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# THE WORKING CLASS

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# TAMIL NADU PREPARES FOR 11TH CONFERENCE

**P**reparations are on for holding the 11th all India Conference of CITU in Chennai.

Already the Reception Committee for the Conference had been constituted under the Presidentship of the veteran freedom fighter and former President of the All India Kisan Sabha, N. Sankaraiah. T.K.Rengarajan, Vice-President of CITU, both at the national and Tamil Nadu state level, is the general convener.

Several functional sub-committees have been constituted to look after venue, logistics, reception, transportation, accommodation, catering, international delegations, rally and public meeting etc.

The entire CITU in Tamil Nadu is now actively involved in a massive fund raising campaign throughout the state.

As part of the campaign programme related to the conference the leaders of the Tamil Nadu CITU including J.Hemachandra, President, A.Soundararajan, General Secretary, T.K.Rengarajan and A.K.Padmanabhan, both Vice Presidents and other office bearers have toured all the districts, addressing gatherings of CITU activists and workers highlighting the significance of holding the 11th Conference in Chennai, particularly in the aftermath of the recent strike by Tamil Nadu government employees and teachers.

In all the districts of the state, hundreds of squads have been formed with the target of meeting 20 lakh families both for explaining the CITU policies against liberalisation and globalisation offensives and collection of donations for the conference. This house to house campaign has received enthusiastic support from all sections of the people. People are coming forward with their grievances and look forward to the CITU as their champion in fighting their cause. Gate meetings are being organised in thousands throughout the state.

The CITU cadre had been engaged in putting up extensive wall-writings throughout the state, announcing the 11th Conference. A large volume of publicity materials including banners, posters, hand bills etc. have been brought out. The entire state is brimming with conference related activities by the CITU unions and cadres.

The Reception Committee is also planning to bring out a special Souvenir on the occasion of the 11th Conference and a dedicated team is working on this. Advertisements are also being collected from well wishers and friends.

Meanwhile, the CITU centre has started receiving confirmation of participation by international delegations from several countries. The response is very encouraging.

While the notice for the 11th Conference will issue in due course, we are furnishing the particulars of the Reception Committee of the 11th Conference for information of the state committees and comrades:

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# THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

NOVEMBER 2003

HERE & NOW | Sudhir Tailang



We're very clear about this!  
Anybody who's chargesheeted  
must resign — provided he  
doesn't belong to our party!

Courtesy: Hindustan Times

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## EDITORIAL

### EXPOSE THIS TREACHEROUS NDA REGIME !

Celebration of four years completion of the Vajpayee Govt through self-congratulatory garlanding has been covered widely by the electronic and print media. In fact, through such sponsored media-hype by the officialdom, the BJP bandwagon seems to have started its preparatory exercise for the general election in 2004.

For the people, it is definitely not an occasion for celebration. But it can very well be an occasion for having a countdown of the series of crimes perpetuated on the society, economy and the polity by the most treacherous, anti-national and opportunist Govt. the country ever had.

Never before, in any other regime, the country's economy is faced with such severe distortion and prolonged decline in all fronts. Yet, never before so much lies have been shamelessly showered on unfound economic recovery from the highest seat of governance. Growth slows down, employment degenerates, but profit sores; godowns overflows with food-stock but people die in hunger; banks flush with funds, but investment dips. The list is unending. In fact the NDA managers are ruling in proxy for the MNCs and their junior partners in Indian big business.

Never before, such all pervading corruption and explosion of scams one after another—the tehelka scam, coffin scam, petrol-pump scams, stock-market scams and the privatisation related scams were witnessed. Here also the list is unending.

Never before, in any other regime, the ruling polity resorted to such heinous mode of engineering riots, bloodbaths and organised killings, just to address its political isolation from the people owing to its own anti-people policies. The human lives were never undervalued so much and put on chopping blocks in thousands for the sake of power. And never before the administration was made to connive so shamelessly with the criminals and murderers to manipulate justice, as in the Best Bakery and Babri demolition cases. No other regime has ever strived to sustain itself through generating hatred and animosity among the various communities in the populace. It came to power riding on the hate campaign; it seeks to tear to pieces the fabrics of secularism and humanity on which the Indian nation thrives, just to retain itself political power.

The BJP led NDA combine has earned the rarest distinction of becoming the champion of all round degeneration of values of a civilised society reminiscent of a fascistic regime.

The working class must not default in exposing this enemy of the people before the mass of the populace through heightening all round united offensive against this disastrous regime. We can afford to vacillate only at our peril.

*(The 39th Session of Indian Labour Conference was held in New Delhi on 16-18 October, 2003. CITU was represented in the conference by M K Pandhe, Kali Ghosh, A. Soundararajan as delegates and P K Ganguly, S. N. Solanki and Ranjana Nirula as advisers. Here is a report - Editor)*

## INDIAN LABOUR CONFERENCE:

# TRADE UNIONS REBUFF MOVE TO CHANGE LABOUR LAWS

M K Pandhe

The 39th Session of Indian Labour Conference, held in New Delhi on 16-18 October 2003, rebuffed the attempts of the Union Labour Ministry to get approval of the trade unions to the anti-working class legislations being introduced in Parliament as per recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour. The trade unions unitedly opposed all the retrograde proposals of the Labour Ministry and demanded drastic changes in the proposed Bills so that they can meet the requirements of the working class. The CITU presented its viewpoints on all the agenda items placed before the conference in an exhaustive note.

The agenda of the conference was to consider the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour on rationalisation of labour laws and the bill on the unorganised sector workers, employment generation and social security for the unorganised sector workers.

### TALL CLAIMS!

Union Labour Minister, Sahib Singh Verma, who presided over the conference, made tall claims about India's "vibrant" economy. "Economic reforms have created enormous possibilities of upward mobility. Indian

economy has been rated as one of the fastest growing economies in the world", he claimed. "Economic growth often demands more flexible labour markets, which means that many people may find them out of employment in spite of having the right kind of skill and qualification," he stated. Thus he virtually justified the concept of jobless growth. Fully endorsing the policy of globalisation Verma observed: "The Second National Commission on Labour had submitted its recommendations to gear up our workforce to face the challenges posed by liberalisation and globalisation and to frame the necessary support, both legislative and administrative. There may be divergence of opinion on the recommendations of the Commission, but we cannot deny the fact that our laws and systems need to be fine-tuned to match the new national aspirations." For the Union Labour Minister the requirements of MNCs and big business houses become the "national aspirations". The working class was thus asked to suffer and sacrifice to meet the aspirations for higher profits of the financial tycoons.

Hasubhai Dave, President of BMS, speaking on the occasion, criticised the policies of

liberalisation and noted how they helped the MNCs and Indian big business. He criticised Supreme Court judgement on strike and demanded a new law to protect workers' right to strike. G Sanjeeva Reddy, President, INTUC, also condemned the Supreme Court judgement and demanded reinstatement of all the victimised State government employees of Tamil Nadu.

The representatives of the employers fully endorsed the government's viewpoint and advocated acceleration of the space of economic "reforms." Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, while inaugurating the conference repeated the tall claims about the achievements of the economic policies of the NDA Government. He said: "Reforms have begun to unleash the untapped productivity in the economy. It is helping us to better harness the nation's resources. Despite many difficulties and obstacles our domestic industry has achieved robust growth last year." He conveniently ignored the admission of the Economic Survey about slowdown in the economy. Vajpayee chose to advise the trade unions: "The new economic compulsions require workers and their trade unions to be sensitive to the needs of their business units.

For example restructuring of business models, reorientation of production, and flexibility in working conditions, are crucial for our business units to be competitive in the new environment. Whenever this has happened, it has benefited both business and their employees."

Thus, the Prime Minister openly advocated the World Bank package for India and wanted working class to accept it and allow the business houses to exploit the working class most ferociously. He, however, had no word to say about the Supreme Court judgement attacking workers' right to strike and the brutal repression launched by the Jayalalitha Government in Tamil Nadu against the State Government employees and teachers who embarked on a glorious strike despite the reign of terror.

### **CITU POSER TO PM**

Immediately after the speech of the Prime Minister, M. K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, stood up and asked the Prime Minister why he has not uttered a word about the anti-strike judgement of the Supreme Court and the arbitrary actions taken by Tamil Nadu Government against the State Government employees. The CITU representative pointed out that the Prime Minister's speech was an election speech and wanted to know what steps the Central Government would take to nullify the pernicious impact of the Supreme Court judgement and the vindictive actions indulged in by the Tamil Nadu Government.

The Labour Minister tried to intervene and respond to the points raised but the CITU representative insisted that the workers' representatives wanted a reply from the Prime Minister. Other central trade unions supported the CITU's viewpoint and the Prime Minister had to say that he may not be agreeing with all the observations of the Supreme Court. He was prepared to have a discussion with trade unions provided there is no closed mind. 'Some way has to be found out to the problem', he stated.

### **DIVERGENT STANDS**

All the trade union representatives in their speeches on the general debate criticised the policies of globalisation followed by the NDA Government. They did not agree with the claim of the PM and the Labour Minister that the economy was forging ahead. They pointed out the growing menace of unemployment and large-scale closure of industrial undertakings.

Most of the trade unions opposed the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour and the proposed amendment to the labour laws. They criticised the reduction in the rate of interest on PF and deterioration in the functioning of the EPF Organisation and the ESI Corporation.

The representatives of the employers, however, welcomed the policies of the government and demanded acceleration of the pace of economic reforms. Intervening in the debate, M K Pandhe noted the decline in the

tripartite machinery in India during NDA regime with most of the tripartite committees becoming defunct. Criticising the policies of globalisation, he pointed out that the working class was under severe attack and India's ranking in human development has gone down from 123 to 127 out of 175 countries studied by the UNO. MNCs are earning huge profits in India, while traditional and small scale industry in India is facing ruination.

