



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

SEPTEMBER 2 : DELHI CHALO! WORKERS MARCH TO PARLIAMENT AGAINST THE FRAUDULENT PENSION SCHEME DEMANDING A BENEFICIAL REVISED SCHEME TO SAY NO ENCROACHMENT OF PF MONEY TO PRESS GOVT SCHEME BE MADE OPTIONAL COME ONE, COME ALL COME IN THOUSANDS MAKE SEPT 2 RALLY A THUNDERING SUCCESS

- * Remember comrades, the Sep.2 rally on the pension issue is the clarion call of the 9th conference of CITU, recently concluded at Kochi.
- * Take the signature campaign (Memorandum on pension scheme, to be presented to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha) to the mass of workers irrespective of affiliations. 50 lakhs signatures is our target. Signed copies of the memorandum may please be sent to CITU headquarters.
- * Come with CITU flags, banners, placards, festoons and badges.
- * Let Delhi on Sept. 2 wake up to the chorus of protests of a million voices!

CITU

Good News for The Workers against Government pension scheme

The news that various High Courts in the country granted several stay orders against the Government Pension Scheme at the submission of the CITU unions in Steel, ICI, IEL and others was published earlier. The Central Government having failed in the High Court, moved the Supreme Court and filed SLP for vacating the stay orders.

The hearing took place on 16.7.97. The Solicitor General appeared on behalf of the Central

Government. Supreme Court rejected the appeal for vacating the Stay orders. Thus the stay continues. The trade union side has been asked to file counter affidavit. In the meantime, the Solicitor General has been asked by Supreme Court to request the Government to make an application for transfer all such cases pending in different High Courts to the Apex Court to avoid diverse judgment. The case will come up for further hearing after 3 weeks.

Golden Jubilee Of Indian Independence

W R VARDA RAJAN

Come midnight August 14, 1997, the country will commence celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Indian independence.

The Government of India has planned to organise celebrations of this golden occasion for a year. So also, the political parties and other organisations will vie with each other in celebrating.

Can the working class of India lag behind?

Surely we the working people of India have the pride that our country had become free from the yoke of colonialism five decades back and is marching ahead, despite the vacillations, weaknesses and shortcomings of those who ruled during these long years, overcoming threats and offensives of the imperialist powers to maim the independence and sovereignty of this great country.

So we shall also celebrate the golden jubilee

But ours will be with a difference

The Government of India will, expectedly, focus the role of Mahatma Gandhi and his tribe, the civil disobedience, non-cooperation and other non-violent movements launched by them, as the main instruments through which the independence was wrested from the Britishers.

For the Congress Party, golden jubilee of Independence will be an occasion to project the Nehru family as the life and soul of freedom movement.

The Sangh Parivar, which has already completed yet another Rath Yatra marking Swarna Jayanthi, will also try to utilise the golden jubilee to parade themselves as the true inheritors of the legacy of the galaxy of freedom fighters.

There is no dearth in this country of the so called voluntary organisations, who also will chip in with their own versions of the Indian Independence.

The working class of the country must be alert as all these could at best be exercises in putting forth only half-truths about the freedom movement.

The glorious struggle for freeing our great country from the colonial rulers dates back to the first war of Indian Independence in 1857, which had insultingly

been referred to as 'Sepoy Mutiny' even long after independence.

When the leadership of the national movement headed by the Congress Party was toying with various definitions of 'Swaraj' - a term which meant different things to different people at different junctures - putting forth proposals for self-rule and dominion status under the British Crown it was the working class of the country which unhesitatingly declared 'complete independence' as our goal!

Various streams of struggle in different parts of the country in which the peasants and workers participated, though with varying demands, were all linked in more than one way, with the goal of independence. But the bourgeois historians and the ruling class of the country had consistently refused to recognise these streams as part and parcel of the freedom struggle.

Several dedicated youth formed organisations in different parts of the country and challenged the imperialist rulers with a death defying courage. Those young underground revolutionaries and terrorists, as they were called, made supreme sacrifices at the altar of freedom. Those sacrifices are also neatly covered up by the silky screen of non-violence!

