



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## CALL OF NATIONAL CONVENTION

# *Forward to June 16 Countrywide Strike*

P K Ganguly

The National Convention of trade Unions organised by the Sponsoring Committee at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi on May 10 unanimously adopted a Declaration giving a stirring call to the working class to launch a countrywide general strike on June 16, 1992 demanding total reversal of the IMF-dictated economic and industrial policies.

The Convention unequivocally condemned the Narasimha Rao Government for remaining insensitive to the first countrywide strike action of November 29 and lending completely deaf ears thereafter to the repeated protests and warnings by the trade unions and going ahead with the implementation of the retrograde economic measures one after another under the direct command of the Fund-Bank.

The Declaration pointed to the sweeping measures taken by the Government after 29th November strike in the name of structural adjustments to keep up with the policy enunciations, which virtually mortgaged the economic sovereignty of the country to the IMF and posed a danger to its freedom and independence. It further condemned the Government for trying to confuse the workers and creating illusions among them by continuously giving hoax of assurances to them, while playing into the hands of the Fund Bank and their mentor, the US imperialists.

The Declaration pointed to the constitution of the National Renewal Fund taking 500 Million dollars from the World Bank, thus conceding the monopolists' demand for the Exit Policy. It pointed to the 9 percent disinvestment in the profit making public sector undertakings and reference of 98 loss making PSUs to the BIFR by amending the Sick Industrial Companies Act, despite repeated protests by the workers and employees. It referred to the systematic dismantling of the MRTP and FERA, paving the way towards surrendering to the Dunkel proposals, that gave the audacity to the USA to impose the special 301 and then give further threats to the

government and black mail it to surrender the country's Intellectual Property Rights. It pointed to the series of privatisation measures taken in the core sectors like in steel, power, coal, telecommunications, fertilizers, road transport, ports, railways, airlines, defence, etc and opening up the economies of these vital sectors to the domination of the multinationals. It referred to the closures in various industries and retrenchments in the name of Golden Hand Shake. It sharply pointed to the Government's acceptance of the recommendations of the notorious Narasimham Committee which allow entry of multinationals in the Banking industry to have control over the country's financial system. It referred to the 10 percent reduction of jobs in the Central Government and same threat to the State Government employees, privatisation of state sectors, freezing of wages and DA of the Government and public sector employees under IMF prescriptions. It pointed to the near ruination of the small scale and unorganised sector and the pauperisation of the peasantry in absence of any land reforms. The Declaration further pointed to impact of these policies on the labour policy of the Government, which had taken move to amend the labour laws to curb the right to strike, and to the dangerous pro-imperialist tilt in the foreign policy of the Government.

The entire gamut of the economic measures resulted in rapid escalation of prices of all commodities and in galloping unemployment, affecting all sections of the working people.

These measures were not only anti-labour, but anti-people and anti-national, and would expose the people to the worst form of neo-colonial exploitation. The Declaration therefore appealed to all the trade unions and all sections of the working people without any exception or exemption in the public sector, private sector, unorganised and small scale sector, to all central government and railway employees of all departments and categories, to all State

Government employees and to all mass organisations of peasantry, agricultural workers, students, women and youth to join the countrywide strike on June 16, 1992.



*Com. M. K. Pandhe, General Secretary CITU moving the Declaration of the Convention.*

The Convention was attended by about 1,500 delegates from all the states, including Jammu & Kashmir, representing all sectors of industries and employment. A large number of delegates came from different departments of the Central Government, railways and State Governments, apart from the public sector undertakings and their officers. New forces like the AICCTU joined the convention this time.

A presidium consisting of Samar Mukherjee (CITU), B D Joshi (AITUC), Kamala Sinha (HMS), D D Shastri (TUCC), Sushil Bhattacharya (UTUC), Sunil Mukherjee (UTUC-LS) and K K Neogi (AICCTU) conducted the proceedings.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU moved the Declaration and briefed the retrograde economic measures step by step. The Central Trade Union leaders who spoke on the Declaration were E Balanandan (CITU); Indrajit Gupta, Homi Daji (AITUC); Veereshwar Tiyyagi (HMS); Sunil Sengupta (UTUC); Chitta Basu (TUCC); Ashutosh Banarjee (UTUC-LS) and Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU).

Twenty six delegates representing the industrial federations, central government, railway and State Government employees' organisations participated in the deliberation. The deliberation was an unique demonstration of unequivocal condemnation of and anger against the Government's non-chalant pursuit of the IMF-prescribed slippery path, which would land the country to the marsh. The special feature of the deliberations was that most of the speakers were from independent organisations. They narrated their experience of the last one year and particularly after the 29th November strike, during which the threat to their job security had become more real

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*Workers courting arrest near Rail Bhawan*

# Declaration of the National Convention of Trade Unions Against the Government's Economic & Industrial Policies

Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi

May 10, 1992

This National Convention of trade unions held at New Delhi on May 10, 1992 condemns the Narasimha Rao Government for going ahead with the implementation of the retrograde economic and industrial policies, growingly surrendering to the dictates of the IMF, despite the countrywide protest strike by the trade unions on 29th November last. While giving hoax to the trade unions that there will be no privatisation, no victimisations, etc, the government is reassuring the IMF and reiterating that the economic measures being taken are irreversible.

2. Ignoring the total rejection by all the trade unions in the Special Tripartite Committee meeting, the government announced the constitution of the National Renewal Fund taking 500 million dollars from the World Bank and made the passage of the much resented Exit Policy clear.

3. While the government constituted the Special Tripartite Committee to discuss the viability of the 98 loss making PSUs, it rejected all appeals by the trade unions and referred 58 of them to the BIFR by hastily amending the sick Industrial Companies Act, thus making a mockery of this Committee. While on one hand it has marked the loss making PSUs for closure or handing them over to private parties, on the other hand it has started disinvestment in the profit making PSUs. It has now declared that it would sell 49 percent of the equities of the profit making PSUs to foreign monopolies. The Govt. has thus not only exposed the fraud of its promises to the workers that it will not dismantle the public sector, but also laid bare its anti-national steps to subvert the self-reliant economy at the behest of the Fund-Bank and sell away the hard earned assets of the nation to the foreigners.

4. Privatisation of PSUs in the core sector like in power, steel, telecommunication, fertilisers, rail, road transport, ports, railways, defence, etc which have impact on the national economy have been started in consultation with the World Bank. The bill to privatise the Airlines has already been introduced. In power sector 100 per cent equity with 16 per cent take home profits are going to be allowed to the multinationals. Opening up these vital sectors' economy to the multinationals' domination will lead the country to the pre-independence scenario. In the prestigious textile industry the public sector NTC mills are under threat of closure. Already about 75,000 workers have been affected due to the move of merger of several NTC mills and closure of the weaving sections. Scandalous deals have been struck against BHEL and NTPC to favour the multina-

tional Asea Brown Boverly.

5. In the same manner the Government has played fraud with the bank employees despite their massive rally by accepting the diabolical recommendations of the Narasimham Committee, which seek to freely allow the entry of multi-national banking companies to keep control over financial operation.

6. Apart from above, the government is virtually on the path of surrendering to the draconian Dunkel proposals on investment measures and services, giving equal treatment to the multinationals and removing all controls and regulations. The MRTP and the FERA are being dismantled in the process step by step. It is the growing surrender of the Narasimha Rao government to all the prescriptions of liberalisations of the IMF, that has enabled the USA to impose the Special 301 and extend further threats and blackmail the government through the GATT forum as well to surrender its Intellectual Property Rights, which would place the agriculture and pharmaceutical industry of the country under the complete command of the multinationals.

7. Consequent upon the implementation of the economic and industrial policies, large scale retrenchments in the name of Golden Hand Shake and closure of industries have taken place affecting several thousands of workers. About 8 lakh workers are threatened with joblessness in the 98 loss making PSUs. Three lakh workers will be affected in the banks. 4 lakh workers are threatened with retrenchment in the railways. While the ban on recruitment in the central government employment continues, the government has announced 10 per cent reduction in staff complement. The abolition of 200 posts at the Secretarial level is bound to affect the employees upto the village level. Several government establishments like Export Inspection Council, DGTD, DGSD, Cement Controller, etc have been decided to be closed down. Besides, computerisation is on in a big way in Telecom and Government departments which will render lakhs of employees surplus.

8. Another dangerous manifestation of the IMF prescriptions in the offing is freezing the wages, DA and Bonus of the employees. The move has already been taken by the arbitrary constitution of a High Level Committee to go into the wage policy and DA of the central Govt. employees, public sector employees and those of the financial institutions, which will make a mockery of the Tripartite DA Committee, the terms of which have been extended till July as a hoax. The Government has banned wage negotiations for the employees and officers in the public

sector and for the central employees. Implementation of all awards has been stalled.

9. The State Government employees are also under the same threat of abolition of posts and departments and forced retirement schemes. Welfare schemes funded by the Central Government in the states are being withdrawn, which means retrenchments. A number of state public sector units in several states have already been closed or sold to the private sector.

10. The small scale and unorganised sector has been badly hit and destined to be ruined because of the entry of monopolists, both Indian and foreign into this sector as allowed by the new policies.

11. The culmination of the IMF prescribed policies was the Union Budget, as it became evident from the Finance Minister's letter to the President of World Bank, which led to further soaring of prices of all commodities over and above the spurt created by the devaluation. It heaped further miseries on the common people coupled with the hike in the railway freights and fares. The inflation rate has jumped to 15 percent. The worst affected have been the peasantry and the rural poor in absence of any land reforms and employment generation programme.

12. It is to be noted that while the government has launched an orchestrated vilification campaign against the public sector at the behest of IMF-World Bank and embarked upon the path of unbridled privatisation, the public sector is still contributing to the tune of over 60 percent to the economic growth of the country and the sickness in the private sector has soared to 4 lakh units involving over Rs. 10 thousand crores of bank credit.

13. While the registered urban unemployment figures have crossed 3.5 crores and rural unemployment around 7 crores, these policies will create an army of another one crore within a couple of years, which will smash the national economy.

14. The convention notes with serious concern that the impact of the policies are far fetched. As demanded by the World Bank, the Government has already announced that a series of legislations will be brought in the Monsoon Session to amend the labour laws in tune with the structural changes. The Rashtrapati's speech had already made the policy enunciations. The move is to put a curb on the right to strike by the workers and employees and even the elementary forms of trade union movement to make it a regimented one to safeguard the interests of foreign investment.

15. These policies naturally have resulted in the government making dangerous shifts from its anti-imperialist traditions. Under pressure from the US imperialists, the Government has withheld the supply of rice to Cuba and given full recognition to the

Zionist Israel. It has even started joint naval exercises with the USA and opened the Vishakapatnam port to US naval vessels and submarines. The shift in the policies has made the country a breeding ground to the foreign agencies to further boost the secessionist forces in Punjab and Kashmir.

16. The Convention asserts that by adamantly pursuing these policies at the behest of the Fund-Bank, the Government has mortgaged the economic sovereignty of the country to the IMF, which will take the country to the pre-independence days, thereby threatening its freedom and independence.

17. Under the above circumstances, the Convention unanimously endorses the decision of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions to launch another countrywide general strike on June 16, 1992 with the following demands as noted hereunder. It further calls upon the workers to consolidate their unity further and carry forward the struggle in a sustained manner till the economic policies are reversed.

18. The convention notes with satisfaction that new forces have joined the mainstream of the trade union struggle in the country after the 29th November strike. It further notes with satisfaction that all the Central Trade Unions including the INTUC and BMS had participated in the Calcutta Convention on March 5 and 6 and appealed for a countrywide strike against these retrograde policies of the government. The convention was an unique demonstration of trade union unity in the country.

19. The convention calls for holding joint conventions statewide, regionwise, industrywise and at local levels and holding gate meetings, rallies, etc all over the country to mobilise all sections of workers and employees to join the strike.

20. The convention appeals to all trade unions and workers and employees and officers irrespective of affiliations, in the public sector, private sector and unorganised sector, to all Central Government and Railway employees of all departments and categories, to all state government employees and all sections of professional employees, and to all other mass organizations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth and women, who are affected by these retrograde policies to join this mass countrywide general strike on June 16, 1992. The Convention further appeals to all democratic and patriotic sections of the people to support this mass action of workers to safeguard the sovereignty of the nation.

## DEMANDS

1. Scrap the Industrial and Economic Policies of the Government of India formulated at the dictates of the IMF and World Bank.

2. Stop privatisation and dis-investment in Public

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## Join the 16th June Strike Enmasse

E. Balanandan

Owing to the dramatic changes that had taken place in the world in the past few years, US imperialism has launched a renewed offensive for world domination. It is common knowledge that there are mounting pressures on our country, subjected to by US imperialism. It is dictating terms not only with regard to what should constitute India's economic policy, but in several other fields too. Special 301 of the US Trade Act has been clamped on India, meting out discriminatory treatment to Indian products exported to the US. The interference and intervention in the internal affairs of our country was blatant in the matter of the transfer of Cryogenic rocket engine technology from Russia to aid our space research programme. The US imposed punitive measures in the form of a two year ban on the transfer of US trade and technology to both the Indian Space Research Organisation, the recipient and the Glavkosmos, the Russian Space Research Organisation which was to transfer this technology. The US had also pressurised India not to export rice to Cuba.

After the dismantling of socialism in the USSR and the disintegration of the union and the process of reversal that has been initiated in Eastern Europe, the mighty bulwark against imperialist manoeuvres no more in existence, the US in pursuit of its aim for world hegemony is trying to impose its dictates on the countries of the third world. It is trying to achieve this relying on its mighty military machine and through the International financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank over which it holds sway. Even the UN Human Development Report, which in no way can be considered anti-imperialist, had to categorically admit in its report for 1992 that the IMF and the World Bank are pushing the countries of the third world into a debt trap.