The CITU warned the government that the united trade union movement would not allow the policy of indiscriminate privatisation of well run and profit making public sector undertakings and asserted that a movement including strike action to oppose the policies of the Government would soon be on the anvil.

The representatives of the State Governments were divided. Some supported the points raised by the trade unions, while others fully endorsed the views of the employers and the Central Government.

Md Amin, Labour Minister of West Bengal in his intervention made it clear that some of the recommendations made by the National Labour Commission were evidently anti-labour. He said: "Without going into the specifics, I would like to submit that my State Government would oppose any move to curtail the existing trade union rights. Curtailment of the right to strike and proposed freedom to the management to hire and fire the labour and to contract out non-core jobs completely would hit

## CITU REFUTES LABOUR MINISTER'S VERSION

The Union Minister of Labour, Dr. Sahib Singh Verma, while briefing the media on the outcome of the recently concluded session of the Indian Labour Conference had claimed that "two new bills on the unorganised sector workers and contract labour were unanimously accepted and are likely to be introduced in the winter session of Parliament" (Times of India, Oct. 20).

In a press release, M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, described this as an 'absolute concoction' not borne out even by the reports circulated to the plenary session of the ILC.

First, the Ministry of Labour did not circulate any revised draft of the unorganised sector workers bill, in spite of the demand made by the workers' side that the draft reportedly cleared by the GoM chaired by the Dy. PM be placed before the ILC. Second, there was no agenda item even before the ILC relating to any new bill on contract labour.

The report of the committee on rationalisation of labour laws placed before the ILC only recorded the workers' views and employers' views and ended with expressing a pious wish that "the discussion should further continue to reach a consensus".

The report of the committee on unorganised labour only recorded a long list of suggestions and recommended that "consequential amendments be made to the draft Bill (circulated in May 2003) on the basis of these suggestions before it is placed to the legislature". The report also noted that the recommendations of the National Seminar held last year "could have been suitably incorporated while drafting the Bill". These recommendations comprise adequate safeguards for ensuring minimum wage security, taking into account the suggestions of the 15th ILC, the study group set up by the Second NCL and the Supreme Court judgement in the Raptakos Brett case on minimum wage fixation. The report also noted the trade union representatives' views that "much more detailed ground level tripartite consultations were a necessary pre-requisite before the Bill is posed to the legislature". Further, the financial sustainability of the schemes and infrastructure for implementation thereof are crucial questions, which remain to be addressed.

The CITU press release urged the Labour Minister to respect the ethos of tripartism and not indulge in fake claim of 'unanimous acceptance', where there was really none. It cautioned that if the Government of India ventured to proceed with the introduction of the two Bills, as stated by the Labour Minister, the move would only be an infringement of the tripartite consultation process and meet with total resistance by the trade unions.

the interest of the working class." He further noted: "We are of the view that rising unemployment and erosion of fundamental rights of workers are due to erroneous economic policies pursued in the country over the last 12 years."

## 'NO' TO LABOUR LAW CHANGES:

The discussion on the agenda items reflected sharp differences of opinion among the representatives of workers and the employers. On the report of the Second National Commission on Labour, the representatives of the workers resolutely opposed the recommendation and both workers and employers' groups recorded their divergent viewpoints. The representatives of the State governments did not give any specific opinion.

The workers' group opposed the concept of 'master and servant' relationship visualised by the Second NCL and criticized the policy of hire and fire to be granted to the employers. They opposed the policies, which gave the management full powers to retrench the workers, declare lay off and close down the industrial undertakings. They disapproved the proposal to reduce the regular jobs and increase the contract jobs in industrial undertakings. The proposal to create a new judicial authority viz. Labour Management Relations Commission to conduct

adjudication and arbitration proceedings was not agreed to by the workers' representatives. They objected to the concept of labour flexibility, which would give huge powers to employ labour at their sweet will. The employers, however, welcomed the proposals and wanted the government to take quick measures to implement the recommendations of the Second NLC.

The Committee of the ILC, which discussed the agenda item on the proposed bill on unorganised sector workers, suggested that without ensuring need-based minimum wages job security, decent working conditions and genuine social security the Bill on Unorganised Workers would not really serve the interest of the workers. It was emphasised that the recommendations of the national seminar, held by National Labour Institute, should be implemented in full to ensure the benefits for the unorganised workers. The committee suggested a separate bill for the agricultural workers, as recommended by National Commission on Rural Labour. The trade unions pressed the point that the Bill on unorganised labour should not be introduced in Parliament, without incorporating the suggestions given by the trade unions. However, in a Press Conference, the Union Labour Minister made a unilateral announcement that the proposed bill was 'unanimously accepted' by the ILC. The CITU in a press statement has

contradicted the announcement of the Labour Minister (see box). Another committee discussed the question of employment generation; but its report did not oppose the downsizing of manpower by central and state governments and undertakings in public and private sectors. The CITU noted that when huge skilled and highly skilled manpower is unemployed today, mere training and skill-development will not help tackling the problem of unemployment in the country. The CITU criticised the policies of jobless growth implemented by the NDA Government and not allocating resources for any public spending for programme of job creation, including development of infrastructure in the country. The representatives of the CITU demanded unemployment allowance for the unemployed to maintain their existence. It emphasised the need for land reforms and development of rural industry to generate. They demanded schemes to reopen all the closed units, to provide jobs to the workers, who have lost their only source of livelihood. Right to work as a fundamental right should be recognised by the Govt of India. On the question of social security for the unorganised sector, the government scheme was just an election gimmick. The CITU representatives in the concluding plenary session pointed out that the Central Government had no machinery to provide social security benefits to about 33 crore unorganised sector workers in

urban and rural areas. Moreover, the government had not spelt out how the money would be raised for their social security. The CITU proposed a cess of one per cent of the turnover on industries having turnover of over Rs 100 crores. The Union Labour Minister welcomed it but in the face of resolute opposition by the employers, he could not come out with any explanation on how the funding of the scheme would be undertaken. Trade unions opposed the cess on petrol and diesel, as it would affect ordinary people. When unorganised workers do not get jobs for the whole year how can they contribute to the scheme? This point was raised by the TU representatives. They further demanded a special bill for the home-based workers to protect their interests.

Thus the government could not get their policies endorsed by the Indian Labour Conference due to the strong opposition expressed by the trade unions. Regarding the problems of small scale industries, the trade unions agreed to have a separate discussion for arriving at appropriate conclusions to protect the interests of the workers and the industry in the traditional and small scale industries.

If the Government of India despite the TU opposition tried to amend the labour laws unilaterally, it will have to meet stiff resistance of the united trade union movement all over the country.

On the 85th anniversary of the Great October Revolution, we remember all those who sacrificed their lives and endured immeasurable suffering for the success of the Revolution in Russia. The October Revolution assumes greater significance in the existing world situation, when more and more people are realising that capitalist society has not provided solutions and that it cannot provide solutions to the basic problems of mankind - poverty, hunger, illiteracy, ill health etc. Also, it has immense significance today, when millions of people - workers, peasants, women, youth and students - believe that 'Another World is Possible' and are in search of such a world. The Great October Revolution, in spite of the fact that Socialism has suffered a temporary set back in the 1990s, has proved that 'Socialism Is The Alternative' to the exploitative capitalist society.

#### EXPLOITATION ENDED

On 7th November (new calendar) 86 years ago, in 1917, the working class established its control over the State in Russia, for the first time in the history of mankind, thus ushering in a society free from exploitation of one human being by another. The Great October Revolution, under the leadership of Lenin,

shook the entire world. While the capitalist class started trembling at the prospects of the spread of socialist ideas among the toiling masses in other countries, the working class throughout the world was greatly inspired by the success of their brethren in Russia in capturing power from their exploiters. The Revolution, within a short period, transformed the USSR from an industrially backward and poor country into an industrially developed country, which could challenge the USA in several fields, including Space Technology. Poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy were eradicated. Health care and housing were assured to all the citizens of the country. The living standards of the people, of the workers, and the peasants improved to an extent unimaginable before the days of the Revolution.

#### GENDER EQUALITY

Working women and Peasant women were given equal employment opportunities, equal remuneration and other equal rights, which were not confined to legal documents, but were fully put into practice. Women were encouraged to come out of the confines of their homes and to play an active role in the productive process and to contribute their share to the national prosperity.

Maternity benefits, crèches, leave for child care etc were ensured to all working women.

#### INTERNATIONAL ROLE

The role of Socialist Russia in fighting and defeating the Fascist forces in the Second World War, sacrificing over 20 million of its young people, is unforgettable. The USSR extended all the necessary help to the newly liberated countries for their industrial and economic development. The military might of Socialist Russia helped many developing countries to successfully challenge American imperialism.

The existence of Socialism influenced the attitude of the capitalist class throughout the world including those in the advanced capitalist countries, towards the workers in their countries. The employers in the capitalist countries, particularly those in Western Europe were forced to provide social security benefits to their workers, to prevent them from coming under the influence of socialist ideas, as their counterparts in Eastern Europe, under the socialist system, were enjoying job guarantee, job protection and decent working and living conditions. Even in other countries, including in our own country, this was the background in which the Government, at least in words,

boasted of developing an egalitarian, socialistic pattern of society.

