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**Com. Jyoti Basu, addressing the open rally at
Siliguri on the occasion of CITU General Council Meeting**

AFTER BALCO, YET ANOTHER GIFT TO STERLITE

As the Balco was sold to the Sterlite Company by the BJP-led NDA Government ignoring the country-wide opposition, so also the Hindustan Zinc Limited. (HZL) has been sold to the same Sterlite Company. While Balco had around Rs.400 crores reserve at the time of privatisation, the HZL had Rs.737 crores reserves.

The Sterlite got the control of the management of HZL in the name of strategic partner with 26% shares at Rs.445 crore. In November 2001 the same Sterlite had bid for HZL at Rs.353 crore. The Government of India refused to sell at that time on the plea that the bid was very low. But the same Sterlite captured the HZL in 2002 by offering a slightly higher amount of Rs.445 crore. The CITU's allegation of rampant corruption in each case of privatisation of PSUs is once again reinforced.

The operational profile of the company includes 4 zinc and lead smelters and 9 valuable mines. One of the smelters is located in an area of 365 acres on the seaside at Visakhapatnam. Another one is located in Chattisgarh. The rest of two

smelters and the 9 mines are situated in Rajasthan. With the completion of the expansion at Debari and Vizag Zinc Smelters the total zinc production capacity of the company has gone up to 1,69,000 tonnes per annum. The company has a total manpower of 11,490 out of which around 9,000 are workmen. The HZL produces the zinc, lead and silver necessary for the country. All these national resources of the country have been handed over to private hands.

As this industry did not flourish in the private sector, the HZL was established in the Public Sector in 1967. This PSU has immensely contributed in attaining self-sufficiency in the products. During the year 2000-2001 the company was rated 'Excellent' under the MoU with the Union Ministry of Mines. Started with a capital base of Rs.442 crore, today the Company has a total asset base worth around Rs.10,000 crore. In addition it has a reserve fund of Rs.737 crore. With privatisation, all these assets are gifted away to the private industrialist. HZL has been continuously earning profits. The Company has paid an amount of Rs.1705 crore in the last five years as tax and dividends to the Government.

The impact of selling out the HZL is worse than the privatisation of Balco. Balco's contribution is 25% of aluminum produced in the country. But with the selling out of the HZL, the country's entire zinc production is privatised. By purchasing the HZL, the Sterlite has established total monopoly over the production of zinc and lead in the country. This is dangerous for the industrial development of the country.

HZL privatisation is a fraud on the country. It is not at all transparent — it is a scandalous dark deal. It is against the interest of the workers and the country. The anti-national policies of NDA Government in gifting away the profit making basic public sector industries to private capital must be opposed. The entire trade union movement in the industry breaking the barrier of affiliations must come in a single platform and mobilise the total employees in the industry and launch a united movement against the policy of privatisation.

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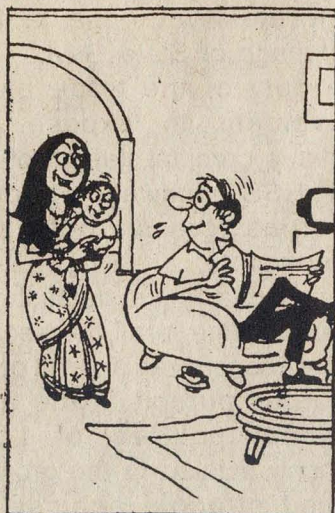
Cover page Photo: Jyoti Basu addressing the mass rally in Siliguri

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

JUNE 2002

HERE & NOW | Sudhir Tailang



Did you hear he uttered his first words today: "Sack Modi"!!

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

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EDITORIAL

RESIST BJP's DISASTROUS MACHINATIONS

The BJP has shown once again that it is a symbol of boundless opportunism. By cobbling up an unprincipled coalition with the BSP against which the former BJP Chief Minister Rajnath Singh had drawn daggers out in the U.P election campaign, the BJP has managed to subvert the people's verdict against it. The U.P Governor, Vishnu Kant Sastri, a known RSS man, has been a pliant tool in this subversive game. Mayavathi may be all smiles in having succeeded in occupying the Chief Minister's chair once again but sooner than later the inherent contradictions in this unholy coalition arrangement will surface. The largest State in the country has to go through yet another patch of non-governance, even as the long lingering Ayodhya issue is waiting for yet another eruption.

In Gujarat, the State Government sponsored genocide against the minority community is continuing unabated for the third month now. Vajpayee gave a clean chit to Narendra Modi and doggedly refused to give in to the almost united demand for the ouster of its Chief Minister in Gujarat. The BJP excelled in double speak during the debate in the two houses of Parliament. But the BJP Government is yet to initiate any meaningful steps either for ending the brutal genocide or for relief and rehabilitation of the thousand of victims. In the midst of above milieu, the BJP Govt is selling off the profit making PSUs with their huge national wealth, one after another, ignoring the total opposition of the entire working class to such disastrous exercise as reflected in the countrywide massive strike action of 16th April.

The anti-national game plan of BJP to tear apart the society through their heinous criminal communal design on the one hand and virtually put the country's economy on the auction on the other stands thoroughly exposed. Imperialists and their Indian cohorts in the ruling polity are the beneficiaries, not the country in the least.

Despite all these developments, the so-called secular allies of the BJP cling on to its bandwagon just for the spoils of power sharing at the Centre. The BJP is keeping the carrot dangling before them by off-repeated announcements of an impending Cabinet expansion. Now, the BJP and the sangh parivar outfits have stepped up their hysteric jingoism, calling for immediate military action in the name of tackling the cross border terrorism indulged in by Pakistan and the jihadi squads supported by the Musharaff regime. At the same time, the Vajpayee Government has inextricably linked its foreign policy with the USA. This has deprived the country of any scope of independent decision-making in matters of international policy.

The country is surely at cross roads. The BJP regime has been a total failure on all fronts. The people must exercise complete vigilance and unitedly raise their voice against the disastrous machinations of the BJP Government.

CITU GENERAL COUNCIL CALL:

CARRY THE UNITED STRUGGLE TO MILITANT HEIGHT

The General Council meeting of CITU held on 22-25 March 2002 at Siliguri, West Bengal called upon the working class and all the CITU units in particular to broaden the platform of unity to carry the united struggle against the anti-national policies of the NDA Govt. to further militant heights. 338 members and six invitees from various all India Federations attended the meeting.

E Balanandan, In his presidential address to the General Council, elaborated on the mounting struggle of the working class all over the world and in the advanced industrial countries in particular against the severe fall out of the imperialist sponsored policy of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation

(LPG) and also to the growing momentum of the anti-LPG struggle in our country. He underlined that our campaign and struggle must expose the game plan of imperialism in all its facets, the economic political and social aspects. The presidential address also dealt in detail on the ugly communal design of the BJP outfit in carrying on a genocide in Gujarat and called upon the working class to fight back unitedly this worst enemy of humanity—the fundamentalists and divisive forces of all hues.

DEBATE ON REPORT

While placing the General Secretary's report in the meeting, M K Pandhe dealt in detail on the political and economic situation in the country since the last working committee

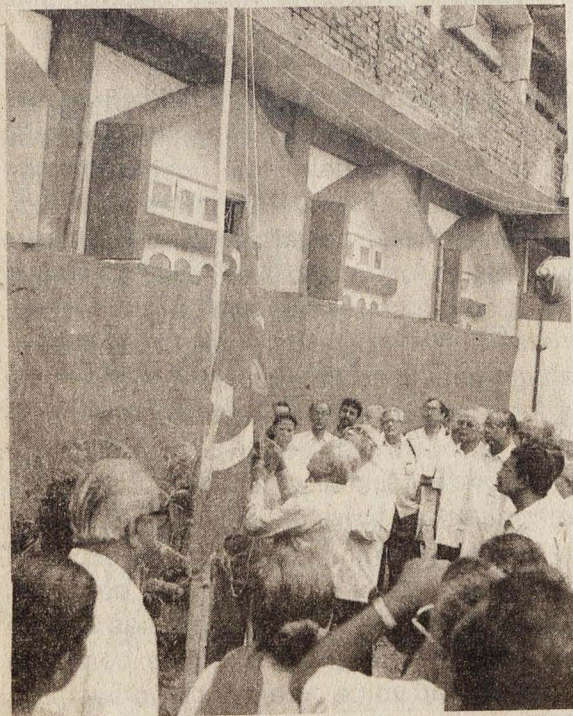
meeting in August 2001.

While referring to development in the international arena and the Govt of India's response to the same, the report noted the "the increasing servility of the ruling BJP led NDA combine to the US imperialist. While in the name of economic liberalization, the Govt of India is continuously surrendering the vital interests of the national economy to

them, on the political front as well, they were gradually going on the lap of the imperialist camp."

The General Secretary's report also pointed out to the horrendous crime and mass killings perpetrated by the BJP outfit at Gujarat following the heinous Godhra incident, through a more-than-two-month long communal rampage on the minorities with the active patronage of State Govt. "It is the duty of the trade union movement to expose the heinous criminal design of the BJP-RSS bandwagon through vigorous grass root level campaign."

