in the Annual Report for 1965-66.

The Wanchoo Committee Report had stated that with some ulterior motive an attempt to show an utopian efficiency and progress is being projected by the Raiway Mughals throwing safety rules to the wind, and the Railwaymen declined to adjust themselves with the unsafe working and prone to work adhering safety rules, are being harassed, punished and victimised. Without any prejudice, it can easily be said that the venture is responsible for upward trend of Accidents on Raiways resulting not only direct costs but indirect costs also and to these costs get added the sufferings of the victims of accident and loss of fair name of the Railways which cannot be reckoned in terms of money.

The Pranjape Committee in its report in 1980 has made a very brief comment that "Efficiency of utilization of track and rolling stock on the USSR and the Chinese Raiways is significantly higher." Be that as it may, the Indian Railways came down heavily from their own standards of performance achieved in the earlier years after independence, evident also from the experience of the Railway Officials. But the lesson has not been drawn by the Railway Board for advancement of the same.

What are the factors that militate against better utilisation of the Raiway assets? Mainly three major assets of the Raiways are the permanent way and allied fixed installations, the rolling stock, (both locomotives, rakes and wagons) and above all, the 1.6 million workers. The performance is the essence of

administrative capacity to maintain these assets in a sound state of health and to secure their optimal utilisation, keeping in view the expiry of the useful life of the assets, replacement of the parts in time and prevention of cannibalisation of parts from one rolling stock to others. Since the man behind the machine is more important for its effective use, it is self evident that the large contingent of work force should receive the prime attention of the administration. As, otherwise, all investments made in fixed or moving assets can run to waste. The accidents are mainly attributed to human failure, mechanical defects and failure, sabotage, natural calamities, engineering defects etc., depending on the occasion, by the Railway authorities. But management failure is seldom referred to. Management failure is the main reason behind most of the accidents, which only could be unearthed by deeper impartial fact finding enquiry to each accident which the Railway administration is every time reluctant to do or denied. Even the trade unions are not being allowed to associate with such enquiry.

Defective signals, failure of route relay system, inadequate brake power, defective maintenance of rolling stock, over hours or under rest working, forcing to work superseding the Head Quarter or relieving points etc. are among the important reasons that result in committing the so-called "human error". Provision for partial track-circuiting is another danger in disguise for safety measure. It betrays the operating staff who depends largely on visual indication. Under the partial track circuit system, the whole length of the track between the 1st Home signal and the last stop signal of the stations is not track circuited. Thus the expectation of the operator to depend on visual indication is belied when the non-track-circuited portion over the above section of the track remaining occupied, signal can be taken off leading to accident. The Railway Board commitment and programme after the recommendation of Kunzru Committee (1962) to track circuit 200 stations per year has been proved futile. Had the recommendations and commitments been translated into action by the Railway Board in pace with the increased tempo of traffic, most of the disastrous accidents for receiving trains on an occupied line occurred in recent times would have been averted. The rate of progress in the provision of track circuiting is so slow that even the busiest trunk routes have not been fully track circuited which has led to disastrous accidents. This exactly happened in case of recent disastrous acci-

dent at Ferozabad station when the Kalindi Express stopped without clearing the last stop signal (advance starter) which is free from track circuit and the Puroshottam Express closely followed got the signal clear and collided in rear of the Kalindi Express.

The modern signalling system and automatic signalling system, the adequate distance theory for controlling and warning the drivers about the safety of the line ahead has been given a go-bye, and now human failure is attributed to the operational staff but not the system.

Under the interlocking system, while the cabin is situated on the top, the relay room is situated in the basement. The relay room is kept open for the access of the staff as and when they require. But there is no control or record on the opening and closing. Thus the relays are exposed to manual operation effecting movements of points and signal beyond the control of the operator in the cabin above. It is observed that over recent years some disastrous accident took place due to this. The recent disastrous accident of 51Up Sealdah-Jammu Tawai Express ramming into a stationary goods train on loop line at Kalubothan-Asansol division in E Rly on 1st June, 1995 occurred as the home signal was green and line was set for loop line.

Similarly, Panel Board is often operated by the untrained, unqualified or semi-qualified staff, contrary to the recommendation, directive and instruction of Wanchoo Committee (1968). On the plea of economy, the Switchman are posted to operate Panel Board in different parts of Indian Railways while only trained ASM should operate the same.