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation did move the masses and gave the national movement a mass character. He, no doubt, created men out of dust! Scores of other leading lights of the national movement have also made invaluable contributions to carry forward the Indian people's resolve to win freedom. The working class will cherish their contribution as well, as it is part of the whole truth of our freedom struggle.

But the fact remains that the Congress which adopted the resolution calling for the 'quit India movement' on August 9, 1942, following which the Mahatma and other leaders were arrested, did not conduct any mass movement in the subsequent period.

The working class struggles during this final phase of the freedom movement, the glorious RIN mutiny, etc, drove the British rulers to the conclusion that it

was in their interests to transfer power to Indian hands, safeguarding their economic interests. In the process, they also succeeded in forcing the partition of the country into India and Pakistan.

Nevertheless India attained freedom on 15th August, 1947. The Union Jack was downed and the national flag was hoisted to mark the dawn of independent India. People of India rejoiced, though the communal orgy in the immediate aftermath, particularly in the border provinces made them bleed in their hearts.

In these fifty years we have given unto ourselves a republican constitution with universal adult suffrage, embarked on the path of building a strong and prosperous India, with justice, political, social and economic to all our people. These have remained a dream even at this golden jubilee.

Our hard-won freedom is threatened.

Divisive forces backed by imperialism are out in the open. Communalism mars the unity of the people.

Teeming millions are below poverty line.

The ruling class of the country is busy pledging our sovereignty to the imperialist dominated transnational financial bodies.

Corruption galore.

We could go on.

But let us stop here.

And let the working class of the country come together and declare: "We shall overcome this depressing state of affairs."

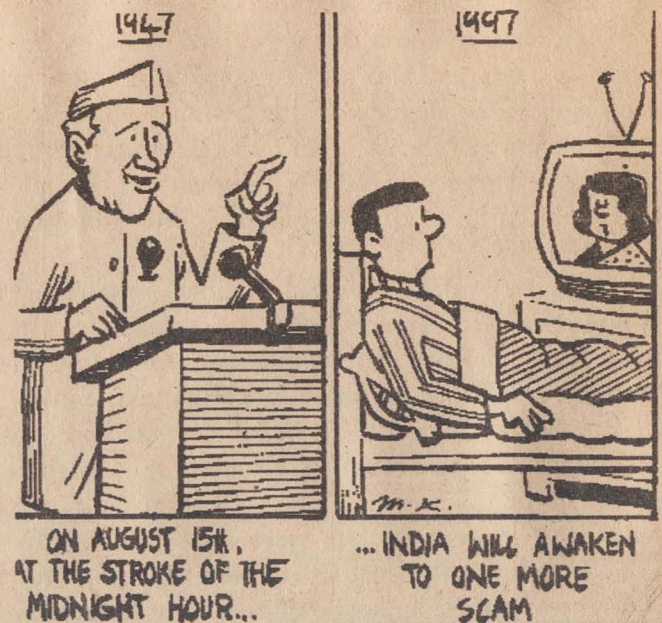
CITU calls upon the working people of the country on this occasion of golden jubilee:

Salute the martyrs of the Indian Independence!
Cherish and propagate the role of working class in the freedom movement!

Carry forward the anti-imperialist tradition, of the struggle for independence!

Defeat the divisive, communal forces and preserve the unity of the country and the people!

Defend the hard won freedom by frustrating the self-liquidating economic policies of the ruling class!



courtesy by Asian Age

Com. A. NALLASIVAN

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions, at its meeting of the Secretariat at New Delhi, paid homage to the memory of Com.A Nallasivan, a founder secretary of CITU in Tamil Nadu and a former All India Working Committee Member of CITU, who passed away at Thirunelveli this morning (20.7.97).

Com.A Nallasivan was a relentless fighter for the cause of the working people and courted imprisonment right from the British days. His contribution in organising the trade union movement throughout Tamil Nadu and building up a strong organisation of CITU in the State was invaluable.

Com.Nallasivan was also the Member of the Polit Bureau and Secretary of Tamil Nadu State Committee of Communist Party of India (Marxist). He was also a Member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council and Rajya Sabha. He espoused several issues concerning the working people in these fora as well.