While explaining in detail the all round decline in all the sectors of the economy as a result of the vigorous pursuit of the anti-national policies of LPG, Pandhe pointed to the growing united struggle against the disastrous policies both at industry level and national plane. The period under review witnessed all in unity of the trade union movement in denouncing the economic policies of the NDA Govt. and attack on labour rights through various programmes, which culminated in the massive countrywide strike action on 16th April, drawing the active participation of more than 1.5 crore workers. Although the strike action was planned initially in the central public sector units and financial sectors only, ultimately, it got converted into a total bandh in



CITU Flag being hoisted

four states and many non-PSU segments like State Govt employees, Anganwadi workers, workers in Port & Dock etc., joined the strike action in a big way and it had drawn the active participation of the INTUC unions at the industry level despite the opposition of INTUC national leadership to the strike. This explains the increasing urge for all in unity and militant struggle against the disastrous economic policies among the mass of the workers at the grass root level, which has to be strengthened further through series of militant countrywide united action.

Jyoti BaSu, Vice President, CITU also addressed the session on 23rd April. In his brief pointed intervention, Basu stressed the urgent need for more vociferous and united assertion by the working class movement and much greater initiative of CITU in that direction to defeat the policies of BJP led NDA Govt spelling disaster for the country and the people in all fronts. He referred to the line of 'unity and struggle' adopted by CITU at its foundation conference which had not only placed CITU in the frontline of the country's trade union movement but also contributed a lot in uniting the movement in militant struggle against exploitation and enabling it for making effective united intervention against the policies. At present crucial juncture, more vigorous pursuit of such role by the trade union movement is the urgent need of the hour and is of tremendous importance for the country's unity and economic sovereignty,

Basu asserted.

45 comrades took part in the deliberation on the General Secretary's report. The speakers while reporting on the activities and the strike performance in respective sectors ON 16TH April, stressed upon the urgent need for maintaining the continuity of the struggles against the policies. The deliberation also pointed to the need for formulation of and campaign on the pro-people alternative policy in our struggle against the policies of LPG.

SPECIAL DISCUSSION

A separate session was held for discussion on a specific subject: "United struggle and organizational consolidation of the trade union movement" for which a special paper was circulated. M K Pandhe also placed the discussion paper. The discussion paper made a brief appraisal of the united TU movement since last three decades. It was noted that immediately after birth of CITU in 1970, effort was made by the ruling class to isolate CITU even within the trade union movement. But consistent and firm pursuit of the line of "Unity and Struggle" by CITU foiled

such game plan of the ruling class and CITU could establish itself as the front-runner in building unity in the working class movement in defense of the rights of the workers and against the exploitative regime. The paper noted that since seventies onward the trade union movement in the country witnessed various united platforms of trade union action at different phases right from the United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU) in Seventies to Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions in the nineties and Joint TU agitations with all the trade unions in the country including INTUC and BMS on certain issues in 2000 onwards and at every successive stage of united trade union movement, the platform of trade union unity got widened to include various independent industry wise federations and newer section of workers.

The paper also underlined various weaknesses as well and also stressed upon the need for consolidation of the united platform by overcoming various organizational shortcomings and vacillations in sharpening the edge of the united struggle



M K Pandhe presenting the report

to confront the challenges before the working class and the democratic people at large. It was noted that the increasing urge of united struggle among the workers at the grass root level against the severe fall out of the policies of LPG is creating favourable conditions for wider unity and militant struggle. CITU is required to take much more initiative in reaching the widest section of the workers in all sectors as well as all sections of society to ensure that such urge for united action can be sharpened further to carry the united struggle to higher pitch for reversal of the policies. Simultaneously, the concept of formation of Confederation of all trade union centers to provide for a more tangible platform of united trade union movement has to be popularized at all levels. To undertake this uphill task CITU has to strengthen itself manifold organisationally, Pandhe stated.

In the deliberation on this special subject, 45 members participated and put forth various suggestions based on the experience of unity exercises at the State and industry level.

The intensive independent campaign by CITU activists with the message of united struggle against the policies along with exposure campaign on the political, economic and social policies of the ruling class at the grass root level and our conscious effort to extensively reach out the workers of all affiliations with the appeal for united action have been identified, inter alia, as some of the major tasks.

M K Pandhe summing up the deliberations said: "The developments in the political, economic and social scenario already posed a big challenge before us. The BJP Govt., despite their increasing isolation from the people, is ignoring the fast growing opposition to the economic policy with arrogance. In this background, the BJP-Sangh Parivar bandwagon has been resorting to ugly communal tactics in their bid to overcome the situation. Never before the country faced such ugly disastrous design costing the humanity so dearly. The situation enjoins upon the working class movement to expose these worst enemies of

the nation and the humanity through much more powerful mass struggles and all our effort must be directed towards that." With E Balanandan emphasising, in his concluding address, the task of carrying the decisions and understandings of the General Council to the grass root level for effective implementation, the meeting concluded.

ACTION PLAN

In the above background the General Council decided to continue dialogue with other trade unions and mass organisations to draw out a countrywide plan for series of mass agitations/actions like 'rail/road-roko, jail-bharo' etc. The target must be countrywide massive mobilisation with the perspective of culminating the same in a bigger General Strike all over the country along with simultaneous actions by other mass organisations. The meeting also decided to carry on independent campaign from the CITU platform in that direction. (See page 7 for programme of action).

MASS RALLY

The General Council ended with a mass rally on 25th April at Bagha Jatin Park, Siliguri drawing several thousands workers and people from the adjoining areas. Notable was the presence of thousands of women workers in the mass rally. The Mass rally was presided by Anand Pathak and was addressed by Jyoti Basu, M K Pandhe, Chittabrata Majumder, Ajit Sarkar and Ashok Bhattacharya among others.



Jyoti Basu addressing the CITU General Council

CITU GENERAL COUNCIL CALL:

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN WEEK MAY 30 - JUNE 5 NATIONAL PROTEST DAY ON 6TH JUNE 2002

The meeting of the General Council of the CITU held in Siliguri (West Bengal) on 22-25 April 2002 considered at length the united T.U. movements being organised all over India against the anti-people economic policies of the Government of India. The meeting decided to campaign independently from the platform of the CITU highlighting the urgent need for a nationwide united general strike against NDA Government's anti-national and anti-worker policies on the following demands:

1. Against thoughtless privatisation of profit making and potentially viable public sector Undertakings
2. Against the move of the Central Government to change the labour laws including Industrial Disputes and Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act against the interests of workers and in favour of employers
3. For immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for Agricultural Workers
4. Against removal of quantitative restrictions on imports much to the detriment of industry, agriculture and national interest as a whole
5. Against the policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment and demanding nationwide employment generation policies and programmes
6. For amendment of the Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings.
7. For restoring the 12% rate of interest on the PF deposits.
8. Grant of financial assistance by the Central Government to revive the sick industries in public sector and concrete steps to revive the sick units in the small scale and traditional sectors.

The first 5 demands are accepted by all the central trade unions, while last 3 demands are most popular among the workers.

The campaign week will start on the foundation day of CITU on 30th May and continue till 5th June to culminate in the observance of National Protest Day on 6th June, 2002. During the campaign week, these demands should be popularised and all trade unions should be requested to give a call for a one-day nationwide general strike in support of these demands. All unions should organise gate/shop level meetings, wearing of badges, processions, leaflets, posters, wall writings etc. to popularise these demands and the call for nationwide general strike. Our campaign must reach the widest section of workers at the grass root level and serious efforts must be taken in that direction.

On 6th June, we should observe National Protest Day by resorting to various forms of direct actions including holding of massive dharna and rallies.

In these meetings, the CITU unions should also highlight the situation in Gujarat and condemn the communal carnage indulged in by the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal outfits. We should also demand the resignation of Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

The CITU Centre has circulated this call of the General Council, with a request to the State Committees to direct all unions to immediately start preparations for observing the national Campaign Week and the National Protest Day.

30th May being the foundation Day of CITU, we should hold meetings to explain to the workers the significance of the day and the role played by the CITU in building united movement of the working class.

The State Committees should inform the CITU Centre of the steps they are taking to implement the decision of the General Council. They should also send a detailed report on the observance of the above programme for publication in the CITU journals.

DOCUMENT

(The General Council meeting of the CITU held a special discussion on "United Struggles and Organisational Consolidation of Trade Union Movement. We reproduce extracts from the discussion paper on the subject - Editor)

TOWARDS ORGANISATIONAL CONSOLIDATION OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT...

"Since the emergence of CITU in the trade union scene of India twenty three years ago, it has played an important role in building a united movement on common issues facing the working class. During this period the CITU came in the limelight as the foremost champion of the working class interest."

The Report on Organisation adopted by the CITU Working Committee meeting held at Bhubaneswar on 4-6 June 1993, popularly known as the Bhubaneswar document outlining the organisational approach of CITU, opened up with the foregoing paragraph.

VARIOUS PHASES

The CITU emerged from its foundation conference with the slogan "Towards Unity and Struggle" and emphasised the urgent need of building unity of the working class in the struggle against exploitation and for defending the trade union and democratic rights of the workers and the people.

The exercise on uniting the trade union movement since the birth of CITU passed through various distinct phases. The first one had been in the form of United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU) in the face of pro-Govt. combine of some major trade unions under the leadership of the INTUC. Then came the phase of National Campaign Committee Against Industrial Relations Bill, which for a certain period could bring all the central trade unions in an united platform to fight against the Industrial Relations Bill during the Janata Party regime. Thereafter, National Campaign Committee of Trade unions was formed with all the central trade unions and industrial federations except INTUC in 1981.