Single line sections with token or tokenless instrument should only allow one train in either of the directions at a time. Once one train has entered into the section, the section is interlocked, the line clear for any other train cannot be given because the Block instrument will show train on line. But the experience goes that the Block instrument also failed. Because of this there was serious train accident between Darbhanga-Samastipur section of N.E. Rly. on 15th July, 1993, a head on collision between Mithilanchal Express and Nirmali-Samastipur passenger. Twin single line working on double line section is conducive to Accident. The system is introduced in the Lokker-Denishpet section in Southern Railway further planned for extension though proved to be a wrong system and conducive to accident. This wrong system played a major, vital and critical role in the accident of 6019 Madras Kanyakumari Express on

14-5-95.

Single Manning in EMU and DMU coaches is a dangerous phenomenon, which led to many accidents, including the accident of EMU Coaches between Lilluah and Bellur of Eastern Railway. Because, depending on the "Dead Man's Handle" the safe running of single manned EMU and DMU coaches cannot be preserved, still the Railways are arrogantly forcing such working. Forcing the excessive hours, under rest working and jambo Rakes working, superseding the HQ and relieving points are causing accidents. Despite ILO convention No.1, (8 Hrs. duty for the workers) the Govt. of India did not ratify the same and incorporate in the legislation. The 10 Hrs. agreement still not implemented even after lapses of 23 years. Many such accidents occurred due to excessive hours of work of the Engine Crew. The massacre due to head on collision between Mourya Express and a goods train at Gomoh, Eastern Railway on 21st July, 1986 occurred due to excessive hours of work performed by engine crew of goods train. The engine crew was on 17 hrs. duty, despite repeated urge, the relief was not given.

Though the Brake Van and the Guard are the integral part of the safe running of trains but still the train working without brake vans and Guard are being forced, the workers are being subjected to punishment upto the extent of removal from service for refusal to do so. There were many accidents which includes the disastrous accident of Amritsar Tata-Express at Garawa Road of Eastern Railway on 6th August, 1986.

Engineering defect is one of the important and vital aspects of train accidents. The track maintenance, packing, deep screening, sleepers changing etc. are not done properly. Now a days, due to track maintenance by the contractors, the condition of the tracks further deteriorated. Non maintenance of track in a proper way further lead to the defects like rail fractures, loosening of fish plate etc.

Numerous accidents are taking place daily many of which are not coming in the public notice till any disastrous accident takes place involving loss of lives and national properties. There was accident of a Passenger train and the total train fell down in the Bagmati river in the year 1979. The accident of Island Express occurred on 8th July 1985 in Southern Railway when the full train fell down was fallen in the Astamudi Lake. Both the accidents occurred due to Engineering defects. Take the Railways Bridges about 60 to 100 years old. But out of 1.14 lakhs, only

a small percentage of them was re-girded with steel girders. 61985 Route Kilometers renewal programme is stagnated for funds inspite of 76% increase in passenger earning during 6th plan and 41.3% higher in 7th plan periods. About 25000 kilometer track is suffering from "Rail Fracture". Out of 37,092 level crossings (excluding 1097 canal and 4004 cattle crossings) there are 26,240 level crossings which are unmanned. Even in 42.25% manned by Gate Keepers i.e. 15672 there has been a frequent incidence of trains colliding with road traffic. Though actual number of such accidents are not revealed but they occur in large numbers. Train actuated warning device are not on the agenda for safety in Railways. The A.W.S. (Auxiliary Warning System) fitted on the engines to warn the drivers are mostly non functioning. After the specified codal life the rolling stock gets over aged, replacement should be done, which is not adhered to in practice.

The over hauling of various types of rolling stock as should be done after the completion of assigned kilometerage are never done.

According to Para 1525 of Indian Railway Mechanical code, economic life of all the Steam Engines have expired long before. But still some of them are being utilised. The economic life of first two batches of Diesel and Electric Locomotives have also expired. But still they are in service, only to increase the danger of accidents.

On the question of adequate manpower the Sikkri Committee commented "In the name of economy we also find that severe constraints have been placed on Railway in deploying the man power needs for operation and maintenance". Now there is an alarming shortage of staff almost in all the departments.

On electrified Sections, vast length of traction wires have become over due for renewal. As a result very often train servies get interrupted and mishaps take place due to breakage of wire. For not proper earthing of 25 KV AC traction by providing "Return Feeder" System, railway staff and commuters are exposed to the dangerous effect of induced induction and electric energy flux. As a result of forcing staff to work in violation of industrial and occupational safety rules as laid down in Indian Electrical Rules and AC Traction manual, more than 1100 staff have been electrocuted of whom more than 400 have lost their lives. Over 300 have become disabled and a large number of workers are suffering from brain disease.