Com.Nallasivan was a delegate to the foundation conference of CITU in 1970 and he was a source of inspiration and guidance to the CITU movement for the past nearly three decades.

The CITU dips its red flag in reverential condolence of the death of Com.Nallasivan.

WORKING CLASS AND 50 YEARS OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

M K Pandhe

Working class and the toiling millions in India will rejoice on the occasion of celebration of 50th Anniversary of India's independence. The ruling class will highlight only the role of some national leaders in throwing out imperialist yoke from the soil of India. The heroic role played by the working class will be obviously not focused during the official celebration.

It is, therefore, the duty of the trade union and democratic movement in India to explain to the working class of India this sacrifices made by the working class and the toiling masses of India in achieving independence for the country. However, the leadership of the national movement was in the hands of bourgeoisie which has resulted in their taking advantage of the gains of the freedom movement.

The working class struggle against imperialist exploitation started much before the commencement of the trade union movement in India. The harrowing working conditions prevalent in cotton textile mills in Bombay, Jute mills in West Bengal and tea plantation in Assam resulted in several spontaneous outbursts of the working class. Several unknown leaders of these outbursts were done to death by armed hirelings of the British owners with impunity. A slightest protest against exploitation was brutally suppressed by the police. The conditions in tea plantations in Assam and North Bengal was particularly very serious where many workers were shot dead and thrown in the river without any trace of the ghastly murder.

The revolt of indigo plantation workers and the peasants in Bengal was among the earliest actions by the toiling masses of India. There have been several peasants uprisings against landlordism in the last century which have shaken the rural support base of the British Raj.

The strike struggles have started in sixties of the last century. Several railway strikes have been recorded in that period. The strike of the Empress Mill workers in Nagpur in 1873 was among the major struggles fought by the workers in the early period.

The historic strike of Bombay textile workers for 3 days in the year 1908 in protest against the arrest of Lokmanya Tilak was a major political action by the Indian workers against imperialist domination. The struggles of workers in Tamil Nadu led by Chidambaram evokes repressive measures by the imperialist Government. Every activity to organise the workers in the battle against exploitation was considered as seditious by the British Government. Despite these repressive measures trade unions were being formed to ventilate the growing discontent of the working class.

The trade union and working class movement got a new fillip after the First World War when the rising prices of essential commodities went up very high and a new strike wave emerged all over India in major industrial centres. The formation of AITUC in 1920 was a moment of great importance. The election of Lala Lajpat Rai as President of AITUC was an indication of closeness between the trade union movement and the struggle for freedom.

The October Revolution in Russia in 1917 had a great impact on the Indian working class which has enthused greatly the working class movement and rise of socialist ideas emerged within working class. Younger generation started taking interest in socialist and communist ideology. Along with the freedom movement the concept of social revolution began to take roots in the country and working class movement got new revolutionary outlook.

The British rulers understood the importance of these early revolutionaries and tried to suppress these movements with ferocious repressive measures since this potential force was viewed as the major threat to the alien rule in India.

The role of these revolutionaries is not being focussed today on the occasion of our 50th Anniversary of independence. They do not underline that these revolutionaries tried to give a proper direction to the working class movement. To side track the public attention the bourgeois leaders characterised these movements as "foreign inspired." Despite this maligning campaign the socialist consciousness grew among the working class.

Instead of symbolic struggle against imperialists as advocated by the bourgeois leaders the emerging socialist forces stressed for mass struggle against imperialism and advocated complete independence. The British imperialists got scared with the emerging socialist movement in Bombay, Madras Presidency and Bengal and resorted to repressive measures to terrorise the people. During twenties the Kanpur conspiracy case (1924) and Meerut conspiracy case (1928) was launched by the imperialists to implicate leading functionaries in the working class movement and put them behind bars for several years. There was a countrywide movement demanding release of these prisoners. The Meerut conspiracy case even attracted international attention.

The terrorist movement in India had played a remarkable role in fighting against imperialist rule in India. The Martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and his colleagues is still fresh in the minds of the people. The heroic struggle of Chittagong Armory Raiders who valiantly challenged the imperialist in 1930 and the brutal suppression of their armed revolt by the British Army had roused strong anti-imperialist feelings all over the country.

