



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

CITU General Council

Calls for Intensified Actions by the Working Class

□ P K Ganguly

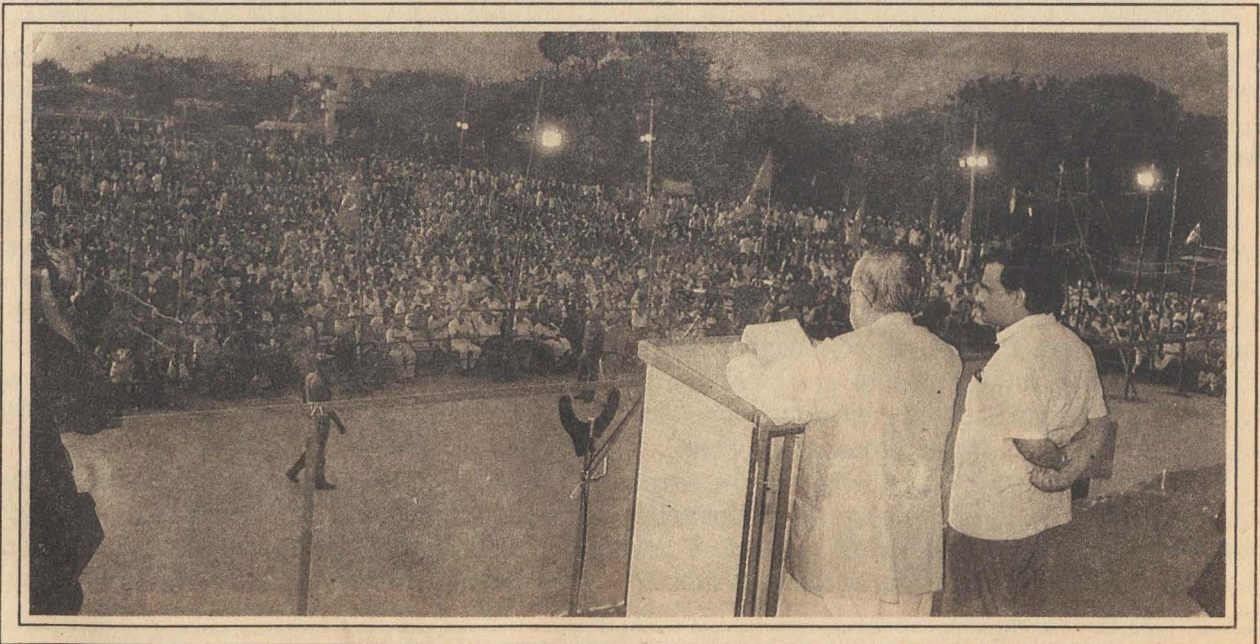
The General Council meeting of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, held at Vishakhapatnam from January 5-8, 1997 unanimously adopted a resolution calling for further stepping up the united actions which the working class had launched during the Narasimha Rao regime in 1991 against the IMF prescribed so-called new economic policies (NEP).

After thorough discussions for two days on the report placed by the General Secretary, which highlighted the harrowing experience of the working class and all other sections of the people of the ongoing economic reforms. The resolution was moved by A K Padmanabhan and supported by P K Ganguly for

adoption.

The stage for firing the first salvo against the United Front Government was set at the mammoth open rally itself on 5th January before the start of the General Council meeting by the speeches of Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister of W.Bengal; E Balanandan, the President and M K Pandhe, the General Secretary of the CITU. They made it clear that support to the the UF Government of course would be there to keep the BJP at bay but there would be no compromise with the economic reforms, which played havoc with the lives of the people.

The meeting started on 6th Januar after hoist-



Com. Jyoti Basu Addressing the mass rally at Vishakhapatnam on the eve of the CITU General Council meeting

ing of the CITU flag by E Balanandan and placing of wreathes on the martyrs' memorial, followed by the welcome address by N Prasadarao. After condolence resolutions E Balanandan delivered his presidential address.

Presidential Address

In his address, Balanandan debunked the claims made by the captains of world capitalism, the United States that they were building a crisis-free new world order through a process of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. He quoted concrete datas as to how the economic reforms had transnationalised the global economy, subverted the national sovereignties of the third world countries and killed millions of jobs, accelerated the growth of unemployment and poverty and increased the disparity between the developed and backward nations of the world. In the Indian context, he gave examples of different sectors of the economy which got worsened by the economic reforms, and called for intensified struggles.

Report by General Secretary

Following the Presidential address, MK Pandhe in his General Secretary's report quoted from the United Nation's Human Development Report of 1996, how the globalised economy had resulted in jobless growth, ruthless growth, voiceless growth, rootless growth and futureless growth the world over. He further referred to the former socialist countries, which after embarking upon the capitalist path of development, had landed themselves into the marsh, with reduced GDP, growing unemployment and reduced real wages of the workers. The report condemned the declaration made in the first Ministerial Conference of the WTO at Singapore, which would be detrimental to India and other third world countries. The report also referred to several international struggles of the working class against the reforms.

The report severely criticised the UF Government for following and accelerating the same structural adjustment programmes which were pursued by the Congress Government at the behest of the imperialist powers. This had led to price rise, dismantling of the public sector, further closure and sickness of industries and loss of secured jobs aggravating the unemployment situation and rampant corruption.

The report further dwelt at length on the retrograde Pension Scheme and called for stepping up movements against it. The report referred to the situations in several public sector and private sector

industries like in FCI, Cement, NTC, Textiles, Beedi, etc and the struggles being launched therein. It briefed about the work among working women and emphasised for further consolidation of work in this area. The report was also critical of the failure of the Government in implementing its promises in the CMP like enacting legislations on secret ballot for recognition of unions, on workers' participation in management, on agricultural workers, on revival of sick units and revamping of BIFR, etc. The report also referred to the growing international relations of the CITU.

The report self-critically analysed the implementation of the tasks on organisation and called for its speedy implementation from the Centre to the union level. The report gave a brief guideline for the forthcoming Ninth Conference of the CITU to be held at Ernakulam from 6th to 10 of April, 1997. Concluding the report, Pandhe gave a clarion call for carrying forward the movement against the NEP.

Discussions on the Report

Thirty five comrades took part in the discussion on the report. The discussions concentrated on the economic reforms. Privatisation, the most dramatic manifestation of the reforms was the common focus of anger. Almost all the speakers expressed their anger against the disinvestment of the most profit making PSUs which went against the CMP, which categorically stated that these PSUs would be further strengthened to achieve international standards. They were also unanimous against opening of the insurance and the financial sectors to multinationals and against privatisation of the telecom and power sectors etc. Similarly they unequivocally called for amendment of the SICA and revamping of the BIFR for revival of the sick units and not for their liquidation. They expressed their determination to make the public sector strike on April 2 a total success.

Members also emphasised on the unorganised sector and development of all India movement educating the workers on need based wages. The Government was assailed for its failure to check the price rise and growth of unemployment. Speakers expressed their concern over the deteriorating conditions of the poor peasantry and the agricultural workers and called for supporting actions by the CITU for them.

On the Pension issue there was a vociferous demand for revocation of the scheme and stepping up of movement. Speakers self-critically briefed the work among working women and assured for im-

provement and planned work to mobilise them and fight for their specific demands. They gave valuable suggestions to enrich the report and expressed their preparedness for intensification of movements to force the UF government to retrace from its path of implementing the reforms.

After reply by the General Secretary, the report was adopted unanimously. The meeting also adopted the accounts report placed by Saroj Chaudhury, the treasurer.

Minimum Wage in Unorganised Sector:

Another report on Minimum Wage in Unorganised Sector was placed by P K Ganguly. The report was discussed by sixteen comrades. Speakers generally emphasised for propagation for need based wage as per the decision of the 15th Indian Labour Conference. The meeting decided that the issue

would be further discussed in the forthcoming conference of the CITU, where a separate Commission would be set up on the subject, when the quantified amount as the demand for floor level minimum wage on a national basis would be finalised.

BTR Memorial Fund

The meeting also discussed about the BTR Memorial Fund. Several states made contributions on the spot. It was decided that all states would have to fulfil their respective quotas before the conference. Several states made contributions to the Andhra Pradesh Cyclone Relief Fund also.

Fraternal Greetings:

R Govindarajan (AIIEA), K Adinarayan (P&T), Sudhir Kumar (FMRAI) and Pradip Sarangi (BEFI) greeted the meeting as fraternal delegates and extended active support to all agitational action plans



A Section of the dias and the members attending the General Council meeting

against the NEP

Asia-Oceanic Conference

M K Pandhe and Chittabrata Majumdar reported about the Asia-Oceanic Conference to be held at Calcutta from February 17-22, 1997. The meeting decided about the delegation of the CITU and several national federations.

CITU Conference

The meeting also discussed about the forthcoming Ninth All India Conference of the CITU to be held at Ernakulam from 6th to 10th April, 1997 and decided several guidelines to the conference. A total of 2500 delegates would attend the conference, which would be based on membership of 1995. The cut off date for submission of affiliation fees and Annual Returns of the states was decided to be 31st January, 1997.

Ranjit Basu placed the Credential Committee report.

Action Programme:

The main resolution endorsed the action programme taken by the National Platform of Mass Organisations in the national convention held on 16th December, 1996 and added some action plans against the Pension Scheme. It also decided to hold solidarity demonstrations in support of the decision taken by the W.Bengal State CITU to observe one day's strike in March demanding revival and opening of all sick and closed units in the public and private sector.

The resolution called for the following action programmes:

(A) Programme of National Platform of Mass Organisations:

1. State level/district level conventions to be completed by 15th February 1997.
2. Picketing before Central Government offices on 25th February 1997 all over the country
3. Rail Roko/Rasta Roko all over the country on 28th March, 1997 from 9.30 to 11.30 am
4. March to Parliament during second part of budget session of Parliament.

(B) Programmes of CPSTU

1. Workshop on wage negotiation on 27th/28th January, 1997 at Bangalore
2. State/district/regional/industry level conventions
3. National convention on sick industries on 12-13 February, 1997 at New Delhi
4. A day-long dharna at New Delhi against sickness of industry and demanding revival, on 14th February 1997.
5. 'All India Protest Day' in all Public Sector Units on 10th March, 1997 through demonstrations/rallies

etc

6. Strike in all Public Sector units on 2nd April 1997.

(C) On Pension Scheme

1 Mass signature campaign to be intensified to ensure collection of maximum signatures by mid February 1997

2 Submission of Mass Petition to Lok Sabha during Budget session of Parliament by massive demonstration at New Delhi

The other resolutions adopted were against the privatisation of the Insurance industry; on modernisation of IISCO; on Completion and revamping of Vizag Steel Plant; in support of all India strike of Anganwadi workers on 31st January; in support of Beedi workers' march to Parliament on 3rd March; on immediate submission of the 5th Pay Commission Report and in support of indefinite strike by the municipal employees of Haryana.