The subsequent period also saw the consolidation of the countrywide united platform of the public sector workers' movement. The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) was formed. All the public sector trade unions affiliated to

various central trade unions, except INTUC, besides unions not affiliated to any central TUs joined the CPSTU to fight against the anti-PSU conspiracy of the Govt.

Then came the formation of Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions in the nineties to fight against liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. And the present phase is witnessing a bigger unity at the industry level actions involving the INTUC and BMS as well. At the national level also, these two central trade unions are joining the united programmes on occasions with other trade unions, on commonly agreed issues.

The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) formed at a massively attended all India Convention in New Delhi in 1993, did also play an important role in activating all the mass organisations, covering all segments of society, in unleashing campaign and agitation.

INNUMERABLE STRUGGLES

The entire decade of nineties witnessed not only a number of general strikes and bandhs, but also numerous sectoral strike actions in banks, insurance and other financial institutions, by the State and Central Govt. employees and also by the unorganised sector workers as well, besides other mass fronts.

Moreover, the struggles for revival of sick industrial units like NTC, IISCO and many others saw almost total unity of all the unions in the concerned sector. The atmosphere created throughout the country by the campaign and agitation from the platform of Sponsoring Committee and the NPMO was such that even the leadership of those trade unions, not joining the united platform of struggle at the national level, had to raise opposition to the LPG policies. Nor they could restrain a major section of their followings from joining the united countrywide struggle. This was instrumental to a considerable slowing down of the pace of

implementation of the policies of liberalisation during Congress and United Front regimes.

UNDER NDA REGIME

The BJP, after coming to power at the Centre, embarked on a more vigorous and desperate pursuit of the LPG policies, paying no heed to the public opinion reflected by the united trade union movement and other mass organisations. The onslaught of privatisation and attacks on the working people assumed new dimensions. This set the backdrop to more vigorous forms of resistance by the toiling masses from 2000 onwards.

The strike actions, from 2000 onwards up to the latest countrywide strike on 16th April, 2002, revealed a common feature. Almost all the workers of all affiliations have joined them. All the trade unions in these sectors, including those affiliated to INTUC and BMS, had sponsored most of these strikes, thus reflecting the all in unity of the workers.

Another important feature of the developments in the recent period is that in solidarity with the public sector strike against privatisation, in many States viz., AP, West Bengal, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, etc, all the trade unions had jointly called for a general strike, which was responded to by the workers of both the public and private sectors in a big way.

EXPERIENCE, LESSONS AND TASKS

The three decades long exercise of united trade union movement throws up certain concrete experiences.

During the period following emergence of CITU, our efforts for rallying the workers in the struggle against the policies of the ruling classes could draw the major sections of the trade union movement, away from the clutches of class collaborationist pro-Govt. approach inside the trade union movement.

In the subsequent period also, firm assertion of the line of united trade union action against the policies led to widening of the united platform. The anti-liberalisation struggle also could take-off only after a sustained campaign from early 1991 exposing the real face of the policy of liberalisation itself. Still, there was serious vacillation within the trade unions for giving a strike call. But ultimately it could be overcome and the first countrywide

united strike against the liberalisation policies could be called on 29th November 1991.

This experience underlines the fact that for achieving broader unity for action, it is always essential to pursue the line of united struggle and to insist firmly on "unity for struggle only". By compromising on struggle, such unity cannot be achieved. Unity, without a vision of struggle, is futile and has no meaning.

It is true that more grievous manifestation of the impact of the LPG policies from 2000 onwards created a favourable situation for all in unity in the trade union movement. But, favourable conditions alone cannot lead to united actions, unless there is proactive effort to canalise the resentment and the spontaneous urge for resistance in the appropriate direction. In the absence of such efforts, onslaughts and manifestations of the crisis can lead to demoralisation and frustration. Here lies the importance of conscious efforts for developing united countrywide trade union action.

INTERVENTIONS AND INITIATIVE

Secondly, our intervention had played an important role in building up the united programmes of action at the national level during mid-seventies onwards. But, during the post liberalisation period, when the united struggle had to focus much more on basic policy issues, rather than on economic demands, we had to confront with more vacillations within the movement. This illustrates the depth of the influence of economism and reformism, particularly when the basic class issues are coming to the fore. The vacillation was also due to the ideological offensive carried on through media and other means to generate a kind of fait accompli or the TINA (There Is No Alternative) syndrome among the ranks within the trade union movement.

Moreover, the rise of communal and divisive forces in the socio-political scenario in the late eighties has posed a serious challenge to our efforts for unifying the working class and the toiling people in general. We have seen how the tempo of countrywide militant struggle against the LPG policies, built up through a million strong mobilisation of workers in Delhi on 26th November 1992, could severely be damaged by the situation created by demolition of Babri Masjid by the *sangh*

parivar outfits. At regular intervals, particularly when the ruling BJP combine is facing electoral rout in different parts of the country, the communal forces disrupt the developing unity of not only the workers but also the society as a whole. We have to fight against these evil forces as well, while striving for class unity.

Herein lies the crucial importance of the independent ideological campaign and organisational initiative by the CITU. This is of utmost importance to create widest possible awareness about the policies and to popularise the need for united struggles. This process will expose the forces of disruption, both at the top and at the grass-root level, and also effectively facilitate united actions. Such grass root level independent campaign is crucial to create conditions from below. Equally important is the independent initiative by the CITU to ensure widest mobilisation for effectively implementing the united action programmes.

REACHING OUT TO ALL WORKERS

Thirdly, it is noticed that despite many successful united countrywide actions, where the initiating role of ours was widely recognised, such successes do not always lead to organisational consolidation of the movement. Why this is so? It must be noted that the pursuit of the line of unity and struggle gave the organisation tremendous benefit during the seventies and eighties. During this period, the movement expanded in almost all the key industries and all the major all India industry wise federations - in Steel, Coal, Construction, Transport, Waterfront, Electricity etc. - were formed. Our consistent initiative in developing united struggles and forthright stand in defense of the rights and interests of the workers, clearly manifested in all the joint forums, was key to such developments.

Building a powerful unity of the workers is also a process of struggle. To intensify the class struggle, we have to launch a powerful struggle within the trade union movement. Sustained campaign against anti-struggle policies within the trade union movement is an integral part of our struggle to build a united movement of the working class. The Tenth Conference of the CITU has clearly identified the weakness - rather reluctance - on the part of our organisations at industry level to

plan and fully reach the entire workforce in the concerned industry, both during our independent campaigns and joint programmes, as one of the major defects in our functioning. In many places, we fail even to reach our membership in entirety. Many unions in major industries prefer to communicate with the workers through circulars/press statements, instead of reaching them directly. Such a shortcoming frustrates the very purpose of our initiative in united trade union activities and deprives us of the organisational gains from our initiative towards achieving unity. Without conscious efforts on our part to reach the mass of the workers, irrespective of affiliations, with our campaign, neither effective unity of the class can be built up, nor gains of united struggle be consolidated organisationally.

THE MOVE FOR CONFEDERATION

While working for the unity of the trade union movement, we must constantly keep in view our objective of building a Confederation of Trade Unions to further consolidate trade union unity, achieved through various struggles.

Formation of a confederation at a national level cannot be achieved unless all participants accept it. There are still differences on the proposal for a confederation among the central trade unions, from both extremes. Therefore, we may have to work out various intermediate forms of organisational consolidation to bring trade union movement closer. In such a situation, our efforts for unifying the working class through various united formations, both at the national and industry levels, should be directed gradually towards popularising the idea of formation of a platform of a more consolidated character encompassing the entire trade union movement.

TOWARDS TANGIBLE MOVES FOR UNITY

The discussion among the trade unions on the issue of building the united trade union platform of a more 'permanent nature' is taking place from time to time. While not being too much optimistic about such a possibility in immediate future due to various constraints in the prevailing atmosphere, we must realise that the possibility of common debate on this issue within the trade unions does assume special importance. These talks reflect the growing urge for working together among the rank and file workers of these

organisations. The experience of talks on merger held between AITUC and HMS has shown that there are several hurdles in the way of merger of central trade unions at the top. Hence, the urge for unity has to be generated more forcefully from down below to create the condition for a more tangible unity at the national level.

The CITU should consciously explore possibilities of combining multiple unions at unit level into one union to make it more effective. By developing closer coordination with other unions at unit level on common issues, ground may gradually be created for such possibilities. Conscious effort to develop joint working arrangements with other industry-wise federations in various industries is also an important task in this direction. Wherever possible, we should take initiative in formation of one single industry-wise federation, which would ensure democratic functioning of the organisation and maintain its loyalty to defend the interests of

the working class in the struggle against capitalists.

The post-liberalisation regime, with the unleashing of severe attacks on the working people, has created a favourable situation for unity in the trade union movement. Identification of common issues, around which unity can be built up, has become much easier now. The CITU unions must redouble their independent initiative to take full advantage of the situation to reach out to the common workers. They must expose the real face of the policies and the ultimate source of the onslaughts along with the appeal for unity and struggle. The exact form the unity exercise may take may vary from place to place, depending on the composition, level of consciousness and the concrete situation obtaining. But the exercise must continue at all levels for further organisational consolidation of the unity achieved through struggles.

COMRADE D. JANAKIRAMAN

We record with profound regret the sudden demise of Comrade D. Janakiraman, Working President of the Electricity Employees Federation of India (EEFI) and a member of the CITU Working Committee in a private hospital at Chennai on 13th April 2002. He was 69. Com. D. Janakiraman had served the Central Organisation of Tami Nadu Electricity Employees as its General Secretary for over 25 years and he was its President at the time of his death.