The revolutionary role played by the Gaddar Party to mobilise support in India and abroad for the freedom struggle, the initiative taken to develop communist movement by Muzaffar Ahmad, M Singaravelu and others on the soil of India as well as by those in Tashkent, Germany, USA, etc must be remembered on this occasion.

The refusal of the Indian Army personnel to fire at peaceful demonstrations in Peshawar under the leadership of the Chadrasingh Garhwali and the punitive measures taken against the patriotic army men has contributed a great deal in rousing the anti-imperialist sentiments among the workers. The colleagues of Bhagat Singh and participants in Chittagong Armoury Raid later on joined the working class movement.

On the occasion of the Independence Day we cannot forget the immense contributions made by representative of the working class in UK like Ben Bradley who was also involved in Meerut conspiracy case by the imperialist Government. R P Dutt, a veteran communist leader of Great Britain by his several writings inspired the leadership and activists

of the working class movement in India. We must remember the solidarity expressed by these two comrades.

The radical movement in India in which working class played a significant role roused the consciousness of the masses which resulted in demanding complete independence by the Congress Party in 1930.

The workers uprising in Sholapur in 1930 which resulted in British administration police and army leaving the city for three days virtually ending the British Raj in the city and National flag being hoisted in most of the Government establishments was another landmark struggle during the freedom movement. With new Reinforcement by the army Martial Law was declared in the city killing large number of workers and patriotic people and detaining hundred with severe punishment by the Martial Law regime. 4 leaders were hanged by the British rulers. Nationalist leaders like Lokmanya Tilak, Gandhiji, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose have no doubt played an important role in mobilising Indian masses in the anti-imperialist struggles. They have created impact on the working class movement and the positive contribution made by them should be remembered on the occasion of this great anniversary of India's independence. After all Lokmanya Tilak was nominated for the post of Vice President at the First Conference of AITUC which could not materialise due to his untimely death prior to the conference. Nehru and Subhash Bose were elected as President of the AITUC which also indicated importance of the TU movement in the national movement.

However, the bourgeois leaders were also attempting to underestimate the working class movement and did not like to develop it to acquire a leading role in the freedom movement. Their anti-imperialism had limitations which clearly reflected during all freedom movements and it was clearly visible on the eve of independence of the country in 1947. The growing capitalist class in the country was hostile to the working class movement since it was directed against the capitalist system itself. This explains why the working class strike actions on political issues was discouraged by the bourgeois leadership.

The formation of All India Kisan Sabha in 1934 heralded emergence of militant kisan movement which also participated in several anti-imperialist

struggles and against the imperialist agents in the rural areas the landlords. This movement also faced severe repression. In many princely states the kisan sabha has played a key role in fighting against feudal oppression during the freedom movement.

On the occasion of 50th Anniversary of our independence we must remember the heroic Kayyur Martyrs as well as the heroes of Punnappra Vayalar struggle in Kerala whose role in anti-imperialist struggle was of great significance in India. Working class and the toilers movement owe a great deal for the sacrifices of these revolutionaries.

The anti-war strike at a national level in 1939 was a notable anti-imperialist action by the militant working class movement. During the early part of the second world war a large number of trade union leaders were imprisoned along with the other freedom fighters under the Congress leadership.

However, the heroic role played by Soviet Union in defeating Fascist Germany and other axis powers had changed the world situation. In the post world war period India witnessed a powerful strike wave in which millions of workers participated. Though some of these struggles were on economic issues they also reflected anti-imperialist sentiments of the workers. Series of peasants struggle broke out during this period which clearly reflected the rising tide of militant mass movement against imperialism.

Working class and the peasantry in India along with other sections of the people resorted to sustained actions demanding release of INA leaders and soldiers. The students, youth and women's movement in India also played a notable role in this period.

The RIN (Royal Indian Navy) revolt in Feb 1946 was a culminating point of several post war struggles of the people. The working class fully supported the struggle of RIN heroes who showed remarkable patriotism in challenging alien rule. The 3 days strike by the Bombay working class and the blood shed by several martyrs evoked strong countrywide anti-imperialist sentiments. The imperialist Government realised that they could no more rule India in the wake of growing revolutionary movement. It is just not a coincidence that within 3 days of the RIN revolt the British Government announced a mission to negotiate with the bourgeois leaders the settlement on transfer of power. In this process they imposed

partition resulting in division of the country. Leadership of Congress and Muslim League came to a settlement with the imperialists.