The meeting concluded with a clarion call by the President to make all round efforts to mobilise all sections of workers, trade unions and other mass organisations for complete success of all the action programmes given in the main resolution.

Meeting of AICCWW

Earlier on 4th January a meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women was held under the presidentship of Com.Gangamma. The committee members from Tripura, W Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu attended the meeting. The women members of the CITU General Council also attended the meeting as special invitees. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of the Coordination Committee placed a written report. It was noted that work among the working women in unorganised sector like Beedi, garments, home based units, export zone, etc had improved. In Anganwadi also considerable improvement was noted. Kerala and MP had already held their conferences of Anganwadi workers. It decided to hold the AI Conference of Anganwadi Workers at Kerala.

Among those who participated in the discussion were Hemalatha, Gargi Mukherjee, Varalakshmi, Prasanna Kumari, Nazimunnisa, Rajeshwari, Indu Das, etc

The meeting decided to implement the action programme of the National Platform by launching campaign by the AICCWW among the working women all over the country. It also formulated a charter of demand for the working women to be pursued through struggles.

General Council Meeting
January 5-8, 1997
Vishakhapatnam

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Comrades,

We met in our General Council at Howrah from 31st of May to 2nd of June, 1995. After this we have had two meetings of our Working Committee - one at Bhilai on 2nd to 4th of November, 1995 and another at New Delhi from 6th to 9th June, 1996. In these meetings we have reviewed the work done and took decisions about the immediate jobs ahead. Now in this General Council, we have to review our work besides formulating the future tasks. Since we are going to hold our 9th conference in Kerala some time in the month of April 1997, we have to discuss and finalise the programmes of this conference too. The General Secretary's Report deals in detail the world economy, the national and international situation and the tasks, besides a review of the work done during this period. Therefore, I shall be brief and deal with certain issues only.

We all know that we have originally planned to hold this General Council here from 17th to 20th of November 1996 for which all the arrangements were made by our comrades. But we had to shift the dates due to the unprecedented national calamity that engulfed the coastal areas of Godavari during the first week of November. The cyclone mercilessly hit these areas causing indescribable destruction. The human loss was estimated to be over a thousand, besides the property loss of 1000s of crores of rupees. Myself with some members of the Parliament, party leaders and leaders of CITU, visited these areas. We have seen the colossal damage to the paddy fields, coconut gardens, besides the smashing off of the small houses of the rural poor especially of the fishermen. The whole of the power supply system and the communication network were shattered and completely damaged. The Government of Andhra Pradesh was completely geared up to do what all possible to give relief to the people and to restore normalcy in these areas. The constraint of financial resources stand in the way above all' said the Chief Minister when we met him at Hyderabad before returning to

New Delhi. He wanted the Centre to release more funds to the State which we felt is correct. After coming to Delhi, we have appealed to the Centre to provide more help to Andhra Pradesh to enable the State to meet the situation arising out of this national calamity. The CITU have immediately asked the unions to collect money for Andhra Relief Funds, which the comrades have taken up seriously. Also we have donated Rs 25,000/- from our Central fund.

Comrades, let us express our sympathy with suffering people of Godavari Districts and assure them that we will continue to cooperate with them in all their efforts to restore normalcy.

Before we proceed further, let us express deep sorrow on the death of comrade Sunil Moitra, one of the outstanding leaders of the trade union movement and the Polit Bureau Member of the CPI(M) who passed away at Calcutta on 18th of September, 1996 due to a massive heart attack. He played a key role in organising the insurance employees of the country, which today is one of the powerful unions of the insurance employees. During 80s, he has been elected to the Lok Sabha and there he played an effective role in raising the issues affecting the working class and the people.

His masterly interventions and exposures are remembered even today by those who were with him in the Parliament. He became a Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and elected to the Polit Bureau. He was in charge of the People's Democracy and its editor. In various fields he has done yeoman serves to the working class and the people of the country. We pay our respectful homage in his memory and send our heartfelt condolence to Com.Nilima, his wife and other members of the family.

Another serious loss for us was the demise of Com.Godavari Parulekhar, the legendary leader of the adivasis and the Peasantry. She passed away at Thane, Maharashtra on 9th of October, 1996 at the age of 89. She joined the freedom movement at her

early age and was jailed several times for taking part in satyagraha movement. She led several battles against the landlords and the reactionaries and through this she became the legendary figure among the peasantry of Maharashtra. She joined the Communist Movement and was elected to the CPI(M) Central Committee. Comrade Godavari Parulekhar's life was a model for all the revolutionaries of the country. We pay our homage in her memory and convey our heartfelt condolence to her family members and comrades.

During these period many of our important cadres have passed away in different parts of the country. We dip our red banner in their memory.

We express our strong protest against the murder of Com. Amya Das, a member of our General Council from Orissa on 29th of October, 1996. We condemn this gruesome murder by the anti-CITU goondas. We express our sympathy with the bereaved family.

Dear Comrades,

You might remember that we have dealt with the development of the world economy in our earlier sessions, debunking the tall claims made by the captains of world capitalism, the United States that "they were building a new world order, a crisis-free capitalist system, the only sustainable system using the technological advancement since socialism has no future and it is already dead." But, now many studies and reports have been published by bourgeois Pundits who were the proponents of this theory, highlighting the crisis of the world economy. Though trade and commerce to a certain extent have shown increase, the overall economic growth is tardy. Killing of millions of jobs, threatening increase in unemployment and underemployment, growing poverty, increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, between the developed and backward nations of the world, etc are the features of the so-called development.

Here, I do not wish to go into elaborate details, but I shall confine only to some of the details given in two or three reports. Let us begin with the report of the ILO on world employment 1996-97, the press summary of which is available to us. The headline given to that is : "*Global Employment Crisis Continues, Worldwide inequality is Rising.*"

People around the world, approximately 30% of the entire global work force are unemployed in industrialised and developed countries alike and it says that global employment situation is "grim". growing

number of unemployed is aggravating the social and economic situation. The report also gives the figures about unemployment. In the OECD countries 34 millions. In European Union unemployment increased last year to an average of 11.3% of the workforce. France, Germany, Italy and Sweden registered significant increase.

After giving these figures in many countries of the world the ILO argues that steps should be taken to provide full employment in order to reverse the developing unemployment and underemployment now prevailing in so many parts of the globe. *Current levels of unemployment make no economic sense and are neither politically nor socially sustainable.*"

The report argues that the new development, globalisation of trade and commerce with restructuring etc, economy can be developed and employment recreated. They admit however that the present anxiety being expressed by the people about loss of employment and increase in poverty is understandable, "*given the almost worldwide deterioration of employment conditions*" the size of layoffs and "*the concentration of job losses in particular economic sectors and communities.*"

In conclusion the report suggested, as I stated earlier, that "the full employment practice should be born in mind by all." But it cannot be done under the capitalist system, since the system is facing a crisis, which nobody can now cover up. The building of a crisis free capitalism stands exposed by the actual experience.

Let us have a look at the Human Development Report 1996 published by UNDP. This report emphasises that the economic development must help the human development. Basing on this they examined the past 15 years of developments and brought out many facts. A few is given below

Widening Disparities:

1. "Of the \$23 trillion global GDP in 1993, \$18 trillion is in the industrial countries - only \$5 trillion in the developing countries, even though they have nearly 80% of the world's people."

"The poorest 20% of the world's people saw their share of global income decline from 2.3% to 1.4% in the past 30 years. Meanwhile, the share of the richest 20% rose from 70% to 85%. That doubled the ratio of the shares of the richest and the poorest— from 30:1 to 61:1."

"The assets of the world's 358 billionaires exceed the combined annual incomes of countries with

45% of the world's people."

"During the past three decades the proportion of people enjoying per capita income growth of at least 5% a year, more than doubled from 12% to 27%, while the proportion of those experiencing negative growth more than tripled from 5% to 18%.

"The gap in per capita income between the industrial and developing world tripled from \$5,700 in 1960 to \$15,400 in 1993."

2. Jobless growth: "where the overall economy grows, it does not expand the opportunities for employment: In the OECD countries in 1993 the average unemployment rate was 8% - ranging from 2.5% in Japan to 10% in the United Kingdom, 18% in Finland, and 23% in Spain. In the developing countries too, jobless growth has meant long hours and very low incomes for the hundreds of millions of people in low productivity work in agriculture and the informal sector."

Ruthless Growth - "Where the fruits of economic growth mostly benefit the rich, it leaves millions of people struggling in ever deepening poverty: During 1970-85 global GNP increased by 40% yet the number of poor increased by 17%. While 200 million people saw their per capita incomes fall during 1965-80, more than one billion people saw it between 1980-93"

Voicless Growth - "Where growth in the economy has not been accompanied by an extension of democracy or empowerment: Political repression and authoritarian controls have silenced alternative voices and stifled demands for greater social and economic participation."

"Policy - makers once debated whether they should choose economic growth or extensive participation, assuming that these were mutually exclusive. That debate is dead. People do not want one or the other—they want both. But too many people are still denied even the most basic forms of democracy and many of the world's people are in the grip of repressive regimes."

"Voicless growth can also be growth that gives women only a minor role in an economy's management and direction. As Human Development Report 1995 showed, human development, if not engendered, is endangered."

Rootless growth: "Which causes people's cultural identity to whither: There are, thought to be, about 10,000 distinct cultures, but many risk being marginalised or eliminated."

Futureless growth: "Where the present gen-

eration squanders resources needed by future generations: Rampant and uncontrolled economic growth in many countries is laying waste to forests, polluting rivers, destroying biodiversity and depleting natural resources.

From the above, it can be seen that the developing inequalities in the world are increasing poverty and pauperisation, besides unemployment. Here again we find that the "crisis-free capitalism" is a wild dream.

World Development Report 1996

The situation in the erstwhile socialist countries are examined exclusively by the World Development Report, 1996. naturally this World Bank report tries to justify the so called 'transition' to capitalism. However it also brings out certain facts about the life of the people of these countries. It goes to show that the National Income of these countries are falling, unemployment on the increase and the real wages of the workers are on the decline. The standard of living of the people are going down to unbearable levels. Poverty and break down of health care have hit the life span of the people. In the case of Russia for men a reduction - 6 years during 1990-94 for women 3 years. The equality enjoyed by the women under socialism is non-existent today. They were the first to be found out of employment.