### **SETBACK ADVERSITIES**

The collapse of the USSR and the setback to Socialism in the Eastern European countries, for several reasons including weaknesses in the proper implementation of the Socialist principles, is a great set back not only to the working class in those countries, but also to the working people all over the world. The people of the countries, which earlier constituted the USSR, who were carried away by the bourgeois propaganda that they would gain freedom and further material prosperity by embarking on the capitalist path today find, to their utter dismay, that their conditions have fast deteriorated. The economy has collapsed and the country, which was able to challenge the wealthy USA in many fields, today finds itself in the company of the poor countries in several social parameters. Poverty and unemployment have increased. In Russia, after the collapse of socialism, poverty is estimated to have increased from 2% to 40% in eight years. While a few neo rich and the mafia have amassed wealth, large sections of the people have been thrown into destitution. Wages are not being paid for months at a stretch. Working women have been forced to quit their jobs in favour of men. The old feudal attitude that women's place is in the home has resurfaced. Violence on women has

increased. Many women are forced into prostitution because of poverty.

The process of imperialist globalisation gathered momentum with the fall of Socialism and the attacks on the living and working conditions of the workers have intensified. The social security benefits- pension, health care, old age benefits etc- provided to the workers are being withdrawn in all the capitalist countries. The rights of the workers, including the right to protests and the right to strike, are sought to be curtailed.

### **CAPITALISM PREDATORY**

The advocates of capitalism have proclaimed that capitalism was the end of society and that socialism was only an aberration. USA seeks to establish a unipolar world with its economic, political and military domination. It has utilised the 11th September terrorist attacks to launch war against Afghanistan and also against Iraq without UN sanction. But the developments in the last more than a decade after the setback to Socialism, have proved beyond any doubt that capitalism has no answer to the basic problems of humanity like unemployment and poverty. Capitalism, whose driving force is profit mongering, can never eradicate these, nor can it provide equal opportunities and equal rights for women workers. Even in the advanced capitalist countries, including the USA, Japan, and Europe, women's wages are only around 60%-70% of men's wages.

Opposition to imperialist globalisation and war is also mounting with millions participating in the anti globalisation, and anti war protests. Millions of workers in England, France, Germany, South Korea, Philippines, as well as in our own country are participating in militant struggles against the attacks on their living conditions and to protect their rights. Thousands of people lodge militant demonstrations whenever and wherever the meetings of World Bank, IMF and the WTO, the proponents of imperialist globalisations are held. Larger and larger number of people, including youth and students are coming out in opposition of the exploitative capitalist system.

### **ALTERNATIVE IS SOCIALISM**

The World Social Forum, in which lakhs of people from all over the world participate, is being held since the last three years with the slogan 'Another World is Possible'.

It is only the working class that can make another world possible. The Great October Revolution, under the leadership of the working class of Russia, has shown us what should be the outlines of the other world which should replace the capitalist world. On this anniversary of the October Revolution, let us, the working class of India, take a pledge to lead the struggle against all exploitation in our country and fulfil the task ordained to us by history.

## AICCWW 7TH CONFERENCE CALL:

# INTENSIFY STRUGGLES AGAINST EXPLOITATION

K Hemalata

**S**trengthen the Working Class movement and intensify struggles against economic and social exploitation by bringing more and more women workers into the trade unions in general and the CITU in particular! This was the message of the Seventh Conference of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) to the millions of women workers in the country.

The Conference, as part of the Eleventh Conference of CITU, was held on 11-12 October 2003, at Mangala Hotgi Manch, in Susheela Gopalan Nagar (Adarsha Vidyalaya), Mumbai. 318 delegates and fraternal delegates from 18 States, representing more than 25 industries/ sectors participated in the Conference. Fraternal delegates from AIDWA, AIAWU, SFI and DYFI attended the conference.

AICCWW (CITU) Conferences were earlier held one day prior to the CITU Conferences. But in 2000, the CITU decided to hold a two day Conference of working women separately in order to have a better focus and more detailed discussion on the issues of working women and their participation in the activities and leadership of CITU. This was found to be very useful and the practice has been continued this time too.

### VETERANS FELICITATED

The inaugural session started

with the hoisting of the CITU flag by the veteran leader of the trade union and women's movement and the Vice President of CITU, Ahilya Ranganekar. A Presidium consisting of Nirupama Chatterjee (West Bengal), MK Kamalamma (Kerala), T. Jaya (Tamil Nadu), Ch Prameela (AP), Rama Deb Burman (Tripura), Fatima Beg (Maharashtra) and AR Sindhu (AICCWW Centre) conducted the proceedings. Malathi Chittibabu from Tamil Nadu introduced the Condolence resolution. Suman Sanzgiri, Chairperson of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates and the guests. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, inaugurated.

Founder members of the AICCWW (CITU) and veteran leaders of the trade union and women's movements in the country Lakshmi Sehgal and Ahilya Ranganekar, both of whom are the personification of courage, determination and sacrifice in the struggle for the cause of the working class, were felicitated by the Conference. In a gesture to symbolise the handing over of the legacy of struggles to the younger generation, the CITU flag was handed over by Lakshmi to Jyoti, a young office bearer of the AP State Committee of CITU and by Ahilya to Heerabai, an anganwadi worker from Maharashtra. Ashok Dhawale, General Secretary of the

Maharashtra State Committee of the Kisan Sabha, and Kiran Moghe, Joint Secretary of AIDWA, greeted the Conference.

The conference report was presented by Hemalata, Secretary of AICCWW (CITU). 37 delegates, including the representatives of several industrial federations, participated in the discussion. The report was later adopted unanimously.

### PERNICIOUS POLICIES

The report noted that working women were the worst affected by the policies of neo liberal globalisation being pursued by the BJP led Government at the Centre. The industries where women work in large numbers are hit by these policies. Agriculture, plantations, traditional industries like coir, cashew, fisheries, handloom etc, where most of the women workers are employed are in the doldrums. Working women in the unorganised sector, where most of the women get some work, do not get any legal benefits like minimum wages, maternity benefit, equal wages, social security benefits etc.

Even in the organised sector, women were targeted for VRS. The women workers in the Special Economic Zones were subjected to severe economic exploitation and sexual harassment. The report of the Second National Commission on Labour gave blanket permission

for night shift for women and proposed that separate women's trade unions should be promoted, which would in fact divide the trade unions on gender lines.

The recent Supreme Court judgments on the right to strike, on the retirement age of air hostesses, on contract labour etc indicated the anti worker, particularly, anti organised labour attitude of the judiciary in the era of neo liberal globalisation.

The danger of communalism is rising in the country and the working class being influenced by the communal ideology, as is seen by the participation of the workers in the communal riots in various industrial centres in the country. It has noted that majority communalism and minority communalism feed on each other and both are opposed to the emancipation of women. Both seek to confine women to their homes and family responsibilities. There is an imminent need to create awareness among working women on the danger from the communal forces and to be vigilant towards their attempts to disrupt the unity of the working class.

Struggles against imperialist globalisation have intensified all over the world, including in our country and more and more working women were participating in these struggles. Even middle class women employees like teachers, bank and insurance employees, and Government employees etc in our country, who were earlier reluctant to participate in

demonstrations, shouting slogans, etc. were participating in these, in increased numbers. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu a large number of women State Government employees were in the forefront of the Strikes and were arrested and kept in prison. Anganwadi employees and women in other sectors regularly face police repression whenever they raise their demands. Women plantation workers are being killed along with their male comrades by the goondas of the management and their private security forces.

#### **PROGRESS NOTED**

The participation of women workers in the activities of CITU has increased considerably in the recent period. In the 'Collectorate siege' programme of the Kerala State Committee of CITU on 28th January 2003, in several districts women workers constituted more than 50% of the participants. In the 'Court arrest' programme in Tamil Nadu on the problems of the unorganised sector workers, more than 5,000 women workers courted arrest. Thousands of women plantation workers participated in the May Day rallies in Assam. In Andhra Pradesh, anganwadi employees in some mandals took up the responsibility of organising the May Day programmes.

Women's sub committees were formed in several unions, like those of the electricity employees, road transport employees, medical and health employees, construction workers, beedi workers, plantation workers etc at the State and district level in some

States. The delegates felt that formation of such subcommittees within the unions helped in greater participation of women in the activities of CITU. The Conference noted that a large number of unions have still not formed women's sub committees and called upon all of them to form them at the earliest. It expressed happiness that several fraternal organisations like the AILEA, BEFI, All India State Government Employees' Association, Teachers' Organisations etc, organise women's sessions, conventions etc at the State or all India level on the occasion of their Conferences and have formed women's sub committees.

The membership of women in CITU increased from 15.91% in 1998 to 20.68% in 2000. In Karnataka, women constituted 55% of the membership of CITU and in Himachal Pradesh, women membership was 48.65% of CITU membership. In one district in Karnataka, almost the entire membership of CITU consisted of women. In Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Maharashtra and Kerala, it was between 20% and 40%. It is to be noted that to ensure women's participation in CITU Conferences, a quota of 10% was given in the 8th Conference of CITU at Patna. This was increased to 15% in the 10th Conference at Hyderabad. This time the CITU General Council decided that women should constitute at least 20% of the delegates wherever they were more than 20% of the members and in other States it should be

15%. State Coordination Committees should take this up with the state leadership of CITU to ensure that women are elected as delegates to the Conference as per the quota. Some improvement has also been observed in the representation of women in the various committees of CITU and its affiliated unions. Most of the State Committees of CITU have women members and all the major State Committees have at least one woman as office bearer. Women are elected as members and office bearers in many district committees of CITU. Among the fraternal organisations, women employees in insurance have been elected to important positions as General Secretary or President at the divisional and zonal level. But, on the whole, it was felt that the representation of women in leadership positions needs much improvement.

#### **DEMANDS AND TASKS**

The Conference also unanimously adopted the note on Home Based Workers, presented by Ranjana Nirula,

member, AICCWW Centre, and decided to study the conditions of home based workers, prioritise the industries and prepare strategies to organise them.

Resolutions on amendments to labour laws, on the right to strike, on comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers, on caste oppression, on violence against women, on imperialism and war, on communalism, on an anganwadi worker who was raped and murdered and on two workers of the Tata company who committed suicide after retrenchment, were adopted unanimously.