The government of India by accepting the humiliating conditionalities dictated by the IMF and the World Bank is leading the country into this very trap. At the behest of these financial institutions, the government is going ahead with 'structural adjustments that will jeopardise the country's economic development and compromise its economic sovereignty. Giving up self-reliance will be shutting the doors to further economic development and will open the doors for multinational penetration and loot.

Let us take some individual sectors in which we have achieved some amount of success, independently and with aid and assistance from our friends.

### Electricity

In the power sector there has been a remarkable

improvement since independence. Out of the total capacity of 66,000 megawatts, 43,000 is generated from indigenously manufactured equipment. This is no mean an achievement. The public sector BHEL today is not only in a position to meet indigenous demand for power generation but is also meeting export commitments to various countries. The tariff for electricity is one of the lowest in the world and is about one third of that prevailing in the developed capitalist countries. The shortage of electricity, one of the factors among others that is hampering economic development in various parts of the country, can be overcome, provided the government has the will to mobilise the requisite resources and utilise the maximum installed capacity. Under the new dispensation, meeting the requirements of the World Bank and the IMF, the government of India in the name of resource crunch is inviting foreign multinationals with hundred percent equity and a guarantee to take home 16 percent of the profits, on cost plus basis. State electricity boards will have to buy power generated by these multinational corporations at costs to be decided by them. In addition, it has also been agreed by the government that electricity rates in India will be brought at par with international rates. The result will be an enhancement of electricity rates by 300 to 400 percent.

Consequently, while the foreign multinationals will import the machinery and knowhow for power generation, the Indian power equipment manufacturer, the public sector BHEL will be starved of orders in its own country. Thus, on the one hand while electricity charges for both industry, agriculture and domestic needs will go skyhigh, on the other hand industries in the core sector built with money from the public exchequer will be compelled to pull down their shutters. While on the one hand agriculture and industry, both public and private will suffer due to the steep increase in electricity rates and consequently lead to closures and lockouts, the country will be subject to more and more reliance on imports to meet its domestic needs.

### Oil

Another vital sector which is being opened up for multinational penetration is Oil. In spite of the constraints under which the ONGC was working, it should be credited for the achievements made. It is owing to the strenuous efforts made by this public sector enterprise that the country's crude oil production has reached 33 million tonnes per annum from a mere 2 million at the time of independence. During the period of the Seventh Plan, surpassing the target of 143.64 million tonnes the ONGC could achieve a target of 145.72 million tonnes of crude. Whereas

this public sector industry has been performing well and has to its credit profits, from 1981 onwards at the behest of the IMF/World Bank a concerted effort has been made to curtail its growth and the attempts made by it at achieving self-sufficiency in oil. During 1990-91 the country consumed 54.71 million tonnes of crude oil, out of which the indigenous production was 33.10 million tonnes. The balance of 21.61 million tonnes, therefore had to be imported at an exorbitant cost of Rs. 10,460 crores, draining the country's precious foreign exchange reserves.

While such a situation would have demanded more efforts at attaining self-sufficiency in oil production (the country had already achieved 73% by 1986-87) to meet its domestic requirements, taking the plea of financial resource crunch, the government has been scaling down the allocation of funds to the ONGC. The price for the indigenously produced crude is Rs. 967.00 per tonne (which works out to \$5 per barrel) whereas the international price is \$ 20 per barrel. Therefore, the government is importing crude at four times the cost of indigenously produced crude, which as pointed out earlier, accounts for the main drain from our foreign exchange reserves. Instead of doing away with the burden imposed on our exchequer by increasing the indigenous oil production, multinationals are being handed over an invitation to exploit our oil reserves. It should be underlined that the ONGC has already identified sufficient oil deposits in various parts of the country that could have led us to attaining self-sufficiency in oil. But then the dictates of the IMF/World Bank took precedence over self-sufficiency with the government of India.

### Steel

Another important sector which is being axed is Steel. With its vast reserves, if properly utilised, India can not only achieve self-sufficiency in Steel but can also turn out to be a major exporter. Today the country produces 16 million tonnes of steel ignots. While the per head consumption of steel in India is only 14 kgs, the consumption in Britain and the USA is 30 and 50 times higher, respectively.

Under the new dispensation of the IMF/World Bank, the government intends to bring down steel production in the public sector enterprises, close down loss incurring units and encourage these industries in the private sector. To meet this requirement, all price controls and import restrictions have been done away with. Combined with the unrestricted import of capital goods, machinery and spares, the indigenous machine tool and capital goods industry will be faced with ruin.

### Fertilisers

In the matter of fertilisers too, where we have immense achievements to our credit, this sector is being opened for multinational penetration. Our fertiliser industry in the public sector has grown manifold and is to an extent meeting domestic

demand. But here too foreign companies will be given a free hand to operate leaving the indigenous companies at their mercy.

### Join the 16th June Strike Enmasse

It is in the background of this multifaceted attack on our economy and the industries in the core sector, combined with the drive for dismantling the public sector and handing it over to private hands—all at the behest and dictates of the IMF/World Bank combine, that the Trade Union convention at New Delhi on May 10, unanimously decided to call for an All India General Strike on June 16, 1992. The resolution adopted at this convention deplored the government of India for going ahead with these retrograde policies harmful to the country's interests. In spite of the warning given to it in the form of the strike action of November 29, 1991.

It should be noted that even while the government keeps on making statements that it will not retrench workers, the measures initiated by it are to the contrary. At the tripartite meetings convened for considering the new exit policy, all the Central trade unions unanimously rejected the paper presented by the government. The National Textiles Corporation plans to terminate the services of 70,000 workers. The proposal envisages the closure of 14 mills incurring losses, restructuring of another 49 mills and consolidating them into 21 units and a modernisation of another 64 mills. In order to meet the expenditure arising therein it is envisaged that surplus land available with these units will be sold off. Besides this massive retrenchment in the NTC, in the other public sector undertakings too retrenchment on the same scale is on the anvil. In the case of the Indian Railways, the biggest industry in the country the reduction of the workforce will be to the extent of 25 percent i.e. four lakh employees will be thrown out. Same will be the fate of employees in the other public sector undertakings.

The resolution adopted at the convention took note of the mounting attacks on wages. The DA committee has been paralysed by the arbitrary appointment of a high-level committee to go into the question of wage and DA policy of Central government employees, public sector and employees of financial institutions. This will make a mockery of the tripartite machinery for deciding the issue of wages. Negotiations have also been banned in the case of Central government and public sector undertakings. This is a very dangerous trend. While prices are being manipulated and hiked at will putting the ordinary wage earner in immense difficulties, instead of taking measures aimed at improving his wages the government is trying to curtail it.

While on the one hand promise after promise is being dished out to the multinationals and assurances with regard to super profits are being made, a concerted onslaught on the wages and living conditions of the working class and the mass of the Indian

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# May Day Observations

May Day was observed by the CITU in the states in keeping with its revolutionary traditions. The Manifesto was published in regional languages and distributed to the workers in thousands. Based on the Manifesto, while upholding the banner of socialism and proletarian internationalism, the focus was laid on the IMF dictated economic policies being pursued by the Government and campaign for the countrywide strike on 16th June, demanding their reversal to safeguard the economic sovereignty and independence of the country. Simultaneously, the workers pledged to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country from the onslaught of the imperialist backed divisive and communal forces and also to work assiduously for trade union unity and worker-peasant alliance. Following are the reports received from the states.

## W. Bengal :

A massive rally was held at Saheed Minar, Calcutta. The rally was jointly organised by the left trade unions. A number of processions came from different places and converged at Saheed Minar. The rally was held with a huge portrait of Lenin in the backdrop. Com. Jyoti Basu, Vice President of CITU and Chief Minister of W. Bengal was the main speaker. Among others who spoke were Benoy Chowdhury, Revenue Minister of W. Bengal; Chittabrata Majumdar, the State CITU General Secretary; Kamalapati Roy (AITUC); Sunil Sengupta (UTUC); Bhabatosh Roy (12th July Committee); Kedar Nath Bhattacharya (Mercantile Federation); Naresh Das and Sailen De (BEFI), etc. May Day was observed in the whole state in like manner.

## Tripura :

The CITU observed May Day all over the state with big rallies. At Agartala, processions came from different places, which culminated in a huge rally at Kamani Chowmony, unprecedented in recent years. The rally was joined by various unions and addressed by Baidyanath Majumdar, the State CITU President and Sudarsan Das, the General Secretary among others.

## Assam :

At Guwahati the May Day was observed jointly by CITU, HMS, UTUC (LS) and other federations. Among those who addressed the rally were Hemen Das (CITU) and Drupad Bargohain (AITUC). A similar rally was held at Pandu. The JCTU organised a massive rally at Tinsukia.

## Meghalaya :

The May Day Committee, Meghalaya observed the day at Shillong in a befitting manner. After

flag hoisting at different factory and union gates in the morning, a big procession was taken out in the afternoon from the Central Library. The procession culminated in a rally before the PMG's office. The rally was addressed by N. K. Chakrabarty, General Secretary of the May Day Committee and others. The rally was followed by cultural programme.

## Karnataka :

The Joint Action Front with other trade unions organised a rally. The big procession marched from Chekka Lal Bagh to Jubile Park. It was presided over by M S Krishnan (AITUC). The main speakers were S Surya Narayana Rao (CITU) and Mahadevan (JAF). K. Subrahmanya welcomed the gathering.

## Delhi :

The CITU took out a big procession from Ramlila Grounds, which culminated in a public meeting at Town Hall. Another big rally was organised by the CITU at Ghaziabad. Both the rallies were addressed by M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, S B Bharadwaj, the State General Secretary and others.

## Madhya Pradesh :

May Day was observed at different places in the state including in the industrial centres. At Gwalior a gate meeting was held at J C Mills by the CITU and a big joint rally was organised by the Joint Council of Trade Unions. The procession marched from Uchleshwar Mahadev and culminated in the rally at Maharaj Ware street junction, where a public meeting was held. P. K. Ganguly, Secretary CITU, and Badal Saroj, State CITU Secretary addressed the rallies among others.

## Bihar :

The Coordination Committee of Unions and Associations held a rally in front of the Maurya Complex Maidan after a procession which marched through the main thoroughfares of the city. The rally was presided over by Ananda Prasad Singh and Sachidananda Singh and addressed among others by Chandi Prasad, J. S. Majumdar (CITU); Gajnafar Nawab, Chakradhar Prasad Singh (AITUC); Ganesh Prasad Singh of State Government employees, etc.

## Andhra Pradesh :

The CITU hoisted red flags at 140 centres on the eve of the May Day. On the May Day a massive procession was taken out from Feroj Gandhi Park to Baghlingampalli Park with big hammer sickle cut outs and pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, B. T. Ranadive, P. Sundaraya and M. Basavapunn-

aiah. The rally was presided over by P. S. N. Murthy and addressed among others by N. Prasad Rao, K. Satyanarayana, D. G. Narasimha Rao, etc.

### Tamil Nadu :

May day was observed in Tamilnadu with the usual enthusiasm and spirit. Massive rallies were held in various parts of the state. Union Offices and factory areas were decorated with flags and festoons. Pamphlets and posters were published in large numbers. Along with CITU unions, Unions of state government employees, central government employees, Banks, Insurance and various other sections of employees and members of mass organisations like DYFI, DWA, Kishan Sabha, AIAWU etc joined the rallies.

Leaders called upon the workers to extend solidarity with Cuba and contribute to the Cuban Solidarity Fund. They also called upon the workers to prepare themselves to make the 16th June Strike a complete success.

In Madras city, thousands of workers and employees including large numbers of youth and women participated in the colourful procession. There were cultural programmes by the Bank Employees Art Group and the Nelson Mandela Choir Group. Similar processions were also held in all the districts centres and other Industrial centres.

May Day was observed in befitting manners with processions and rallies in Kerala, in several places of UP like in Dehradun, Kanpur and by various industrial federations also.

## Massive May Day Rally at Moscow

The history of May Day—Reform Vs Revolution was practically demonstrated at Red Square, Moscow this year, and over ten thousand workers carried forward the revolutionary traditions of May Day by marching a seven kilometer route from Gorky Square to Red Square, Kremlin with red flags, banners and pictures of Lenin and Stalin.

It was for the first time since the October Revolution that May Day was not observed officially in Red Square. On the contrary, the Yeltsin Government had declared it as the Spring Day for the workers. The Government had organised a festival for the recreation of orphan children. But there was hardly any response from the people. Yeltsin had given away the vicinities of the Red Square on hire for display of commercial advertisements by private tycoons replacing the portraits of Lenin and big banners reading "Workers of All Countries Unite".

But all the nefarious games of the counter revolutionaries were overwhelmed by the massive march and rally. The traffic was jammed at various centres. Having reached the Red Square, slogans denouncing Gorbachov-Yeltsin-Capitalism-Fascism and hailing the October Revolution, the workers demanded re-establishment of the USSR and pledged for socialism and proletarian internationalism. Amidst thundering applause and echoing the name of Lenin, the red flag was hoisted over a high pole near the Red Square. Greetings from Fidel Castro and from DPRK were read out with deafening slogans.

Similar demonstrations were reported from Kiev, St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Minsk, Siberia, Tomsk, Khavarevosk and other places.

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people has been mounted. The organised trade union movement in the country is therefore duty bound not only to fight back this offensive on employment, wages and living standards, but to rise in defence of the public sector and more importantly in defence of the country's economic sovereignty and independence. All trade unions in the country, big and small should join together to unitedly take on this offensive against the people of our country; against the policies of surrender pursued by the government of India. The need of the hour is single-minded unity and determination on the part of the working class, to mobilise all the patriotic people of our country to defend the country's independence, economic sovereignty. No attack on our freedom or any compromise in this regard will be tolerated.

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# Why BMS Opposes All India General Strike

M. K. Pandhe

[The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions released to the press the following reply made by MK Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU as against a Circular of BMS opposing the forthcoming countrywide strike. The circular of BMS is also being published hereunder—Ed]

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh Central Office has issued a circular to its ranks explaining their opposition to the anticipated call of the all India strike by the Sponsoring committee of Trade Unions.