Com. Janakiraman was one of the founder leaders of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions in Tamil Nadu and was an office bearer of the State Committee of CITU for over two decades.

Com. D. Janakiraman served as a front-ranking leader of the electricity employees in Tamil Nadu for nearly five decades. He played a pioneering role in uniting the electricity employees in common struggles. He devoted considerable attention to the problems of contract workers in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board and succeeded in securing permanent employment to thousands of contract workers.

Com. D. Janakiraman had to undergo imprisonment several times in his long trade union life. During the emergency rule, Com. Janakiraman was detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) for six months during 1976.

The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' pay homage to the immortal memory of Comrade D. Janakiraman. We also convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

E. Balanandan and W.R.Varada Rajan, President and Secretary, CITU, personally paid homage to the departed Com. Janakiraman at Chennai on 14th April.

(Reproduced hereunder is the excerpt from the speech of Jibon Roy MP, in the Rajya Sabha on 29th April 2002 on the working of the labour ministry of Govt of India - Editor.)

LABOUR ISSUES IN PARLIAMENT: LABOUR UNDER FRONTAL ATTACK

Probably for the first time since introduction of the policy of LPG-liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the functioning of labour ministry is being discussed in Parliament. When the Govt. does not recognise seriously the labour portfolio as part of the Ministerial team, they consider it to be a subsidiary wing, such neglect, rather the bias against labour is quite obvious. Let the Labour Minister himself, who is stated to be a champion of Social Justice movement, state what has been his experience regarding the functioning of the labour ministry. It was on record that in 1993-94 seven paise of every hundred rupee of the GDP were allotted to labour. Now in the union budget of 2001-02, the allotment is half a paise per every hundred rupee of the GDP. This reflects the attitude of the Govt. towards labour and the labour ministry as well.

Secondly, I like to know whether the Labour ministry itself was at all consulted seriously on the so called labour-law-reform issues and whether the trade unions were at all consulted by the labour ministry on such issues directly involving the labour, their rights and livelihood. I have serious doubt on this.

It is understandable that the employers' class is after the blood of labour since they are trying to jack up the liberalisation process in their favour despite its collapse as reflected in the all round decline in the economy. But why should Govt. be biased in favour of such policies which will further aggravate the demand constraints in the economy. It has already been diagnosed and universally accepted that the basic reason for the present economic crisis is not the labour, but the situation of demand crunch, squeeze of domestic demand and market. The supply is over-stripping the fast contracting demand situation. If the so called labour-law reforms are introduced, the demand will further squeeze, market will further narrow down and the crisis will be aggravated further. But the Govt is following the same suicidal path and the labour ministry is toeing the same

line.

We must note that the employment generation is going down alarmingly from 2.04 percent to 0.84%. It is the worst since post independence period. And the most dangerous thing is that the rate of job-losses, the rate of labour dispersal is much higher than the nominal low-quality jobs being created, that too in the informal sector. In the organized sector, the workforce has gone down by more than three lakhs in the three year period of 1995-98. As per more current assessment by the CSO as reported by the Economic Times, during 1998-2000, the manpower has further gone down by seven lakhs in the registered manufacturing units. The Business Standard has reported that out of 7.5 lakh joblosses, 3.49 lakhs are in the textile sector, which is our traditional industry. Hence there had been net decline in employment as labour outgo(joblosses) is much more than the intake.

How the proposed labour reform of 'hire and fire' is going to address such situation. Even without the reform the employment generation is showing negative signs not merely through downsizing but through various other routes. In 1999-2000, mandays lost due to lock-out were 3.28 crore. In 2000-01, it was 1.6 crore. This already crossed the highest loss of mandays during the sixties since independence. Therefore, the outflow of labour due to lock out is also increasing.

Further mass scale casualisation of the labour force is taking place in a big way with the resultant downward pressure on the wage level. Major section of the workforce in the country is receiving wages around the poverty line and situation is deteriorating every day with Govt patronage. There had been practically no change in daily rated wages in real terms for the last 15 years for the overwhelming majority of the workforce and in many cases there had been a decline in real terms. As per labour ministry sources, at the central level the wages for daily rated ranges from Rs 52 to Rs 124. In Andhra Pradesh it ranges

from Rs 27 to Rs 63; in Gujarat Rs 64 to Rs 95; in Karnataka Rs 49 to Rs 77; in Tamilnadu Rs 44 to Rs 109; in West Bengal Rs 58 to Rs 165; in Maharashtra Rs 8.64 to Rs 116. A myth is being sought to be created that the wages of daily rated is increasing annually by three per cent on the basis of two baseless hypothesis. One is that every one in the country is being paid the statutory minimum wage, which is far from reality. In fact more than fifty percent of the daily rated workers are deprived from even the statutory wage rates. The second is that all daily rated workers are being permanently and continuously employed and they are getting price-index linked dearness allowance which again is nowhere near the truth. Without addressing this situation how can the Govt dream of improving the demand situation in the economy which is of vital necessity for economic recovery. Another dimension of the situation is that the employment of skilled manpower is becoming the biggest victim in the post liberalisation scenario. In 1998-99 15 workers out of 100 were coming from high-tech industries which has already gone down to 6 in the subsequent years. The workers coming from the medium scale industries have also gone down from 38 to 12 out of every hundred workforce. And in the low-skill employment the proportion has gone up from 47 to 82 out of every hundred. This signifies drastic decline in quality of employment and also in the average wage level. This is also indicative of the downgrading in the quality of the country's industrial structure, courtesy the import-based export orientation policies being followed. In the 60s and 70s, 80 percent of industrial products were coming through basic and heavy industries. The recent figure arrived at by CSO findings shows that 60% products are from consumer goods sector and also from import-based export oriented industries. This trend is ominous for country's industrial health.

And the mass of the workers is being subjected to immense deprivation. Despite commitment secret ballot for recognition of unions has not been introduced. Same is the fate of the bill on 'Workers Participation in Management'. Most of the workers even in the organised sector are deprived of bonus. In the unorganised sector the situation is even more serious. Out of 370 million

workers, only 26 million workers are covered by the Provident Fund scheme; only 9 million under ESI scheme; 4.5 million under Workmen's Compensation Act; only 0.5 million under Maternity Benefit Act.

So far as the Provident Fund arrears signifying default on the part of the employers and Govt are concerned, in 1997, the figure was Rs 466 crore. It has risen to Rs 1184 crore by 2001. So far as the industrial disputes are concerned, hardly 25% of the disputes could be resolved by the machinery operating under the labour ministry, thereby allowing the unlawful actions by the employers to perpetuate at least in 75% of the cases. This reflects the state of tardy functioning of the Labour Ministry itself and a hey-day for the law-breaking employers. Death on accidents in workplace is increasing every year and more than 206 died in workplace accidents last year. In case of accidents in mines, most of the deaths every year are taking place due to roof-fall or collapse of the walls. What is the Directorate General of Mines Safety doing or in that matter the labour ministry?

The intense exploitation of child labour has become the order of the day in the post liberalisation regime. Out of every hundred six are child-labour. This is the national average. In the so called prosperous States the incidence of child labour is more. Andhra Pradesh the figure is 11.1. In Gujarat it is 6.9, in Karnataka 7.3, in Maharashtra 5.4, in Tamil Nadu 9.5 and in West Bengal it is 4.7 out of every hundred.

The above scenario reflects the situation created by our rulers. For the overwhelming part of the workforce there is no law either to govern their condition or to provide a civilised living. And for those such law is there, they are ineffective and not being implemented properly. Flagrant violation with Govt. patronage has become the order of the day. What more flexibility does the Govt. wants to introduce by changing the existing labour laws? The Govt. must ponder over the matter seriously. Instead of singing the tune set by the foreign agencies and their junior partners in the country, they should set the tune in favour of the people. Instead of serving the foreign agencies, they should serve the nation. The present labour minister must come out with the clear answer.

WITHOUT COMMENTS

WARNING AGAINST RICH-COUNTRY PROTECTIONISM

The heads of the WTO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund on 16 May 2002 urged OECD ministers to give impetus to the Doha agenda negotiations, and warned that increased protectionism in the world's leading economies would undermine developing countries' efforts to reform through more open economies. They made the call in a joint note to the 15-16 May meeting of the OECD Ministerial Council in Paris...

"Ensuring that poor people have every possible chance to participate in trade, and directing our assistance to enable them to do so, is not only morally right it also makes economic sense..."

"Any increase in protectionism by any country is damaging. Such actions will hurt growth prospects

where fostering growth is most essential...(But) How can leaders in developing countries or in any capital argue for more open economies if leadership in this area is not forthcoming from wealthy nations? ...

"We should be aware that Doha marked the first time that the wealthy countries committed to assist the developing world in building capacity to better engage in the global trading system. It is important that they follow through on this commitment..."

"But we must move beyond rhetoric, firmly resist protectionism, whatever its form or justification, and promote policies that foster economic growth and prosperity."