The Conference adopted a charter of demands of working women, which included ensuring equal wages and equal opportunities for work, maternity benefit for all women workers including agricultural workers, law against sexual harassment and strict implementation of the Supreme Court directions on sexual harassment, strict implementation of the labour laws in Special Economic Zones, ratification of the ILO

Convention on Home Based Workers and enactment of a law for them, fixation of national minimum wages as per the 15th ILC, crèches at work places and no blanket permission for night work. It was decided to conduct an extensive campaign on these demands among working women through local, district and State level conventions, rallies etc, which would culminate in a massive mobilisation at Delhi in the first half of 2004 and give a memorandum to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

A 50-member AICCWW was formed with representation from the States and some industrial federations. It was decided to co-opt a few more members after State Coordination Committees are formed in those States. Hemalata was re elected the Secretary of the AICCWW. The Conference concluded with the concluding remarks by Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU, who expressed his hope that the CITU would have women as General Secretaries at least at the State level in some States in the near future. A.R. Sindhu gave the vote of thanks.

## **COM.SUNIL BASU ROY**

We record with deep regret the sudden demise of Com. Sunil Basu Roy, a prominent leader of the coal workers movement in West Bengal, a former Member of Parliament and member of the working committee of CITU on 6th October, 2003. Com. Sunil Basu Roy has been in the forefront in organising the coal workers movement and was a leading force in the militant struggles of the workers. He held the post of the General Secretary of the All India Coal Workers Federation till its last conference held earlier this year. His untimely demise is a big loss to the CITU and the coal workers in particular.

The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to Com. Sunil Basu Roy and convey condolences to the bereaved comrades and family members.

## AFTERMATH OF BALCO PRIVATISATION

Three years have passed since the BALCO was sold off - rather gifted to Sterlite - almost free of cost. The workers fought a 67 day-strike action but ultimately could not stop privatisation. Arun Shouri, the salesman-in charge appointed by the NDA Govt., spoke volumes in the electronic and print media about the idiocy of the workers opposing privatisation and painted a bright prospect of BALCO under privatised regime. Shouri's brief, on behalf of Sterlite, was eloquent about the certainty of more efficiency and much better performance in Balco under Sterlite's rule and of course more benefit for the workers.

Three years after, by the end of 2002-03, the picture is just opposite in BALCO, and Shouri no more speaks about BALCO on the TV screen. The Observers' team sent by the Prime Minister's office sent to BALCO reported that the conditions of the workers turned worse under the private regime. More than 2400 out of around 7000 workers (at the time of sell-off) have been shown the door under forcible VRS. Highly skilled workers are being forced to do unskilled manual jobs.

But the downslide is there not only in respect of workers. The highly profit-making aluminum plant is going down also in terms of production and operational performance under the Sterlite regime. All the unions in BALCO of all affiliations viz. CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS have jointly submitted a memorandum to Union Labour Minister detailing the fall out of the dubious management of this once blue-chip Aluminum plant in public sector by the Sterlite.

After privatisation, the Bidhanbag Unit of BALCO and the Profile and Tube shop of the Korba plant were shut down which tantamount to around 35% of BALCO operation was stopped. The efficiency under private rule starts with closure and shut down. In terms of financial performance, the post privatization years (2001- 2003) of BALCO registered consistent decline in profit compared to years preceding the sell-off 1998-2000) although the turnover increased in 2002 and 2003 compared to 2000. The Sterlite continued the and manipulative practice of dispatching alumina produced at Balco to Sterlite's wholly owned unit India foils during this period at below market price besides other dubious means of drainage of resources from BALCO making a fool of its 49% stake-holding Govt partner.

And now a more grave conspiracy is afoot endangering the survival of BALCO itself when the lock-in period after the sell-off is going to be over in March 2004. The Sterlite is now enjoying control over the mines with huge bauxite reserve. Sterlite is planning to set up a separate alumina powder plant near the Lungigarh mine with foreign collaboration, which, if materialized, will endanger the survival of the BALCO plant at Korba. Game plan of Sterlite is crystal clear. Through bad financial performance, drainage of resources and planning separate venture in the vicinity with BALCO's resources only, Sterlite is trying to create condition for pushing down the Balco further and manage to procure balance 49% share of BALCO on a platter from Govt. But the Vajpayee Govt has turned a blind eye to all such dubious activities of Sterlite, courtesy his dubious lieutenants.

The BALCO unions, in their memorandum submitted to Labour Minister, demanded total review of the demanded -sell-off deal as the lock-in period is going to be over soon, thorough enquiry of all the aspects of management of demanded during the post sell-off period and take-suitable steps to protect the workers and the plant and mines from manipulative activities of Sterlite.

# ECONOMY DERAILED ....

## ALL ROUND DOWNTURN

The onset of the second decade of the liberalized policy regime, signalled further aggravation of the pace of economic downturn. The annual average growth rate of Real GDP during 1992-2001 had been 6.1%. The said rate in the next two years in 2001-02 and 2002-03 remained well below the previous decade's average at 5.7% and 4.3% respectively indicating a clear trend of further downside. In fact, in the first year itself of the Tenth Plan period the growth rate succumbed to almost half of the rate targeted by the Tenth Plan

document mocking at the wisdom of those planners who dreamt of 8 per cent growth annually. Same is the scenario sector-wise. The annual growth rates in Agriculture, industry and services during the previous decade (1992-2000-01) had been 3%, 6.6% and 7.7% respectively. In 2002-02 and 2002-03, all those three sectors witnessed a lower growth rate on the average (agriculture: 5.7% and -3.2%, industry: 3.2% and 5.7%, services: 6.5% and 7.1%) than the previous decade's aggregate rates.

*(Source: Annual Report, Reserve Bank of India, 2002-03)*

## DOWNSLIDE IN CAPITAL GOODS AND CAPITAL FORMATION

The growth rate in capital goods production dipped from 6.9% in 1999-00 to 1.8% in 2000-01 followed by an absolute decline by (—) 3.4% in 2001-02 and in 2002-03 it has recorded a growth of 10% which means that the growth in real terms remained well below the 1999-00 level. On the other hand, the gross domestic capital formation

has sharply decelerated from 25.2% of GDP in 1999-00 to 23.7% in 2001-02 reflecting the gloom in investment scenario. As the Annual Report (2002-03) of Reserve Bank of India noted, "the deceleration of investment rate has essentially reflected the failure of investment demand to absorb available resources."

*( Source: Economic Survey and RBI Annual Report, 2002-03 )*

## TEXTILE MACHINERY SECTOR-VICTIM OF GOVT POLICY

"The Textile Engineering Industry had been an unintended(?) victim of reforms, said Sanjay Jaybharathanavelu, Co-chairman of Federation of India Textile Engineering Industry in a meeting of the Development Council of Textile Machinery industry held on 11th October 2003 at Mumbai. It was reported in the meeting that the domestic industry has an installed capacity of Rs 3800 crore, the market for such machineries and accessories in India is Rs 3000 crore with exports at Rs 400 crore... However, imports of machineries and accessories had been at Rs 2000 crore with internal production and supply at less than Rs 1000 crore leading to severe underutilization (hardly around 26%) of domestic capacity. The

reasons cited for such depressed state of affairs is that the supply of technical know-how and joint ventures dried up due to indiscriminate trade policy and unfriendly fiscal measures. Further the policy encouraging the import of used textile machinery with the facility of concessional duties compounded the distress of the domestic machinery industry. Further, customs duty on the inputs used by the domestic industry is higher than the customs duty of fully assembled machinery imported from abroad which has put the domestic industry in severe distress in the face of higher incidence of local levies, higher power cost, increased transaction costs etc...

*(Source-Business Line, 12-10-2003)*

# DOWN THE DISASTER LANE !

## DOWNSLIDE IN RURAL ECONOMY

**A**griculture and the allied sector has been the worst victim of slowdown and decline during the liberalized policy regime. The annual growth of agricultural sector during last three years till 2002-03 remained around 0.7% on the average and out of those three years, agricultural GDP witnessed negative growth in two years. The foodgrains production has also recorded an

absolute decline in 2000-01 and 2002-03 and in 2002-03 it fell below the 1996 level of production and all major commercial crops like oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane, tea, coffee etc also faced a similar decline in absolute terms or remained virtually stagnant. All blames for the agricultural collapse has been put on drought, but the problem is even deeper.

*(Source: Economic Survey and RBI Annual Report, 2002-03)*

## CORE SECTOR GROWTH DIPS TO 4.2% IN FIRST HALF OF 2003-04

**D**efying the feel-good factor (?) in the economy, six infrastructure industries suffered a decline in the first half of the fiscal to 4.2% against 6.5% during the first half of 2002-03....Finished steel registered a growth of 7.8%—down from 11.2% in the first half of 2002-03 ; crude petroleum came down from 5.3% in the first half of 2002-03 to (-) 4% during the same period

in the current fiscal 2003-04; cement declined from 9.8% in the first half of last year to 5.1% in the first half of current fiscal; coal declined from 5.8% to 3.7% during the corresponding periods; electricity also showed a decline in growth rate from 3.4% in first half of 2002-03 to 2.8% in the first half of current fiscal...

*(The Financial Express, 23-10-2003)*

### Without Comments

## Panel tells Govt to plug holes to check vanishing cos

The Standing Committee on Finance has pulled up the Department of Company Affairs (DCA) for not making serious efforts to check 'fly-by-night' or vanishing companies. The Committee has asked the Government to plug in the loopholes in the existing provisions of the Companies Act in an effective manner so that the small investors get their money back.