The figures given below will give us the idea about the situation in many of these countries.

The GDP of countries compared to the year 1989

Poland	98%
Hungary	80%
Estonia	67%
Lithuania	40%
Rumania	73%
Mongolia	75%
Russia	60%
Moldavia	40%
Kazhakisthan	40%
Ukraine	40%

The rate of unemployment

Albania - 18%; Bulgaria - 14%; Croatia - 13%; Russia - 12%; Latvia - 7%

The real wages of the workers have come down in many of these countries. Only in Hungary the real wages remain constant. In Poland - 32%; Czech republic - 19%; Russia - 30%; Ukraine - 50%; Latvia

- 50%; Estonia - 55%; Bylorussia - 55%; Kazhakistan - 65%. For the rest of the countries figures are not available. It is evident from the above, that the change over the capitalism can bring in a new life to the people of these countries was an illusion.

Before I close this subject let me bring before you a different scenario which is being witnessed in China and Vietnam. according to World Bank, China and Vietnam too have also have given up socialism and trying to change over to market economy. China and Vietnam have denied this and stressed that they are continuing the socialist path with their national characteristics. Chinese economy is growing at a faster rate and is the highest in the world. As per available statistics, average annual growth of economy is shown below:

Annual Average Growth	
1971-80	5.5%
1981-89	11.1%
1990	3.9%
1991	8%
1992	13.6%
1993	13.4%
1994	13.8%
1995	10.2%

The World Bank also admitted the growth of Chinese Economy averaged 10% which is the highest in the world. The World Bank tried to claim that it is because of the restructuring and privatisation policies that are being implemented in China at a slow pace. This argument cannot cut any ice since it is illogical. The fact is that the Chinese did not give up planned new development. With regard to public sector, they have not privatised it but taken steps to increase its efficiency by rectifying the existing drawbacks of various kinds and these enterprises are made to run effectively and profitably. Also they have not relaxed control over the market economy while relaxing certain areas for market forces to operate. The Chinese Government has claimed that they have introduced a system of socialist market economy. However, it is to be noted the Chinese scenario has presented a new example for speedy growth.

In the case of Vietnam too, the GDP average annual growth according to the world report is 7.1. For Vietnam privatisation of industries did not take place. Without that industrial production is on the increase. According to report in Vietnam, changes have taken place in the matter of land relations.

However, Vietnam presents a different picture, than the CEE countries.

Dear Comrades,

I do not wish to go into national political situation today. Only try to examine the effect of the privatisation and restructuring in certain basic sectors of our economy. Today everybody knows that we are facing a serious crisis in the oil sector. As part of the new policy, the Government of India discouraged the public sector oil companies, ONGC and others of intensifying their productive activity so that we can improve reliance in the oil sector. From late 80s onwards under the pressure of World Bank the Government started inviting private sector into the field of petroleum and petroleum products. Without going into the details let me bring to your notice the latest position in this sectors. From April to August this year crude oil production reduced by 10%. Last year during this period the production was 14.82 million tones. This year it has come down to 13.82 m tones. the production achieved during 1995-96 was 31.15 m tones. But for 1996-97 it is estimated to be 31.10 tones. The annual average demand growth for petroleum product for the last 4 years was 5.4% But in 1995-1996 it rose by 10.8%, and the demand rose to 75.4 m tones. The rate of self-sufficiency was continuously going down. In 1991-1992 it was 50%. In 1995-1996 it came down to 44% and 1996-1997 it would be only 39%. And by 2000-2002 it expected to go further down to 32%, as per the Ministry's estimates. The import of crude oil and petroleum products are on the increase. Consequently the import costs are also mounting. Together with this the price of crude oil went up to 22 dollar per barrel from 18 dollars. The deficit in oil import account is going to increase from Rs 99,800 million to Rs 1,55,000 million. The details of the mismanagement of oil economy I do not venture to explain due to constraint of time.

The government is now in a tight fit. The oil import bill is going sky high and foreign exchange erosion is becoming very serious. The government is contemplating restrictions on import together with increase in prices. The consequences of which needs no explanation. The situation is created by the so called policy of liberalisation.

The foreign oil companies were not willing to help us to develop oil in the public sector. The multinational oil companies abandoned exploration work in given field saying that the fields were dried

and there is no prospect for oil. Also they refused to handover information and the vital data they obtained during exploration, to ONGC. Subsequently our ONGC scientists carried out drilling work and extract oil from the very same field. For the refinery sector the multinationals put forth conditions which could not be agreed to — (1) For 30 years no nationalisation, (2) For 30 years import of crude oil, and refining them must be with foreign oil companies, (3) Distribution of the refined products should also be with them for 30 years. Rejecting all these conditions we have developed public sector, which have achieved 73% self sufficiency in crude production. So also the import bill of the product could be brought down sizeably.

Instead of further intensifying the attempt for achieving self sufficiency in this sector, the government under World Bank's pressure opened up this sector to the same multinational companies together with Indian private companies. To facilitate this process the government has appointed a Restructuring Committee as it was done in every other sector. The wonderful part of it is that in this committee foreign and Indian private company representatives were included. Mr Mukesh Ambani of the Reliance Group, Mr Sasi Revia of Essar Company, Mr Vikram Mehta of Shell Oil Company and Mr Ajit Kapadia of Hindustan Domestic Oil & Gas company are there in the 13 member committees. As per their report the ONGC and Oil India Ltd will cease to function as a national oil companies. Empowered committee is to be constituted for Hydro Carbon sector. All datas of sedimentary Basins are to be supplied to the private company. On the financial matters also they have recommended a fantastic proposals for encouraging the private sector.

More than 25 oil/gas discovered fields has been contracted out to joint sector or exclusive private sector. All these fields are most promising soft ones. ONGC has given only junior partnership in the joint venture.

The concessions given to private sector and the contacts signed by the companies with Government are such that the private sector, Indian and foreign, are given most favoured treatment vis a vis with the public sector. The funny part of it is that the oil produce by these companies will be bought by the government at international prices.

With all this concessions given to private sector, their contribution of production of crude oil is only 0.63 million tonne out of the total production of 31.67 m tone in 1995-96

So the present crisis is because of the new

policy of globalisation put into practice by the Government of India. Now the country is in serious crisis which will affect the total progress of India and we will be completely at the mercy of foreign multinational companies. The Trade Union movement should properly take it up and fight for a reversal of this policy.

POWER SECTOR

Let me bring to your notice as to what is being done in another vital sector of our economy—the power sector. As soon as Mr Rao came to power they have decided that investment in power sector is to be reduced and private investment should be brought in for power development. Out of the 8th Plan target of 30,800 MW only less than 18,000 MW were achieved because of lesser budgetary support. Today we are facing power shortage in large parts of the country. Of all the persons, MR Manmohan Singh, the architect of the new economic policy, recently declared in a Delhi meeting that the policy decision taken with regard to power was wrong. The reduction of investment in the public sector power development was erroneous. Relying on the private sector for power development did not succeed, and was also wrong. But, hwoever, the Government of India is still pursuing the same policy of the Rao government. The last 40 years of power development in the country focused on reduction of unit cost of power. With the change of policy this has ceased to be an important criterion. The new direction given by the Government of India to the States is for restructuring of the State Electricity Boards saying that the Electricity Boards are in debt. The World Bank is offering credits to the States for restructuring the Electricity Boards. The condition attached is that the Board will be only a regulatory body - separate corporations will be organised for generation, transmission and distribution. And then, there should be no subsidised power supply. The Orissa government has taken a 350 million dollars loan agreeing with the conditions - and started implementing the schemes. The subsidised power given to agriculture is to be done away with. The minimum charge of power in the agricultural sector may be around Rs 3/- per unit. For the industries it will go up to Rs 5/-. This pattern is going to be implemented by UP, Rajasthan and Haryana for which the World Bank loan is sanctioned. With regard to the other states too the same directions are being given by the Central Government.

According to the latest figure, the State Electric-

ity Boards today have a cumulative loss of Rs 29,000/- crores. This is because the State Governments wanted Tariff concession given to the agriculture sector and in some cases free of charge.

Also, as government policy, economically weaker sections were given concessional rates. Because of all these the Electricity Boards have given concessions to the consumers to the tune of about Rs 49,000 crores. The power concession given to agriculture and industry, especially agriculture, made the country self-sufficient in the matter of foodgrains. If this policy is changed, and they are going to be changed, on the basis of cost, it will have its own repercussions in our agricultural sector.

Foreign multinational corporations and Indian private companies are invited in the power sector resulting which the power cost may go upto 3 times over what is prevailing in the country today. This will have adverse impact on our total economic development. The Electricity Employees, Engineers, Financial Experts and Scientists have strongly come in opposition to the new power policy of the government. The development of cheap power is possible in the country without our succumbing to the World Bank pressure.

On the question of making the Electricity Boards viable, the West Bengal government have taken certain steps which are in the correct directions. I do not wish to take your time for suggesting the alternative policies. Only I wish to state here that, we, CITU should take initiative to discuss the problems of the Energy Sector, oil, power, and coal, so that we can present a cogent policy frame for the development of the nation.

INSURANCE SECTOR

Comrades,

You know that IMF/WB was insisting that our financial sector is to be opened up and privatised. The government was taking steps to accommodate their view by appointing the Malhotra Committee which under dictation suggested opening up and privatisation of banking and insurance sectors, against which the TU movement was conducting struggles. Of late the government came out with the proposals for opening up the insurance sector to foreign and Indian private companies as well as its privatisation.

The LIC and GIC of India by their performance proved that it is the best in serving the clients also mobilising surplus, which is used for the development

of the country. The LIC which had started with only Rs 5 crores of capital in 1956, has been accumulating savings of the people and is in the surplus. It has been contributing sizeable amount of money for our development purpose and maintaining a growth rate of 20% per annum for the last several years. The premium income mobilised during 1995-96 alone amounted to Rs 14,182 crores. The total income including the income from investment was Rs 22,000.04 crores. The LIC's performance was superb in doing settlement which was as high as 97%. LIC was providing the government with resources at 12% low interest. This is the biggest source for development of finance in the country.