India achieved Independence on 15th August 1947. The working class and the toiling masses celebrated it with great enthusiasm along with other patriotic masses. High hopes were raised in their minds.

The capitalist path adopted by the Congress Government in cooperation with the landlords has resulted in slow economic growth and poverty conditions for the vast majority of the people.

So long Soviet Union and other Socialist countries were helping India in its economic development, the Government of India was adopting a policy of self-reliance and strengthening of the public sector. However, after dismantling of socialism in these country the Govt of India accepted IMF-World Bank conditionalities for loans and adopted the structural adjustment programme. This has resulted in giving up the path of self-reliance and resorting to privatisation and free entry to multinational corporations in the country.

The national sovereignty and integrity is today under great threat. The multinationals are capturing Indian market causing sickness in Indian industry making them non-competitive in Indian market itself.

The tremendous sacrifices made by innumerable freedom fighters who shed their blood for national independence and suffered long term imprisonment are greatly being undermined. The corrupt bourgeois elements are minting money at the cost of common man's livelihood. The growing unemployment and high prices are making the life of people miserable. Communalists, casteist and divisive forces are taking advantage of the situation to create threat to national unity and integrity.

The working class and other toiling masses must rally together to resist the threat and reverse the process accepted by the bourgeois landlord government. On the occasion of 50th Anniversary let us take a firm pledge to fight all these forces who are out to destroy the achievements of the freedom movement and posed a severe threat to sovereignty. The leading role of the working class in this crucial struggle will alone change the destiny of the country and carry forward the heroic traditions developed by millions of freedom fighters in the national liberation struggle.

RALLY TO BLOCK THE BLACK BILL

SWADESH DEV ROYE

The Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Bill, 1997 introduced by the Finance Minister in the Lok Sabha on the last day of this year's budget session with a view to repealing the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 is yet another retrograde step by the UF Government which has already earned the dubious distinction of forgetting altogether their promise to the working class in the Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

A comparative study between the recommendations given in July 1993 by the infamous Omkar Goswami Committee on industrial sickness appointed by the rejected Congress (I) Government and the provisions of the instant Bill will reveal how the UF Government is even surpassing the Congress (I) Government in speed and sweep in adopting certain policies and taking some steps against the interest of the country and the working class.

BASIC SHIFT IN NEGATIVE DIRECTION

The points of serious concern in the Bill are that the additions and deletions proposed are so massive that it will practically change the original basic structure of the SICA and shall totally deviate from the stated aims and objectives for which SICA was originally enacted. With the changed definition of "sick industries", so called sickness in industry will spread like epidemic. Under the proposed Act the role of the BIFR is going to be reduced to that of mere "facilitator"/"mediator" as against the existing quasi-judicial authority. Against the concept of revival and rehabilitation the Bill provides for "restructuring" of sick units. The existing provisions for enquiry by BIFR (as to whether a unit has really become sick) and appointment of Operating Agency (for preparing revival/rehabilitation scheme) have been altogether deleted. Apart from these changes, many other provisions of SICA have either been removed or replaced by such provisions which are repulsive to the very concept of revival.

The trade union movement has been demanding amendment of SICA to remove the provisions providing for winding up of sick units without seriously considering the importance of the

concerned industry, the replacement cost, opportunity cost, import substitution factor etc as also those which infringe upon the rights and service conditions of the workers of sick units while urging for provisions for proper diagnosis of the cause of sickness and to ensure rehabilitation of sick units referred to BIFR. But the Bill has on the contrary sharpened the killer knife totally ignoring the constructive suggestions put forward by the trade union centres. It is worthwhile to mention that on industrial sickness the CMP noted "A new law will be made to deal with industrial sickness and the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction will be completely revamped. The law will also provide for a separate mechanism to deal with sickness in small industries. Efforts will be made to rehabilitate and revive sick industries and protect the interests of the workers."