(WTO NEWS, 16 May 2002)

SCAM SEASON

It is the season for scams. In India and abroad. And if it's any consolation, it is desis who are doing us proud in both places. If at home we have the Ketan duo, then in New Jersey, we have four Indians charged by the FBI in one of the biggest scams to date in the metals trade. All four have been charged with making off with millions of dollars posing as metal traders representing non-existent companies....The motives and modus operandi will soon be public knowledge once the FBI completes its investigation. Punishment will no doubt follow equally swiftly...Contrast this with what happens in India. Investigations in 1992 scams took years to complete, the trial meandered

even longer, none of the accused, save some small two bit players have been charged and Harshad Mehta, the main accused died before he could be sentenced. The story is no different in the Madhavpura Bank fraud. The 30 member joint Parliamentary Committee appointed in April 2001 was supposed to submit its report in six months. Today, more than a year later, the JPC is nowhere near completing the investigation and papers report that it has been given a second extension. No wonder, it is just not cynics who regard the JPC as nothing more than an eyewash...

(Editorial, Economic Times, 17-05-2002)

WHAT A LONG JOURNEY...

If justice delayed is indeed justice denied, then justice is seldom done in this country. The Supreme Court has just disposed of a case involving the question of whether the various clerical staff in the police deptt of Orissa should enjoy parity in pay scales. The Justice system took 30 long years - 12 years at the Supreme Court stage itself-to give a final verdict on the case. As the Court said, the manner in which the case

travelled from court to court showed the judicial process in "its saddest and poorest exposure". It is imaginable how the delay would have impacted the original litigants many of whom may have retired or died by now....After all, this is not an isolated case as, according to Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, over two crore cases are pending in lower courts and 35 lakh in the High Courts. At the pace in which cases are disposed of, it is

almost impossible to clear the backlog.

The inordinate delay in disposal of cases acts as a dampner for those seeking justice. The growing tendency among the people to seek justice outside the judicial system can be attributed to this failure. Two-thirds of all the cases pending in the lower courts are criminal, where the conviction rate is as low as 6 per cent. To put it differently, 94% of those accused of committing criminal offences go

scot-free....

On Monday, Parliament gave its approval to the Code of Civil Procedure(Amendment) Bill, 2000....The new Bill seeks to put justice on the fast track by facilitating pronouncement of judgment within 30 days of completion of hearing...

(Indian Express Editorial, reproduced in the Financial Express on 17th May 2002.)

AN UNAVOIDABLE COMMENT:

FACTS...FACTS AND FACTS....

The apex court pronounced the sentence of conviction for Arundhati Roy on charge of contempt of court for her criticism and protest against another judgment of the apex court on Sardar Sarovar Project, within a period of a day or two. The judgment upholding the sale of Balco to Sterlite in the context of the case filed by the unions complaining of gross irregularities was pronounced in a span of two-three months or so,

immediately after the completion of hearing.

In contrast, the hearing of the case on the Employees Pension Scheme 1995 in the Supreme Court was completed on 1st May 2001. On this 1st May 2002, the workers, while observing the May Day, have also agonisingly observed the 1st anniversary of the completion of the hearing on the subject. The judgment has not been pronounced as yet. The Apex Court has closed for summer vacation till 1st July, 2002!

"DON'T PRIVATISE BPCL & HPCL"

The Parliamentary Standing Committee unanimously advised the Govt. to desist from selling its stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, the State run refining and petro-marketing firms...

The Parliamentary Standing Committee also questioned the Disinvestment Dept.'s argument that the country's economy has the capacity to absorb the employees losing their jobs after privatisation. Citing examples of Modern Food and Balco, privatised in the last two years, the Committee said that the employees were "coerced" to take the golden handshake. "Many of them are still without work", it said, adding that the growth rate of employment in the organised sector declined 0.5% in 1999-2000 and is expected to dip further this fiscal.

The Committee said, the two PSUs have spent the capital raised on their own without the Govt's support to set up pipeline network, ports, and terminals. Setting up of such infrastructures ultimately helps the common man. This means

that the companies have already fulfilled the Govt's disinvestments objectives of releasing public resources locked up in these firms for social uplift.... therefore, there is no need for disinvestments.

The Committee also disagreed with the Govt. valuation of the lands and buildings owned by these two companies-Rs 1396.97crore for BPCL and Rs 913 crore for HPCL. It also challenged the Govt. claim that the dividends paid by the two companies were lower than the private companies. While the Govt. has issued bonds to clear their oil-pool dues at 7 per cent interest, it expects them to raise money from the market at 10 per cent!

(The Times of India, 18-05-2002)

WHO CARES STANDING COMMITTEE ADVICE?

The cabinet Committee on Disinvestment (CCD) on Saturday (18-5-02) cleared the sale of 26 per cent equity of the state-owned Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited (IPCL) to Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) for Rs. 1491 crore. RIL will also get management control.

(Financial Express, 19 May, 2002)

SHARP RISE IN U.S. JOBLESS RATE

Jerry Isaacs

The US unemployment rate rose from 5.7 to 6.0 percent in April, 2002 reaching the highest level in nearly eight years. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of workers officially unemployed in the US increased last month by 483,000, to 8.6 million. Since its recent low of 3.9 percent in October 2000, the jobless rate has increased by 2.1 percentage points and the number of unemployed persons has risen by 3.1 million.

The ranks of the long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or longer) increased by 161,000 in April, to 1.5 million. Over the last 18 months the number of long-term unemployed workers has more than doubled. The government says another 1.4 million persons were "marginally attached" to the labor force in April, up from 1.1 million a year earlier (Not counted as unemployed).

ECONOMY IN DOWNTURN

The sharp jump in the jobless rate surprised many economists, who predicted a rise to no more than 5.8 percent and believed the economy would generate far more jobs. Instead a larger than expected 565,000 persons entered the workforce, while only 43,000 jobs were created. In addition, the Labor Department acknowledged that US companies actually cut 21,000 jobs in March, a huge revision from the 58,000-job gain the government previously reported.

These figures fly in the face of the official pronouncements of an economic recovery made by White House officials, media pundits and various analysts... In reality there are increasing signs of... even a "double-dip" recession with the economy slipping back into a full-scale downturn. Bush administration officials responded to the jobless figures by calling for further tax breaks for big business to "stimulate the economy." This only underscores the fact that the White House has no solution for the worsening conditions affecting tens of millions of working people and that its so-called war on terrorism is chiefly aimed at diverting attention from the social crisis at home...

'IS THIS A RECOVERY?'

Writing in an article entitled "Is this a recovery?" a commentator for the Internet publication Smartmoney.com said: "Under accounting methods that would make even Enron blush, the BEA [Bureau of Economic Analysis] counts any slowdown in inventory liquidation from period-to-period as growth..."

US corporations continue to be plagued by the worst collapse in profits in the postwar era and are saddled with saturated markets, overcapacity and weak pricing power...

"In April, US corporations announced plans to cut 112,649 jobs, a 10 percent increase over the 102,315 jobs wiped out in March, according to Challenger. April was the sixteenth time in the last 17 months that corporations slashed more than 100,000 jobs, and 2002 is on pace to catch up to the total job cuts made in 2001, when nearly 2 million workers lost jobs.

The monthly average of nearly 140,000 job cuts in 2002 is more than five times greater than the monthly average recorded during 1990-1991 recession, when the average was just under 26,000. Telecommunications companies were the biggest job-cutters in April, with 38,176 cuts announced. The telecom industry has announced 120,698, or 22% of all job-cut announcements in 2002. The auto industry announced the second highest number of job cuts-75,051 so far this year. Joining the list of job-cutting companies this week was DuPont, which eliminated 2,000 positions in its textiles and interiors unit, on top of the 6,300 jobs the chemical company eliminated last year. Genuity Inc., a Massachusetts Internet services provider, said this week it would cut another 1,100 to 1,200 jobs-about 30 percent of its workforce-after posting weak financial results. Genuity has slashed 2,800 jobs over the past year...

The Labor Department reported that construction employment declined by 79,000 in April, for a total loss of 155,000 jobs this year. Manufacturing employment declined by 19,000 in April, with 8,000 job losses in motor vehicles, 4,000 cut in printing and publishing and 7,000 in chemicals.

WHITHER EXPORT AT ANY COST...

The developing countries should not attempt to engage with the global market by just offering cheap labour.

India is not the only country going through a rough patch in exports. Last year was bad for global trade as a whole. The World Trade Organisation has prepared a sombre report on developments in global trade in 2001,... it is less than optimistic about the prospects for 2002. World merchandise trade, in volume terms, fell by one per cent last year, and, in value terms, contracted by 4 per cent. This was the largest decline in nearly two decades. There was no respite either from trade in services such as tourism, travel, banking and telecom; all of which together witnessed a contraction by one per cent..... The developing countries as a group were hurt more than most in 2001. Their total merchandise exports contracted by 6 per cent and the non-oil exporting countries saw their global sales falling by 5 per cent....

In 1998, 76 of these 111 developing countries were still dependent on export of primary commodities. A reliance on export of primary products is considered unhealthy... Traditional wisdom simultaneously holds that developing countries are better off focussing on manufactured products where demand grows and the opportunities for income generation (what is technically called 'value-added' in the process of production) are substantial. But is that really so?...

The complex arguments put forward in the Trade & Development Report(UNCTAD) can be distilled into essentially two. The first is that what matters more for a developing country is the kind of manufactured goods it focusses on for exports.The countries which engage with the global market by merely producing products which are labour and resource-intensive and that have only a transient demand may benefit for a while but will eventually be marginalised. The most obvious examples of such products are clothing and textile apparel.