[Cont'd On Page 22]

Whither India under Congress(I) Rule!

(We are publishing hereunder in abridged form the speech delivered by Com.E Balanandan, MP, President of CITU in the Parliament on 29.2.96, on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address—Ed)

Sir, the President's Address does not reflect the actual situation prevailing in the country. The President has tried to present a rosy picture before the nation, which is contrary to facts. The actual situation is very bad. The Government and the Congress(I) party are in the sick bed. It is almost cancerous. Therefore, the Cong(I) party and the government cannot be saved from this disease. This fact is not mentioned by the president.

We see that some from the Council of Ministers of the government are charged with corruption and they are facing prosecution. And the Prime Minister himself is under the shadow of allegations of corruption, which are being inquired into by the Government investigating agencies. That his friends had to quit on this corruption issue clearly shows that the Government itself is engaged in corruption. And, finally, we know the latest revelations that pliable Members of Parliament had been allegedly bought for money, that 40 to 50 lakhs of rupees and so on were given to five Members of Parliament. When the Government faced a crisis when a No-Confidence Motion came up before the Lok Sabha, the Government sought to buy up certain MPs to increase its strength. If it had any kind of respect for decency, the Government would have resigned immediately after this kind of an allegation had appeared in the press. If the Prime Minister had even an iota of decency and respect for the Constitution and constitutional rule in the country, he ought to have resigned on the very day when these allegations had appeared.

Why do I say this? The Indian Constitution is based on fundamental rights and so on—and so many rights are there—and Parliament is functioning on the basis of political parties. All the political parties come out with their own manifestoes—that they will do this and that and will rule the country this way or that. But now a situation has arisen when money power can buy ministers, money power can buy Members of Parliament, so that whatever policies moneyed men want to be implemented in the country by their not coming to Parliament can be implemented. They can buy up Ministers in the country, and that creates a very serious situation.

The hawala scandal is haunting the country

today, but I find no reference to it in the President's address. There is only one point I want to mention about it. We all know who are the recipients of the hawala money, but we do not know the source from which this money came. Some references, of course are there. The foreign multinationals were trying to pump money into India so that India's policies can be changed in their favour—I do not want to deal with the subject today, because my time is very little. I would only say, the foreign multinationals utilised the policy of liberalisation to pump money into India to buy up ministers and administrative personnel in high positions who are dealing with industries and projects. That is the reason why this money has come. This means, a thorough probe has to be made and action has to be taken.

One point which was being stated is that when Babloo Srivastava was interrogated by the police, he came out with a startling disclosure that Chandraswamy, one of the godmen, had connections with Dawood Ibrahim and tonnes of money had been pumped through Chandraswamy, and it is alleged that the money has gone to the highest people in the country who are holding the reins of the country, including the Prime Minister.

Then coming to the claims made in the President's Address, I want to refer to two or three points now.

The President says that the Purulia arms drop is a serious security lapse. What has happened in this case? A foreign aircraft took off from Karachi, flew to Varanasi, took off from Calcutta, flew to Thailand and flew back again to Madras on way to Purulia. After dropping the arms, it went back to Bombay where it was brought down and intercepted. Kim Davis, the prime accused was allowed to escape. What is the position of our security. This aircraft was flying this way and that way. We could not find anything. Now some claims have been made. Some information was there, but that information was not given to the West Bengal government. It was posted, and they got it after the incident. How can you handle the security of the country this way?

Also, you know that a huge quantity of ammunition was found with Christoph Zellweger, a Swiss national, and an Iranian, Mohammad Phadar, settled in Pakistan, on February 17. This again highlights how poor India's security net is. He was travelling in India for 53 days in a bus with the arms. Nobody found him. One day he came to Delhi, and in some way he was caught. This is the situation of our security. This

shows that the security of the nation is not safe in the hands of the Government of India.

The President has talked about many things. With respect, what is the real situation in Kashmir? The President's Address mentions that our relation, especially in economic and other matters, with the United States is improving. What is the real position? After the United States passed the Brown's Amendment, a lot of sophisticated arms are being supplied to Pakistan. Pakistan is taking an aggressive stand. They do not want to keep off from Kashmir. They do not want to stop interfering in India's internal affairs. This is being supported by the United States. Therefore, the United States is taking an inimical attitude towards India by supplying huge quantities of sophisticated arms to Pakistan.