The performance of GIC was also equally commendable giving insurance cover and settling insurance claims mobilising the resources for our developmental activity. The claim settlement of GIC in 1994-95 was 74% while the international rate of settlement was hardly 40%. The GIC started with Rs 21.5 crores paid up capital and has given a bonus share to government Rs 194 crores. The LIC and GIC put together can provide a minimum of Rs 20,000 crores per annum. One lakh crores in five years, at the present rate of business, of course is going to develop further.

The story of private sector companies in the country was known to us. The National Insurance Company did not settle 74% of their claims. This was more or less the position of the other companies too. The international insurance sector including United States cannot claim better performance than ours.

Therefore, the case brought out by the government spokesmen as well as employers' organisations for opening up of the insurance sector to improving efficiency and mobilising resources do not stand scrutiny, because the private sector cannot do better. That is their history. There will be advantages for private sector to mobilising resources which will be used for their private use. The surplus money they make will be utilised for lending as the market place and for further increasing their profit.

Therefore, in the interest of national development these biggest resources available today through LIC and GIC should not be allowed to be transferred to private capitalists of India and foreign. While the Government of India is talking about resource crunch one cannot understand the steps being contemplated to transfer this resource mobilising sector to the private hand. No further explanation is wanted. It is anti-national. Therefore we have to join with insur-

ance employees in their fight against privatisation of this sector. They had a very good strike on 9th December protesting against the policy contemplated for privatisation. The Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill which was introduced in the Parliament had to omit the provision originally intended to provide for licensing of private companies. This was the result of the public pressure and the pressure from the employees. Comrades, I must tell the government on your behalf that the government should not do anything for privatising the insurance sector.

INDIAN DRUGS AND PHARMACEUTICAL LTD

Comrades, I want to bring to your notice the developments in another sector. The public sector drugs and Pharmaceutical industry, the IDPL. As part of our planned development we have established this company for producing medicines at affordable rates for the people of our country, for the protection of our peoples' health. IDPL established five units in various parts of the country with the facility for research and development. They were able to manufacture bulk drugs, formulation, fine chemicals, surgical equipments etc at different units.

Bulk drugs manufactured by IDPL are penicillin G and higher antibiotics derived from penicillin, streptomycin, tetracycline, oxy-tetracycline, erythromycin, sulpha drugs, vitamin B1, B2, B6, Nicacinamide, Analgin, Chloroquine, Phosphate, Paracetamol, acetic acid, Thiacetazone, Piperazine salts, Grisofulvin, etc. Industry including multinationals started buying raw materials from IDPL.

Amongst the formulations Sukcoe (vitamin C), idicine, idifulvin, Emdopa, Analgin, could achieve highest share in trade market. Other formulations also grabbed good market share viz, Tetramycin, Cebexin, Hexavit, Idibend, threocycli, Idizone, etc

IDPL supplied drugs to state government, central government organisations with cheaper price. IDPL also introduced formulations with very economical prices in the trade market which compelled the multinationals and big Indian drug companies to reduce prices. For example in 1970, the price of Terramycin was Rs 1.5 per capsule. IDPL introduced Tetracyclin at the rate of 50 ps per capsule. All companies reduced the price of Tetracyclin. The price of Mebendazole (six tablets) was Rs 14 IDPL introduced Mebendazole @ Rs 1.6 for six tablets which compelled all the companies to reduce the price of Mebendazole.

IDPL became one of the first 20 companies in trade market. IDPL could maintain this ranking till 89-

90.

IDPL catered medicines having cheaper price to the people of India, thereby social objectives were achieved.

From 1991 onwards the Government of India refused to provide the financial health to this company. Now the company is in sick list. The closure of this company is in the interest of multinationals in the field. If this is allowed to be closed the people of the our country have to pay through their nose for their requirement of medicine. In spite of the repeated representations the Government did not provide funds for this company. This is not a question of security of employment for the workers of this company, though that is important, the main question is to provide medicines for the people of this country at affordable rates.

Apart from this, the Govt has not given up its plan to amend the Indian Patent Act. We must oppose it tooth and nail, as otherwise the self reliance in the drug industry will get a fatal blow.

NATIONAL TEXTILE CORPORATION

Similarly, the public sector National Textile Corporation is under serious attack by the Govt's policy. They have flouted the unanimous agreement and the report of the Textile Research Associations for modernisation and revival of the NTC mills. The promise made by the Prime Minister when we met him recently, has been fake. It is being reported that about 30 to 40 NTC mills are going to be closed, rendering about one lakh workers jobless. The united platform of all the trade unions are in struggle. We have to go all out in opposing the Govt's move and save the NTC mills, which constitute the largest number of PSUs in an industry.

Comrades,

I shall bring to your attention about the corruption which is haunting the bourgeois political parties of the country, especially the Cong(I) party. I do not wish to go into all the details of corruption in the country. Day in and day out the whole press is full of reports of corruption cases and court trials. Mr Narasimha Rao, the former Prime Minister and Congress President is involved in many cases of corruption of which one stands out as a special category. When Mr Rao came to power he had no majority in the Parliament. He could mobilise majority in the House by buying up MPs paying huge sums of money. Now it is the subject matter of court case. In Indian democracy there were corruption in many places before

also but this kind of specific corruption paying huge sums and buying MPs never came to light. In this case money was collected from the big employers of the country by Capt Satish Sharma, Minister for Petroleum in the Rao Cabinet. Capt Satish Sharma received Rs 50 crores from five industrialists during the period April 1993 to Feb 1994. As per the charge-sheet filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation, details are:

Mr Prithvi Raj Jinda of M/s Jindal Saw Pipes, Hissar

Rs 50 lakhs in April/May 1993

Mr V N Dhoot of M/s Videocon International Ltd
Rs 1 crore in July, 1993 and Rs 1 crore in October, 1993.

Mr Shashi Ruia of M/s Essar Group of Companies Rs 3 crore in November, 1993 and Rs 4 crores in February 1994.

Mr Mukesh Ambani of M/s Reliance Industries Ltd Rs 1 crore in June, 1993, Rs 1 crore in October, 1993, and Rs 2 crores in December, 1993.

Mr Abhay Oswal of M/s Bindal Agro Industries Rs 1.5 crores in April/May, 1993.

The capitalist of the country are talking about moral standards. I do not know what will they say about it. Mr Rao is foisted as a senior politician and a big leader. Even now there are people in Cong(I) party supporting him, which a normal citizen of the country cannot understand. You should also know that more than a dozen ministers of the Rao Cabinet are involved in different kinds of corruption. We find today that the BJP leaders and government ministers are not above corruption Also we find in states to many leaders are now facing corruption charges and prosecution. The case of Jayalalitha is a case in point. Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar also is facing charges of corruption. Though eradication of corruption in high places is a talking point since long but no tangible measures have been taken by the government till date. Bourgeois system is corruption-ridden that everybody knows. However anti-corruption laws are going to be legislated by the Parliament. some proposals are afoot to exclude MPs and MLAs from its coverage. We have to strongly oppose this. The working class of the country should fight for eradication of corruption in high places which is now all pervading.

Comrades, before I conclude, I want to invite your attention to the New Delhi Convention of the National Platform of Mass Organisation held on 16th december, 1996. they have adopted a resolution calling upon the working class to launch a big fight for

reversal of the government's retrograde policy. A charter of demand has been accepted with a programme for action. In the 15-point charter of demands they have included the issues facing the people and the working class. I do not wish to detail them since that will come up here in the form of a resolution, I want you to take up the call given by the Delhi convention for immediate action.

With greetings,

E Balanandan

Date:06.01.1997

NPMO Reschedules Rail Roko/ Rasta Roko Programme

on 27th March instead of 28th March.

The National Platform of Mass Organizations has rescheduled the programme of countrywide Rail Roko/Rasta Roko to be implemented on 27th March, 1997 instead of 28th March, 1997. This has been done because 28th March is a holiday on account of Good Friday.

The Rail Roko/Rasta Roko will be launched all over the country on 27th March, 1997 from 9.30 AM to 11.30 AM. All other action programmes against the NEP in pursuance of the 15 point demands as decided by the NPMO in the national convention held on 16th December stand. The action programmes are as follows:-

- 1) State/District level conventions to be completed by 15th February, 1997.
- 2) Picketing before Central Government offices all over the country on 25th February, 1997.
- 3) Rail Roko/Rasta Roko all over the country on 27th March 1997 from 9.30 AM to 11.30 AM.
- 4) March to Parliament during the second part of the Budget Session. Date to be announced later.
- 5) The convention also extended support to the phased action programme adopted by Public Sector Workers against the anti-PSU policy of the Government of India, culminating on one day strike on 2nd April, 1997.

Sd/- M.K. Pandhe
(CITU)

B.D. JOSHI
(AITUC)

R.A. Mittal
(HMS)

MAIN RESOLUTION

The General Council meeting of the CITU held at Visakhapatnam from 5-8 January 1997 expresses grave concern at the deteriorating economic situation in India due to the continuation of the IMF-World Bank dictated policies by the UF Government, which have far reaching adverse consequences on the working class, the peasantry and the toiling masses in the country.

In the year just past, the people of the country brought to an end, through a democratic electoral verdict, the corrupt Congress(I) regime whose relentless drive towards the structural adjustment programmes brought the country to the precipice of disaster.

The outcome of these policies are writ large today on each and every segment of national economy. It is a sordid sotomy of systematic dismantling of almost every bit of industrial, infrastructural and financial capabilities developed by India, and reckless withdrawal of the State from all economic activities to obligingly conform to the Fund-Bank dictate that market economy will decide everything in the country.

Alongside, the trade unions and other mass organisations mobilised as never before the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, women, students and youth on united actions on their common demands as also on industrywise and sectorwise demands for getting the retrograde policies scrapped and replaced by alternative progressive policies, for the defence of self-reliance, the public sector and national sovereignty.

As the last several years were marked by a desperate bid to put the country on sale at the global market of international finance capital, it was also marked by the determination of the people to fight and defeat these policies. The CITU can legitimately feel proud that it played an important role in the process of developing and sustaining united struggles on common agreed demands.

Defeat of the Cong(I) regime and institution of the 13 party coalition Govt at the centre, foiling the desperate bid of BJP and other communal forces to form a Government, gave rise to high hopes and expectations in favour of a change of policies. Unfortunately

however the UF Government is continuing the same disastrous and discredited policies of the Cong(I) regime.