The second argument offered by UNCTAD is that it is not enough to be part of a global production network (either as a base for multinational companies or as a sub-contractor) if the developing country's main function is to assemble imported components or engage in simple processing of imported-intensive products.....There will always be other economies waiting to offer a pool of low-wage, semi-skilled/skilled labour that can do the same job - at a lower cost. One critical factor then is how the export sector is linked to the larger domestic economy

The TDR classifies developing countries into four groups, depending on the kind of export strategy they have pursued.... In such groupings, those economies which have focussed on labour-intensive and natural resource-based products that do not possess the long run dynamism in world markets. India with its export basket loaded with agro-based products such as textiles and marine products would belong to this category, so too Bangladesh with its re-processing of imported clothing for export.

Here it is notable that China more than any other economy is an example of a country shifting to exports after considerable domestic industrialisation.

And the larger lesson is perhaps just that. The developing countries should not attempt to engage with the global market by just offering cheap labour. The situation could then end up with, as the TDR argues, the labour of developing countries competing with each other to sell themselves cheap to producers and consumers in the developed country market. To successfully engage with the world market over the long-term and at the same time generate considerable value-addition in manufacturing, the developing countries should instead follow a mix of strategies which include development of the domestic market, independent technological upgradation (rather than complete reliance on whatever little global firms make available to domestic subsidiaries), and export of dynamic products that are manufactured and not merely assembled with imported inputs.

(Excerpts from an article by C. Rammanohar Reddy in "The Hindu" dated 11 May, 2002)

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COUNTRYWIDE OBSERVANCE OF MAY DAY

JHARKHAND

A huge procession of several hundred workers from coal and other industries and also from insurance, bank and other sectors passed through sector III of the Ranchi town to converge in a mass rally at Shaheed Chowk on the May Day.

All the squares in the city were decorated with red flags and festoons of CITU. J S Majumdar, leader of CITU, addressed the mass rally. He congratulated the workers for successful strike on 16th April staged in the State of Jharkhand. He emphasised the urgent need for carrying the united struggle to further militant height to cry halt to the disastrous economic policy of the Govt. He also spoke about the urgent task of fighting against the communal forces in the country to defend the unity of the people and the working class. Mihir Chowdhury, General Secretary, Jharkhand State CITU also addressed the meeting.

Reports have also been received from other industrial centres in the State on observance of May Day through rallies, procession etc. At Jamshedpur, rally was organised at Adityapur area, which was addressed, by Narendra Mishra, Bijoylal Das and others.

MADHYA PRADESH

As per report received from Nagda, a huge procession attended by several hundreds of workers marched through the city and a

rally was held at Azad crossing. Dilip Joshi, Locumal Rakhi, the Vice President and General Secretary of the town committee of CITU addressed the rally.

MAHARASHTRA

In all the industrial centres of the State like Nasik, Pune, Nagpur and other places, May Day was observed through flag-hoisting, rallies and processions etc., which had drawn the participation of thousands of workers.

In Mumbai, all the trade unions viz., AITUC, CITU, HMS, HMKP, Kamgar Aghadi, and various independent federations, in industries and service sectors, organised processions and rallies jointly. A huge procession of several thousand workers started from Kamgar maidan marched through the working class areas and converged into a mass rally in the Maharashtra High School Maidan at Curry Road at Central Mumbai.

P Sanzgiri, President of the State CITU, presided. K L Bajaj(CITU), Sukumar Damle(AITUC), Suryakant Bagal(HMS), Dada Samant(Kamgar Aghadi), PR Menon(NRMU), GMV Naik(BEFI) and others addressed. The speakers exhorted the workers to carry on united struggles against the anti-worker policies of the Govt. and also against the offensives of the communal forces, as being

witnessed in Gujarat.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

In all district Head quarters and project centres like Bhava Nagar, Parawanoo, Baddi, Berotiwalla, Ponta Sahib, Lurgi, Nahan Jhakri etc., May Day was observed through processions and rallies.

In Shimla, a huge rally was held at the initiative of Hotel Mazdoor Lal Jhanda Union, Nepali Mazdoor Ekta Union, BCS Workers Union and Railway Sports Union. A huge procession of thousands of workers started from Panchayat Bhawan and marched through the main market place of the city and converged into a rally in front of Naaj Restaurant. Rakesh Singha, President of State CITU and Jagat Ram, Treasurer of State CITU addressed the meeting, besides others.

UTTAR PRADESH

At Varanasi, flag hoisting followed by workers' meeting was organised at Chandpur and Ramnagar industrial estates, where hundreds of workers participated. In the evening, a huge procession of workers commenced from Chandpur industrial estate, marched throughout the city and converged into a massive rally in Chittaranjan Park at Dashaswamedh. Processions have also come from other centres to join the rally.

The district leadership of CITU viz., Debashis, Fulchand, Vijaykumar, Dayashankar Tiwari,

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Ramuprasad and others, addressed the rally.

At Kanpur, the May Day rally was held at Vijaynagar crossing, which was joined by the workers in thousands from all the industries and offices. Daulat Ram, General Secretary, UP State CITU and Arvind Kumar, Secretary, State CITU, besides others, addressed the rally.

Report of rally and procession from Saharanpur has also been received. There, after a brief meeting in front of the Railway station, a massive procession marched through different parts of the city shouting slogans against the policy of the Govt. and its communal design.

DELHI

At Ghaziabad, a mass rally was organised in Ghanta Ghar Chowk, which was addressed by Tapan Sen, S.B. Bharadwaj, both Secretaries of CITU and K M Tiwari, General Secretary of the District CITU.

At Delhi, a joint rally by 14 trade unions and federations was organised. In the evening, in front of Town Hall, Chadni Chawk, preceded by a huge procession

marching from the Ramleela Maidan. M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, Gurudas Dasgupta, General Secretary, AITUC and other leaders addressed the rally.

WEST BENGAL

May Day was observed throughout the State by hoisting of flag in all the industries and establishments and trade union offices in all the districts and industrial centres. Rallies were organised in all the districts and major industrial centres.

A massive rally of workers and employees was held at Kolkata, which had drawn the participation of several thousands workers from various sectors of industries and establishment. The rally was jointly organised by all the left trade unions, industrial federations and employees' organisations. Jyoti Basu, Vice President, CITU, in his brief address, recalled the historic importance of the May Day and called on the workers to unitedly fight back with determination the mounting imperialist offensives against the country and the people. He criticised the virtual surrender of the Vajpayee Govt. to the the

imperialist dictates on the economic policies, resulting in ruinous impact on the economy and the people at large. Basu also dealt with the nefarious communal design of the same Vajpayee team and the Sangh outfits perpetrating genocide in Gujarat, with active connivance of the State machinery. Basu emphasised the need for uniting the entire working class in militant struggle against the economic policies as well as the heinous communal design.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary of West Bengal State CITU, also addressed meeting. He congratulated the working class in State for their magnificent response to the General Strike on 16th April. He complimented the workers for playing the most important role in maintaining communal harmony in the State, frustrating all provocations. He called upon the workers and employees to prepare for militant countrywide struggle in the days to come. The leaders of other central trade unions and employees federations also addressed the rally.

TAMILNADU: CITU PLANS STATE LEVEL CAMPAIGNS

The Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU met at Hosur on 11-12 May, 2002. The Committee discussed the work report and latest developments. The decisions of the All India General Council meeting were

reported.

The meeting noted that the last six months were a period of massive struggles, actions and campaigns against the policies of the Central and State Governments. The 16 day strike of the state Transport

workers, one day strike of Electricity employees, Dharnas, Demonstrations and fasts by various sections of unorganised workers, observance of various calls by the All India Committees, 16th April Strike, 3day strike by

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at Godhra station. They also demanded immediate removal of Narendra Modi from the Chief Ministership of Gujarat and punishment of the rioters responsible for the mass killings in the State. Chittabrata Mazumder, General Secretary of WB State CITU, Kali Ghose, Secretary CITU, Raghunath Kushari and leaders of other trade unions led the procession.

MAHARASHTRA

Reports of joint rallies, processions and dharnas against the communal design of BJP and sangh parivar and the carnage and killings in Gujarat have been received from Mumbai, Nasik, Pune, Solapur, Ichalkaranji, Aurangabad, Nagpur and other parts of the State.

In Mumbai, a huge procession of several thousand workers took place under the auspices of Trade Union Joint Action Committee.

The Procession commenced from the Kamgar Maidan near KEM hospital and Marched through Parel, Lalbag, Chinchpokli and Klalchawki area to converge into a mass meeting at Bhagat Singh Maidan. The procession was led by KL Bajaj, Saeed Ahmed Hemkant Samant and P R Krishnan of CITU, Dr Shanti Patel of HMS, Sukumar Damble of AITUC, Milind Rnade of Shramik Sangh, and leaders of the federations of Bank, Insurance, Airlines and other sectors. The Rally was addressed by Vivek Monterio (CITU), Dada Samant (Kamgarh Aghadi), Suryakanta Bagal (HMS), Yashwant Chavan (Shramik Sanghtana), AD Golandas (AITUC) among others.

DELHI

In Delhi Joint Action Committee comprising 14 trade unions and federations organised a massive

dharna At Samata Sthal on 15th May in the afternoon to observe the protest day against communalism and the Gujarat genocide. The Dharna raised the slogans condemning the nefarious ploy of the BJP outfits in engineering mass killings at Gujarat with the active patronage of the BJP Govt there and demanded immediate sacking of the Gujarat Chief Minister. The Dharna also condemned the brutal killing at Godhra Railway station and demanded thorough investigation and punishment of the culprits.