We must note another thing. The President's address mentions about the achievements of our scientific personnel in many areas. We have had laudable achievements in some areas. The United State Administration was trying to stall all those things. For example, for development of our communication system, we needed the cryogenic engine for launching a rocket which we wanted to do from Trivandrum. The engine was agreed to be supplied by Russia.

But the United States intervened to see that the cryogenic engine was not supplied. In the case of LCA also, there was an understanding with the United States that it would cooperate with India in its production. It did not do that. Therefore, the Government of the United States has been taking an attitude of not strengthening our defence system. But, the Government of India did not say a word about it. Not only that, they have now agreed to have joint naval exercises in Cochin in March. What does it show? This shows that this government is not capable of saying what the United States is doing against us. Our President did not mention about that. He only said that our relations with the United States are improving. The government wants to cover up the American intentions against our country. Now, I would like to refer to the situation in the North-East. Tripura is a small state, which is surrounded by Bangladesh from three sides and 50 per cent of the state land is covered by forests. Armed insurgency against the Tripura Government is being encouraged by the armed gangs from Bangladesh through these forests. When the Congress Government was ruling the State, 63 companies of the army personnel were supplied. Now, this strength has been reduced to 43 companies. Why has this reduction been effected? This insurgency has increased because there is no resistance from the armed personnel to stop their insurgency

activities. Within the last six months, between 50 and 60 people have been abducted and killed. Police and security personnel are being attacked. I myself went to the Prime Minister and represented this matter. Tripura is part of India. Here, an Indian force is being allowed to be attacked by insurgents supported by Bangladesh armed gangs. This shows the Government of India is not serious to protect the country's integrity. Tripura is the only State wherein Tribals and other sections of the people are maintaining its unity. This aspect I told the Prime Minister. He promised to do something, but he has not done anything. This is about the insurgency in a State in the North East where the Government of India is not taking any step to stop it.

Now, I come to the economic situation. Many claims have been made. One claim is that a sizeable amount of poverty has been brought down. I do not want to argue much on that, but it is found that in 1991, the total incidence of poverty in the country, including rural and urban, was 35.6 but in 1994-95 this total incidence of poverty rose to 39.6. What is being claimed in the President's Address is not correct. It is factually wrong. Poverty is on the increase.

The Government also claims that real wages of workers have improved. But the statistics which we have studied show that actual wages of skilled labourers have gone down. In 1986-87 and in 1990-91 the change in nominal wages was 9.4 per cent; and the change in real wages was 1.3 per cent. In 1992-93, this has gone down. The nominal wage increase was 12.1 per cent. The real wage has gone down to minus 1.6 per cent. This is the situation. The real wages of workers are coming down but the monetary wages are going up. In real terms the wages of workers are coming down. So, the claim of improving the conditions of workers is also found to be wrong.

I would like to mention one point with regard to the conditions of labourers. Generally the Government claims that the Government is doing many things for the working class.

However, I would bring before the House the condition of beedi workers. There are 80 lakh beedi workers in the country. The Government of India has taken certain steps to see that the beedi industry is ruined. Today, in India out of 100 smokers, 15 smoke cigarettes and 85 smoke beedis. The multinational cigarette companies pressurised the Government to permit them to manufacture mini-cigarettes. They also pressurised the Government for a reduction in the excise duty on mini cigarettes from Rs 120 to Rs 60. A further attempt is on to reduce it to Rs 40. I led a delegation of beedi workers to the Finance Minister and told him that if this is done 80 lakh beedi workers

would become unemployed. The Finance Minister told me that he would be looking into the matter. I think he is still looking into the matter. A large section of women are employed in the beedi industry throughout India. Now, they are going to suffer because manufacture of beedis is going to be taken over by multinational companies and big companies. This is what is happening in that area.

The Government also claims that the national income is increasing and the country is making progress. Is the country really making a progress? The total national income which has been improved has been taken away by big Indian companies and by multinational companies. Their profits have shown an increase. The profits of 20 big companies of the country and multinational companies have shown an increase in a big way. They have cornered upto 600 per cent profit while the people living below the poverty line are on the increase. Therefore, the claims being made by the Government about the improvement in the lives of the people are false. Then, Sir, I will come to the foreign exchange position which is showing a disturbing trend. On May 4, 1995, the "Times of India" published the report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General. That report states that the total external and internal debt of the Government in 1995-96 is estimated to be Rs 600,559.08 crores or 83.93 per cent of the GDP. The interest on this is estimated to be Rs 52,000 crores. The net borrowing and other liabilities of the Government for 1995-96 are estimated to be Rs 52,634 crores. This is reported in the "Economic and Political weekly." And, the quantum of debt itself is over four fifths of our GDP. That is, if the debt were to be repayed, the 90-crore Indian people would be left with only one-fifth of what the country produces! Three-fourths of the GDP is to be spent to clear the debts, if at all we want to clear them. Therefore, we are really in debt trap. To keep the servicing of the loans, payment of installments on capital and interest, we have to go for further taking of loans. Therefore, the country's economic position is very serious.