The pro-people commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme of the UF Govt are not being implemented. On the contrary, despite opposition by all the mass organisations and democratic movement, the policies of reckless opening of the vital and sensitive sectors of the economy and giving almost a free hand to multinational companies to plunder our national resources, disinvestment of the shares of profit-making public sectors companies, complete inaction in the matter of revival of sick PSUs, reckless concession to import by downsizing the customs duty, and greater subservience to the pressure of the advanced industrialised countries in international and multilateral fora like WTO and others, along with a desperate bid to prune the rights of trade unions and democratic movement, and commercialisation of education, health and other social welfare measures are being pursued with greater vigour.

This betrayal of people's hope can be prevented only by massive intervention by the working class, peasantry and other toiling masses to secure the implementation of the pledges made and to get away from the disastrous policies of the previous regime and to make available to the people, the working class and every other toiling section, the much needed relief. We can ill afford to forget that it is the workers' struggles that heralded in the change in the Government. It is the struggles that will keep the corrupt, greedy power-brokers on the one hand, and the divisive and communal forces on the other hand, at bay. It is struggles again that will force the UF Government to redeem its pledges and promises.

The General Council therefore welcomes and endorses the decisions of the National Platform of Mass Organisation (NPMO) and the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU), which have called for a series of programmes of mass mobilisation and agitation. The National Platform, on the basis of the decisions unanimously taken at a joint meeting of Central Trade Unions, and other mass organisations, successfully organised a National Convention

on Dec 16 at New Delhi. The convention deplored and condemned the vacillations and ditherings of the UF Government in redeeming the pledges and its refusal to reorient its policies to meet the demands of the working class, peasantry and the poorer sections of the people, and resolved to build up a broad based popular movement on the basis of 15 point common demands of all the mass organisations and the people. The programme of actions include widespread campaign, picketing, rail-rasta roko, state and district conventions and a march to Parliament during the Budget session.

Alongside, there is the call of the CPSTU for a countrywide strike in public undertakings on April 2, preceded by a series of preparatory agitations. The demands of the strike not only include the question of wage revision, but also to prevent the onslaught against the public sector and to compel the Govt to initiate urgent and practical measures for the revival of the sick public sector units.

At the same time, the joint struggles against the retrograde Govt Pension Scheme have to be further stepped up through intensive grassroot level campaign. The programme of mass signature already adopted has to be vigorously pursued to reach each and every individual worker in the public sector, private sector and unorganised sector throughout the country. A large number of signatures of the Provident Fund subscribers have to be collected and submitted to Lok Sabha during the next budget session of the Parliament through a massive demonstration.

The General Council also supports the decision of the W.Bengal State Committee of CITU and other trade unions in the State to observe one day's industrial strike in the state demanding revival and opening of all sick and closed units in the state, both in the public sector and private sector. It calls upon all state committees and unions in the country to launch solidarity demonstrations on the day, which will be decided by W Bengal later.

The last general elections have shown the depth of popular discontent against the policies of the previous government. If this depth of discontent can be harnessed by greater mobilisation and untied actions, it is possible to salvage not only the immediate interests of the workers and other toiling masses, but also will open up the possibility of safeguarding the hard earned sovereignty of the country. It will also cement the unity of the toiling people to keep the communal and divisive forces at bay.

All efforts therefore must be made to mobilise the workers, irrespective of affiliations, and other mass

organisations and draw in newer sections under the vortex of the struggle. And CITU has to take the responsibility to discharge this historic task.

The programmes as adopted by the National Platform of Mass Organisations, the CPSTU and on the specific question of Pension are given hereunder for thorough implementation.

(A) Programme of National Platform of Mass Organisations:

1. State level/district level conventions to be completed by 15th February 1997.
2. Picketing before Central Government offices on 25th February 1997 all over the country
3. Rail Roko/Rasta Roko all over the country on 28th March, 1997 from 9.30 to 11.30 am
4. March to Parliament during second part of budget session of Parliament

(B) Programmes of CPSTU

1. Workshop on wage negotiation on 27th/28th January, 1997 at Bangalore
2. State/district/regional/industry level conventions
3. National convention on sick industries on 12-13 February, 1997 at New Delhi
4. A day-long dharna at New Delhi against sickness of industry and demanding revival on 14th February 1997.
5. 'All India Protest Day' in all Public Sector Units on 10th March, 1997 through demonstrations/rallies etc
6. Strike in all Public Sector units in the country on 2nd April 1997.

(C) On Pension Scheme

1. Mass signature campaign to be intensified to ensure collection of maximum signatures by mid February 1997
2. Submission of Mass Petition to Lok Sabha during Budget session of Parliament by massive demonstration at New Delhi

(D) Solidarity demonstrations all over the country on the day of strike in W Bengal with the demand for revival and opening of all sick and closed units in the public sector and private sector.

The General Council Session of CITU calls upon all the State/District Committees and all its affiliates as well as all industrial federations to take up the task in right earnest and to take the message of struggle through a thorough grassroot level campaign to ensure full success of the action programmes.



RESOLUTION

On the Fifth Central Pay Commission

This General Council meeting of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions held at Visakhapatnam from 5th to 8th January 1997 takes a very serious view of the deplorable delay in submission of report by the 5th Central Pay Commission to the Government. The Commission has failed in honouring its assurances given to leaders of Central Government Employees on submission of its recommendations as quickly as possible. The recent statements made by Shri P Chidambaram, the Finance Minister indicate a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to delay the much awaited wage revision in central government service sector. Series of reports appear in the media further indicate that the recommendations of the Pay Body will probably be overweighed in favour of top bureaucrats and disadvantageous to the ordinary employees. The demand for a wage parity with public sector will receive a raw deal by the Commission; not to speak of any scientific wage policy. While the basic demands of employees will be rejected by the Commission on one hand a drastic cut in the strength of staff in Central Government Service Sector will be imposed on the other. Considering the above, this meeting of the General Council calls upon the Central Government Employees to prepare themselves for a serious action against the retrograde recommendations of the 5th CPC. The CITU assures full support to such struggles.

On Central Government Employees' Strike

This meeting of General Council of Centre of India Trade Unions held at Visakhapatnam from 5th to 8th January, 1997 heartily congratulates, the Central Government Employees of India for their successful strike on bonus issue conducted from 23rd to 29th October 1996. The support extended by various trade unions and the Left parties and the total unity exhibited by the employees defeating collaborationist line adopted by a small section of the leadership made the action a great success and spectacular. The prompt, effective steps taken by leaders of Left parties in support of workers compelled UF government to take a favourable decision on the common demand of working people of India for removal of the eligibility ceiling for grant of bonus, at least as a first stage, in the case of about 40 lakhs central government staff. While this General Council welcomes the decision of the government and congratulates the

employees for their united action calls upon them to consolidate the unity for further advancement of the movement.

This General Council meeting also welcomes the decision of UF government for regularising the strike period as the 'eligible leave' which marked a distinct deviation from the confrontationist line of heavy victimisation adopted by the Congress regimes in the past. At the same time, the meeting notes that the above decision has been applied only to the regular employees of Postal and Telecom Departments and the Extra Departmental Employees of Postal Department as well as employees of other Central Government Departments are left out. The council calls upon the UF Government to end this discrimination without any further delay.

On Privatisation of Insurance Industry

This General Council of CITU held at Visakhapatnam from January 5-8, 1997, demands the Government of India to abandon attempts to open up and privatise the Insurance Industry. This council notes that such an opening up will indeed weaken the LIC and GIC, not strengthen as is made out in the CMP and subsequent ministerial pronouncements. The Bill on Insurance Regulatory Authority, though the obnoxious clause to give power to the IRA to issue licenses to private operators stands removed due to popular resistance, gives enough scope of different interpretations in favour of privatisation and that should be withdrawn. The LIC and GIC should be given full autonomy with the decision-making powers in all matters including products, pricing and personnel matters. That this Council contends, is the only way of strengthening the LIC and GIC.

This General Council records its appreciation to the relentless campaign and struggles being carried out by the insurance employees; it notes that the AIIEA and its units could collect 65 lakhs of signatures from the people of this country against privatisation of insurance industry, collect individual letters from more than 10,000 eminent men and women in public life, hold thousands of seminars and meetings throughout the country and conducted jatha programmes to meet the people and thus made this movement as part of people's movement against the disastrous economic policies of the Central Government. The strike call on December 9, 1996 given by

the AIIEA and responded to by other unions also, had been a powerful united action of the employees and this council congratulates all the insurance employees who made that strike action a success. This council, while expressing its solidarity to insurance employees' movement against privatisation, appeals for extending the platform of action covering all sections of the people, toiling masses and other mass organisations and for continuation of the struggle in a determined way.

Resolution Demanding Completion and Revamping of Vizag Steel Plant

The General Council meeting of CITU held at Visakhapatnam from 5-8th January, 1997 expresses grave concern over the deteriorating financial position of the most modern steel plant in India. The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, in spite of higher productivity and better performance, owing to faulty policy of the Government of India.

This plant was conceived in the early 60s by the Govt of India with 4 million tonnes installed capacity, and its foundation stone was laid in 1973. But due to non-allocation of funds in time by the Govt of India and several changes in the original plan, commissioning of this plant was inordinately delayed. Finally it was commissioned in 1988. The estimated initial cost was only Rs 2800 crores. Due to unusual delay the cost of construction crossed Rs 8500 crores.

As a result of the Govt's prevarications this plant is suffering from two major shortcomings. Firstly, its steel making capacity has been reduced by deducting one steel melting shop of 1.15 mt capacity from the original project, which makes it non-viable. Secondly the debt and interest burden resulting from time and cost overrun are too heavy for this plant to bear, thus making this plant suffer heavy losses every year, though the productivity in this plant is far more than that of Bhilai or Bokaro Steel Plant. The accumulated loss has thus reached about Rs 3200 crores.

The General Council meeting maintains that for the viability and the future of this most efficient and modern steel plant in this country, the following steps must be taken immediately.

1. The Steel making capacity must be augmented to utilise the full capacity of the plant constructed till now, by installing the steel melting shop No.2 of 1.15 mt as per the original project.

2. All the debt burden arising out of delay in sanctioning of funds should be written off by the Govt of India.

3. Gangavaram creek should be developed into

a cargo handling port for importing metallurgical coal and exporting products, which will save about Rs 80 crores freight charges per year.

The General Council demands upon the Govt of India that the above steps must be initiated with right earnest which would help Vizag steel plant to develop into a vibrant healthy steel plant helping our country to achieve self sufficiency in steel production. Also these steps will create confidence among entrepreneur and investors to start ancillary industries providing employment to many displaced people and others. Vizag steel plant's well being will directly help growth of the economy of the country as well as of the local region.