K.L.Mahendra (AITUC), Tapan Sen (CITU), R A Mittal (HMS), S Roy (AICCTU), and Tiagi (UTUC-LS) addressed the Dharna, besides others. The dharna ended with adoption of pledge to defend unity of the people and communal harmony in the country.

PLANTATION WORKERS CONFERENCE

The 19th Conference of the Cha Bagan Mazdoor Union, West Bengal, was held at Banarhat in Jalpaiguri district on 26-28 April 2002. The union has more than 82,000 members, of whom over half are women. The mass rally on 26th was unfortunately disrupted by a big storm with lashing rain. Yet, around 10,000 tea garden workers, a large number of them women reached Banarhat to participate in the rally. Manik Sanyal, President of the union hoisted the flag and

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, inaugurated the Conference, which had only to be delayed slightly because of the rain. Md. Amin, Labour Minister of West Bengal and Hemalata, Secretary, CITU also addressed the rally.

584 delegates including 135 women attended the Conference. In the absence of the General Secretary, Mantu Bose, who suddenly fell ill and was undergoing treatment in a Calcutta hospital, the Assistant General Secretary, Babu Lal,

placed the report. Zia ul Alam, Secretary, supplemented it. 35 delegates including 9 women participated in the discussion. The women spoke about the problems faced by them in the tea gardens and the activities of the women's sub committees.

A separate session of women workers was held in the afternoon of the 27th. Hemalata inaugurated the session. She emphasised the responsibility of the union committee to ensure that the women's sub committees are

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functional, so that the specific problems of women workers can be addressed and women activists could be trained and developed as union functionaries. Sukhomoy Oraon, Convener, Women's Sub

committee, placed the report. 12 delegates including 2 men participated in the discussion. Robin Roy, Secretary, narrated the encouraging experience of the regions, where sub committees

were formed. A new women's Sub Committee with Sukhomoy Oraon as Convener was elected.

The Conference adopted the report unanimously and elected a new committee of 75 members.

SILIGURI: AICCWW MEETING

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) met at Siliguri, West Bengal, on the 21-4-2002. 28 members from 11 States (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Tripura and West Bengal) and the Centre attended. Soni Kometh from Kerala presided. Hemalata,

Secretary, AICCWW (CITU), presented the report. Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU also participated. 18 members participated in the discussion on the report. The meeting recommended holding of a broad national level meeting of State CITU leaders and Working Women leaders in the State, to develop a better understanding of and to

further improve the functioning of the Coordination Committees at various levels.

The meeting also decided that the State Coordination Committees should concentrate on the formation of women's subcommittees in unions with a large number of women members and also on organising women in the beedi and fisheries industries.

WOMEN'S CONVENTION AT SILIGURI

Alongside the CITU General Council meeting, the Darjeeling District Committee of CITU held several seminars. A seminar on 'Liberalisation and Workingwomen' was held on 21-4-2002, at the Deenbandhu Manch. Around 600 people, including large number of women plantation workers, women office

employees etc., attended the seminar.

Ajit Sarkar, Secretary, Darjeeling District CITU, welcomed the gathering. M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, Hemalata, Secretary, CITU and All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, and Arati Dasgupta, Secretary, West Bengal

CITU and the State Coordination Committee of Working Women, addressed. The speakers explained the impact of the liberalisation policies on the living and working conditions of working women and exhorted the women workers to be more assertive and active in the trade unions. Zerimoy Toppo proposed the vote of thanks.

HANDLOOM WORKERS PLAN AGITATION

A meeting of the handloom Sub-Committee of the Textiles Coordinating Committee of CITU was held at Chennai on March 26. Recently, the Government of India had imposed an Excise Duty of 9.2

per cent on Hank Yarn used in handloom industry, as per the Union Budget proposals. This is for the first time that Excise Duty on Hank Yarn has been imposed. There was Handloom industry

bandh in Tamilnadu on March 22. The weavers in Andhra Pradesh, Bengal, Karnataka etc. also launched agitations. The Chennai meeting reviewed these developments and decided to

REPORTS & EVENTS

intensify the agitations. The meeting decided that meetings of Handloom should be held separately and not tagged with the Coordination Committee meetings. A Statement was issued demanding withdrawal of the Excise Duty and other specific demands. The meeting decided to observe All India Protest Day on May 13, preceded by District level and State level rallies, hunger

strike, etc. The meeting also decided to mobilise the Handloom workers for a demonstration at Delhi tentatively during the Monsoon Session, with the slogan, "Save the Handloom Industry, Save the Handloom Workers". The meeting also discussed the organisational position. It was noted with serious concern that although Handloom industry is there in all the states, yet, our

unions are concentrated still in Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tripura only. Handloom being the biggest sector after agriculture in the unorganised sector, with over 10 million workers in the industry living under poverty line, all our State Committees must plan to form our unions in handloom sector to build up movement to resist the onslaught.

WORLD CONFERENCE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

The 13th world conference of Trade Union International of

Workers in the Building, Wood, Building Materials and Allied Industries' (UITBB) was held on 4-6 April, 2002 at Larnaka city in Cyprus.

Sixty delegates from 25 countries like Albania, Angola, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba,

Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Ghana, Greece, India, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Niger, Portugal, Syria, Uruguay,

Vietnam participated in the conference. From Construction

The conference after discussion decided to initiate joint movement

in every country to fight against globalisation policies and for defence of trade union rights and basic freedoms.

The conference unanimously elected 30 member executive committee with Johan Sutton (Australia) as President and Jose Denis (Portugal) as



Construction Workers Federation of India delegates at the demonstration in Nicosia, Cyprus on 5.4.2002, to protest Israeli action against Palestine

Workers Federation of India, Debanjan Chakrabarti (WB), R. Singaravelu (TN), Nagen Chandra Chutia (Assam) participated.

General Secretary. Debanjan Chakrabarty (India), was elected as Executive Committee Member of UITBB.

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B T RANADIVE MEMORIAL FUND

COLLECTIONS UP TO 20.5.2002

State	Amount Received(Rs)	Committed Amount (Rs)
West Bengal	58,67,615.00	1,00,00,000.00
A.P.	15,24,005.50	15,00,000.00
Assam	74,180.00	5,00,000.00
Bihar	77,522.00	8,00,000.00
Delhi	1,15,430.00	2,00,000.00
Kerala	31,42,500.00	50,00,000.00
M.P.	76,342.00	2,00,000.00
Orissa	36,813.50	5,00,000.00
Punjab	4,47,152.00	10,00,000.00
Rajasthan	3,00,615.00	5,00,000.00
Tamilnadu	5,62,580.00	30,00,000.00
Tripura	30,280.00	5,00,000.00
Karnataka	2,60,016.00	7,00,000.00
H.P.	13,756.00	2,00,000.00
Haryana	46,950.00	2,00,000.00
Maharashtra	2,61,182.00	10,00,000.00
U.P.	1,71,750.00	5,00,000.00
Goa	50,000.00	1,50,000.00
Gujarat	14,000.00	1,00,000.00
Andaman & Nicobar	5,000.00	
Individuals/Union/Fed.	7,70,251.00	
Bank Unions/Federations	5,24,114.00	
Insurance (AIIEA)	4,12,000.00	
AISGEF	6,31,670.00	
	<u>1,54,15,724.00</u>	<u>2,65,50,000.00</u>

Collection up to 25.03.2001 was published in the April 2001 issue of "The Working Class" & "CITU Mazdoor". The following is the list of collections from 26.3.2001 to 20.5.2002

OTIS Emp. Union (Kerala)	1800.00	Coal Field Labour Union Singrauli(MP)	4000.00
Tapan Sen (CITU)	500.00	Maharashtra State Comm. Of CITU	50000.00
WR Varada Rajan (CITU)	1000.00	Individual Collections by CITU Centre	1100.00
Ranjana Nirula (CITU)	150.00	*G. Janardan Rao	200.00
U.P. State Committee of CITU	10000.00	Jayanta De (CITU)	10000.00
I. Haque(Malda)	200.00	Individual Collections by CITU Centre	31039.00
Bihar State CITU	3000.00	Donation (From Durgapur)	15000.00
Anil Pandhe (Sholapur)	25000.00	A Dakshi (CITU)	1000.00
K. Hemalatha	8000.00	Hemalatha (CITU)	4000.00
Individual Collections by CITU Centre	64686.00	CITU Orissa State Committee	10000.00
WR Varada Rajan	1500.00	MP Koyla Sramik sangh	8000.00
Ranjana Nirula	100.00	Hemalatha	10000.00
Individual Collections by CITU Centre	21752.00	Seven Star Food Products Work Union(AP)	103.00
K. Hemalatha	4000.00	TTD Forest Staff & Work. Union (AP)	230.00
Bharat Petroleum (Tech)Union	1000.00	SUTTD Garden Work. Union(AP)	864.00
G. Janardan Rao (Hyderabad)	200.00	Individual Collections by CITU Centre	25000.00
AIIEA (Chennai)	61000.00		
W R Varada Rajan	3000.00	Total	415432.00
Delhi State Comm. Of CITU	2100.00	Previous collections up to 25.3.2001	1,50,00,292.00
Mohan Lal	2500.00		
Ranjit Basu	2000.00	Grand Total	<u>1,54,15,724.00</u>
A R Sindhu	2500.00		
Individual Collections by CITU Centre	27508.00		
Ranjana Nirula	100.00		
Kanai Banerjee	300.00		