Also, the Government has been claiming that we are having a lot of foreign exchange reserves, etc. If you go to the trade balance of the four years that have gone by, the import was on the increase and though the export was increasing, the import was more all-ways. Therefore, the foreign exchange liability per annum was on the increase all these years. The country cannot afford this. Now, in the new situation wherein the rupee value is going further and further down and the dollar value is on the increase, if the export is always less than the import, the total liability of the country is automatically on the increase. The

goods which we produce are to be sold to foreign countries. We have to give more goods. At the same time, we will be paying more rupees for getting the import which we need. If you take the total economy of the country under the 'liberalised' set-up, though our Finance Minister was claiming it was going to improve, we are really in a Mexico type debt-trap. Our country is going to face such a serious situation. Before going to the other points, I want to say something about the new steps which are being taken by the government to ameliorate the conditions of the working class. There is a tall claim being made about the pension scheme. My friends on this side are also supporting the scheme. It is said that 18-19 million workers are going to be benefited. I would like to know this. What is the contribution for the pension scheme from the Government or the employer? Not a single rupee is being contribute by them. My friend Mr Venkat Swamy makes speeches, lengthy speeches. That is the only contribution. Nothing else. They are not contributing one 'anna' for the pension scheme. Only the workers' money is being converted to pension fund. Under the earlier family pension scheme which we had, there was a surplus of Rs 9,000 crores. When that scheme was launched, the Government was saying, "If we give this money to you, this will not be sufficient for paying family pension." But now, we find that Rs 9,000 crores is a surplus! The Government, now, wants to float another scheme to see that the workers' money is taken by the Government for its 'ways and means' account, by making surplus. That is why the pension amount which is supposed to be given to the pensioners is very meager. If the Government feel that the pension scheme is very attractive, why can't the government agree to the workers' choice? Why can't the owners of the money choose their things? An option should be given to the workers to choose pension. That was the main demand raised by us. Therefore, I say that this is another device not to help the working class but to further take away the money which has been earned by the working class and put in their provident fund accounts. That step is also against the interest of the working class. Therefore, the steps which are considered to be ameliorative in nature go against the working class. Finally, I have to bring to your attention another serious aspect. You see, in the Presidential Address it is said that our scientists have done a wonderful job in various sectors, which is a fact. How can they do it without infrastructural facilities which have been developed under the public sectors—the basic engineering industries and the other industries which paved the way for self-reliance and which paved the way for the development of our defence equipment?

What is the policy of the government? The policy of the government is to destroy the public sector, especially the basic infrastructure is to be handed over to the private foreign multinationals. What does that mean? For everything we are going to be dependent on foreign multinationals. We are slowly being taken to the old stage of pre-1947. We can meet the needs of our country. But we have to see that our power sector is not demolished even if the foreign multinationals are brought in. The BHEL which is employing 32,000 workers will be slowly closed down or will be handed over to foreign multinationals. 33 per cent capital invested in the public sector is now held by private companies—Indian and foreign. Within two, three years, they capture majority hold if this policy is persued.

Before going to other things, first of all I would like to refer to a statement made by the proponent of the liberalisation policy, Dr Manmohan Singh. On 13th January, 1995, the "Observer" reported like this: The Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, said that "the traditional approach to labour that providing the workers the maximum security in the form of employment and wages was not workable in the new given situation. Therefore, what is the new situation? In this situation employment and wages are not secure. Today, what is in operation? I want to report to the House the latest things. The Bharat Ophthalic Glass Plant, BOGL, Durgapur has been ordered to be wound up. It is one of the plants producing import substitute of glass products which are being used by our Defence services. Together with that M/s MAMC, BPMEL National Instruments, Weigh Bird, NTC, etc are being closed. Therefore lakhs of workers are being thrown out of employment. This is the policy being pushed through the so-called liberalised policy which has not been referred to by our Honourable President.

I also refer to para 10 of the President's Address regarding the reduction of inflation rate. In 1990-91 it was 17 per cent. Now, it has been reduced to 5 per cent in the current year. Before dealing with the real life's experience, I may be permitted to quote from the election manifesto of the Congress (I) party which was produced in 1991.