"The committee was pained to observe that a large number of companies have vanished. It appears that no serious effort has been put in place in this regard and the companies have taken an easy exit from the scene," the Committee said in its report on Demand for Grants (2003-04).

It found that the DCA has failed to cross link these companies with defaulters list prepared by the Reserve Bank of India. In the view of the Committee, the directors of such companies are also defaulters and the Government may supply the names of such directors to the RBI for putting on its Web site.

The Committee observed that though the names of the companies with dates of their incorporation were on the DCA Web site, the names of the directors and the amounts raised by these companies were not available. It apprehended that in the absence of cross-linking, the directors of the vanishing companies were joining the boards of other companies. Hence, the Committee asked the Government to initiate steps in this regard expeditiously.

Further, the Committee was surprised to note that not even a single investor has been able to get his money back. Besides, the penal provisions provided under the Companies Act were not adequate to deal with the directors of vanishing companies effectively. The Committee felt that there were some loopholes present in the provisions and the unscrupulous persons could make use of them and escape from the penal provisions.

*(The 'International Bonded & Child Labour Conference' was organised at Pakistan (Gujrat) on 18th and 19th September 2003 by the 'All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions'. At the invitation of the organisers a CITU delegation comprising Janaki Ballabh of the International Department and Malathy Chittibabu, Secreter, CITU Tamil Nadu visited Pakistan from 18th to 22nd September 2003. Here is a report by Janaki Vallabh and Malathy Chittibabu. - Editor)*

## A VISIT TO PAKISTAN

We boarded the 'Delhi - Lahore Bus' at Dr. Ambedkar Bus Terminus, New Delhi in the early hours of 17th Sep 03. After completion of all the check in formalities the bus started at 6.00 am. Breakfast, lunch, etc were served en-route. While crossing the borders at Wagah, we had some unknown feeling that we are entering into a terror stricken land of Pakistan. We reached Lahore at 6 pm Pirzada Imtiaz Syed, General Secretary of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions and C.Gulzar Ahmed, General Secretary, APTUF, along with some of their comrades received us very cordially. From Lahore we were taken to Gujarat city, where a grand reception awaited us. On 18th, we visited a Workers Welfare Board School. Trade Unions are involved in this task. This school was one of 22 such schools that are run by the Punjab Provincial Government. We met the Principal, Ahsan-Ul-Haq, a Retd. Major, who told us that 40% of the children enrolled belong to the general public and 60% were the children of workers. About 40 children are admitted on average in each section. The school faculty members are involved in educating and persuading the parents to send their children to

school. We visited the Punjab Board of Technical Education. Then we visited a company that manufactures Electric Fans, Washing Machines, etc. Around 300 workers work there on a contract basis. We also visited some Ceramic Pottery making factories. Labourers in these factories also work purely on contract basis. In one single factory they produce 80,000 cups in a week, under stringent working conditions.

On 19th Sep., the 'International Bonded & Child Labour Conference' started at 11.30 am, with Pirzada Imtiaz Syed welcoming the participants. Besides two of us from India, Mohammed Sultan Hussain, President, Bangladesh Technical Education Board Employees Union (CBA), also attended the Conference. The other invitees from Nepal, Australia, etc could not attend the Conference for various reasons. Around 1000 people participated in the Conference, of which women and children constituted 60%. On behalf of CITU we presented a paper. Md. Sultan Hussain, President, Pakistan Federation of Labour Unions gave the presidential address. 21 speakers took part in the deliberations. Eradication of Dowry, unemployment, causes for child labour,

elimination of child labour, were the issues focused by the speakers. They spoke about child labourers in brick-kilns, hotels, textiles factories etc. The Conference concluded at 4.00 pm.

On 20th, Ms Najma Muneer, Principal, Usman Girls Model School, invited us for lunch. Around 300 girls are studying in that school. They were telling us that if the opportunity is given the girls perform better than boys in their studies.

The next day we had to leave Gujrat city. The hospitality and the affection shown by the people at Gujrat and the tearful farewell will always be remembered.

At Lahore, we were received by Gulzar Ahmed Choudhry, Secretary General, APTUF and Nazir Gulzar, President, Progressive Youth Organisation.

The Railway Employees & Workers Federation organised a meeting on 22nd. Though there was a ban on trade union activities, more than 200 railway workers participated in the meeting. Working Women Organisation also conducted a meeting in which 15 women took part in the discussion. The issues discussed in the women's meeting were - globalisation and its effects in general and on

women in particular; downsizing of labour; home based workers and labour policy of the Pakistan Government. They also wanted to know about how Indian workers feel about Pakistani workers.

At 6 pm an all-union meeting was organised. About 100 trade union leaders representing various unions participated. During the course of discussion they were emotionally raising slogans like: "We don't want bombs, we want roti, we don't want bloodshed, we want peace". We learnt from the discussions that in Pakistan transport has been totally privatised; banks and financial institutions are partly privatised; the insurance sector is controlled by private sector; railway and postal services are under the control of Government; sale of

telecom services has been announced but there are no buyers.

Since the trade unions are banned, no democratic rights are enjoyed by any of the trade unions. If any movements/demonstrations are organised, the leaders are arrested on criminal charges. The government and labour laws are not favourable to workers in Pakistan. Despite ban, union activists are functioning here and there. They organise conventions and seminars, international trade unions are invited by these unions and they participate in conferences and workshops.

The main industries are furniture making, ceramics, leather garments and textiles. Workers are mostly engaged on contract basis or piece-rate basis only.

Purchasing power is drastically reducing. Women are being employed in various sectors as they feel that women perform better in their work. Women represent 17% in the assemblies.

Despite all their hardships in their day-to-day life their humane approach is very touching. Wherever we went and met people, in the streets, at PCOs or in restaurants or shops, if they came to know that we were Indians, they were most affectionate. It was so clear that they want to be friendly with Indians. It is the governments of both the countries that create tension between the people. But the workers only want unity. And it is only the unity and friendship of the people of India and Pakistan that can ensure peace in the region.

## IOC PRIVATISATION MOVE OPPOSED

**T**he Centre of India Trade Unions (CITU), in a statement issued on October 4, condemned the BJP led government's move to privatise the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). The statement said that, having failed to privatise the HPCL and BPCL, thanks to the Supreme Court judgement restraining the government from privatisation of these oil PSUs without prior approval of parliament, the cabinet committee on disinvestment (CCD) has decided to split and privatise the IOC.

It may be recalled that the trade unions had already expressed apprehension over the attack on IOC, at the all-India convention of the oil trade unions held in Delhi on September 28, 2003. The convention's declaration had then warned that the privatisation onslaught would be extended to other oil PSUs like the ONGC, IOC etc, and had urged upon all oil workers to unite under the banner of National United Forum, irrespective of their affiliations, and prepare for bitter struggles.

The IOC, the only Indian company among the Fortune 500 companies, is also the 17th largest petroleum company in the world. The IOC's share in refining and marketing capacity in the country is 42 per cent and 55 per cent respectively. This public sector oil giant contributed Rs 33,007 crore to the national exchequer in fiscal 2002-03.

The CITU has recorded its vehement opposition to the move to privatise the IOC, strongly condemned the government for the anti-national decision, and emphatically demanded the reversal of the suicidal decision and complete halt to the move to privatise the IOC. The CITU statement expressed its firm view that the decision demonstrates abject surrender of the BJP led government to the ill will harboured by the big business in the country and foreign oil multinationals that this cash rich and excellently run blue chip oil public sector undertaking (PSU) be handed them over. The CITU further appealed to the trade union movement, particularly in the oil PSUs, to intensify the ongoing move against privatisation and take immediate steps for effective implementation of the decision of the September 28 Delhi Convention to "launch militant struggles including strike.

*The Hindu, datelined Saturday, Sep 27, 2003 carried a story under the caption "Unorganised sector to get pension" by Aarti Dhar, which is reproduced below:*

## LAVISHING PLATITUDES FOR UNORGANISED SECTOR WORKERS

"NEW DELHI SEPT. 26. For the first time, the Government plans to offer the unorganised sector of about 370 million workers a scheme which would give them old age pension as well as life insurance and medical cover.

"A Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, met today and cleared the scheme. It will now be sent to the Union Cabinet for approval before being tabled in Parliament, most likely, on the first day of the winter session. The initiative is expected to go a long way in improving the living and working conditions of the workers in the unorganised sector and provide them with some social security. "The seven-member GoM decided to provide three basic necessities to the workers in the unorganised sector. A draft Bill has been prepared - the Unorganised Sector Workers' Bill - under which each worker and five members of his family will get medical cover up to Rs. 30,000 a year through a Universal Health Insurance Scheme. It will also give him a life insurance cover for Rs. one lakh and an old age pension of Rs. 500 per month on attaining the age of 60 years. "The Union Labour Minister, Sahib Singh Verma, said that the Centre intended to levy an additional surcharge of 10 paise per litre on petrol and diesel to partially generate resources for the voluntary scheme that will cost the Government Rs. 1,000 crores for covering 5 million workers in the next 10 years. "The scheme will not suffer for paucity of funds because the Centre has agreed to bear the expenses," Mr. Verma said while indicating that besides this no other cess or tax would be levied. "While a worker below the age of 35 years will pay Rs. 2 per day to become a member, his employer can also volunteer to participate in the scheme by contributing Rs. 200 per employee per month for which he will get income tax rebate. For those more than 35 years of age, the amount will be slightly higher. In the case of self-employed persons, the employer's share will also be paid by the Government, he said.

"The ambitious scheme will be implemented through an elaborate Employees Provident Fund and Employees State Insurance scheme set-up that will bring down the establishment cost to a mere one per cent as compared to 30-35 per cent in other countries where such schemes are being implemented, Mr. Verma said.