BMS's opposition to the All India General Strike on 29th November 1992 was well known and the TV and Radio had given maximum publicity to this stance of BMS. This position considerably helped the Government of India to campaign against the strike and confuse the workers. However, the working class of India responded magnificently to the strike call and even the rank and file workers belonging to BMS participated in the strike in several centres. As a matter of fact even the central office of BMS had to give a call for some movement against economic policies of the government on the eve of the last strike. The rising discontent among the BMS ranks thus forced the leadership to give some call for agitation. The growing discontent is also reflected in a situation which prompted BMS leadership to issue clarification to their ranks as to why they are opposed to the all India general strike.

The charge by the BMS that the left trade unions have decided to give a call for one day token strike sometime in April 1992 in "concert" with left political parties is absolutely false. We wish to remind the BMS, that the appeal of the Calcutta Convention, which they refer to, was made, not by the Left Trade Unions alone, but by all trade unions irrespective of affiliations, and non-affiliated unions and federations including those of Central Government, Railways and State Government employees, to which BMS is also a party. So the question of "concert" with left parties does not arise. Moreover, the alleged Bharat Bandh call has not come at all from any political party. It is therefore, a deliberate and malicious ploy of the BMS to confuse the workers in order to cover up their opposition to united working class action.

BMS may have reasons to be annoyed with the outcome of Calcutta Convention held on 5th and 6th March 1992. This Convention appealed to the Central TUs and Federations to give a call for nationwide strike in the last week of April. The BMS note however says "BMS delegates participated in the said convention of Central Public Sector Trade Unions and other Government Departmental workers organisations. The BMS representatives had

clearly told the organisers that any decisions cannot and should not be taken at a state level convention."

## Calcutta Convention and BMS

Firstly, it is not correct to say that BMS delegates only participated in the convention. Actually an attempt is being made to underplay the participation of BMS in the convention. They were not just silent participants. BMS was a part of the Preparatory Committee which organised the convention. A representative of BMS was on the presidium of the convention. The main part of the resolution was approved in the Preparatory Committee meeting in which the representatives of BMS participated. A circular issued about the convention to all the Central Trade Unions and the Industrial Federation was also signed by the BMS representative, though the initiative was taken by the state units of all the Central T.U. organisations.

The title of the Convention was "All India Convention of Central Public Sector Trade Unions and other Departmental Undertakings. More than 300 delegates from organisations of different affiliations came from outside West Bengal and from all the major public sector undertakings throughout the country. In view of all this it is totally incorrect to mention that it was only a state level convention.

The statement of BMS mentioned above tries to create an impression that BMS was not a part of the "organisers". Whatever BMS representatives stated was mentioned in the Preparatory Committee meeting itself. These facts should be noted objectively if proper evaluation of Calcutta convention is to be made. BMS note however states further:

"Thereupon it was publicly assured to the delegates that the ultimate decision regarding strike should be taken at the central level only after consultation with top leaders of all the Central Trade Unions. After such an assurance only our representatives signed declaration with clear reservations as stated above."

The operative part of the resolution was discussed at length in the meeting on 5th March evening which the BMS representatives also participated. On 6th March in the morning the draft again discussed in the meeting and finalised.

All the Presidium members of the convention including the BMS representative signed on the final resolution which was unanimously adopted and appealed to all the Central Trade Unions to give a call for All India General Strike at the end of April. It was in pursuance of this, that on behalf of Sponsoring Committee Homi Daji and myself visited BMS

Central office at Delhi and appealed to be prepared for a nationwide strike.

### Opposition to United Struggle

We however, were surprised to hear from the BMS leadership that "the all India strike would throw the Government of India further in to the IMF lap. If this argument is to be carried further then there can be no movement on any issue affecting the working class and the people in the country. The real background of the BMS opposition to the strike is explained by the BMS circular itself.

"The country's economic policies so far were over influenced by the powerful impact of centrally controlled economy of the Soviet Union and all our planning process was built on the model which has now totally collapsed, but the left parties and their trade unions are clamoring for a return to the old system which we cannot support."

What BMS is stating is exactly what the World Bank and the IMF have been telling to the Government of India. The World Bank wanted India to give up planning, dismantle the public sector, give more and more concessions to multinational companies and deregulate the entire economy. This understanding perfectly tallies with BJP's welcome of these economic policies.

BMS is welcoming the Government of India's giving up the policies which has some implication for self-reliant growth of Indian economy.

The Sponsoring Committee has never stated that the Government of India should revert to old policies. These old policies were criticised and fought against by the united trade unions from time to time in the past. During 1982 and particularly during 1987 all India strike the united trade union movement opposed the Government of India's economic policies of privatisation of public sector, permission for entry of multinationals and monopolies into the sphere of activities of the public sector, import of technology and goods detrimental to indigenous development etc. BMS co-sponsored and participated in these strikes. In face of this reality, it will be difficult for BMS to convince their own ranks that the advocates of the present General Strike want the Government of India to revert to the old policies, when along with BMS the united movement was always opposing the erstwhile policies.

### Diversionsary Tactics

What is the BMS alternative to the General Strike? BMS wants a Swadeshi movement. The BMS leadership does not realise that in South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, the multinational companies have become "Swadeshis" and they will collaborate with Indian capitalists and get a stamp "Made in India."

While ostensibly opposing multinationals, BMS

in fact is supporting the economic and industrial policies from the beginning. In the meeting with the Finance Minister on 17th August 1991, the BMS representative supported these IMF dictated policies, while all other trade unions totally opposed them. Thus while multinationals are being allowed free entry and the public sector and self-reliant economy are being undermined, the BMS's so-called Swadeshi movement is only a cover up of their real stand.

Avoiding the real struggle to defend the public sector and for self-reliant growth of the economy, and holding of the so-called "swadeshi movement" in opposition to the massive united nationwide general strike against Fund-Bank dictated government policies, amounts to an attempt by the BMS leadership to rescue the multinationals and the government of India from the united onslaught of the working class.

Another campaign BMS wants to launch is "Declare Cost of Production Campaign". This is only a diversionary tactics to detract the attention from the main struggle. Will the big business declare real cost of production if they are statutorily asked to do so? If balance sheets can be manipulated can the statements of cost of production not be manufactured?

Then the net theory of "Labourisation" as the solution to all the problems is being trotted by the BMS leadership once again.

All these clearly indicate that BMS's opposition to the economic policies of the Government of India is not genuine. It also shows that the BMS has backtracked from its earlier path of opposing government policies, in unity with the other trade unions. That is why it is opposing the present all India General Strike.

Though BMS talks of independence from political parties the reality is that it is adopting BJP's policies of welcoming the new economic policies of the Government of India. Naturally BMS leadership finds the call of all India strike as 'mischievous' and 'misleading tactics'. The BMS circular says "we all know very well that our policy is of 'Responsive Co-operation'." Since the Government of India's policies are dictated by the World Bank and the IMF, the BMS leadership's Responsive Co-operation becomes co-operation with the World Bank and the IMF.

It is indeed surprising why BMS should stoop so low as to slander the West Bengal Chief Minister Joti Basu who according to BMS circular "has gone on record on several occasions praising the new industrial and economic policies which have already been implemented by the CPM Government in West Bengal." BMS leadership cannot hide from their ranks the forthright condemnation of these policies by Jyoti Basu and the alternative proposals put forward by the Left Front Government.

The Calcutta Convention resolution correctly noted :

“This Convention earnestly feels that without the unity of the trade unions of all affiliations and the working class as a whole no struggle or movement will achieve desired results. This Convention therefore appeals to the entire working class and the Trade Union Movement of India to the occasion and unitedly resist this unprecedented attack on the job security of lakhs of our workers. Without a concerted and powerful struggle the Government of India will not be prevailed upon to change the IMF dictated policies of opening the floodgates of economy to multinational companies and liquidate public sector undertakings. The remarkable unity achieved in this Convention only reflects the tremendous urge for unity prevailing among the working class all over India to protest their vital interests as well as the national interests.”

Despite misleading propaganda by the BMS leadership, we still appeal to them to seriously ponder over the gravity of the situation and appreciate the strong feelings of unity among all the workers in the country including the ranks of BMS.

The Sponsoring Committee's call for all India strike on 16th June is a clarion call to the working class to raise its powerful voice against these Fund-Bank dictated economic policies. BMS leadership will only harm the interests of the working class, people and the nation and help the official propaganda to disrupt united T.U. movement if they doggedly pursue these policies. We still hope good sense will prevail on them.

### Circular of BMS

“Once again, for the second time within this short period of 4 months, the left trade unions have decided to give a call for one day token strike, sometime in April '92. And of course in concert, the left political parties have reiterated their declaration in and out of Parliament that they would give a call for 'Bharat Band' probably concurring with the proposed strike call.

Significantly, the decision to call for a country-wide strike was taken at a conclave of trade unions held at Calcutta in the first week of March. BMS delegates participated in the said convention of Central Public Sector Trade Unions and Other Government departmental Workers Organisations. The BMS representatives had clearly told the organisers that any decision cannot and should not be taken at a state level convention. There upon it was publicly assured to the delegates that the ultimate decision regarding strike would be taken at the Central level only after consultation with top leaders of all the Central Trade Unions. After such clear assurance only our representatives signed declaration with clear reservations as stated above. But unfor-

tunately the views of the Calcutta convention are being circulated in a manner as if all Central TUs are a party to this strike decision and only a date has to be decided after consultation with other organisations, which is clearly a mischievous interpretation of the proceedings of the Calcutta meet.

Many of our colleagues in BMS have also expressed their concern at this development. It is, therefore, necessary to clarify unambiguously the BMS stand in this context.

### BMS not in Favour of Strike

In respect of the November 29th Strike by the Left Trade Unions, BMS had taken a stand that the strike action was neither in the interest of the country nor the workers. Nothing has happened in these four months so as to revise our earlier stand.

The country's economic policies so far were over influenced by the powerful impact of the centrally controlled economy of the Soviet and all our Planning process was built on that model which has now totally collapsed, but the Left Parties and their trade unions are clamouring for a return to the old system which we cannot support.

However, the change that we envisage should be a change for the better and not a change for another evil. We have to evolve our economic policies based on our own 'Svatva'. BMS does not agree with the New Industrial Policy. BMS, is, however, convinced that the traditional way of giving trade union reaction will in the present circumstances be ineffective. Some positive alternative will have to be suggested. For example our Swadeshi Movement, declare cost of production campaign, labourisation in place of handing over public sector units to capitalists, and making a bold attempt to make some loss making units viable, are such constructive and positive suggestions for alternatives. Let us not forget that the major left unions have opposed some of these suggestions and are ridiculed on some others. BMS and Leftist perceptions about these major issues are totally different and in some way diametrically opposed.

There is an imperative need to carry on a brisk campaign in the society for all these alternatives so as to educate the common man and remind him of this sovereign powers and to mobilise him to such an extent that he can with confidence wield his powers and in effect force the government, the present or the future ones to abandon wrong and irrational policies. This is the need of the hour. We are all aware that through different campaigns, we are on the job. For that we may resort to different agitative modes attracting public and convincing it about BMS proposals without getting ourselves trapped by the mischievous and misleading tactics of Leftist organisations. The Left Trade Unions have their political motive dominating in their actions. This, however, does not mean that the BMS has interest in continuance of the present

Government. We all know very well that our policy is of 'Responsive Co-operation.'

Shri Jyoti Basu, who is both CITU leader and CPM Chief Minister has gone on record on several occasions praising the New Industrial and economic policies which have already been implemented by the CPM Government in West Bengal. The CITU silently accepted the same without discussions.

So brothers and sisters let us be clear in our thinking and our outlook and carry forward our various campaigns.

Let us March on fearlessly with confidence as brave soldiers imbued with the spirit of Swatantra to defend Swarj of our beloved Mother Land. Success is sure. It is ours and ours only.

With kind regards"

## The CITU Expresses Solidarity with the Striking German Public Sector Employees

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) has issued the following statement :

The CITU warmly congratulates the public sector employees of Germany who have been courageously carrying on strike struggle for more than a week, have brought all public sector and public services including the air transport into stand still in all major cities. The strike is spreading to new areas as it enters the second week.

The CITU expresses its full solidarity with the heroic workers of Germany engaged in a serious struggle for appropriate increase in wage in the context of growing inflation. While expressing support to the most legitimate demands of the German workers, the CITU urges on the Government of Germany to immediately take initiative to settle the dispute with the workers by granting reasonable increase in their wages.

The fact that the German public workers have been forced into a serious strike struggle for an evidently legitimate demand show once again that contrary to orchestrated propaganda by big business mouth pieces, capitalism is no answer to the problems of the working class and the people at large.

## CITU Opposes Govt's Move to Provide Security to Private Sector by CISF

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions condemns the Government for its move to extend the activities of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to provide security to the private sector also. This was announced by the Minister of Home Affairs, M M Jacob while addressing a conference organized by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CIL) at Delhi on May 16.

The role of CISF, which was hitherto limited to the public sector, has been notorious, in so far as it attacked the legitimate trade union activities of the workers. In the name of industrial security, the workers have been brutally lathi charged and even fired by the CISF in a number of cases, whenever they have launched peaceful demonstrations in pursuance of their demands. The trade unions on several occasions have demanded removal of the CISF and their non-interference in trade union movement.

The move to extend the CISF's functions in the private sector is clearly as per the demands of the World Bank to guard the private sector and foreign investments from the labour movement. The private sector managements already with their organized army of hirelings have been unleashing physical attacks on the workers in collusion with the police. The extension of the services of the CISF to the private sector will only add to their strength to physically curb even the elementary trade union activities of the workers. This move is in addition to the government's move to amend the labour laws to curb the right to strike and put trade union movement in straight jacket.

The move has been taken obviously on the eve of the second all India strike called on June 16 by the trade unions as a measure of commitment to the Fund-Bank to implement the economic policies dictated by them by "disciplining" the trade union movement.