On Modernisation of IISCO

For modernisation of IISCO Rs 3000 crores (three thousand) will be required. One Russian organisation TPE expressed their willingness to undertake the job against Ruble deposit with the Government of India. The matter is still under consideration for the Finance Ministry, Govt of India. Unnecessarily, they are delaying to settle the issue.

This General Council meeting of the CITU strongly urges upon the Govt of India to settle the issue and to start modernisation of IISCO soon as a part of SAIL in the public sector.

On Municipal Employees Struggle in Haryana

23000 employees of 82 Municipal Committees and Corporation of Haryana State are on indefinite strike since 20th December 1996 over the demand of regular payment of wages through treasury, regularisation of daily wage employees, against privatisation and on the demand of Bonus & PF.

Instead of conceding the demands the Haryana Govt of HVP & BJP has let loose a reign of terror on the employees. More than 4000 employees have been arrested and put behind bars. Hundreds of women employees especially safai working women are put into jails. ESMA has been invoked.

RSS and BJP cadres are coming to roads to oppose the striking employees. But RSS and BJP cadres are unable to demoralise the striking employees, because of the solidarity action of Sarva Karmachari Sangh and CITU in support of the Municipal employees. Around 600 Sarva Karmachari workers have courted arrest in support of the striking employees.

The General Council meeting at Vishakhapatnam condemns the HVP&BJP Govt's attitude towards the municipal employees of Haryana and demands of the

[On Page 18]

JAC CONGRATULATES TEXTILE WORKERS FOR SUCCESSFUL RAIL ROKO/RASTA ROKO

The Joint Action Committee of textile Workers congratulates the Textile Workers in the country of successfully implementing the Rail Roko and Rasta Roko programme on 30th December, 1996.

As per available reports so far, near Kanpur the major trains were detained for over four hours, which included Superfast and Express trains like Sabarmati Express, Gomti Express, Satabdi Express, Farakkabad Express, Jhansi passenger some goods trains, etc. The textile workers from the NTC mills and private mills belonging to all trade unions squatted over the railway tracks. More than 150 workers and leaders were arrested including Subhasini Ali, Ex. M.P., Daulatram, Arvind Kumar, Md. Safi, Ram Kishore Tripathi, Arvindraj Swaroop, etc. The workers also jammed the traffic at the main G.T. Road crossing and other places in Kanpur, where also the police made a number of arrests. Massive processions and rallies were also held at other places in the city.

In Bengal and Calcutta all the main long distance trains were stopped by workers from all trade unions for two hours between 12 noon and 2 P.M. Local trains were also stopped in the Bongaon-Sealdah and other routes. Massive processions were taken out by the workers in different textile centres of the state.

In Andhra Pradesh rail and road traffic were disrupted near Hyderabad and other places for several hours.

In Tamilnadu, massive processions were taken out at Coimbatore jamming the road traffic for several hours. A huge procession reached the Coimbatore Railway Station, where the police arrested a large number of workers. Rail services were disrupted in the process.

In Pondicherry and Tirupur also rail and road traffic were jammed for several hours.

In Madhya Pradesh, huge rallies jammed the main thoroughfares in Gwalior from 11A.M. At Indore the workers squatted on the roads from the afternoon after long processions in the morning. Traffic was completely jammed followed by arrests. Rail and road traffic were disrupted at Gwalior, Indore, Ratlam, Devas, etc.

At Nagpur in Maharashtra all the main roads were jammed by the workers and mass meetings were held jointly by all the trade unions.

Reports of Rasta Roko have come from several places in Rajasthan, Bombay and Ahmedabad also.

The Rail Roko, Rasta Roko programme was taken demanding immediate modernization of the NTC mills and payment of wages; for opening the closed mills in the private sector and Cooperative Sector, and the minimum wages and social security benefit for the handloom and powerloom workers.

The Joint Action Committee calls upon the Govern-

ment to concede the demands of workers immediately, failing which, more intensified action programme will be launched. The JAC will meet again in the middle of January to decide the next action plan,

Sd/- Haribhau Naik (INTUC) Sd/- B.D. Joshi (AITUC) Sd/- P.K. Ganguly (CITU)

Sd/- R.A. Mittal (HMS) Sd/- V.A. Satam (BMS) Sd/- Sunil Sengupta (UTUC)

Sd/- D.D. Shastri (TUCC)

Govt Pension Scheme opposed at grassroot level:

INTUC, AITUC UNIONS RESENT DEMANDING CHANGE

The retrograde Govt. Pension Scheme could be imposed on the workers, inspite of all out opposition by CITU, mainly owing to the support given to the Govt and the Scheme by the leadership of other major central trade unions viz INTUC, AITUC, HMS and BMS.

But at the grassroot level workers irrespective of affiliations rejected the scheme outright.

In Bhilai Steel Plant, Steel Workers Union affiliated to INTUC submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister demanding 'complete overhauling of the methodology and calculations' of the Govt. Pension Scheme to make it really beneficial for all. The INTUC union also demanded separate Pension Scheme, for SAIL employees, without disturbing the Employees, Provident Fund.

In Rajhara Iron Ore Mines in Madhya Pradesh the unions affiliated to AITUC and INTUC joined hand with CITU to form 'Sangharsh Samity' and demonstrated through massive mobilization on 17-12-1996 against the Govt. Pension Scheme. The leadership of the unions affiliated to INTUC and AITUC at Rajhara submitted a Joint Memorandum alongwith CITU to Chairman, SAIL demanding non-implementation of the Govt. Pension Scheme and non-diversion of CPF for the same. Joint memorandum demanded separate Pension Scheme for SAIL employees without encroachment of PF.

Will the opinion of the workers and the affiliates at the grassroot level regarding the disastrous Govt. Scheme of appropriating PF money of the workers lead to review of the stand of those supporting the Govt. Pension Scheme?

COMRADE SHIV VARMA

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) expresses deep sorrow over the death at Kanpur on Jan 10 of Com. Shiv Varma, one of the few surviving freedom fighters who were attracted to the armed struggle against the British, and later joined the communist movement. At the time of death he was 92.

Comrade Varma was convicted to life imprisonment and sent to the infamous cellular jail in Andaman in the same case in which the legendary freedom fighters—Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru—were sentenced to death. At Andaman he came

in contact with the communist revolutionaries and became a Marxist. He played a part in the formulation of the Communist consolidation in Jail. After independence he became the secretary of the UP State Committee of undivided CPI. Since the formation of CPI(M) he joined it and served in several committees. A life long revolutionary, he spent 20 years in jail and 5 years underground. His was a glorious life of struggle and sacrifice.

The CITU dips its red banner paying homage to Com. Shiv Varma

DATTA SAMANT

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) expresses profound grief and shock over the killing by hired criminals of Dr. Datta Samant, a leading trade union leader in Bombay in broad daylight on January 16. He had risen to a position of pre-eminence in the industrial - commercial capital of India through years of sustained work amongst the different sections of the working class, especially of textile and engineering. This dastardly killing has all the ingredients of a well-laid plan which was executed by hired gunmen. The cowardly killing of Dr. Samant, coming as it does in the wake of several such killings, points to a deep malaise. Unless immediately stopped through sternest

possible measures, this is bound to grow as a grave danger to the trade union movement. The net cast by professional killers and their patrons seems to have spread to vast areas and no shade of opinion opposing the power of money can be safe. Political murders, individual assassinations and settling scores by the gun must be condemned and opposed by all shades of political and trade union opinion and right-thinking citizens. CITU while paying homage to the memory of Dr. Samant, sends heartfelt condolences to his wife, sons and daughters and his followers and admirers.

[From Page 16]

Govt to settle their justified demands immediately in the interest of the employees and people of Haryana at large.

In support of Strike of Anganwadi Workers

This General Council meeting of the CITU held at Vishakhapatnam from January 5-8, 1997, extends full support to the call of one day strike given by the Samyukt Sangharsh Samiti of Anganwadi Women on 31st January, 1997, demanding regularisation of Anganwadi workers and helpers, payment of minimum wages as interim measure and against privatisation. The CITU calls upon all its anganwadi workers to join the strike to make it a success.

On Beedi Workers March to Parliament Programme

This General Council meeting of the CITU held at Vishakhapatnam from January 5-8, 1997 extends full support to the decision of the All India Beedi Workers Federation (CITU), in its conference held at Solapur from November 29 to December, 1, 1996 to mobilise the Beedi workers from all over India for a march to Parliament programme on 3rd March, 1997, in pursuance of several vital demands like minimum wage, withdrawal of the exemption in excise duty granted in mini-cigarettes, pension, PF, housing, etc.

The meeting calls upon all State Committees where Beedi is manufactured, and the unions in Beedi industry to mobilise the Beedi workers in thousands to make the rally a big success.

AN ANNUAL RITUAL

The Pre-Budget discussion held in the Ministry of Finance on 11th January 1997 was just an annual ritual to hear the views of different social sectors prior to the introduction of the budget in Parliament on 28th February next. P. Chidambaram, Finance Minister presided over the meeting in which secretaries of different departments of the Ministry of Finance were also present. All the ten central trade unions were invited to the meeting.

E. Balanandan, President and M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary represented CITU.

M.K. Pandhe speaking on behalf of CITU reviewed the outcome of the budget last year and pointed out how Industrial Sickness, Unemployment, economic stagnation, decline of public sectors role and overall growth of poverty and destitution have increased after the introduction of the last budget. He demanded a review of the budgetary policies so that corrective measures can be taken.

Pandhe criticised the failure of the United Front Government for not implementing the assurance given to the working class and the common people in the country. The assistance given to the public sector to overcome their sickness has been symbolic and the preference given to multinationals over the Indian Public Sector undertakings in giving orders is only hitting hard the genuine interests of the PSUs. The reduction in custom duty of Steel, Coal, Chemicals etc. have adversely affected in the Indian Industries and only helped the MNCs in cornering Indian market.

The CITU criticised the failure of the Central Government to remove the ceilings in the payment of Bonus Act while the gratuity ceilings of Rs. 2.5 Lakhs has not been made applicable to the other workers. The repeated demand of the Trade Unions to enhance the exemption limit of the Income Tax to Rs. 60,000/- is falling on deaf ears.

The CITU General Secretary castigated the Central Government for not realising the debts of Rs.28000 crores borrowed by the big business houses from the public sector banks. These business house have increased their assets substantially, yet the government is ignoring this vital task. Instead of raising money from these tycoons the central government is embarking on the path of disinvestment of public sector to meet the budgetary deficit. This policy is extremely harmful to the public sector undertakings. If the debts are realised, sufficient funds would be available for revival of sick industrial undertakings.