"There is provision in the draft Bill for establishing Workers Facilitation Centres for registering workers. The Employees Provident Fund Organisation will provide each registered worker with a unique Social Security Number free of cost.

### TUs KEPT IN DARK

Unfortunately, the central trade unions have been kept in the dark on the actual contents of the bill supposed to have been cleared by the GoM. Nor the Ministry of Labour cared to circulate the bill in the recently concluded 39th session of the Indian Labour Conference (ILC). (See reports in pages 60 - 63)

But the agenda notes of the ILC had referred to an Unorganised Sector Workers (Employment and Welfare) Bill, stating that the draft of which was 'under consideration of the Group of Ministers headed by the Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister'. In the meanwhile only, the above extracted reports in the media had appeared.

The CITU demanded in writing that the draft Bill, vetted by the GoM headed by the Dy PM, should be placed for an in-depth consideration by the ILC before its introduction in Parliament. A similar demand had been reiterated by the central trade unions in the Standing Labour Committee meeting as also in their joint communication to the Ministry of Labour on this subject.

### DUAL STANCE

The media report, as above, states that social security benefits proposed to be extended to the workers covered by the draft Bill would come under the purview of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). As these two

entities are supposed to be autonomous bodies, administered by statutory tripartite machinery, the CITU demanded that the Government of India clarify whether the provisions of the draft Bill in this regard had been placed before the Central Board of Trustees of the EPF and ESIC, in so far as they relate to functioning of these two entities and their views obtained.

The CITU also pointed out in this connection, that there seemed to be no convergence of steps being initiated by the Government of India. On the one hand the Government of India had initiated steps to put in place a Pension Regulatory Authority, as per recommendations of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority in its report on pension sector reforms targeting the unorganised sector. Ministry of Labour is reportedly seeking to address the social security concern of the unorganised sectors workers, including pension and medical facilities, through the EPFO and ESIC. The Government of India has to steer clear of the duality in its approach to the issue of unorganised sector pension reforms presumptions, CITU urged.

None of the above had been addressed by the Ministry of Labour either during the ILC session or even afterwards.

In fact the Committee of the ILC, which discussed the agenda of 'social security issues' with special

emphasis on social security needs for the unorganised sector work force, in its report presented by no less a person than the Central Provident Fund Commissioner, its member secretary noted as below:

"The Committee noted that the Central Government is proposing to enact a legislation for unorganised workers. The contents of the various welfare schemes proposed to be drawn up under this legislation were not available to the Committee probably as these are yet to be finalised. The Committee did not, therefore, deem it appropriate at this stage to make any specific comments or observations about it"

#### **ONLY SYMPATHY AND PLATTITUDES**

In the name of pension sector reforms, which are mainly intended to flag off private insurance schemes in the era of opening up of the insurance sector, the Government has made up their mind to switch over to the "Defined Contributions" concept from that of "Defined Benefits" concept. The move is also towards shifting to personal and social insurance schemes from social assistance schemes.

These policy shifts cannot go hand in hand with the lavishing of platitudes and showering of sympathy over the miserable conditions of unorganised workforce in the country and lack of social security for them.

## **11 Workers Killed in Coal Mine Disaster**

11 Workers were killed in a coal mine in Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh under Singareni Coalfields Ltd. because of roof collapse. The bodies are yet to be recovered and the operations are facing challenges as the danger of further roof collapse in that seam is being apprehended.

In June this year 17 workers met watery grave when roof collapsed and huge water gushed in killing the trapped miners, in the same seam of the bed of coal.

These incidents and many more less severe accidents taking place with regularity shows the coal managements criminal negligence in mines safety. In the name of downsizing and outsourcing the safety administration has been practically locked out and the workers warning are being deliberately ignored.

CITU demands that the rescue operations be intensified and compensation to be paid to the families of the deceased.

CITU also demands that the safety measures and policies must be given top most priority and effective steps to avoid such disaster must be taken. The management cannot play with the lives of miners in the name of cost savings and the officers responsible for the negligence that caused the roof collapse must be brought to book. An exemplary punishment will prevent such accidents in future.

CITU condoles the workers' death and sends our consolation to the bereaved families.

## REPORTS & EVENTS

### ORISSA PREPARES TO DEFEND RIGHT TO STRIKE

**W**ith the Supreme Court hell bent on snatching away the right of workers and employees for strike, the trade unions and industry-level federations of Orissa have reaffirmed their determination towards preparation of strike action in the State, in their meeting held on 21st October, 2003 at Bhubaneswar.

CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC (LS), AICCTU and industry level unions in bank, insurance, central and state govt.s, PSUs etc. met on 20.10.2003 evening at CITU State Office under the presidentship of Jogendra Nath Tripathy. The

meeting was attended by Sivaji Patnaik, Souribandhu Kar, Lambodar Nayak, Govinda Moharana, Bishnu Mohanty, Sankarsan Pradhan, Sarat Mohanty, Subash Chandra Nayak, Mohine Mohan Samal, Subash Chandra Bej, Govinda Barik, Bijaya Kumar Mishra, Niranjana Mishra and others.

To impose Hire & Fire policy of monopoly houses and multinational companies, the Central government is preparing to pass various black acts. In this background, the Supreme Court judgement to prohibit strike poses a serious attack on the Working

Class. So also, High courts are also handing out judgements against workers strikes, bandhs and processions of democratic masses. Therefore, the joint meeting of trade unions and associations have unanimously decided to prepare for direct struggle engulfing the broader section of population against this undemocratic and unconstitutional move of the judiciary, which is violative of human rights. To prepare for broader struggle the meeting have decided to hold a massive convention jointly on 23rd November, 2003 at Bhubaneswar.

*(Report from Sivaji Patnaik)*

### AICCUFS TO DEFEND RIGHT TO STRIKE

**T**he All India Coordination Committee of the Unions in Financial Sector (AICCUFS) met in Hyderabad on 16th October 2003. It was reported in the meeting that units of the AICCUFS had already been formed in 10 states and steps were on to form in other states. The meeting decided to organise the All India Convention of the

Financial Sector Unions to January 2004.

Another decision of the meeting was to organise signature campaign in support of the Tamil Nadu state government employees and teachers. The AICCUFS will extend financial assistance to the victimized employees, the modalities of which will soon be decided.

The meeting also decided to implement programmes in support of the struggle of the working class against the repression on the state govt. employees and teachers in Tamil Nadu, and the Supreme Court ruling to the effect that the govt. employees had no constitutional legal or moral right to go on strike.

### CITU PALAKKAD DIST CONFERENCE

**T**he three day district conference of CITU, Palakkad, was held on 11 - 13 October, 2003 at Com.K

Sivaraman Nagar, Ottappalam. The conference started with flag hoisting by veteran CITU leader N P Saidalavi. K N Ravindranath,

State President of CITU, inaugurated the delegates' session, which was presided by A Prabhakaran, district president of

## REPORTS & EVENTS

CITU. A K Balan, district secretary, presented the work report. M Chandranand and K K Divakaran, Secretaries of Kerala State CITU also attended the conference.

A seminar on "Judiciary and Globalisation" was held during the conference which was addressed

by K N Raveendranath, M K Damodaran, Ex. Advocate General, N N Krishnadas MP, M Chandran, and AK Balan, MLA. A colourful procession and mass rally was held on the third day of the conference which was attended by about 50,000 workers. The rally was addressed by V S

Achuthanandan, M M Lawrence, T Sivadasa Menon, M Chandran A K Balan, among others.

A K Balan, MLA and A Prabhakaran were unanimously elected as Secretary and President of the 81 member district committee, elected in the conference.

### PUNJAB: CITU HOLDS 11TH STATE CONFERENCE

The 11th Punjab state conference of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, at Chandigarh on October 6-7, successfully concluded with a call to resist the LPG policies, combat communalism and imperialist interventions, and oppose the attacks on trade union rights.

The conference began with a rally in front of the Punjab labour commissioner office, attended by more than 12,000 workers including 700 Anganwari women, who came from all industrial centres and districts in the state. M.K. Pandhe General Secretary, CITU, Balwant Singh, Vijay Misra and Raghunath Singh, Punjab CITU president, senior vice president and general secretary respectively, addressed the rally.

After the flag hoisting and floral tributes at the martyrs column, the delegates session began in a hall named after Pandit Kishori Lal, a departed CITU leader and comrade in arms of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. Senior High Court lawyer and reception committee chairman Joginder Singh Toor

welcomed the delegates. The 256 delegates and 8 observers represented a membership of 70,000 in Punjab. Pandhe inaugurated the conference, exhorting the delegates to hold high the CITU flag of consistent class struggle for a revolutionary transformation of the existing exploitative bourgeois landlord system, and to demarcate themselves from reformist trade union centres.

In his presidential address, Balwant Singh dwelt on the main challenges facing the working class today.

Raghunath Singh presented the general secretary's report covering the seven years period since the 10th conference in December 1996. The tenor of the report was self-critical. Reviewing the activities, it reported how corrupt and disruptive elements misguided many labour activists of the CITU and how the danger has been minimised and is being overcome.

In the three and a half hour long discussion on the report, 37

delegates took part. While expressing complete agreement with the main points of the report, they stressed upon democratic functioning, trade union schooling, cadre policy, and regular check up of the life and work style of the cadres. The report was unanimously adopted amid slogans. Some of the important tasks chalked out for the coming period are as under: intensification and broadening of struggles against LPG politics and WTO regime; taking up the issue of unemployment and problems of the unorganised workers on priority basis; adequate steps to build the worker-peasant alliance; combating the influences of decadent culture through progressive, secular cultural activities in workers colonies; intensification of campaigns against communalism and imperialist onslaughts; strengthening the state CITU centre; fulfilling the target of one lakh membership; streamlining the maintenance of CITU records and funds; special attention to enhance the CITU

## REPORTS & EVENTS

work among working women and promotion of women cadre on priority basis, etc.