The CITU calls upon the working class and appeals to all trade unions to raise their voice of protest against installation of the CISF in private sector and join the 16th June strike enmasse accepting the challenge from the government.

## Unprecedented Strike in Financial Sector on 30th April

More than 10 lakh employees and officers in the banks, insurance and other financial institutions in the country observed complete strike on 30th April in pursuance of their demand for Pension as Third Retirement Benefit. The call for the strike was given by the Coordinating Body of Associations and Federations in Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions on Pension.

All constituent units, all State Coordinating Bodies, upto their base units, undertook painstaking, united and sustained efforts for making the strike an unprecedented success. Country's central bank—Reserve Bank of India—did not function anywhere, country's biggest bank—the State Bank of India—was totally closed. Clearing of cheques was completely suspended. All commercial banks—both in public and private sectors—big, medium and small—including foreign banks, regional rural banks, co-operative banks were completely deserted. Insurance sector—both Life and General—all over the country was totally paralysed. NABARD and IFC offices came to standstill; so also various offices of IDBI and UTI. In short the strike was memorable and unique covering the entire financial sector and all cadres of employees. Everywhere response to the strike call was enthusiastic, spontaneous, firm and cutting across organisational barriers.

Some organisations however did not associate with the strike call, unfortunately, which the Government and the management of financial sector tried to exploit in full to campaign against the strike, but their membership extended total moral support, many where taking active part in the strike and its preparations. They have realised, rightly, that the co-ordinating body is articulating their cause too, that the co-ordinating body sincerely desires everybody's participation for security of everyone's future that it is a common timely and justified demand, that the demand takes care of genuine interest of all—without exception—seniors, juniors retired and would-be entrants—and hence requires support from all, which they extended happily.

The Central Government Labour machinery called the co-ordinating body, its constituents and the managements for conciliation on 28th April at Bombay. It was aborted by manifest rigidity of the managements, Just on the eve of the strike, a Finance Ministry spokesman came up with a bizarre campaign against the agitating employees and their demand; arithmetical jugglery, direct threat, a crude attempt to divide the bond of unity of trade unions in financial sector and elsewhere, hackneyed slanders against employees were the government's reactions to peaceful methods of pursuing a genuine demand in face of an uncertain future and galloping price rise. The employees and officers in the financial sector instantaneously understood that if this belligerence was not properly replied to, this will be the

fore runner of things to come regarding any genuine demand. A government which has singularly failed to control inflation and halt price rise cannot escape their responsibility in regard to employees' future by resort to misstatements, subterfuges and display of apathy. And they replied magnificently.

Newspapers, All India Radio and Doordarshan gave wide coverage to success of strike and the report is uniform from the financial capital of the country, Bombay, from other metropolis to remote villages in the farthest corners of the country that the financial operation came to a grinding halt through the strike everywhere. Several trade unions including the CITU supported the cause, In Parliament several MPs, urged on the Finance Minister for a dialogue with the Co-ordinating Body for resolving the issue.

Contrary to the misinformation launched by the Government the Co-ordinating Body reiterated that :

a) The stated annual requirement of Rs. 200 crores for giving pension to employees in financial sectors is a sheer travesty of truth. As suggested by the coordinating body, the constitution of a pension fund contributed by employees and managements will not subject the managements to any appreciable financial burden and in 10 or 12 years time, a huge fund would accumulate which can be utilised by the Government or the managements for developmental purpose, budgetary support or extra-liquidity. Alongside, funding of gratuity will be another mechanism to provide resources for the pension scheme without burden. SBI employees and officers should be extended service gratuity in substitution of gratuity as per Act.

b) To hold employees and officers responsible for the state of affairs in banks is the worst sort of prevarication, far from truth and reality. The Government, their policies and managements' complicity in irregularities and embezzlements are the factors responsible. Out of 20,000 crores of rupees of bad debt in banks, 80% thereof, i.e. Rs. 16,000 crores is blocked by big borrowers alone. Had the Government showed any inclination to get the money back from them, the present maladies of banking sector would have by and large been taken care of. Instead of threatening employees, the Government is asked to do this little job for the viability of the banking system.

Comrades, employees and officers in financial sectors have unmistakably demonstrated their will to ensure their future by achieving pension as third retiral benefit, which is a reasonable demand. It is for the Government to take note of that and initiate meaningful talks with the co-ordinating body on the demand. The co-ordinating body would be meeting shortly to determine further course of action.

## **CITU Congratulates ITC Workers for All India Strike on 28 April 1992**

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

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions congratulates the workers and employees of India Tobacco Company all over the country for their united strike on 28th April 1992 in support of the demand for recognition of the All India ISC orkers Federation, regularisation of all contract and casual workers in all the ITC Group companies, reinstatement of victimised workers employed in ITC and in protest against reduction of job by contracting out, closure of department etc.

The refusal of the ITC Management to negotiate the outstanding issues with the representatives of the Federation left no other alternative for the workers but to resort to strike action. According to reports received by the CITU Centre the strike was successful and workers of all affiliations joined the strike. All attempts of the management to break the strike miserably failed. The management's threat to deduct 8 days wages of the workers for participating in strike failed to deter the workers.

The CITU urges upon the ITC management to realise the mood of the workers and accept the path of negotiated settlement.

The CITU appeals to the ITC workers to strengthen their unity and be prepared for further struggles if the ITC management adopts a path of confrontation.

## **CITU Denounces USA's Threat Under Special 301**

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions denounces the statement made by Ms Nancy Adams, the US Deputy Trade Representative for threatening India of further actions under Special 301.

Having already hit the Indian pharmaceutical Industry by unilaterally and arbitrarily withdrawing the benefits under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) the US Deputy Trade Representative has gone to the extent of charging India for "theft" of American Patents, lambasting the Indian Press and calling upon the Government of India to surrender its Intellectual Property Rights, to withdraw all protections to the Indian Industries to protect the U. S. Industries and cooperate with the USA in GATT talks and address the American concerns. The USA has now come out brazenly to subvert India's sovereignty and dictate its own terms, obviously to transfer the burden of its own crisis to India.

Such audacious attitude and statement by the US Trade Representative was possible only because of the growing surrender of the Narasimha Rao government to the same US dictates through the IMF while formulating the country's economic and industrial policies and its vacillations on the draconian Dunkel proposals. USA is thus utilising the GATT forum as well as its own unequal trade laws to browbeat India and drag the Indian people in its worst form of neo-colonial exploitation.

The CITU warns the Narasimha Rao government against any submission, when the sovereignty of the country has been questioned and when the dictatorial attitude of the USA has caused serious contradictions with the EEC. The CITU demands withdrawal of all the IMF dictated economic measures taken so far forthwith.

The CITU calls upon all the trade unions and the working class to further consolidate their unity and make redoubled efforts to make the 16th June '92 countrywide strike a complete success. It appeals to all other mass organisations of peasantry, agricultural workers, students, youth, women and professionals to join the strike enmasse. It appeals to all democratic and patriotic sections of the people to support the trade union action wholeheartedly in the interest of the nation. The CITU supports the demonstration of the Left M.Ps before the Parliament today on the issue.

## **Prime Minister Promises Increase in Honorarium of Anganwadi Women**

A delegation on behalf of the Samyuktha Sangharsh Samithi led by Com. Samar Mukherjee M. P. met Shri P V Narasimha Rao on 13th May 1992 to place the demands of Anganwadi women where the working conditions are pitiable. The delegation impressed upon the Prime Minister that these women are getting Rs. 250-275 and Rs. 110/- only when the prices have gone up sky high. Even after installation of 4 different Governments during last few years, and women coming in thousands from all over India to Delhi to demand an increase in the honorarium, nothing has been done so far, except the promises or threat of closure of projects including their privatisation.

The Prime Minister gave a patient hearing and conveyed the delegation that the Central Government and Planning Commission was seriously considering the issue. The scheme is rural based and some benefit they are entitled to get. He promised at the end that they would certainly do something to give relief to these women and he would himself look into the matter.

The delegation consisted of Vimal Ranadive and Ranjit Basu (CITU), B. K. Prasad and Raj Kumari (NFTU), S K Sanyal (AITUC) and others.

## Convention of Working Women

A convention of Working Women was organised by Calcutta Distt. Committee of CITU at Shramik Bhavan Hall on 16th April. It was observed with high spirits.

Almost seven hundred working women comprising of sub-staff of CMC, construction, I. C. D. S, CUDP and from different factories, from CSTC, PIECO, etc attended the Convention.

The proceedings of the convention started with one minute silence observed in memory of Comrade M. Basavapunniah and other CITU leaders' passing away.

Comrade Lila Das, Convenor—Calcutta D. C. Sub-committee for working women placed her written report in the convention.

She, in her report, ruthlessly attacked the New Economic and Industrial Policy pursued by Central Government. She characterised the declaration of the policies as a virtual sell-out of economic sovereignty to IMF and World Bank which in turn was endangering political sovereignty too. She expressed grave concern at rising prices, growing unemployment and poverty due to Govt.'s policies.

She expressed concern at exploitation and neglect shown to women in a male-dominated society. She castigated Govt.'s indifference to this issue and

referred to women's lower wage than a male workman. Union leadership also show utter reluctance in this regard. She called upon working women to fight unitedly to defeat the attack on working people initiated by Narasimha Rao Govt.

For organisational activities and to ensure improved participation in Trade Union activities and participate actively in organisation she suggested three point proposal—

(1) Function of working women's sub-committee at the district level regularly.

(2) A sustained campaign to be organised among unorganised women—Women organiser should play a pivotal role in this respect

(3) Convention of women should be organised by union where working woken in large number are employed in industry.

Com. Arati Dasgupta, Convenor, Co-ordination Committee for working women & one of the Secretaries of the state committee and Comrade Raghunath Kushari, General Secretary of Cal. Dist. CITU also addressed the convention. They called upon the working women to take the leading role to defeat the Central Govt.'s anti-people economic & industrial policy. They highly appreciated the women who



*Working Women's Convention Held on 16th April at Sharmik Bhavan, Calcutta*

participated in the convention. They expressed hope that the leading working women shall be able to mobilise & organise the larger section of the working women of the district within a few months. They also hoped that they should play an enthusiastic role in the present critical political situation. Some delegates also took part in the discussions.

The convention was conducted by a presidium of four members—comrades Shibani Sengupta, Krishna Sengupta, Dipika Roy and Jayanta Dasgupta.

The convention ended with of vote a thanks.

## **Industry Minister Agrees to Settle Demands of EPI Site Workers Amicably**

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU has issued the following statement on May 3 :

The site workers of Engineering Projects India Ltd, organised under the banner of EPI Employees Union, the only union among the site employees, have been on strike in pursuance of their several

longstanding demands like regularisation of the temporary workers, uniform pay scales and benefits, introduction of jointnegotiating machinery, etc. The management, instead of settling the dispute peacefully through negotiations, resorted to vindictive measures like termination and transfer of workers, thus forcing and prolonging the strike.

A delegation consisting of the Union Office bearers had met the Union Minister of State for Industries, Shri P. K. Thungon alongwith Shri Basudev Acharya, M.P., on 23rd April. The Minister had agreed to look into the matter.

On 3rd May, the General Secretary of the CITU M. K. Pandhe met Shri Thungan again. Shri Surendra Singh, Secretary, Department of Industries was also present. The Minister promised to intervene in the matter personally and settle all outstanding issues immediately. Both the Ministe and the Secretary further agreed that nobody will be victimised for participation in the strike. The Minister appealed for restoration of normalcy to enable to settle all matters. In view of these assurances I discussed with Y. D. Sharma of AITUC and appeal that the strike should be withdrawn.

### **Read CITU Publications**

**The New Industrial Policy and its Impact on the Fertilizer Industry**

Swadesh Dev Roye

**Dunkel Proposals**

**A Death Knell for the Indian Drugs and Pharmaceutical Industry**

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# CITU Condemns Steps to Abolish Govt Posts and Privatised Airlines

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions condemns the Narasimha Rao Government for abolishing 2,000 Government posts and introduction of the Bill to privatise the Airlines.

Although the posts abolished have been for the time being at the Secretarial level, it is bound to affect the employees in all these departments upto the village level, and is a precursor to higher onslaught on the employees, as it has been done as a part of so-called austerity measures in pursuance of the Govt. commitments to the IMF. The Govt. has already ordered for 10% reduction in staff complement. About four lakh railway workers are under threat of being retrenched. Besides, the ban on recruitment is still continuing. In view of the deteriorating employment situation, all the trade unions including those of the Central Government employees had been urging upon the Government to withhold all its retrograde measures and plans. This is another instance when the government has totally ignored the appeal of the trade unions and gone ahead to implement the retrograde steps at the behest of IMF, the adverse effects which are bound to permeate to the lowest levels.

The CITU further condemns the Government for introducing the Bill for the repeal of the Air Corporations Act, 1953, which would pave the way for privatisation of the airlines. It is quite clear that such a move is emanating from the new Industrial Policy of the government. It is not only devoid of justification but fraught with the danger to the security of the country.

Both the airlines in their 37 years of existence have been earning profits. Even on 4th May 1992 on the floor of the parliament the Minister has said that Air India will earn Rs 120 crores profit during the financial year 1991-92. With the passage of time both the airlines have attained international standards from financial and operational points of view.

In the context of the move towards privatisation, it would be relevant to quote the then Minister of Communications while introducing the Bill for nationalisation of the airlines in 1953 :

“From the point of view of Defence requirements, operation of all services by a State Organisation would obviously be the most desirable arrangement as, in an emergency, it would be easier to make arrangements for meeting the requirements of the Defence Services than it would be if the operation of the services were in the hands of private utility. There is the important fact that Air transport is a

public utility and sought to be developed in the national interest unhampered by the paramount necessity of making a profit, which would be the overriding consideration in private enterprises.”