The CITU criticised the delay in submission of 5th pay commission report for which central government is respon-

sible. An attempt is made to avoid any commitment in the current financial years.

The CITU criticised the central government for its failure to implement the NTC accord and pointed out that in several undertakings there is no money to purchase raw materials and payment of wages to the workers.

M.K. Pandhe criticised the privatisation policies which was squarely responsible for the telecom and other scams in the country. He further demanded a proper review of the impact of the new liberalization measures on the Indian Economy and its disastrous consequences on the common people of India.

The CITU demanded pension as a third retirement benefit and proper rate of interest and indexation of pension to the workers.

Pandhe emphasized the need for introducing more effective public distribution system as promised in the CMP.

E. Balanandan while speaking in the meeting criticised the policy to recklessly allow MNCs to enter in the power sector which would lead to the enhancement of the power tariff in the country. He further criticised the oil policy which has been responsible for increasing import of oil in India. If the price of oil is increased in the country, it would adversely affect overall growth of economy.

Challenging the claim of the Govt. of India that six million

jobs have been generated every year, Balanandan pointed out that the figures use only estimates based on some vague assumptions. The Government does not take into account the jobs which are being lost every year.

The CITU president criticised the central government's callous policy towards Anganwadi Workers and demanded substantial increase in the pay of these women employees without any delay.

Criticising the pro-rich tilt in the last budget, Balanandan appealed to the Finance Minister to give a pro-poor tilt to the next year's budget. He criticized the lack of introduction of genuine land reforms and demanded that such reforms would lead to creation of sizable employment in the rural sector.

Most of the trade unions expressed their disapproval with the economic policies of the Govt. which affect the self reliant growth of Indian Economy. The trade unions demanded that the reckless entry of multi-nationals in Indian Economy should be checked if the country has to make the social progress in the present global scenario.

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

Centre	Oct. 96	Nov.96	Linking facto forr Old Base	Centre	Oct. 96	Nov.96	Linking facto forr Old Base
All India	346	349	4.93	Barbil	332	330	5.00
Gudur	358	360	4.33	Rourkela	310	312	3.59
Guntur	348	349	5.60	Amritsar	317	321	5.19
Hyderabad	318	319	5.23	Ludhiana	318	319	—
Visakhapatnam	325	331	-	Ajmer	344	347	5.01
Warrangal	335	341	-	Jaipur	332	336	5.17
Doom-Dooma Tinsukia	325	324	4.05	Chennai	367	370	-
Guwahati	352	352	-	Coimbatore	338	344	5.35
Labac-Silchar	311	314	3.96	Coonoor	356	361	4.80
Mariani-Jorhat	336	335	3.95	Madurai	359	367	5.05
Rangapara-Tezpur	346	341	4.29	Salem	360	366	—
Jamshedpur	337	340	4.68	Tiruchirapally	381	395	—
Jharia	301	300	4.63	Agra	334	335	—
Kodarma	306	306	5.43	Ghaziabad	336	343	—
Monghyr	336	344	5.29	Kanpur	345	349	4.69
Noamundi	328	340	4.58	Saharanpur	317	318	5.06
Ranchi-Hatia	332	335	—	Varanasi	368	368	5.12
Ahmedabad	345	347	4.78	Asansol	317	318	4.77
Baroda	342	342	—	Calcutta	356	358	4.74
Bhavanagar	364	368	4.99	Darjeeling	303	303	4.55
Rajkot	340	351	—	Durgapur	360	362	—
Surat	364	369	—	Haldia	375	377	—
Faridabad	345	343	—	Howrah	362	365	4.12
Yamunanagar	332	337	5.53	Jalpaiguri	315	311	4.16
Srinagar	325	330	5.47	Raniganj	308	316	4.40
Bangalore	344	349	5.66	Chandigarh	328	329	—
Belgaum	359	368	—	Delhi	365	372	4.97
Hubli-Dharwar	348	350	—	Pondicherry	407	414	—
Mercara	354	357	—				
Alwaye	353	358	5.19	<u>Additional series of Labour Bureau</u>			
Mundakayam	358	362	—	Kothagudem	355	355	3.25
Quilon	367	372	—	Himachal Pradesh	328	331	3.75
Thiruvanandapuram	360	367	—	Bhilwara	344	347	3.20
Bhalaghat	335	338	5.24	Chindwara	354	352	2.59
Bhilai	313	314	3.49	Tripura	332	345	4.37
Bhopal	367	368	5.46	Goa	390	391	3.40
Indore	352	353	5.18				
Jabalpur	351	354	6.41				
Mumbai	371	374	5.12	Note: Figures on old base can be obtained by			
Nagpur	360	359	4.99	multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the			
Nasik	360	369	—	linking factor given and rounding off the result to			
Pune	365	369	—	nearest whole number.			
Solapur	368	370	5.03	—Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series,			

Rally of Unorganised Sector Workers

The Haryana State Committee of CITU and the Agricultural Workers' Union organised a massive joint rally of workers in the Unorganised sector at Rohtak on December 14. The rally was attended by about ten thousand workers and agricultural labour from all the districts of the state. About 50 percent of the participants were women. Workers from the Brick-kiln, Construction, Forestry, Hawkers, Rickshaw pullers, Loading and Unloading Workers, Village Chowkidars, Daily wage and Casual labourers, Municipal employees, safai Karmacharis, Anganwadi Workers and other small industries constituted the major chunk of the participants.

The rally was held in pursuance of the decision of a joint convention held at Rohtak on 6th October. Over two months campaign was launched throughout the state for the success of the rally. The rally adopted a 17-point charter of demands for all sections of the workers and the agricultural labour. The major demands included Rs.2500/- as minimum wage linked with price index, supply of all essential commodities at half price through the public distribution system, central legislation for the agricultural worker, food for work scheme, minimum wage for Anganwadi workers and their recognition as Government employees, Rs.500/- old age pension, halt to privatisation, closures and lock-out, abolition of contract system, recognition of trade unions by secret ballot, genuine land reforms and distribution of ceiling surplus land to the landless, stringent action against corruption, etc.

Among those who addressed the rally were Hannan Mollah, M.P., P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, S.N. Solanki, President, Haryana State CITU, Mohan Kumar, President and Dharmavir Chiri, General Secretary of Haryana State Agricultural Workers' Union, Jagmati, General Secretary and Saroj, Secretary of State JMS, Phool Singh Sankand of Sarba Karmachari Sangh, Inderjeet Singh, Secretary of State CPI (M), and the leaders of various districts and unions. Satvir Singh, General Secretary of the Haryana State CITU placed the main resolution of the rally. The speakers assailed the policies of the Central and State Governments. The BJP-Haryana Vikas Party Govt. of Haryana was severely assailed for its anti-people policies and communal portends to divide the mass of people.

The rally adopted further phasewise action programmes which included district wise rallies in all the 17 districts to be completed by second week of February and culminating into a march to Chandigarh in the last week of February. In another resolution the rally decided to attend and implement the action programme of the 16th December national convention being organised by the National Platform of Mass Organizations.

Meeting of AICCWW

A meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW) was held at Vishakhapatnam on 4th January. The meeting was presided over by P Gangamma and attended by 25 members from W.Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Some women members of the CITU General Council also attended the meeting as invitees.

At the outset, the meeting adopted condolence resolutions on the sad demise of Com.Sunil Moitra, Com.Godavari Parulekar, Com.Sagarika Soren, leader of plantain workers in Kokrajhar in Assam, and other martyrs.

Vimal Ranadive placed the Secretary's report. The report self-critically analysed the organisational development of the Coordination Committee in different states and the struggles launched by working women on their specific demands, as well as on their participation in all India movements against the NEP. The report noted the good work done particularly in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, where work in Beedi, garment, agarbatti, export zone, etc had improved. In anganwadi also considerable development in struggles was noted. In several other matters, however, organisational work was lacking. The report stressed for improvement in the sale of Voice of Working Women. The report also noted the absence of any member from the Hindi speaking areas like Bihar, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, as also from Punjab and Maharashtra.

Members from different states placed their reports. Among those who spoke were Nazimunnissa and Prasannakumari (Kerala), Shibani Sengupta, Gangamma and Leela Das (W.Bengal), Rajeswhari (Tamilnadu), Varalakshmi (Karnataka), Anjali Sarkar (Tripura) and K Hemalatha (AP).

The meeting decided to hold a one day conference of working women at Cochin prior to the 9th conference of the CITU.

The meeting decided the following action programmes:

1. Demands week to be observed from January 20-27 with the demand for 6 months maternity leave and provisions for creche, etc.
2. Strike of Anganwadi workers on 31st January, 1997.
3. Campaign for implementation of the positive features of the CMP, especially the 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and Assemblies
4. Active participation in all the action programme decided by the NPMO against the NEP.
5. March 8 to be observed as International Women's Day alongwith AIDWA
6. Campaign to enroll more subscribers for Voice of Working Women.

Com.E.Balanandan, President of CITU attended the meeting for some time and addressed the members.

The AILRSA Fourteenth Biennial General Meeting has Decided Action Programme.

The AILRSA all India BGM held at G.S.N Murty Nagar, Visakhapatnam (AP) on and from 7th to 9th Jan. '97 has decided Programme of Action including withdrawal of Labour to press for the 19 point charter of demands viz. vacation of long pending victimization and the reformation of channel of negotiation of AILRSA and AIREC. It was decided that if the basic demands are not redressed, within 30 days from the date of conclusion of BGM on 9th January '97 this association will go in to direct action. This ultimatum to the Ministry of Railways has been served telegraphically on 9th January '97 from the place of conference.

In the main resolution the BGM has drawn several phased programmes to press their demands.

1) Campaign week from 13th to 21st February '97 all over Indian Railway by holding of several meetings, issuing of leaflets, posters, walling, issuing telegrammes etc. Press Conference will be held in the respective levels for the public awareness.

2) Memorandum addressed to Railway Minister will be submitted in a mass deputation through General Managers in the 1st week of March '97.

3) Deputation will meet the Minister for Railways between 26th to 29th March '97 followed by meeting with Members Parliament, Central Trade Unions and Members of the Steering Committee of the United Front Govt.

4) Extended Central Executive Committee Meeting will be held on and from 30th to 31st March '97 to decide the mode and manner of the "Direct Action".