A number of comrades from fraternal organisations greeted the

CITU conference.

The conference unanimously elected a 63 member working committee that in turn elected 12 office bearers. The team will be

led by Balwant Singh as president, Vijay Misra as working president and Raghunath Singh as general secretary. Balwant Singh's closing speech concluded the conference.

*(Report from Charan Singh Virdi)*

## CITU DENOUNCES KOLKATA HIGH COURT ORDER

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) on September 29, expressed shock and concern over the judgement of the Kolkata High Court prohibiting rallies and processions in the city between 8 a m to 8 p m on weekdays.

In a statement the CITU held this order to be an infringement on the

basic democratic right of the people to express themselves in a collective and organised manner. It is also surprising that while more serious issues pertaining to life and livelihood of the toiling people are being subjected to wait for attention and justice for long years, the rights of the commoners to highlight their grievances and

demands in a collective manner are being axed one after another. While denouncing this undemocratic order of the Kolkata High Court prohibiting rallies and processions in the city, the CITU said the order needs to be reviewed.

### WEST BENGAL

## MASS PROTEST AGAINST KOLKATA HC RULING

The ruling given by a Kolkata High Court judge, banning all rallies and processions between in the morning to in the evening on working days of the week, has met with a burgeoning protest movement across Bengal and even the legal community has been constrained to identify the ruling as out-of-line. Most political parties, with the notable and expected exception of the BJP, have come forward to register their anger and anguish at the order. Eminent men and women of letters have remonstrated against the HC ruling.

The ruling Left Front in West

Bengal organised a mass convention at the Mahajati Sadan against the HC ruling in Kolkata on October 8. The vast gathering braved the torrential rain represented the antipathy and resentment of the mass of the people at the arbitrary attempt of an "activist adjudicator" (as the corporate media would laud the HC judge) to restrict democratic rights that are explicitly enshrined in article 19 of the Indian constitution.

In his address, Jyoti Basu, former Chief Minister of the state and Vice-President of CITU, declared that struggle and vigilance were

the twin weapons against forays into the realm of democratic rights. The series of attacks that were coming down on the hard-earned rights of the people must be protested by the people through movements.

Describing the ruling as arbitrary and devoid of practicality, Basu, himself a bar-at-law, expressed his annoyance as well as surprise at the manner in which a judge, caught in a traffic jam for a few minutes, would choose to vent his anger on rallies and processions in a suo motu judgement. Basu pointed to the upcoming elections to the Lok Sabha and wondered whether the

## REPORTS & EVENTS

people would be deprived of the right of assembly and of the right to organise marches because of an arbitrary decision of a single judge. Basu asserted: "Nowhere in the world have meetings and rallies ever faced such a blanket ban as exemplified here by the ruling."

Jyoti Basu drew attention of the massive assemblage to the recent and continuing pronouncements by the courts of law, including the apex court, to impinge in a gratuitous manner on the democratic rights of the people of the country by interfering with, and seeking to ban, the right to strike.

"In the democratic set-up that we have today, people can register their remonstrance and disapproval in two ways," Basu pointed out. "One is the legalistic way, and the

other, a much more powerful alternative, is to take to streets. Organisation of rallies, meetings, conventions and marches forms part of the popular movement." At a time, when the courts of law seemed to be bent upon interfering with the democratic rights of the masses, would the latter have much regard and respect for the former, was Basu's query. Basu opined that the people of Bengal would never bow down to arbitrary judgements and said that processions would be organised against the HC ruling. He declared, "If necessary, we are ready to go to jail for the sake of upholding the democratic rights of the masses." Basu said that the Left MP's should take up the issue in parliament even as democratic

movement would continue apace against the judgement until the courts of law retracted and annulled the ruling.

Strangely, the Bengal Bar Council has threatened to move court with a contempt petition against the Bengal Left Front on the issue arising out of the Kolkata High Court's judgement, quietly forgetting the fact the council itself had gone on strike a few months back for a very long period on the basis of a set of demands related to the lawyers' profession.

The CITU and other mass organisations had organised a series of protest rallies to oppose the High Court ruling. Meanwhile, a division bench of the Kolkata High Court had stayed the ban imposed on rallies in the city.

## CITU CONDEMNS KILLING OF PLANTATION WORKERS

**T**he Centre of Indian Trade Unions condemns in strongest terms the firing by the Assam Tea Plantation Security Force (ATPSF) over the plantation workers of Khobang Tea Estate under the Doomdooma PS in Tinsukia district of Assam. Five workers were killed in the firing and nine others were injured.

The workers were demanding 20% bonus but the management agreed to pay only 15% and went ahead with the payment as per its own decision. A section of the workers refused to accept 15%

bonus and an interaction followed during the distribution. It is deplorable that the ATPSF which was supposed to provide protection to the tea gardens from terrorist outfits was used by the management to fire upon the workers on the issue of bonus.

The CITU demands that the manager of the Khobang Tea Estate be immediately arrested and Rs. 5 lakhs be given to the families of the deceased workers. The ATPSF has become a tool in the hands of the tea garden owners to terrorise the workers agitating on

their genuine demands. The CITU demands that the ATPSF be withdrawn immediately.

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# SUCCESSFUL FIGHT BY CHITTIVALASA JUTE WORKERS

M V S Sarma

**A**round 5000 workers of Chittivalasa Jute Mills in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh won their 118 days old struggle on September 27. They had to go on strike when the management illegally and unilaterally imposed wage-cut, DA freeze and an unbearable increase in workload. The workers also demanded that the state government issue a GO scrapping the illegal notice of the management. But the Chandrababu Naidu government, only too eager to please the private managements, did not respond to the workers' demand.

The recognised union, the Chittivalasa Jute Mill Mechanical & General Workers Union (CITU), took initiative for a united movement and launched a powerful campaign in the city and the surrounding rural areas. State units of the central trade unions gave a call for Rasta roko on September 25. Around 55,000 workers in 29 mills went on a one day token strike on September 23. All the unions and associations in Visakhapatnam district, AIDWA, SFI, AIAWU, and AIKS actively campaigned and supported the struggle. The entire municipal town of Bheemunipatnam observed a total bandh on two days. Businessmen too gave wholehearted support to the bandh and took part in the relay fast.

After a week long campaign to mobilise public support, Ch Narasinga Rao, President of the recognised union (and of the State Committee of CITU), Babu Rao (AITUC) and D Appala Reddy (independent) began an indefinite fast on September 21. Earlier, two batches of workers, who started indefinite hunger strike were forcibly removed by the police and arrested. A massive rally was held in which thousands of workers, including the public sector workers, insurance and Government employees participated.

The state government ultimately issued three GOs on September 24, referring the management's proposals to a tribunal and directing that status quo ante be restored pending the tribunal's award. But the management refused implementation of the GO.

On September 24 midnight, police resorted to another round of brutal repression. They brutally beat the agitators, severely injuring several, attacked the press photographers and tried to destroy their films, and forcibly removed the fasting leaders to the hospital. But on the next day, Narasinga Rao broke away from the custody, walked out of the hospital and resumed his indefinite fast in front of the district collectorate. The management was forced to agree for the implementation of the GO when the trade unions threatened with a call for bandh and the political parties supported the struggle. Narasinga Rao broke his fast when the general body meeting of the workers decided to end the struggle.

This significant victory in the backdrop of Supreme Court judgement against strikes, the government's open support to private sector, increased repression of working class struggles and the chief minister's open support to the ban on strikes came mainly due to the remarkable show of unity and determination by all the workers of the CJ Mills. There are four unions in the mill. The leaders of other unions were adopting a self-defeating, cynical approach from the inception and were trying to avoid any united struggle. But the CITU took the campaign to all the workers and won them. This created enormous pressure on other unions who then fell in line.

In many jute mills in the state, the managements have begun to arbitrarily increase workload, and implement two wage systems, employing new workers on abysmally low wages. In certain places like Eluru, unions have either meekly surrendered before the managements or put up a feeble resistance. The CJ Mills management wanted to take advantage of this situation. If its proposals were implemented, workers would have faced a monthly wage reduction of Rs 256, a 30 to 50 per cent increase in workload, DA freeze, besides the two wage systems.

The act of CJ Mills's management also posed a new challenge: it threatened the very right to collective bargaining. The current wage

agreement was sought to be nullified, though it is to be in operation till December 31, 2004. The management tried to impose adverse conditions unilaterally — one and half years before the expiry of that agreement.

The state government's support emboldened the management. But the CITU union in CJ Mills alerted the workers from time to time, educated them on the impending threat and stressed the need for united resistance. The workers responded tremendously, cutting across union loyalties.

The state government was playing a hide and seek game. While ostensibly supporting the workers, the labour department actually did nothing. Its real bosses stood by the management. The CITU successfully exposed this game through a political campaign. It asked the people to pull up their MLAs and other elected representatives and compel them to resolve the strike. The people threatened the MLAs that if they fail to stand by the workers, they could never even dream to re-enter the assembly. This campaign helped raise the political understanding of the workers, and also created a lot of pressure on the MLAs.

The CJ Mills management made a scandalous

campaign against the West Bengal government. It released a pamphlet full of untruths and half-truths about the wage agreements in the jute industry in Bengal. Nimoy Samanta, leader of the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union, visited Chittivalasa and rebuffed the management's arguments. He also toured through some of the surrounding villages. This visit boosted the workers' morale and defeated the management's smearing campaign.

The all-round show of solidarity by all trade unions and other mass organisations, the continuous campaign among the workers and above all their rock-like unity helped in defeating the designs of the management, which was counting on the state government's support.