It is further condemnable that the Government has taken the move to virtually dismantle the FERA further in the tune with the retrograde steps towards complete decontrol and deregulation to ease foreign investments and give equal treatment to the multi-nationals from USA, Japan, Germany, etc. The entire gamut of these economic measures tantamount to the government's surrendering to the Dunkel Proposals too, it did to the IMF dictates.

The CITU reiterates that the Narasimha Rao Government has mortgaged the economic sovereignty to the IMF and the freedom and independence of the country is in danger.

The CITU calls upon all trade unions and all sections of the working people to stand united to safeguard the country and join the countrywide general strike on June 16 as called by the Sponsoring Committee demanding total reversal of all these anti-national economic measures.

## CITU Participates in 'Solidarity Affairs' at Philippines

Kilusang Mayo UNO Labour Centre of Philippines had organised an international seminar on New World Order at Manila during 7th to 8th May 1992. This was the part of 1992 International Solidarity Affairs (ISA) programme which they organise every year. This year's programme had been arranged between 29th April and 9th May. Nearly 65 trade union leaders from 10 countries have participated. The CITU was represented by Com. Jibon Roy, Secretary.

In view of the current international situation and stepped up process of recolonisation of the Third World Nations, this international meeting assumed special significance. Next issue of the working class will carry detailed report.

# Cement Workers Plan Joint Action

A meeting of representatives of CITU, AITUC and HMS unions in cement industry held in Delhi on 7 May 1992 decided to launch jointly a programme of agitation which would ultimately culminate into strike action unless the government and the cement industry comes forward to introduce the system of bipartite wage settlement and start negotiation inviting all central trade unions or federations operating in the industry. The meeting decided to address the Chief Labour Commissioner as well as the Cement Manufacturers Association to expedite the process since the existing settlement had already expired. The meeting further decided to stage dharna and demonstration at each factory gate on 30 May 1992 to press the demand leaving the date for central demonstration/dharna and strike to be fixed afterwards. The meeting again appealed to the INTUC and BMS for joint move. Vireshwar Tyagi of HMS presided over the meeting which was also attended by TN Siddhanta and Kanai Banerjee representing respectively the AITUC & CITU centres.

## The Background

While in all major industries in the country there exist machineries for wage settlement through bipartite/tripartite negotiation involving all trade unions operating in the field the Cement Manufacturers Association which represent the Cement industry refused to be involved in wage negotiation any central trade union/federation other than the INTUC although the other TU centres together represent a clear majority. In this context the CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS had earlier made a joint move for introduction of the system of bipartite wage settlement involving all trade union centres having unions in the industry, and organised all India conventions and other programmes.

The last all India convention which was held on Sept 5, '91 reiterated the demand for bipartite machinery and adopted a common charter of demand. The BMS for reasons best known to them, did not participate in this convention. The convention, however appealed to all organisations including the INTUC and BMS to unitedly face the industry during the wage negotiations to the best advantage of the workers. Once again in response to a proposal made by the INTUC federation to AITUC, both AITUC and CITU reiterated their appeal to INTUC for joint move. Unfortunately there was no response from INTUC federation. Later it came to be known that INTUC and BMS have submitted a joint charter of demand.

## Disruption By ACC Management

Things however did not go smooth even for INTUC federation. The ACC management tried to sabotage the prospect of national industry level wage settlement by imposing unitwise settlement. Although INTUC unions in the units were generally involved in this process, the INTUC federation did

not view this favourably. In one instance the workers themselves rejected such settlement and the union leadership had to resign.

The representatives of CITU, AITUC and HMS met to review the situation arising out of this development and issued a joint statement condemning the attempt to disrupt national level wage settlement in the industry. Decision was taken to persuade the CMA and the Labour Department to start bipartite negotiation with all the Central trade unions.

The joint meeting on 7th May was convened to decide on concrete steps to be taken jointly by the CITU, AITUC and HMS.

## CITU Warns Government against any Retrograde Change in Labour Laws

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions noted with serious concern the reported speech of Mr. P A Sangma, the Coal Minister, who is also looking after the Labour Ministry that there will be a series of changes in the Labour Laws to bring them in tune with the structural adjustment of the country's economy. The legislations are likely to be brought in the Monsoon Session of the Parliament.

The CITU had been repeatedly drawing the attention of the workers that the IMF-dictated economic and industrial policies are bound to have their impact on the Labour Policy of the Government also. With the surrender of the Narasimha Rao Government to the IMF-World Bank on the economic and industrial policies, the Fund-Bank have been demanding to amend the Labour Laws also to safeguard foreign investments from organised trade union movement.

The speech of the Minister now clearly indicates that not only strikes, but even the most elementary forms of trade union protests like demonstrations, rallies, dharnas, solidarity actions, etc will be curbed. The speech of the Rashtrapati had also indicated this earlier. It is further reprehensible that the Government wants to utilise the ILO also in its anti-working class pursuits.

The CITU warns the Government against any retrograde steps to put trade union movement in straight jacket and being regimented by the IMF-World Bank in the interest of the multinationals and private monopoly sector. It calls upon all sections of the working people including those in hospitals, educational institutions and other professionals to rise up on the occasion and work unitedly to make the 16th June countrywide strike action a total success.

## HSCL Workers Preparing for Strike

Hindusthan Steel Works Construction Limited (HSCL) a giant Public Sector Construction Company employing 21,000 workforce is facing a machination of being dismantled by the Government of India.

Decision has been taken by the management of course at the dictate of the Government to drastically reduce the manpower by 14000 including employees, officers and engineers, by the end of next year. Target for reduction of manpower within next six months has been fixed at 8000. And in order to achieve the target HSCL Management has let loose all kinds of unfair and uncalled for practices including drastic and unilateral curtailment of hard earned benefits of the employees like medical benefit, LTC LTC facilities etc with the sole intention to create panic and psychological pressure on the employees to accept voluntary retirement in large numbers. Employees are being threatened and pressurised in many places to either to accept voluntary retirement at the earliest or otherwise they may be retrenched without any benefit in the short run.

It is deplorable as to how a major public sector construction company like HSCL which has set a performance record in building of steel plants and also other important net work, is being sought to be liquidated by the Government itself for opening avenues to monopoly sector and the foreign companies. This is all the more condemnable since in a developing country like India where construction work would continue to be constant necessity, the Government in its play to dismantle HSCL, is to liquidate the construction of the Industrial Economy itself or making a gift of the Construction Sector to the monopoly houses and the Multinational.

The entire workforce of HSCL its employees, workers, engineers and officers and also lakhs of contract workers engaged by HSCL have viewed such move to dismantle HSCL as a fall out of the disastrous economic and industrial policy of the Government pursued at the dictates of I.M.F and World Bank and resolved not to allow such conspiracy to materialise.

And an all out unity is gradually developing among the various employees and workers organisation, Engineers and Officers Associations in HSCL Head Quarter at Calcutta and different sites Bokaro, Bhilai, Vizag, Durgapur and others, cutting across the affiliations in different protest actions against the damaging move of the HSCL Management. Preparation for all out united strike is going on in different HSCL centres and a decision on strike is expected in the all India Joint Convention of the HSCL employees and engineers and Officers to be held at Calcutta shortly.

The Construction Workers Federation of India

while condemning the deplorable move of the Government of India to close down HSCL, urges upon the Government to reverse its and respond to the gesture of the Unions for joint and Co-ordinated effort by the Unions and Management to improve the functional efficiency of the Company instead of taking and confrontationist stance. The Federation also calls upon the entire workforce to build up all out unity to stall the disastrous and anti national move of the Government and the HSCL Management to close down HSCL and prepare for a countrywide united struggle.

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## CITU Condemns Steel Price Hike

The Secretariat of CITU has issued the following statement for favour of publication :

The Secretariat of CITU condemns the orchestrated hiking of prices by TISCO and SAIL by an unprecedented 15% on all steel commodities. This would make the indigenous capital goods costlier and would increase the prices of all basic and consumer goods. Increase of steel prices would freeze future industrial growth and add to the process of de-industrialisation. It would seriously affect the housing construction activities by the poor and common people.

This massive increase in steel prices coupled with heavy reduction of customs on imported steel would pave the way for massive entry of multinationals into India's steel market. The market for plates and flat products would be immediately affected, especially Western and Southern part of India and it will go into the hands of multinationals.

The simultaneous declaration of price increase by TISCO on 17th May and SAIL on the next day illustrates how the giant industrial enterprises replace themselves as the authority when the government has abdicated its responsibility. The present unprecedented increase of steel prices has nailed the lie that decontrol reduces the prices.

CITU calls upon the working class and the people to vehemently protest against this price hike through participating in the General strike of 16th June called by the National Trade Unions and the Industrial Federations. It calls upon the people to resist the World Bank design of establishing the rule of price determination by two or a handful of monopoly and multinational houses.

## **CITU Condemns the Breach of Trust by the Government of India on Central Employees on Question of Merger of D.A. with Pay**

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) have issued the following statement :

The CITU condemns the Union Government for going back on the assurance given sometime earlier to the unions and Associations of Central employees including those of railway, postal, telecom and other departments in the forum of the Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM) that their long pending demand for merger of DA with basic pay would be settled within one month. Once again this has become clear that the Government had no intention to compensate for the employees loss of real earning due to constant rise in prices. On the contrary, in compliance with IMF-World-Bank conditionalities the Govt is steadily advancing towards reduction of real earnings of workers and employees. The appointment of the so-called high level committee on emoluments of Government and public sector employees is evidently intended to kill time and ultimately impose on them a wage system consistent with Fund-Bank terms.

The development again underlines the importance of united resistance of all Central Govt employees against all anti-labour steps taken by the Govt. This also sharply points to the need of the Central employees, the railwaymen and others, for full fledged participation in mainstream of working class movement of the country, for reversal of the Fund-Bank dictated policies of the Govt. The resentment of central employees at this breach of trust on the part of the Govt is justified. This development will undoubtedly serve as a pointer to the unions and Associations of Central employees and their leaders that the Govt is in no mood to settle the most legitimate demands of the employees through negotiations in JCM forum which the Govt has been trying to turn into a mockery over the past years.

The CITU hopes that the leadership of central Govt employees organisations will after this experience, place a little more reliance on united struggle of the central employees as well as of the working class of the country at large. The CITU while pledging all support to any struggle that the unions and Associations may decide upon against this intransigence of the Govt and in order to win their legitimate demands calls upon them for full fledged parti-

## **CITU Denounces USA for Imposing Sanctions Against ISRO**

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions denounces the USA for the imposing sanctions against the Indian Space Research Organisation alongwith the Russian Space Organisation, Glavkosmos because India and Russia arrived at an agreement for the supply of Cryogenic Rocket Engines by Russia to India.

The CITU refutes of US charge that India has violated the guidelines of the Missile Technology Control Regime, since India's requirement of the Cryogenic Rocket Engines are purely for peaceful purposes of its technological progress.

This sanction against the ISRO is the latest in the series of steps taken by the USA to pressurise and blackmail India and drag it under its neo-colonial exploitation. The USA utilised its dominant position in the IMF to dictate India to formulate its economic policies according to its demands. It has been utilising the GATT to compel India to accept the draconian Dunkel proposals and surrender its Intellectual Property Rights. Imposed its own unequal Trade Law Special 301, and it has been pressurising India to sign the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.

The CITU at the same time condemns the Narasimha Rao Government for growingly surrendering to such imperialist pressure and going ahead with the process of liberalisations, decontrol and deregulations step by step despite growing protests by the working class and other sections of the people. It is because of such supine attitude by the Narasimha Rao Government, added with its joint naval exercises with USA, that the USA has the audacity to browbeat India in such a manner and pose as the gendarme of the world.

The CITU demands of the Government to stand firm and outrightly reject all US pressures. The working class and the trade unions have already launched a strike action on November 29 last and demonstrated their total opposition to the imperialist pressures and the Government's surrender. The trade unions have called for another countrywide strike action on June 16 next. The CITU appeals to all trade unions to carry forward and intensify mass actions accepting the challenges to safeguard the country's sovereignty and appeals to all democratic and patriotic sections of the people to support the working class actions.

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icipation in common struggles, specially in the one day industrial strike on 16th June for reversal of anti-labour and anti-national industrial policies of the Govt of India.

# Workshop on India's Power Sector

A two day workshop was held in Kerala House, New Delhi on 25th and 26th of April, 1992. Employees and officers organisations of state electricity boards, BHEL, NTPC and NHPC participated in the workshop. It was presided over by A.B. Bardhan, E. Balanandan and Ashok Rao. Eminent Engineers like Shri S. N. Roy, Chairman (Retd.) C.E.A., Shri B.N. Ojha, Chairman (Retd), Bihar State Electricity Board and Eminent Economist Prof. Prabhat Patnaik (JNU) participated in the workshop. R. Umanath, Vice President of CITU also attended the seminar on the second day.

The main paper which was delt in the workshop was prepared by K. Vijaya Chandran, Industries Research and Services, Kochin.

The workshop resolved to :

1. Form an apex committee to represent the Electricity Industry consisting of workers' and officers' unions of Public Sector Electricity generating and distributing and equipment manufacturing organisations.
2. To form study groups to analyse and reply point by point the proposed policies of the Govt. of India.
3. The workshop totally opposed privatisation as solution to the problems of the power sector.

After detailed discussions the workshop concluded :

- a) The policies of inviting multinationals into electricity generation and proposed dismantling of BHEL and handing over various Units of BHEL to interested multinationals would be a suicidal step.
- b) Policies such as creation of a Central Transmission organisations and introduction of costly technologies like HVDC instead of stabilisation of Grid Network at 400 KV would add unnecessary cost to power by way of wheeling charges.
- c) The above policies are likely to result in power stations being set up at Rs. 4 crores /MW and more together with wheeling charges due to overheads created by NPTC, the cost of power at the customer terminal would be a minimum of Rs. 6/-per unit.
- d) Such an exorbitant cost of power generation, transmission and supply would render both industrial and agriculture uneconomic, and put an unbearable hardship on domestic and commercial consumers.
- e) On the other hand if the tariff is kept low and no

subsidy is given to the Electricity Boards, while guaranteeing cost plus rates to the private power generation, it would render Electricity Boards bankrupt.