"The Congress reiterates its firm resolve to use the full power of the state to arrest the rise in prices and bring down the prices of essential commodities and articles of common consumption. Economic policies will be geared to this end. Stern action will be taken against blackmarketing, hoarding and profiteering and those who are profiting from the miseries of the common man." I will give you the figures. In the past one year the wholesale price of onions has risen

by 72 per cent. Onions are commonly used by our people. Dry chillies rose by 55.9 per cent, potatoes by 29.7 per cent. the average for all vegetables by 23.1 per cent. moong by 17.9 per cent, bajra by 13.7 per cent, mutton by 95 per cent and so on and so forth. However, when we examine the dimensions of the price rise of essential commodities over the last five years since the Rao Government came to power, the real sweep of the deception, the gulf between promise and practice can be seen from the above figures. I want to quote from the "Business Standard" 14th Feb 1996. The average index in 1990-91 of cereals was 171.5 and in June 1995 it was 303.9. Pulses rose from 227.5 to 297.0. Fruits rose from 190.0 to 304.0. Vegetables rose from 234.6 to 306.3. Milk, egg, meat, fish, dairy products, sugar, etc, are up. The promise was to see that in the case of common consumption commodities the prices would be brought down. That has not been done. It has happened the other way round. Therefore, the claims that are being made by the President in his Address do not, I am sorry to say, tally with the facts.

There is another point I want to bring to the notice of this august House. In paragraph 4 of the Address, the law and order situation is referred to and it is claimed that it is under control. The daily routine of harrowing killings in the capital city of Delhi needs no elaboration. Killings, besides, looting, are on the increase, apart from bomb blasts. This makes life in Delhi unsafe. And the government claims that the law and order situation is brought under control.

One cannot forget the point referred to by my colleague, the lady member from the BJP. She referred to the point while dealing with this subject. I mean the Bombay riots. Madam, one cannot forget the horrendous riots in Bombay and now the successive State Governments in Maharashtra dealt with the criminal gangs involved in those killings and the Bombay blasts. Minus Bombay, there is no India. You have to refer to Bombay here also. The most shocking thing is the Shiv Sena-BJP government's decision to wind up the work of the Srikrishna Commission. Madam, you know the aftermath of the Ayodhya incident. There were the Bombay riots. I went there at that time. I found that thousands of people were killed. Anyhow, , later, the Srikrishna Commission had been appointed. The Bombay riots could be compared with only one incident in the post-Independence India and that is, the November 1984 riots in Delhi wherein 3,400 sikhs were killed. After 11 years, their inquiry is still not complete and all those culprits are still at large. In Bombay, another incident happened, the Bombay blasts. That also was referred to this Commission by the new Government.

The Srikrishna Commission was going into the two incidents, the Bombay riots and the Bombay blasts. These two incidents in which thousands of lives were lost were being inquired into by the Srikrishna Commission. Now the work has been stopped abruptly. What is the law and order situation? What is the justice? Is justice being done? All those culprits who demolished the houses of the muslim minority are going scot-free. The Shiv Sena people were the main people who had done this damage. The work of the Commission was stopped. There was the involvement of the Shiv Sena MP in the riots, etc. I want to raise only one point.

Since the Srikrishna Commission has been done away with now, there is an unofficial commission. They went into it. Justice Krishna Iyer and two eminent Judges of the Bombay High Court were the members of the Commission. I want to read out only one paragraph from their observations," Communalism, with fascist facets and engineered by criminalised and politicised groups, will destroy our democracy and overthrow our Republic. Therefore, every constructive suggestion made must be taken seriously by the State. The minority community, which in an overall view, suffered terribly, deserves better protection. That is the measure of our culture...." This is what they said. The minorities are part of our life in our country. Bombay has a combined population of muslims as well as Hindus, but thousands of Muslims are being killed. That had happened. All right, an Enquiry Commission was appointed with a sitting judge, and that has also been wound up. What is the law and order situation in the country? What is the protection for the people of the country? This is not mentioned in detail or even referred to by the President in his address. I consider it an omission on the part of the Presidential Address. We know even persons belonging to the gang of one of the prime accused in the Bombay blast case, Dawood Ibrahim, were given shelter in Delhi by one of the BJP MP, excluding the hospitality of Kalpnath Rai. The Vohra Committee, on the basis of material it had collected and on the basis of investigation conducted by it, came to the conclusion that there exists a nexus between the criminals, politicians and bureaucrats in India. This is a new situation. What was the role of the Congress party and the Government to counter the situation. I want to refer to para 40 of the President's Address, which is the concluding para. It says: "The policies of the Government have put the country on the path of growth..." Is it so, Madam? Nobody, who is living in India, can say today that it is correct. The economy is in doldrums, the poverty and the misery of the people have increased, unemployment continues to