The struggle of the CJ Mills workers proved that it is very much possible to protect the workers' hard-won rights even under a draconian, neo-liberal regime of the World Bank's touts like Chandrababu Naidu. This requires militant unity and resistance of the working class, democratic functioning, winning over of support from the masses other than the working class, and effective political exposure of the ruling classes.

### CHARTER OF DEMANDS OF WORKING WOMEN

1. Reverse the anti worker and anti women policies of globalisation and liberalisation.
2. Stop the anti worker amendments to the labour laws.
3. Ban retrenchment of women in any form. Create more employment opportunities for women, as a matter of policy.
4. Unemployment benefit should be given to all those who have been retrenched and to those on the employment register.
5. Eight hour work in a day should be strictly implemented for all working women including those in the EPZs and in the unorganised sector. Overtime wages should be paid whenever they are asked to work for longer hours.
6. Equal wages and equal opportunities for work.
7. No discrimination in training, promotion, deployment and retirement.
8. Maternity benefits should be provided for all working women including to those in the unorganised sector and agricultural working women. This should cover miscarriages also.
9. National Minimum wages should be fixed as per the recommendations of the 15th ILC and should be strictly implemented.
10. Supreme Court judgment on Sexual Harassment should be strictly implemented; Complaints Committees should be formed. Enact Legislation against sexual harassment at work place.
11. Ratify ILO Convention on Home Based Workers and enact law for home based workers.
12. Crèches should be provided near the place of work. Working women should be given time to feed their babies.
13. No blanket permission for night work.

*(Adopted by the 7TH Conference of AICCWW)*

# CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

| State          | Sr. Centre<br>No. |                    | Month     |          | State         | Sr. Centre<br>No. |                | Month            |                |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
|                |                   |                    | July, '03 | Aug, '03 |               |                   |                | July, '03        | Aug, '03       |
| Andhra Pradesh | 1                 | Gudur              | 470       | 471      | Maharashtra   | 38                | Mumbai         | 589              | 583            |
|                | 2                 | Guntur             | 512       | 511      |               | 39                | Nagpur         | 510              | 510            |
|                | 3                 | Hyderabad          | 506       | 501      |               | 40                | Nasik          | 537              | 534            |
|                | 4                 | Visakhapatnam      | 491       | 492      |               | 41                | Pune           | 563              | 557            |
|                | 5                 | Warangal           | 533       | 529      |               | 42                | Solapur        | 505              | 502            |
| Assam          | 6                 | D.D. Tinsukia      | 420       | 419      | Orissa        | 43                | Barbil         | 439              | 439            |
|                | 7                 | Guwahati           | 494       | 501      |               | 44                | Rourkela       | 438              | 436            |
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|                | 10                | Rangapara-Tezpur   | 433       | 432      | Rajasthan     | 47                | Ajmer          | 493              | 486            |
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| Gujarat        | 13                | Ahmedabad          | 501       | 491      |               | 50                | Coimbatore     | 497              | 490            |
|                | 14                | Bhavnagar          | 513       | 512      |               | 51                | Coonoor        | 508              | 499            |
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| Haryana        | 18                | Faridabad          | 505       | 501      | Uttar Pradesh | 55                | Agra           | 457              | 459            |
|                | 19                | Yamunanagar        | 468       | 465      |               | 56                | Ghaziabad      | 500              | 501            |
| J & K          | 20                | Srinagar           | 582       | 578      |               | 57                | Kanpur         | 473              | 475            |
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|                | 25                | Ranchi-Hatia       | 439       | 440      |               | 62                | Durgapur       | 562              | 567            |
| Karnataka      | 26                | Bangalore          | 481       | 476      |               | 63                | Haldia         | 592              | 590            |
|                | 27                | Belgaum            | 544       | 542      |               | 64                | Howrah         | 557              | 557            |
|                | 28                | Hubli-Dharwar      | 498       | 495      |               | 65                | Jalpaiguri     | 427              | 424            |
|                | 29                | Mercara            | 484       | 479      |               | 66                | Kolkata        | 545              | 541            |
| Kerala         | 30                | Alwaye             | 490       | 488      |               | 67                | Raniganj       | 433              | 432            |
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| Rajasthan        | 3 Bhilwara         | 491       | 490         |
| Madhya Pradesh   | 4 Chhindwara       | 453       | 454         |
| Tripura          | 5 Tripura          | 440       | 439         |
| Goa              | 6 Goa              | 603       | 598         |

## YET ANOTHER OFFENSIVE AGAINST LABOUR:

# CITU OPPOSES 'FIXED TERM EMPLOYMENT'

The Ministry of Labour had on 4th September, 2003 issued a notification incorporating draft rules for amendment to the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946, introducing a new classification of 'fixed term employment workman'. The Government communication, forwarding the notification containing the draft rules providing for the amendments, does not state the reasons that weighed with the Government to decide on such amendment.

CITU had lodged its strong objections to the proposed amendment, in a letter dated 26 September, 2003 addressed to the Ministry of Labour.

At the outset, CITU questioned the propriety of the Government proposing the amendment by way of a routine notification on a matter of industrial relations policy, without placing it before any tripartite forum.

The notification was also flawed as it contained a proposal for an amendment to the Schedule of the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 itself, in para 2 of the draft rules. Any amendment of the Schedule, which is part of the legislation enacted by the Parliament, can only be made through an amendment bill brought before the Parliament and not by an executive notification. Terming the draft rules as ab initio VOID, CITU demanded that the notification should be rescinded in toto.

CITU is of the confirmed view that the present classification of workman as permanent, probationer, badlis, temporary, casual and apprentices is itself more than adequate and there is no necessity to introduce a new classification as 'fixed term employment workman'.

Drawing the attention of the Government to the recommendations made in the report of the Second National Commission on Labour (in Appendix I - Model Standing Orders to Chapter VI - Review of Labour Laws), CITU pointed out that even there, the Commission on Labour had not suggested any separate classification as 'fixed term employment workman'. Rather the

Commission on Labour has recommended that the classification of 'temporary workers' be defined as "A worker who is engaged for a fixed term for work which is temporary or for temporary increase in work". The Government of India has not initiated any dialogue so far on this Model Standing Orders recommended by the Commission on Labour. Nor any consensus has emerged, as yet, either on this or other recommendations of the Commission on Labour.

Thus, the Commission on Labour, while not favouring any classification as 'fixed term employment workman', had only envisaged engaging a temporary worker 'for a fixed term' only for 'temporary work' or for 'temporary increase in work'. But, the proposed amendment seeks to introduce this classification of 'fixed term employment workman' to be clubbed with that of 'badlis'. This, in essence, seeks to permit 'fixed term employment workman' against posts of permanent workman. A 'badli' workman is, at present, entitled to be made permanent, under certain circumstances in certain occupations. The proposed amendment defines the 'fixed term employment workman' in such a manner that would not entitle him even to the rights or claims, which a badli workman may have. The proposed amendment by incorporating the words 'engaged on the basis of contract of employment for a fixed period' in the definition of 'fixed term employment workman' seeks to encroach the provisions in the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, by permitting contractual appointments for any number of 'fixed terms' in jobs, which may include those of permanent nature. This again has grave implications for the workers and cannot be accepted by CITU.

The proposed amendment suggests that the 'fixed term employment workman' may be engaged on 'contract of employment for a fixed period' 'shall be eligible for all statutory benefits available to a permanent workman ... even though his period of employment does not extend to the qualifying period of employment required in the statute'. The amendment does not specify which statute or

statutes will thus be made applicable to the 'fixed term employment workman'. Further the question arises as to how an amendment to the Model Standing Order can waive the requirement of any qualifying period of employment, prescribed in any statute for availing the benefits there under, only in the case of one category of non-permanent workmen, leaving even the permanent workmen out.

The proposed amendment provides that 'no workman employed on fixed term employment basis as a result of non-renewal of contract of employment or on its expiry shall be entitled to any notice or pay in lieu thereof, if his services are terminated'. This is liable to be misused by the employers as they can go on renewing the

'contract of employment for a fixed period' to engage a workman on 'fixed term employment' for any length of time, without ever making him permanent. Eventually this could lead to complete elimination of the classification of permanent workman in any establishment. Thus the proposed amendments have dangerous and far-reaching implications for the employment relations in the country, which cannot be allowed to pass. This will usher in a 'hire and fire' regime in the country.

In view of the foregoing, the CITU urged the Government of India to drop the move amend the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946 and withdraw the notification dated the 4th September, 2003.

#### **AISGEF & CCGEW APPEAL:**

### **EXPEDITE PREPARATIONS FOR NATIONWIDE STRIKE**

**W**elcoming the decision of the national convention organised by central trade unions and industrial federations at Delhi on September 26, the All India Government Employees Federation (AISGEF) and Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers (CCGEW) have urged their ranks to prepare for a nationwide strike and mass campaign against the infamous Supreme Court ruling banning the strikes.

In a statement issued from New Delhi on October 2, AISGEF General Secretary Sukomal Sen and CCGEW Secretary-General S K Vyas, said the national convention they had organised on September 25 had categorically decided for a nationwide strike in cooperation with central trade unions and national federations.

The two organisations pointed out that attacks of the government and managements on the working class and all sections of the employees and teachers are coming in a big way in the form of severe downsizing, retrenchments and closures. On top of that, the judiciary too is pronouncing anti-worker rulings one after another, the latest being the Kolkata High Court ruling banning rallies and processions in the city. In view of all these factors, the AISGEF and the CCGEW have urged the central trade unions to advance and fix the date of the nationwide strike in consultation with them and other national federations to be implemented in the first half of January 2004. This way, they pointed out, the government employees, industrial working class and all other sections of workers and employees can unitedly go on a strike to protect their right to strike and other democratic and trade union rights, and also make the preparatory campaign a challenging success.