- f) The policy dictated by the World Bank is aimed only for catering to the urban elite. It will make electricity a luxury for the rich and non-available for the common people.
- g) The only viable alternative is through standardised equipment manufactured on the basis of long term plan within the country as was the practice earlier. Indigeneous manufacturers have technology capability comparable to any multinational.
- h) The arguments of inefficiency in public sector organisation such as SEB's is by and large baseless. On the contrary the achievements of power sector since independence are remarkable:
  - i) Electricity consumption has increased by 50 times to 210 billion KWH.
  - ii) Per Capita Consumption of Electricity increased by 16 times to around 250 KWH/year whereas the per capita GDP has increased only by 2 times.
  - iii) About 5 lack villages were electrified covering about 80% of the villages in the country.
  - iv) About 9 million farmers get subsidised electricity today for agricultural pump sets. Their number was negligible at the time of independence.
  - v) About 45 million Indian Households are electrified today—a 40 fold increase since independence.
  - vi) About 2 million small scale Industries are served by the Indian Power System, an increase of 32 times.
  - vii) Average electricity price in the country is one of the lowest in the world, at the current exchange rate it is about 1/3 of that in the developed countries.
  - viii) The number of electricity employees per thousand consumers has come down to 17 from a pre-independence figure of 30.
  - ix) The plan load factor subject to availability of night load is comparable to any private sector power generation.

## Seminar at Madras

A Statewide 'Seminar' was conducted by the Central Organisation of Tamilnadu Electricity Employees (affiliated to CITU and EEFI) at Madras on 11th April 1992 under the Chairmanship of Com. R. Umanath, Vice-president of CITU, on the subject of against privatisation of Electricity Industry from Public Sector. Dr. K. Ashok Rao, President, National Confederation of Officers Associations (CPSU) delivered the key note speech on this subject linking the present New Economic and Industrial Policy pursued by the Central Government. The Seminar was attended by about one thousand selected delegates from all over the State.

Dr. K. Ashok Rao, in his speech narrated how the new economic policy of the Central Government would take the Country to the new colonial system. Public Sector units are rapidly being eroded and nakedly handing over either to the Private Sectors or to the Multinationals. He specifically pointed out that the Electricity Industry, the mother industry to all the other Industries and agricultural sectors, are now openly thrown to the Multinationals to loot the country and at the same time deny the development of the economy and social uplift of the country. He further challenged that any Tatas would come forward to undertake Electricity Generation and Distribution in Bihar State nevertheless there are some Industrial developments there and he said "No". Because their aim is profit which they can not get it like Bihar States. Even the British Government took 7 years to take a decision to privatise the Public Sector Industries and less in India, Minister after Minister take speedy steps to implement privatisation in every field.

Ashok Rao concluded by saying that the future Generation and our children will call us criminals if we could not protect and save the Public Sector of our country and therefore we should mobilise all our might and fight on this direction.

Com. R. Umanath, Vice-president in his speech said that even some capitalist countries like U. K. France, Japan and South Korea are keeping the electricity industry in the control of Government. He pointed out, that not only India produces electricity less than what is needed, but even the development is uneven from State to State. This uneven development, is the main grass root for discontentment of the people which is easily being used by the divisive forces. He emphasised that the fight for retaining the Public Sector Industries in our country is the patriotic duty of every working class of the Country.

Mr. L. V. Krishnan, Head, Safety Research and Health physics programme, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam, had taken up the

## CITU Condemns USA For Racial Violence

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions condemns the Government of the United States of America for the racial violence which erupted following the acquittal of the four white policemen for beating up the black motorist, Mr Rodney King.

The acquittal of the four white policemen, who were caught in a video camera and shown throughout the world beating and kicking Mr King with a savage vengeance, constitutes a most scandalous judgement by the U.S. judiciary. The protestations which spontaneously erupted was again sought to be

curbed by further violence on the black community by the police and the federal troops. Blacks were killed, mayhemmed and properties worth 550 million Dollars were looted including those of the Indian and Asian community.

The entire episode from the scandalous judgement to the continuing violence lays bare the state sponsored racial bias prevailing in USA. It further exposes the real face of so-called democracy and civil liberties and human rights in USA as championed by the USA the world over.

The CITU demands of the US government stringent punishment to the four police officials, full compensation to the people affected by death, injury and loss of properties, and calls upon all its unions to raise their voice of condemnation against the racial violence.

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subject matter of "Need for Atomic Power and Koodangulam Project".

While speaking he had elaborated all relevant points and stressed that Indian Scientists and Indian Technology is the best and with it the country can go for more power producing even on Nuclear Sector.

After Com. D. Janakiraman, General Secretary of the Union, presented his welcome address, leaders of all trade unions irrespective of political affiliation attended and spoke in the Seminar and shared the same view.

## Steel Workers' Meet Calls for Preparation of Strike

The working committee of the Steel Workers' Federation of India has called upon the steel workers to prepare for united strike action in all the steel centres' throughout the country. The working committee met at Calcutta on 19th & 20th April to take stock of the situation arising out of the disastrous policies of the Government of India and its impact on the workers and the steel industry and also to review the organisational preparedness to action programme against those policies going to be organised on all India plane by the Sponsoring Committee of trade unions.

The meeting was presided over by Com. MK. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU and President SWFI, and participated by the representatives of the affiliate unions from almost all the steel centres throughout the country.

The meeting condoled the sudden death of Com. M Basaupunniah the outstanding communist ideologue and member of Politbureau of CPI(M) and born fighter for the cause of common people. The meeting also condoled the untimely demise of the Com. Swapan Bose, the founder working committee member of SWFI and a leading personality of ASP workers movement.

Com. Mrinal Banerjee, General Secretary while initiating discussion on the fallout of the economic and industrial policies of the Government on the industry and the workers pointed out that the steel industry already started feeling the pinch of the policy drives of the Government. It was pointed out that the Railway Budget and the general budget of 1992-93 in faithful pursuance of the Government policy declaration at the dictates of World Bank and IMF has already pushed the cost of steel production upward which together with drastic reduction in import and custom duty on Steel would inevitably push the Indian steel industry in competitive disadvantage. Added to this has been the most unscrupulous manner the policy of so-called decontrol of steel prices has been implemented. Although freight equalisation scheme was stated to be done away with, in reality the most uneconomic system of a ceiling on chargeable freight per tonne has been introduced which is much lower than the actual freight in most of the case the burden of which amounting more than Rs. 100 crores per year is being borne by the industry.

Com. Pandhe while explaining the impact of the Government policies asserted that the policies declared to be for making the domestic industry more efficient and profitable through competitiveness are actually meant for marginalising the indigenous industry to the advantage of its multinational counterpart and such a position clearly exposes the real

face of the design of the World Bank & IMF to which the Government of India has readily surrendered. It is really shameful that while the Government policies are gradually stripping off the domestic steel industry from all kinds of protection by way of reduction of duties on imported steel, the same policies are ensuring protection to foreign steel producers in the Indian market by making domestic steel dearer through imposition of higher excise duty and other budgetary devices. Such a portion reminds us of the colonial rule in India when Indian commodities faced discriminatory treatment vis-a-vis the British products.

Com. Pandhe pointed out that the pursuance of the Government policies, if not stalled by powerful united movement of the working class is bound to damage severely the self reliance of the country besides having damaging impact on the steel industry pushing the same to the inevitable sickness. Workers would be hit hardest, the indication of which is already being visible. The gradual reduction of employment potential in the steel industry, particularly in the public sector steel units, is indicative of ultimate abolition of one of every three standard work post if not more, in the nearest future.

The entire issue was discussed threadbare by the working committee. The working committee also took note of the fact that despite expiry of the wage agreement in Dec. '91, fresh negotiation has not started as yet' which reflects the renewed vigour of the Government and the employer to target the workers and their rights to be made the cannon fodder for their cost economisation programme. The disinvestment of share of public sector SAIL along with other and decision of the Government to offload 49% of the PSU equity also reveals the adamant attitude of the Government in carrying on with disastrous policies which must be rebuffed by the united Trade Union movement as asserted by the comrades while taking part in the deliberation.

The deliberation also evaluated the continuous campaign programme adopted by some of the steel units against the Government policies and also dealt on shortcomings in certain steel centres in consistently carrying on such campaign to prepare for further strike. It was pointed out by different comrades while discussing the organisational position in different steel centres threadbare, that such shortcomings and any organisational lacunae at this crucial juncture cannot be sparable on any account and such shortcomings must have to be overcome at any cost which calls for much more sincere effort from all concerned to carry on toe awareness and exposure campaign on and against the Government policies at the grass-root level through specific and well designed programmes and consolidate and widen the organisational base of SWFI and this can create congenial

atmosphere in uniting the entire trade union movement in the steel industry.

The working committee also decided to bring out monthly news bulletin under the name 'Newsclip' detailing ongoing developments in economic, industrial, social and political fields both in the country and abroad to provide for campaign materials to the comrades in different centres.

The working committee also took note of the countrywide struggle of the workers of Engineering Projects India Ltd. in the face of massive termination and transfers. The SWFI expressed solidarity to the EP Workers' struggle, and called upon all its units to send financial support to the striking union on all India plane. In the meeting itself different units committed for donation of more than

Rs. 10,000/- including Rs. 5,000/- from Durgapur unions, Rs. 3,000/- from Rourkela Unions, Rs. 2000/- from SWFI Centre and Rs. 5000/- from CMO unions. SWFI called upon other units to give immediate drive for raising donation for struggling EPI workers who are mostly working with different projects in various steel plant sites.

The working committee also expressed strong solidarity with the struggle of the Cuban people in defence of socialist system in the face of international gangsterism and economic blockade by US imperialism and its western allies. It was decided that SWFI would send 20 tonnes of rice costing Rs. one lakh approximately for Cuban people as a mark of the solidarity of the workers of India to the struggle of the Cuban people.

## Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982 = 100)

Centre	Jan. 1991	Feb. 1992	Linking factor for Old base									
				Belgaum	235	234	—	Varanasi	249	251	5.12	
				Hubli-Dharwar	237	234	—	Asansol	219	216	4.77	
				Mercara	219	218	—	Calcutta	230	230	4.74	
				Alwaye	217	211	5.19	Darjeeling	213	215	4.55	
				Mundakayam	228	224	4.67	Durgapur	236	237	—	
				Quilon	231	216	—	Haldia	239	239	—	
				Trivandrum	243	234	—	Howrah	249	248	4.12	
ALL-INDIA	228	229	4.93	Bhalghat	224	221	5.24	Jalpaiguri	211	214	4.16	
Gudur	223	228	4.33	Bhilai	206	204	3.49	Raniganj	213	216	4.40	
Guntur	227	228	5.60	Bhopal	233	235	5.46	Chandigarh	230	228	—	
Hyderabad	217	223	5.23	Indore	241	239	5.18	Delhi	234	235	4.97	
Visakhapatnam	222	228	—	Jabalpur	246	248	6.41	Pondicherry	247	243	—	
Warrangal	226	229	—	Bombay	245	241	5.12					
Doisom-Dooma-				Nagpur	238	243	4.99	<b>Additional Series of Labour Bureau</b>				
Tinasukia	208	210	4.05	Nasik	247	246	—	Kothagudem	227	232	3.25	
Gauhati	222	223	—	Pune	241	242	—	Himachal Pradesh	217	221	3.75	
Labac-Silchar	206	206	3.96	Sholapur	250	249	5.03	Bhilwara	231	237	3.20	
Mariani-Jorhat	221	222	3.95	Barbil	225	226	5.00	Chindwara	232	232	2.59	
Rangapara-Tezpur	226	224	4.29	Rourkela	204	203	3.59	Tripura	235	233	4.37	
Jamshedpur	219	220	4.68	Amritsar	212	213	5.19	Goa	245	246	3.40	
Jharia	209	209	4.63	Ludhiana	213	213	—					
Kodarma	212	212	5.43	Ajmer	234	235	5.01	<b>Other Series of Labour Bureau</b>				
Monghyr	229	230	5.29	Jaipur	219	220	5.17	<b>Centre</b>				
Noamundi	221	235	4.58	Coimbatore	217	221	5.35	Base	Mar.	Apr.		
Ranchi-Hatia	223	223	—	Coonoor	239	239	4.80	1990	1990	1990		
Ahmedabad	235	236	4.78	Madras	227	233	5.05	Ammathi	1960	873	895	
Baroda	233	236	—	Maduri	229	228	5.27	Chickmagalur	1960	887	894	
Bhavnagar	237	237	4.99	Salem	217	219	—	Kolar Gold Field	1960	910	914	
Rajkot	230	228	—	Tiruchirapally	240	233	—	Gwalior	1960	1022	1025	
Surat	240	242	—	Agra	218	220	—	Sambalpur	—	—	—	
Faridabad	211	211	—	Ghaziabad	234	234	—	Berhampur	—	—	—	
Yamunanagar	209	206	5.53	Kanpur	233	237	4.69	Cuttack	—	—	—	
Srinagar	217	220	5.47	Saaranpur	222	225	5.06					
Bangalore	220	221	5.66									

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

—Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series.

# The Railwaymen and the Coming Industrial Strike

Kanai Banerjee

Every one except the blind can see how the economic policies which are being pursued by the Cong (I) Government led by Narasimha Rao and the measures adopted by it in compliance with IMF-World Bank conditionalities are leading the country to ruins. All sections of our population with the exception of a handful of monopolists speculations and the like are going to be subjected to the disastrous consequences of these policies and measures in one way or more. Prices are souring, the inflation rate has already shot up to double digit figures, around 13%. Large scale closure of industrial, commercial and other units both in private and public sectors and even those operated directly by the government as departmental establishment are on the cards, the process is already going on. Retrenchment in all sectors are going to play havoc with the lives of the workers. Unemployment is going to assume dangerous proportion. The economy is going to be given a distorted colonial pattern, leading to further impoverishment of the country. Above all, the Government is compromising the sovereignty of the country. Against this almost the entire working class of the country has been waging relentless struggle since mid-1991 when the policies started being announced. There has been protest in all forms and the first round of the struggle culminated in one day countrywide industrial strike on 29th November 1991.