increase, foreign debt is alarmingly on the increase, almost leading the country to the Mexico-type of debt trap. The strength of the country is being allowed to be eroded by the destruction of the strategic industries and the industrial base that we have built through public sector. Foreign multinationals are frantically invited to take over and dominate this sector. In sum, the freedom of our country—economic and political—is being put to a severe strain. Above all, the government itself have proved to be the fountain head of corruption and have made corruption a way of life. Therefore, the minimum thing that the Government ought to have done is to quit office. However, as I have stated in the beginning, the Cong(I) party and its government are very seriously sick. The people of the country are anxiously waiting to give them a ceremonial burial and with this, Madam, I conclude.

[From Page 17]

The essential conditions of safe running of passenger trains is to have 100% active brake power and a goods train 85% active brake power which fades to the extent of 20% after an average run of every 700 Kms. of goods train. But in reality trains, particularly the goods trains are allowed to run or forced to run with far less percentage of brake power.

In the so called guaranteed air brake system the main source of creation of air brake is through the Distributor valve and because of frequent theft of the valves the air brake power fails and cause accidents. It is due to this that the serious accident of NRPA goods train was caused at the Asansol platform. 36. The following illustrations are enough to prove that the numerous Railway accidents are caused when the Railways do not attempt to make an end to such accident prone conditions as stated above: Year Collision Derailment Level crossing Accident Total

Accidents	dueto	fire			
i) 1988-89	30	457	55	3	545
ii) 1989-90	34	456	42	8	540
iii) 1990-91	41	446	36	9	532
iv) 1991-92	30	444	47	9	530
v) 1992-93	50	414	51	9	524

Prevention of Accidents and to run Trains accident-free, need updating of modern safety devices, and adequate man power is an essential pre-requisite and should be fully implemented in the larger interest. For safety, the vital role is to be played by the management, which in case of Railways is not only seriously lacking, but it is rather deteriorating. It is a fact that if the management remained callous about the safety in an establishment or industry, no remedial measures can be successfully advanced. So all out efforts must be made to make the Rialways to understand the gravity of the issue of safety in running of the train services.

CARRY ON STRUGGLE AGAINST GOVT PENSION SCHEME

In spite of all out opposition to Govt pension scheme and the related ordinance expressed by the mass of the workers all over the country through massive strike on 23rd February 1996, it appears that Govt. is moving ahead with its design.

The struggle against the Govt design to dilute even the second retirement benefit of contributory provident fund in the name of pension, hence, requires to be carried forward and intensified.

In view of above we call upon workers all over the country to continue to raise their strong voice of opposition against the Govt. design and stage massive demonstration before the offices of the Regional Provident Fund commissioners all over the country on 20th March 1996 and express their firm resolve to carry on the struggle for saving the Provident Fund from Governmental appropriation and for pension as third retirement benefit. In the places where Regional Provident Fund offices are not there, demonstration may be staged at factory gates.

It is noted with satisfaction that consequent upon massive strike of 23rd February 1996, by workers irrespective of affiliations throughout the country, even those Central Trade Unions, supporting the Govt scheme have come out with criticisms and demands for modifications of the Govt. Scheme.

We call upon all the Central Trade Unions and workers in general to unitedly resist the Government's scheme of dismantling the contributory provident fund system and impounding almost half of PF generation in the name of Pension Scheme, and press for the genuine demands of the workers for Pension as a third benefit.

We also appeal to the honourable members of Parliaments to raise their powerful voice in the House to reflect the all out opposition of the working class against the Govt. Pension Scheme and the related Ordinance designed only to take away the right of contributory provident fund of the workers.

Sd/-
M.K.PANDHE
CITU

Sd/-
R.K. SHARMA
UTUC(LS)

Sd/-
ABANI ROY
UTUC

Sd/-
DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA
AICCTU

Sd/-
Dr. V. PATOLE
IFTU

Editorial

From Page 11

arrange cover-ups, destroy evidence, manipulate records and bring intransigents into compliance!