A strong contingent of 2000 delegates attended the

BGM. The proceedings and deliberations conducted by a three members presidium. The BGM was inaugurated by Com. Basudev Acharaya M.P., the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways after the welcome speech by Palla Shimachalam Local MLA as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Com. M.K. Pandhe General Secretary CITU delivered his valuable speech as the Chief Guest of the BGM. Among others Com. Samar Mukherjee Vice President CITU, Com. Kanai Banerjee Secretary CITU Com. P.V. Ramdas Secretary DREU and other Railway Trade Union Leaders, like C.M. Singh President AIREC, D.B. Roy General Secretary IRTCSA, D.N.S.S. Rao, General Secretary AIGC, Nirmal Mukherjee General Secretary CLW Labour union, M L Banerjee General Secretary IRTWA addressed the BGM.

A mammoth rally was organised followed by a well participated mass meeting held on the 1st day of conference.

The BGM elects 48 members strong committee with Com. K.Rajanna as President, Com.S.K. Dhar as Secretary General and Com. Jit Singh Tank as Central Treasurer.

The BGM has nominated Com. S.K. Dhar and Com.M.N. Prasad to attend the Fourth Indian Ocean Regional Conference going to be held at Calcutta from 17th to 22nd February '97, on behalf of AILRSA. From the General Meeting Rs.10000/- was donated to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's relief fund for the cyclone victims of A.P. Conference also reported about donation of one day's pay by all employees on the same account through railway management.

Kerala State CITU General Council Meeting

N Padmalochanan

Centre of Indian Trade Union Kerala State General Council meeting was held at Trichur from 20th to 22nd of December 1996. The venue was Tagore Centenary Hall (Com.K V Velayudhan Nagar). The meeting commenced with the hoisting of the red flag of the State unit. All the four hundred and fifty council members paid floral tributes to the martyrs at the martyrs column arranged near the memorial gate erected in the name of Com. T K Balan.

Com.C Kannan presided and Com.E Balanandan, All India President of the CITU, inaugurated the council meeting. The martyrs resolution was moved by Com.C Kannan and the condolence resolution on departed leaders, workers of CITU of National and left movement and cultural movement, after the last State Conference of the CITU, including

Com.V G Bhaskaran Nair, our beloved and dear comrade who was one of the Secretaries of the CITU State Committee. Com.Sunil Moitra and Com.Godavari Parulekar moved by Com.K N Sudhakaran.

A Credential Committee consisting comrades N Padmalochanan (Convenor), K K Chellappan and Sankara Pillai, and a resolution committee consisting comrades V B Cheriyan (Convenor), K O Habeeb, K K Divakaran, K M Sudhakaran, Elamaran Karim, P Union, CBC Warrior and P Kesavan Nair were elected by the council.

Com.E Balanandan explained in detail how important was the role of the working class in saving and leading our country out of the present crisis emanated from the new

[On Page 24]

Asian Tiger In Turmoil - Unprecedented Upheaval of South Korean Working Class

South Korea has been hitting the headlines for reasons other than its economic might. The Asian Tiger which was made into a by-word for rapid progress and stability, by the end of 1995 discovered to its dismay that international 'competitiveness' of its industrial exports, especially of automobiles and engineering had dangerously dwindled. It urgently needed removal of labour market rigidity by introduction of labour market flexibility, guarantee employers' right to lay-off strikers and to replace them by other workers or temporary workers, to introduce flexible working hours upto a maximum of 56 hours a week, not to pay wages to strikers and to sub-contract jobs during strikes. Signals had kept coming for a long time and now a flash point was reached.

The South Korean government of President Kim Young-sam hit upon a novel plan to overcome working class opposition in the context of mounting discontent in the country over several policy decisions of the government, battered by currency fluctuations and a record trade deficit of 20.30 billion dollar in 1996-end against 8.95 billion dollar in 1995.

Five days ahead of the New Year day, a wee-hour session of Parliament enacted a new law that conferred on the employers everything they wanted as mentioned hereinabove. The state acted in aid of the large employers in making strikes immensely more difficult, in union bashing and strike breaking, increasing working hours, sanctifying unfair labour practices and perpetuating the rule of hire and fire. The enactment also stipulated that the Korean Confederation of Labour Unions, a militant organisation, will remain illegal until 2000.

This, quite naturally, inflamed the workers who responded by widespread strikes which brought to a grinding halt the auto factories, shipyards, giant engineering firms and other units. The stock market nose dived and economists warned of consequences in the context of a slowdown. Most political parties except the one of President Kim condemned the legislation. The government and employers went on assuring the workers of better living conditions and improve employment terms. All these failed to cut any ice as more and more sections of working fraternity, nurses, subway drivers and city transport services joined the strike. Mammoth meetings and rallies were held in all industrial centres, especially at Seoul, where thousands and thousands of workers chanted slogans to overthrow the Kim government. On December 30 when the strike entered the fourth day with unredeemed export orders, jampacked roads, clogged ports and silent assembly lines, a rally of 20,000 workers in central Seoul clashed

with riot police who liberally used teargas shells and chased the workers many of whom sheltered themselves in the sprawling Myongdong Cathedral.

The striking employees, on their own, temporarily suspended the strike to enable people to celebrate the New Year. The year 1997 opened with renewed wave of strikes that crippled car plants and shipbuilding yards, hospitals and others while broadcasting unions were poised to swell the number of strikers. The threats held out by government, keeping the army on stand-by alert, more powers to the police and open threats of lockouts and browbeatings by employers were of no avail. By the end of the first week of January, South Korea appeared poised for a total shut-down. The threat of the State prosecutor to arrest the union leaders only helped to increase the workers' determination. The Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy supported the strikers fully and sheltered many leaders in their cathedrals. By this time, the students started joining the protest rallies and threatened to go on indefinite strike.

International solidarity with the strikers swelled. Opposition political parties challenged the new law on labour in the Constitutional Court and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) condemned the legislation as pernicious. The government went on harping on measures to crush the strike so as to achieve labour market flexibility, cut industrial cost and shore up the country's sagging competitiveness.

As the government kept on blowing hot and cold and public condemnation of government's repressive measures grew, the strikers decided to observe a day's strike every Wednesday until mid-February with the decision: "We will launch bigger strike if the government does not accept our demand by Feb 18." This was aimed at enabling the government to hit upon some face-saving measures which it was desperately seeking because of international opposition to its measures and mounting workers' resistance at home.

In a dramatic climb-down, President Kim agreed in the third week of January to meet the Opposition parties to end the crisis sparked by the hated new labour law. Later, the President agreed to talks between himself, the head of the Federation of Korean trade Unions and heads of the three main political parties. Kim has ordered that the union leaders against whom warrants have been issued will not be arrested. He has been quoted as saying: "Anything can be discussed in Parliament again, whether it is the labour law or the law on the Agency for National Security Planning."

South Korean government was proud only a year ago

to have been admitted in the OECD, an organisation of industrialised countries. Soon after the South Korean workers relaxed their opposition, even if temporarily, a team from the OECD arrived a couple of days ago to inquire about the labour standards and if the commitments to the OECD norms have been observed in dealing with strikers. Not a little embarrassment for South Korean government! Meantime, South Korea has accused Japan of distributing money to aid the strikers by way of payments to former South Korean "comfort girls" during the Second World War. It has also, as usual, blamed North Korea (DPRK) of fomenting discontent and disaffection.

The South Korean workers have thus forced the authoritarian government to retreat even if for the time being. It is estimated by a government spokesperson that the production loss is of the order of 3.3 billion dollars and that loss of exports should be 509 million dollars. The wildcat strikes affected more the export-oriented industries.

The current strike wave has underlined the deep malaise of an export-led economy. In depth and sweep the strikes this time surpassed previous records and South Korean trade union movement has reached a new stage.

[From Page 22]

economic policies introduced by the Narasimha Rao regime and still pursuing by the Devagowda Government. He stated that our country had to be redeemed from the malaise of price rise, corruption, dismantling of public sector, total liberalisation and the communal forces. He further narrated about the failures of the world capitalism in all social fronts like unemployment poverty and illiteracy. He said that the growth of the new capitalist economy is jobless and it enlarges the size of the population under the poverty line. Finally, he stated that the destiny of the world really lies in the hands of working class and its socialist ideology.

Com.K N Raveendranath, General Secretary, CITU, Kerala State Committee has introduced the political and work report. He has stated that the liberalisation policy managed by the World Bank and IMF is a fiasco, in all the under developed countries where it has been introduced as per the UN report on Human Resource Development-1996.

He further stated that the very same policies are being pursued by the Gowda-Chithambaram Company. Hence he called upon the working class of our country to unite and put up a relentless struggle to desist the government from its disastrous policies. He also asked the working class of Kerala to work hard to develop our state economy by increasing the production in agriculture and industrial sectors and also to make it more and more competitive.

Fifty comrades participated in the discussion on political and work report and the discussions went on about 9 hours. The nature of discussion was healthy and satisfac-

ISRAEL:

While in the far north-eastern corner of East Asia, South Korean workers were on strike, battling with riot police and preparing for the further steps, in Israel - in little America in the Middle East, workers in a display of unity, strength and determination to fight the policy of budget slashing and privatisation of the government of Netanyahu went on a virtually all embracing strike during the closing days of 1996. The strike engulfed the three ports of Israel, airports, banks, road transports, electricity, telephone, broadcasting and several industrial units. This massive trade union action was preceded by series of strikes that went into one full week against cuts in government spending that targeted the poor. The Israeli Prime Minister termed the strike as being politically motivated. In a radio broadcast, he said the strike was costing the country 10 million dollars a day. This was the biggest grass root challenge to the 6-month old government some of whose economic policies have caused widespread discontent. The leaders of the strike want the government to change its policy of privatisation and reductions in budgetary allocations for protection of the poor.

tory On 22nd morning Com.K N Raveendranath replied and the report was accepted unanimously by the council. Comrades Suseela Gopalan (Minister of Industries), Sivadasa Menon (Minister for Finance), T K Ramakrishnan (Minister for Fisheries), V V Raghavan MP (CPI), and Chadayan Govindan (State Secretary of the CPI-M) had addressed the council. The council adopted 40 resolutions including price rise, BJP-RSS atrocities.

On 20th December, the 1st of the meeting, a colourful 25000 strong procession of the workers was held in the Trichur town. The rally was presided by Com.C Kannan and addressed by Comrades E Balanandan, Suseela Gopalan, TK Ramakrishnan and K Radhakrishnan (Minister for Youth and Sports).

All the arrangements for the council meeting was made by a reception committee headed by Comrades K Padmanabhan, CO Paulose and M A Karthikeyan.

Book Post