The strike was unprecedented, many sections of workers who never participated in the countrywide industrial strikes in the past and whom the trade unions sponsoring the strike did not expect to participate in the 29th November strike, had actually participated in it. The federation of State Government employees formally decided and called upon the State employees to join the strike which they actually did. A convention of central government employees held on 10th November 1991 called upon central employees to join the struggle in other forms and even to participate in the strike where local conditions permit. At least in five states the central employees participated either in full strength or partially. It is only railwaymen, the largest contingent of Indian working class under one management about 17 lakh regular employees besides a large number of casual labour, that mostly kept way from the strike. Deprived of this substantial part of its potential strength, the Indian working class was unable to deliver through the November 29th strike as strong a blow to the anti-labour, anti-people and anti-national policies of the Government as it could have done, had the 17 lakh railway workers joined the strike. Non-participation of railwaymen in the strike had strengthened the hands of government, as much against the interest of the railway workers as

against that of other sections.

The secret documents of the Railway Board which have somehow found their way to the press have shown beyond doubt that the Railwaymen are going to be among the greatest victims of Government policies. Lakhs of railway jobs are going to be wiped out leading inevitably to retrenchment in large numbers in some form or other. Privatisation of a major part of railway work as is being planned will also be leading to large scale retrenchment as a fall out while those remaining in job in privatised establishment will be facing extreme uncertainty regarding their service conditions. It is no longer a secret that the process is already under way. Non-participation of Railwaymen in the strike has not only weakened the struggle against these policies in general, it has also given the Government the confidence that implementation of these policies will not meet with any substantial resistance.

As hectic preparation is going on throughout the country for another one day industrial strike on 16th June 1992 the question had been looming large as to whether the railwaymen would participate in it giving the working class struggle a new dimension and new strength or they will again keep away from it and thereby continue to strengthen the hands of the Government in implementing the policies with devastating consequences for the country, for the working class and for the railwaymen themselves.

## An Unhealthy Tradition

It developed as a tradition, particularly in the post independence period for the railwaymen and other central Government employees to maintain a fair distance with the mainstream of the trade union movement and to keep away, as much as they possibly could, from the united struggle for the common cause of the entire working class. Anyone can see for himself that this has not only weakened the trade union movement as a whole but it had also considerably weakened the trade union movement of the Central Government employees. Low wage, lack of rights and heavy repression of the Government employees prove this beyond doubt.

However, during the glorious 1974 railway strike under the leadership of George Fernandes, isolation of railway trade union movement from the mainstream ended, though temporarily. Not only all the railway trade unions except INTUC federation came together on common platform namely the NCCRS, but they also involved the central trade unions in their leadership. The result was clear for all see: demands could not be won through the strike, but in contrast with previous strikes the 1974 strike be-

came the mightiest action in our trade union history; far reaching significance for the whole trade union and democratic movement in the country.

The NCCRS did not survive long but the spirit of unity among railwaymen did not completely die down. When some years later, NCC emerged as the united platform of the working class for struggle against the anti-labour policies of the Government, the organisations of railwaymen, the All India Railmens Federation (AIRF), Loco Running Staff Association, All India Railway Employees Confederation and Bharatiya Rail Mazdoor Sangh joined. Also joined the organisations of state and other central Government employees. But though they took part in the NCC programmes of demonstration etc the railwaymen central employees particularly did not participate in industrial strikes called by NCC.

It is the leadership of AIRF, the oldest and biggest of railway trade unions who used most vociferously to defend their stand of non-participation in one day strikes. Their arguments however were not convincing to any one having minimum trade union experience. Some of their assertions became the object of ridicule. Yet, non-participation of railwaymen and other central employees in general strikes remained a fact.

### Tradition Breaks Down

But this unfortunate tradition seems to have started breaking down with the November 29 industrial strike observed at the call of the Sponsoring Committee of trade unions (The NCC could not call the strike because BMS which is one of its constituents did not agree to strike decision). The State Government employees federation declared their decision to join the strike and their participation was near complete. According to reports, central employees other than railwaymen participated in the strike in several states in substantial numbers. And despite AIRF's failure to come forward, railwaymen joined the strike in many pockets, notably in Chittaranjan Locomotive Workers. The Eastern Railwaymen's union, an affiliate of AIRF actively campaigned for strike participation of Eastern Railway workers.

### Now the 16th June Strike

The resolution embodying the decision of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions for one day industrial strike on 16th June was greeted with tumultuous cheers in the national trade union convention held on 10th May. In this convention state employees federation conveyed their clear intention to join the strike. Their federation has formally ratified it. Spokesmen of trade unions of major central departments like Postal, Telecom, Defence etc also made it clear that employees of those departments would not lag behind. Later Defence Employees Federation took formal decision to join the strike, there is no doubt that central employees will participate in the 16th June strike in substantial number.

These are clear indications that the old abominable tradition of central employees not joining general strike is on its last leg today.

### Whither Railwaymen

But the AIRF has failed again. The house was shocked when they listened the same old music from the AIRF delegate that AIRF will not participate in the strike. When he said that one day strike is not enough to change Government policies, and indefinite strike would be necessary for that, the delegates lustily cheered for a moment, they did not suspect, many of them, that an anticlimax was awaiting them, that this heroic statement would be followed by his declaration of not joining the one day strike. There was confusion among some, there were jeers from others, and there was anger. Reaction was natural when it became clear that his talk of indefinite strike was no more than a piece of vulgar demagogy to cover up the ignominy involved in their decision not to participate in the strike. Alas! They do not know that it actually bared more than it covered. Or do they know it too?

### Arguments do not Stand

The argument that the article 311 (2) (b) of the Constitution (Rule 14 (ii) of Railway Service Rules) poses serious threat to the central Government employees has totally lost its teeth. In spite of the State Government employees and a large section of Central employees including railwaymen joined the strike on 29th November. It has been proved that this threat can be overcome only by defiance, not by difference.

The other argument is that all railwaymen cannot involve themselves in one day strike because any day is a rest day for a large number of railway workers. But certainly it is not the unique feature of railways. In some other major industries also, this feature exists but this does not stand in the way of their joining strike. And if the AIRF leadership feels that all must be involved and they can be involved only in a minimum three day strike, and if they are really prepared for it, why do they not decide to go on strike for three days commencing on the day on which all others will observe one day strike?

### Rethinking necessary

It will perhaps be an underestimation of the leadership of railwaymen if one thinks that they do not themselves understand the hollowness of these arguments. More probably they do. But the tradition seems to be too strong for them to overcome.

The railwaymen are now the target of a ferocious attack. Even the AIRF itself has asserted in the lead article of March issue of Indian Railwaymen that united action of the entire working class alone is capable of reversing these policies, and that no demand of any sector can be fulfilled without rever-

*(Con't on page 28)*

# Working Class in Building Socialism in China

(Six)

Chittabrata Majumdar

## A Difficult But Determined Task

Despite magnificent success of the policies of reforms and opening to the outside in building socialism in China, the task is not free from danger. The Chinese government, while protecting socialism and China's interest, also look after to protect the benefits of the foreign investors. But it is not easy to believe that the imperialists will be happy with their profits from the industries in China.

Today, when the entire capitalist system has fallen in serious crisis, the imperialists are trying to grab the entire market. Naturally following the policies of reforms and opening to the outside, when they have got the opportunity to present themselves in the main land of China, to have the entire domestic market under their control they will definitely try to dismantle socialist system in China by mobilising the people against the socialist system. China has already experienced this role of the imperialism through the incident of Tien-an-mein square.

The CPC, the Chinese government and the ACFTU is conscious about the role of the imperialist, to influence the people in China. In the interest of developing productive forces, which is a must for the strengthening of the socialist system, the adoption of the policies of reforms and opening to the outside is necessary. But to prevent the foreign investors from doing harm to independence, sovereignty and socialist system of China, a series of policies and regulations have been adopted and are being adopted as and when necessary. To review the developments and to take necessary steps a separate ministry for foreign economic relations and trade has already been set up.

But to protect socialism in China, these steps may not be sufficient. So major emphasis has been given to educate the working class and the people ideologically. This is the real guarantee for protection of the people from the evil influence of the imperialists. ACFTU has taken up the job to educate the working class ideologically and thus playing their role to mobilise the working class for protection of socialism. Along with ideological education the trade unions are playing active role for improvement of political and cultural level of the working class and their conscious and direct involvement in increasing the quantity and improve the quality of production in every sector, which is also necessary for protection of socialism in China.

Industries in China had started developing only after the revolution. So the working class today have just come from rural areas bearing feudal influences. The task of educating them in socialist ideology is a difficult one. The CPC and the ACFTU

also are conscious about that. They feel that the task can not be fulfilled within a short period. They have to carry on the ideological struggle among the working class as long term fundamental task of the trade unions. That is why they don't want to move fast to put the socialist ideology from above on the working class. They want to develop socialist ideology among the working class from their own experience which they may gather from their day to day channelised activities in building socialism.

## International Relations

According to ACFTU a new international order in the trade union movement is necessary to tackle the problems posed before the working class. Based on the principles of independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, the ACFTU is striving to build friendly ties with trade unions in other countries regardless of differences in ideology or world organisational affiliations. They have already established friendly relations with foreign counterparts in more than 130 countries. Among the foreign counterparts there are trade union organisations which are affiliated to ICFTU also. In certain cases these ICFTU affiliates even ignored the instruction of ICFTU for not maintaining the relation with ACFTU. They think that these principles will help to develop greater mutual understanding on problems closely related to human fate as well as in the fields of common interest.

Through bilateral exchanges and multilateral activities the trade unions of China have achieved greater mutual understanding between the Chinese working class and the working classes of other countries. The trade union delegates from other countries, even from such trade union organisations who hold different ideology, when visited China, saw in their own eyes what is happening in China. Through these exchanges these delegates have at least realised that the developments in China is entirely different from what is being publicised about China in their country and worldwide. They feel that this will help to develop a better understanding about the socialist system among them.

While maintaining relations with trade unions in other countries, the ACFTU put stress on friendly and co-operative relations with the trade unions in the Third World countries in general and with the Asian trade unions in particular. According to their understanding, the majority of the world working class is in Asia. Trade unions in Asia are also faced with many common problems. So for advancement of the international trade union movement, it is very important to put stress on developing common understanding among the Asian trade unions and the working class.

(Concluded)

## Railwaymen's Struggle AIREC Conference

The 7th conference of the All India Railway Employees' Confederation which was held in Calcutta on 25-26 April at Yuba Bharati Krirangan (Salt Lake Stadium) was attended by about 750 delegates and observers representing constituent categorywise associations and councils and the zones. The conference was inaugurated by Dilip Das of NFPF. The inaugural session was also addressed by prominent trade union leaders.

The conference reviewed the developments since the last conference and decided to take initiative to contact other railway trade unions with a view to ensure participation of railwaymen in the 16th June strike which is possible only if the workers are called upon to do so unitedly by AIRF and other organisations.

The conference also amended the constitution to the confederation a broad base.

The delegate session was addressed by Samar Mukherjee, Vice-President, CITU. The largely attended open session was addressed by the West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu. All the sessions were presided over by C.M. Singh, President of the Confederation.

C.M. Singh, N.S. Bhangoo were elected President and Secretary General respectively.

### Working Women's Conference

Second conference of Working Women was held at the Union hall at Koilaghata on 7th May, 1992, under the joint auspices of Calcutta Branch—I and Printing and Stationery Branch of Eastern Railwaymen's Union. It was inaugurated by the Union General Secretary Sujit Roy.

12 delegates out of 225 working women attending the conference took part in the discussion on the report. Chinmoy Ganguli, Secretary, Calcutta Branch No. 1 greeted the conference. The speakers included Pratima Chatterjee, Subarna Banerjee and others. Arpita Palit and others presented revolutionary songs.

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sing them. Was this meant to be more rhetoric? Did they not really mean what they said? Will they not come forward along the only path of resisting the attack, the path they themselves have prescribed, and is it the fate of the railwaymen to be helplessly beaten?

It is high time the leadership do some rethinking, even now it is not too late for reviewing their decision and calling upon railwaymen to join the 16th June strike. One earnestly hopes, they will. But even if they don't, the railwaymen will join this strike in larger number. There cannot be any doubt about it.

## Workers Lathi-Charged and Fired at Haryana

In KC Textile Mills, Jind, Haryana where 900 workers are working, the management resorted to retrenchment and organised a rival union.

The workers resorted to dharna from the last week of April 1992. On 3rd May Employers' goondas attacked the workers and thereafter the police made a lathi-charge in which some workers were injured. The management brought Ram Bali and Narayan from Bihar who are notorious anti-socials. The management mobilised other anti-socials like Subhash, Prem and Inder from the adjacent village. A large number of workers were arrested.

On 5th May, Md. Salim, MP, visited the place and met the DM and SP, who assured to intervene to establish peace and release the workers.

But on 7th May the gangsters again attacked the workers and when the workers resisted, the security persons of the management opened fire in which two workers Abhai and Dukh Haran were critically injured. Dukh Haran lost one eye in which one bullet pierced through. His one hand and one leg were also paralysed. 17 workers were arrested and some of them were beaten up in the police lock up. One person of the management's side also was arrested. Ram Chandra, Dist. Secretary of CITU was also arrested and beaten up. Krishna was arrested and was stripped naked in police lock up and then beaten up so severely that he vomitted blood.

The management does not even pay any allowance to the suspended workers as per law.