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

State	Sr. Centre	Month		State	Sr. Centre	Month	
	No.	Feb'2002	Mar'2002		No.	Feb'2002	Mar'2002
Andhra	1 Gudur	438	431	Maharashtra	38 Mumbai	550	553
Pradesh	2 Guntur	465	451		39 Nagpur	489	491
	3 Hyderabad	459	462		40 Nasik	507	511
	4 Visakhapatnam	456	460		41 Pune	517	520
	5 Warangal	489	486		42 Solapur	479	476
Assam	6 D.D. Finsukia	389	391	Orissa	43 Barbil	419	418
	7 Guwahati	472	469		44 Rourkela	404	406
	8 Labae-Silchar	360	369	Punjab	45 Amritsar	404	411
	9 Mariani-Jorhat	404	403		46 Ludhiana	416	421
	10 Rangapara-Tezpur	408	405	Rajasthan	47 Ajmer	461	464
Bihar	11 Monghyr	428	425		48 Jaipur	434	436
Chhattisgarh	12 Bhillai	396	401	Tamil Nadu	49 Chennai	503	502
Gujarat	13 Ahmedabad	464	470		50 Coimbatore	451	455
	14 Bhavnagar	475	481		51 Coonoor	458	460
	15 Rajkot	428	437		52 Madurai	451	443
	16 Surat	472	476		53 Salem	454	453
	17 Vadodra	454	461		54 Tiruchirapally	512	512
Haryana	18 Faridabad	464	468	Uttar	55 Agra	423	426
	19 Yamunanagar	427	428	Pradesh	56 Ghaziabad	459	464
J & K	20 Srinagar	540	551		57 Kanpur	452	455
Jharkhand	21 Jamshedpur	417	420		58 Saharanpur	432	434
	22 Jharia	360	363		59 Varanasi	474	478
	23 Kodarma	375	382	West	60 Asansol	443	449
	24 Noamundi	406	405	Bengal	61 Darjeeling	387	388
	25 Ranchi-Hatia	425	425		62 Durgapur	536	540
Karnataka	26 Bangalore	445	445		63 Haldia	571	579
	27 Belgaum	503	505		64 Howrah	528	535
	28 Hubli-Dharwar	459	460		65 Jalpaiguri	406	410
	29 Mercara	452	453		66 Kolkata	514	522
Kerala	30 Alwaye	468	461		67 Raniganj	404	411
	31 Mundakayam	454	454	Chandigarh	68 Chandigarh	513	505
	32 Quilon	463	466	Delhi	69 Delhi	529	537
	33 Thiruvananthapuram	529	528	Pondicherry	70 Pondicherry	493	494
Madhya	34 Balaghat	408	409				
Pradesh	35 Bhopal	501	503				
	36 Indore	475	482				
	37 Jabalpur	459	462				
				ALL-INDIA		466	468

Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
State	Centre	February 2002	March 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	467	458
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	447	447
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	465	466
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	424	422
Tripura	5 Tripura	418	415
Goa	6 Goa	571	571

CENTRAL TRADE UNIONS' CALL:

LAUNCH COUNTRYWIDE UNITED STRUGGLES!

A meeting of the Presidents, General Secretaries and a number of representatives of all the Central trade union organisations including AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, INTUC, AICCTU, UTUC (LS), UTUC and TUCC was held at the office of Hind Mazdoor Sabha, 120, Babar Road, New Delhi. Umraomal Purohit, General Secretary, HMS presided

The meeting assessed the adverse impact of some of the retrograde policies pursued by the Government at the behest of the World Bank-IMF-WTO triumvirate.

The meeting unanimously decided to consolidate the unity of the trade unions so far achieved and carry forward the unified struggle in support of the minimum demands on which all the CTUs are in agreement. The demands include:

- Halt to privatisation of profit-making and potentially viable public sector undertakings.
- No changes in the labour laws, including the Industrial Disputes Act and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act favouring the employers and against the interest of workers.
- Restoration of quantitative restrictions on imports, the removal of which is much to the detriment of industry, agriculture and national interest as a whole.
- No policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment and nationwide employment generation policies and programmers.
- Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for Agricultural workers.
- Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings
- Restoration of 12% interest on the PF deposits.

It was also agreed that the finalisation of the campaign should be decided at a National Trade Union Convention to be held in New Delhi on 15th July, 2002. The concrete plan and programmes of the forthcoming trade union action

shall be finalised in the national convention.

The central trade unions have appealed to the workers to conduct local level massive joint campaign to further popularise the demands amongst the workers throughout the country and to prepare to participate in the convention in a massive scale and also for active participation in the programmes of action.

The joint appeal, issued on 15.5.2002, has been signed by: Gurudas Das Gupta (AITUC), Uday Patwardhan (BMS), M.K. Pandhe (CITU), U.Purohit (HMS), Sanjeeva Reddy (INTUC), Ashutosh Banerjee (UTUC-LS), S.C. Gaur (UTUC) and TUCC.

The CITU has, while forwarding the joint Press Release, urged that all the CITU State Committees and the affiliated federations and unions must recognise the importance of the emerging unity amongst the central trade unions, including BMS and INTUC, on very urgent issues of our movement. It emphasised that it was incumbent on the CITU to take all out initiative to spread the message of the unity and undertake vigorous joint campaign amongst the mass of the workers at all levels on the seven demands.

The National Convention of Trade Unions on 15th July, 2002 will be held at the TALKATORA INDOOR STADIUM, New Delhi, which has a capacity to accommodate about six thousand persons. The State Committees are requested to take steps well in advance to ensure that the State delegation to the convention consists of representatives from all the districts and also from all important industries/federations/unions in the State. Wider participation in the convention shall be of immense help in implementing the decisions of the convention, which is expected to include a countrywide massive protest action.

The CITU State Committees have also been called upon to take steps for drawing up programmes for local joint campaign and to send delegates to the convention.

NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATIONS CALL: CAMPAIGN AGAINST FASCISTIC COMMUNAL OFFENSIVES

The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) met at New Delhi, on 20th May, 2002. A presidium comprising E.Balanandan (CITU), K.L.Mahendra (AITUC) and R.A.Mital (HMS) conducted the proceedings.

The meeting unequivocally condemned the barbaric genocide and ethnic cleansing being indulged in by the RSS, Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, ever since the Godhra incident on 27th February, 2002. Despite the hypocritical claim by the Union Home Minister that the situation was brought under control by the Narendra Modi regime within 72 hours, media is replete with reports that Gujarat is still burning. The NPMO meeting noted the recent reports confirming that the sangh parivar outfits had drawn up meticulous plans for carrying out their fascist attacks against the Muslim minorities in Gujarat even six months before the Godhra incident. The Gujarat massacre was not a case of sheer communal riot but deep-rooted fascist design of the *sangh parivar* outfits having far reaching impact on the democratic secular polity.

Media reports horrifyingly described the brutal violence indulged in by the fascist forces led by the RSS as "... the slitting of wombs to destroy foetuses, spearing little babies to death, burning alive old people and savaging and quartering women's bodies. That is precisely what happened in the Gujarat massacre."

The NPMO meeting noted that the all round failure of the NDA Government at the Centre on the economic front, because of the vigorous pursuit of the World bank - IMF dictated policies favouring the MNCs and Indian corporate houses, taking the country to the brink of ruination has met with outright rejection of the BJP and its allies in every successive elections since the 1999 Lok Sabha election. The RSS, which calls the shots from behind the BJP led Government at the Centre has decided to revert to its communal agenda with a vengeance and embarked upon its major experiment in Gujarat, which is now the only major State under the BJP rule, using it as its laboratory. The Prime Minister Vajpayee's provocative speech

in Goa, the RSS resolution in Bangalore audaciously proclaiming that the minorities in India can survive only at the good will of the majority community, the ardent refusal of the BJP leadership to accede to the almost unanimous demand - including the NDA allies themselves - for the resignation/ouster of Narendra Mody from the Chief Ministership of the State - are all pointers to the grim and grave situation faced by the country for the first time after independence. The majoritarian fundamentalist forces led by the RSS seek to divide the country into two camps with the intent of physically liquidating the camp comprising the minorities. The Ayodhya issue, the developments on the border with Pakistan are all used to perpetuate this divide and continuing the communal orgy. In the process, they are also feeding on the minority fundamentalist forces, which have been active among the minority community in India, creating a fertile soil for them to gain further ground among the terrorised minority community. The situation will further worsen and is bound to create a volatile situation in the immediate future.

The NPMO resolved that all these developments call for immediate united action on the part of all the mass organisations representing the democratic secular forces by mobilising the people in a big way to counter this menacing offensive of majoritarian communalism and to wean away the minority sections from the fundamentalist groups. The NPMO has called for observance of the fortnight from 19th June to 4th July, 2002 as a CAMPAIGN FORTNIGHT AGAINST THE FASCISTIC COMMUNAL OFFENSIVES, during which period all the constituents of the NPMO will jointly organise mass meetings, rallies, demonstrations, conventions etc., at the levels of village panchyats/mandols in the countryside and in urban areas at the levels of municipal wards and at factory gates, industrial township etc. Further, the campaign shall culminate with joint rallies at the districts and/or state headquarters on 4th July, 2002.