The government that has "ruled" at the Centre since 1991 has not spared any method, nor hesitated to stoop to the lowest depths of conspiracy, intrigues to drink to their hearts' content from the well of tainted money while sermonising the poor and dispossessed, the landless and the unemployed to imbibe the noble traditions of morality.

When the so-called new economic policy was launched with fan-fare, it was proclaimed amidst supportive cacophony of the Big Business that this would end the corruption-breeding licences and permits and usher in an era of transparency. The gifts of this policy are writ large on the economy which need not be mentioned in any detail. It is a story of treachery and betrayal of all values that the nation has attempted to cherish.

While unemployment, sky-high prices closures and pauperisation of the peasantry writ large on the face of the country, it has been put on sale in the international market throwing it into the whirlpool of debt trap. Never before the country's self-reliance and freedom were so threatened since independence!

Such a despicable gang of corrupt deserves to be thrown into the dungheap of history. The coming elections

provides a splendid democratic opportunity. It is the sacred duty of each working man and woman to work for the defeat and rout of the proponents and perpetrators of the most heinous crimes against the countrymen, their hard-earned sovereignty. The guilty gang must go lock, stock and barrel.

The saffron brigade which used to flaunt its adherence to moral values and who are now painted in the same brush of tar of corruption must also go the same way. This brigade is the fountain-head of communalism and represents the most reactionary, backward looking, bigotted section of Indian society. Their religiosity and pretensions to championing the cause of majority community are also rooted in the same putrifying, festering corruption. Both deserve the same fate of defeat and ignominy. These parties have forfeited their right to seek people's mandate afresh. The country must be saved from the clutches of these greedy, corrupt, self-seekers so as to be raised from the miasma into which it has been thrown and put back to the path of regaining its honour, dignity and self-respect. Now it is time to act. The working class must act decisively. Dethrone the policy makers—the policy against which the working class and the toiling people fought so doggedly during the last five years! Defeat the communal forces against which they fought to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country! Ensure victory for the left, democratic and secular forces.

Madhya Pradesh Forms State Federation of Beedi Workers

The 1st Conference of Beedi Workers of Madhya Pradesh under the auspices of MP State Committee of CITU was held at Sehora, Jabalpur Dist on 23rd and 24th March 1996. From this conference a state level bidi workers federation has been formed. In this conference an unanimous resolution was passed to name newly formed federation "Madhya Pradesh Bidi Mazdoor Ekta Federation." In the resolution for the formation of the Federation it has also been appealed to buip up broadest possible unity of the Bidi workers of State, where the highest number of bidi workers are there. Appeal was also made that the unions both independent identity can join the federation.

Com P K Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, inaugurated the conference. In this inauguration speech Com Ganguly explained the condition of the Bidi workers, and effect of New eConomic Policy, particularly the decision to reduce the excise duty on small cigarettes, running the bidi industry. com.Ganguly expressed his happiness at the formation of the Federation and decision of the CITU to organise bidi workers which will pave the way for developing organized movement of the bidi workers in state.

After the inaugural session, a big rally was taken out, which was the biggest rally in Sehora in recent times. More than 50 per cent of them were women. Besides, Com.Ganguly, it was addressed by State CITu president Com.Badal Saroj, CPI(M) MLA, Com.Ramakhan Sharma, Kisan leader Com.Ram Narai Kuravila, CITU leader, Com.Muflis Com.padmanabhan. the meeting was presided by respected freedom fighter Com. Kailash Dixit.

The conference discussed on the report placed by Com.Badal Saroj on behalf of the State CITU. More than 26 comrades spoke on this report, which was passed unanimously.

In the conference 152 delegates from Damo, Sagar, Jabalpur, Rewa, Guna, Balaghat, Raipur, Gwalior, WNarsinghpur participated. About 75 per cent delegates were women.

From this conference a state level working committee was elected with Com.Badal Saroj as president, Tanulal Mandalwar, General secretary and Ajit Kumar Lal, Treasurer, vice president, Smt Kishori Verma and Secretaries A T Padmanbhan, Ram Lal Pataria.

Summing up this conference was done by CITU State General Secretary S Kumar. The conference also decided in a separate resolution to launch picketing on 2nd April as per the decision of the A I Committee.

A presidium consisting of Ajit Kumar Lal(Raipur) Narain Prasad(Gwalior), Tanulal Mandalwar(Balghat), Vidya Shakar Maglis(Rewa) Rajaram Ahirwar(DSamon) conducted the proceedings of the conference.

The Conference donated Rs 1000/- (Rupees One Thosuang), collected from the membership, as Special Fund to the All India Committee of Beedi Workers.

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