On 9th May, Md. Amin, MP and CITU secretary visited the place and met the Deputy Commissioner and the S.P. alongwith S.N. Solanki, Inderjit Singh, the state CITU General Secretary and President and others. The DC and SP promised to look into the complaint. He addressed a workers' meeting also. The workers are determined to carry forward the struggle till the retrenched workers are reinstated.

### BANK EMPLOYEES TO JOIN 16th JUNE STRIKE

The Bank Employees Federation of India in its meeting of the Central Committee held at Calcutta on 16th May unanimously decided to join the countrywide strike on June 16, 1992.

### STATE GOVT. EMPLOYEES TO STRIKE

The All India State Govt. Employees Federation has also decided to join the 16th June countrywide strike.

# Workers' Unrest in the First World

So long they are deemed to be a paradise. At least the worldwide electronic print media at their command projected that way, as if there are no contradiction, no exploitation, no discontent, as if there are only progress, advancement and perfect harmony in the society in the developed capitalist countries who claimed themselves to be the self appointed guardians of the developing and underdeveloped world. But there is much difference between illusion sought to be projected by them as reality and the reality itself. In spite of their much cherished collapse of the socialist system in East Europe and Soviet Union, the developed capitalist world could not yet lift themselves from deep rooted recession and consequent crisis in the society which is getting manifested by spree of working class action all over the developed first world, the workers loudly declaring their refusal to shoulder the burden of recession.

Such is the situation in Germany, the West Germany in particular. From 27th April 1992 onwards Germany had been passing through unprecedented strike wave. The strike action by the public workers of Germany had brought the normal life to a grinding halt. Strike spread to all walks of public services from Road transport to Railways, from civic municipal services to hospital service, from postal service to telecommunication. And on every passing day of strike thousands of new workers from different other services joined the strike enmasse in the face of reddening eyes of administration.

The strike got a momentum in its second week on 4.5.92, the Airliners also joined the striking workers in thousands virtually paralysing the Air traffic in almost all the major national and international Airports of West Germany—Munich, Hamburg, Hanover, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt and others. Strike started at the refusal of the Helmut Kohl Government to accept the workers' demand for a moderate wage rise of 9.5%. Instead, Government offered only 4.8% which is much below the rate of inflation. In a process of Arbitration, the Arbitrator proposed the Government to agree to a wage-hike of 5.7% to which unions expressed their readiness to accept, but the Government arrogantly rejected the arbitration proposal also igniting the strike wave.

Notable is that, in the beginning strike was limited only in West German Public workers. But as the days passed, strike gained further momentum when the public transit workers of East Germany also struck work on 4th May raising similar demand and many other unions of West Germany threatened similar action. Not only that, on the same day 4.5.92, the 8th day of the continuous strike of the German

Public Service Workers, one of the major private sector unions, IG Metal, struck work at Frankfurt and threatened further action if demand for wage rise was not acceded to. One Million construction workers also declared their decision to go in for continuous strike by end May in the event of non-acceptance of their demand for wage rise.

The massive strike by German workers and the massive people's support behind the strike as reflected by a result opinion poll, had already created crisis in the ruling coalition of German Governance. The foreign minister, Hans-Diertrich Genscher resigned. Mr. Theo Waigel, Finance Minister and the leader of the Bavarian Christian Social union burst out in seathing criticism of Mr. Jurgen Molleman, Economic Minister and the leader of the Free Democrats on ground of 'imprudence and effrontery'.

Although during the first week of strike the Government took an adamant stand on the demands of the workers, the spread of the strike to new frontiers made the Government review their stand and try for resumption of negotiation during the course of the second week, as reported by Reuter.

And ultimately, on 7th May 1992 after 11 day long massive unprecedented countrywide strike, the Government had to give in and strike ended through conclusion of wage-rise agreement ensuring wage hike to German public workers much above the initial offer of the government.

## USA

In USA, the Bush Administration has to bring about basic amendment in labour laws to curb the rising protest of workers against rapidly falling living standards, inflation and unemployment. The end of 1991 witnessed a series of protest actions by the organised workforce in USA against onslaught of the employers, in the face of workers' demand for wage rise and better social security measures. Notable was the five months long strike by 12,600 Engineering workers of M/s. Caterpillar of Peoria, Illinois. The strike continued successfully in the face of severe onslaught by the employers and the threat of 'Permanent replacement'—a more civilized synonym of retrenchment in the American vocabularies. The strike ended recently in the last week of April after conclusion of Agreement with the employer.

## FRANCE

About 2000 port and dock workers of the French Port Marseille recorded their protest against the anti-worker action of the Port Authority and the Government through a Five day long token strike action from 22nd April to 26th April 1992.

## JAPAN

Japanese workers, the architect of modern Japan with unquestionable economic superiority have been agitating against the most inhuman treatment meted out to them by the employers and the Government. Being the frontline economic power of the world Japan has nothing to offer to their workers except forced and longer working hours a big part of which is unpaid, and low level of wages compared to its western counterparts, leading to death of 10000 workers a year owing to overwork.

Japanese Labour Ministry reveals that the average working hours of a Japanese is more than 2100 hours a year including overtime. There are many cases where Japanese worker has to actually work more than 200 hours' overtime in a month, a major part of which is either unpaid or underpaid. Japanese working class under the leadership of their National Confederation ZENROREN have taken strong resolve to fight back such oppressive measures during their spring offensive. On 25th March 1992, more than 405,000 workers of 26 National Industrial Union in public and private sector agitated unitedly through different form of action including strike. 13 National Unions participated in strike action while other demonstrated within workplace. On the same day of National Action, 4000 Nurses in white uniform belonging to Japan Federation of Medical workers union organised a rally in the city. As a preparation for the National action day of 25th March 1992, some 40000 workers held a rally in Tokyo on 22nd March which has created immense sensation and exposed the real face of much propagated Japanese style Industrial relation management.

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following the series of privatisation measures; during which they found it more difficult to make the both ends meet due to unabated price rise on one hand and attempt to wage, DA and bonus freeze on the other; and during which they experienced closures of several units. They narrated the fraudulent manoeuvrings of the managements, which shed all illusions of the much trumpeted economic and industrial policies.

The representatives of the public sector workers and officers were visibly vociferous against the Government as they were directly and worst hit. They condemned the Narasimha Rao Government for stooping so low as to make a sell out of the country's sovereignty to the IMF. Theirs was a pledge of do or die to safeguard the public sector and self-reliance. They all reported about the continuous preparations for the strike from after the Calcutta convention of March 5 and 6 itself, which first gave the the call for the strike and set the ball rolling. They narrated about their relentless work to mobilise all unions for the strike from the INTUC to the BMS, which had participated in the Calcutta convention and were parties to the call for the strike, and expressed full confidence that the strike in the

public sector under takings would be total on 16th June.

Another unique feature of the deliberations were the participation of the Central Government and railway employees of all departments and categories. Their deliberations did create an atmosphere and promise that large sections of them will smash the obstacles created by the age old hard core anti-strike reformist leadership and join the strike on 16th June. Their urge to join the strike was practically visible when the sole discordant note shamelessly tuned by the representative of the AIRF was drowned under vociferous protests. It was a warning and demonstration of the same anger and hatred against the strike breakers as they expressed against the Government and the IMF. It was a demonstration of their determination to isolate and remove the reformist leadership to safeguard the sovereignty of the country from the imperialist hordes.

The convention thus showed larger prospects for rallying more and newer forces to join the strike on 16th June, promising it to be a red letter day, particularly for the Central Government and railway employees, removing the proverbial stigma over them and bringing them into the mainstream of the national protest action by the working class.

The Declaration was unanimously adopted with thunderous slogans for the strike and against the Government and its mentor, the IMF. The Convention ended after an inspiring summing up by Samar Mukherjee on behalf of the presidium. The heat and enthusiasm of the Convention however grew further with the courting arrest by the delegates en masse thereafter. As per the programme, the massive slogan shouting procession came out from the Mavalankar Hall and wound its way towards Prime Minister's place. A heavy cordon of police however blocked the procession near the Rail Bhawan, where nearly 2,000 workers courted arrest, including the entire leadership and a number of Parliament Members and MLAs. They were taken in a number of buses to the Parliament Street Police Station and detained for about an hour.

As per the programme announced in the Declaration, the practical mobility will now be in the states, districts, and industries through conventions, rallies and gate meetings to mobilise the workers and employees in the strike.

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## Inside South Korea

The Miracles Stand exposed. The South Korea, so long being cited as a seat of model economic development and prosperity both by the Indian bosses in the Government and also by the US Administration and its bandwagons, equally deserves citation of being the oppressor of the worst kind of human rights and the trade union rights in particular.

The workers in the workshops, factories are the most oppressed section of people in South Korea. Any opposition to employers and the government is not tolerated and tackled most harshly. A report by one South Korean Researcher Mr Phee-Jung-Sun, Director Korea Research Information Centre, Seoul, commented "It is no exaggeration to say that trade unions are now suffering under quasi-martial law conditions including frequent mobilisation of police and troops to the scenes of strikes." Any opposition to employers or government policies are viewed as militant trade unionism and tackled by indiscriminate arrest and intimidation by the police and troops. During 1990-91 only, total arrest of trade union leaders and activists has exceeded the figure of 1,300, the report says.

The South Korean Government has not yet ratified the basic conventions No. 87, 98 & 151 of ILO relating to freedom of association and right of collective bargaining.

A sizeable section of workforce in South Korea, the government employees except the teachers, postal, railways and national medical centre manual employees, are not allowed right to organise. In 1989 a drama was staged in the Parliament to legislate provisions for granting the right to organise only to lower grade employees in government service, but the same was ultimately nullified by the presidential veto to get back to square one.

Only government sponsored trade unions are allowed to operate with absolute surveillance. The Korean law imposed a system of monopoly trade union on the workers which means, either in the factory level or at national level, when one union exists, however small it may be, the government will not recognise any other union. Once a union declares jurisdiction over the workforce, no matter whether it really commands allegiance of that workforce, no other union is allowed for the same category of occupation or industrial sector. And in this process only loyal and surveillant unions are allowed to function and none else.

The functioning of the trade unions has been severely restricted by the legislation. The right of collective bargaining is limited considerably by

imposition of compulsory arbitration. Nearly all labour disputes in public sector during 1990-91, the report says, were regulated by compulsory arbitration and any direct trade union action in those sectors had been dealt by the government with mass scale arrests, dismissal and other kinds of repression. No doubt, there are provisions for redressal of "unfair labour practice" of the employers. But those provisions provide for only appeal to the Labour Committee. But same had become only the formal arrangement owing to lack of willingness on the part of the enforcing authority which always favoured the employers. By the administrative authority itself the unions-busting techniques including unfair transfer, unfair dismissal harassment, bribery, kidnapping etc are allowed to flourish. The report of Mr Phee-Jung-Sun revealed that it is at the initiative of the South Korean government a Special Task force Committee composed of intelligence agencies and Labour Ministry officials operates to destroy and demobilise trade unions in key sectors, which got exposed recently through leakage of secret governmental documents.

Unions are restrained by law even to extend support to the fraternal unions of the neighbouring sectors. The government also is empowered by laws to order or instruct changes in the by-laws and resolution of the union. It also enjoys the right to suspend and dissolve the trade union at its sweet will. During last few years, there have been many cases of dissolution of unions by the government followed by arrests in cases where unions have been designated as militant or anti-government unions.

But still, inspite of all possible measures to restrict the growth of trade unions in developing industrial sectors by the government and inspite of virtual ban on independent trade union movement outside government control, unrest could not be suppressed. It is in the process of such mounting unrest of South Korean workers, in face of massive job cuts, fall in real wages, intensification of job-extraction through restructuring of the workforce etc, strikes and agitations in different forms have become rampant during last few years. And alongwith this the government and the employers have reinforced repression against the movement. Presence of armed police and troops in the factory premises have become a regular feature. Instruction has been given by the Labour Ministry to sue the unions for damages under civil law procedures. Many unions were ordered to pay large amounts in reparation, for conducting strikes. In this process another national trade union centre—Korean Trade Union Congress opposed to Government backed Korean Federation of Trade Unions was formed.

(From page 4)

Sector Undertakings.

3. End to all closures, Exit Policy, Retrenchments etc.
4. Immediate halt to and bring down the prices of all essential commodities and strengthen the Public Distribution System.
5. Halt unrestricted entry of foreign multinational companies in the vital sectors of economy.
6. Scrap the Narasimham Committee Report on Banking Industry.
7. Immediate measures to revive the sick units in public and private sectors.
8. Introduce genuine scheme of workers' participation at all levels in the management.
9. Introduction of genuine land reforms and ensure generation of more employment.
10. Scrap the recently appointed Special Committee to go into the question of Wage Policy and D.A. for employees in Central Government and Public Sector and financial institutions.
11. Immediately commence wage negotiations in all the public sector undertakings and settle the question of D.A., scrap the BPE circular of Pension.
12. Enhance substantially the minimum wages for the unorganised workers and link them with consumer price index.
13. No banning or restriction on the workers' and employees' right to strike and other forms of agitations and repeal of all anti-worker bills and enactments.
14. End all discriminations against working women.

**Join All India  
General Strike On  
June 16, 1992**

## **NF-Left Combine Calls for Hartal by Mass Organisations on June 16**

The National Front-Left Front issued a statement on May 11 extending full support to the June 16 strike by trade unions and called upon all mass organisations of peasantry, agricultural workers, employees, women, youth and students to organise a countrywide hartal on June 16 to express solidarity with the working class and opposition to the Govt's economic policies.

The same day, the seven Left-led organisations of peasants and agricultural workers issued a joint statement calling upon the peasants and agricultural workers to organise hartal on June 16 in support of the countrywide strike.

### **Defence Employees to join Strike**

The All India Defence Employees' Federation in its Executive Committee meeting held at Delhi on May 11 to 13 decided to join the countrywide strike on June 16.

**Book Post**