THE NEW DEFINITION OF SICKNESS

As per the definition in the existing Act "sick industrial company" means an industrial company (registered for not less than seven years) which has at the end of any financial year accumulated losses equal to or exceeding its entire net worth and has also suffered cash losses in two successive financial years."

But as per new definition the company must have been registered for not less than five years and has (i) defaulted in payment, on due dates, of interest or principal or any other amount or any combination therefore to any secured creditor, or (ii) been irregular on any cash credit, working capital or like account (by whatever name called) to any scheduled bank or any other secured creditor, in any four or more quarters, whether continuous or not in a block of two successive financial years. However, for mandatory reference to BIFR the only condition provided in the Bill is the erosion of fifty per cent or more of the peak net worth of the sick company during the immediately preceding four financial years against the existing provision for erosion of 100% net worth.

Dispensing with the provision of enquiry by BIFR as to whether a company has really become sick, the

Bill has provided that a certificate issued by a public financial institution or a state level institution etc "shall be conclusive proof that the industrial company is a sick industrial company for the purposes of this Act."

One would be living in a fool's paradise if he infers that the new liberalised definition has the positive aspect of early detection of sick units: early detection for cure is welcome but early detection for early killing is dangerous. And given the overall thrust of the Bill and the excessive zeal of the government for implementing the Fund-Bank prescribed policies, the trade union movement need not have any illusion on such early detection provision. Further, more sick units means more winding up of sick industries under new dispensation. In the process while the so called sick public sector industries shall be closed one after another, the private sector shall reap the benefit, as a former Chairman of BIFR noted, "Industrial sickness has become a profitable business to the private entrepreneurs." Even the Committee appointed by the government noted that "There are sick companies, sick banks, ailing financial institutions and unpaid workers. But there are hardly any sick promoters(owners)."

GOOD-BYE TO REVIVAL

The concept of revival of rehabilitation of the sick industrial companies provided in the original Act has been deleted and the Bill provides for "viable restructuring scheme." Now the connotation of the term restructuring is so wide and varied that such term can be very handy for ill-intentioned handling of sick units and given the dubious credential of the authors of the Bill, who even cannot tolerate the mention of the words "revival or rehabilitation", the incorporation of ambivalent terms in replacement of clear and definitive words is fraught with imminent danger.

Further, section 18 of the Act, which deals with preparation and sanction of revival scheme, provides a long list of measures from which to opt for preparation of such scheme. But in the Bill the list of measures has been separated from the body of the concerned section of the Act and put in a newly created schedule. Furthermore the list of measures has been altered with additions and deletions obviously to facilitate closure, privatisation and

retrenchment of employees. What is the motive behind putting the important matter in a schedule curbing out the same from the body of the concerned section of the Act? One probable motive could be to arm the government to frequently change the schedule without necessitating to amend the act. And it is not difficult to foresee that such changes would go against the interest of the working class.

NEW BARRIERS

To put barrier in the way of sanctioning revival scheme a new provision has been incorporated under section 17 (4) of the Bill which states, "Provided that no such scheme shall be sanctioned unless it has the approval of the secured creditors representing not less than seventy five per cent of the monetary value of secured debt." To favour privatisation, yet another new clause under section 20 of the Bill states that "where a scheme under section 15, 16 or 17 involves any change in or take over of the management of the sick industrial company, other things being equal, professional management groups (read privatisation) or cooperative society formed by the employees of the sick industrial company shall be preferred."

Section 19 (1) of the Act provided for financial assistance by way of loans, advances or guarantees or reliefs or concessions or sacrifices from the Central Government, a State Government, any scheduled bank or other bank, a public financial institution or State level institution or any institution or other authority... This section has altogether been deleted which will render revival of sick units all the more difficult if not impossible.

JUDICIAL AUTHORITY OF BIFR SNATCHED

Contrary to the commitment of the U.F. Govt. in the CMP to "completely revamp" the BIFR, the Bill has reduced the role of BIFR to that of mere "facilitator or mediator" against the existing quasi-judicial authority. Section 13(3) of the original Act vested the BIFR and the AAIFR with same powers as are vested in a civil court for the summoning of any witness and documentary evidence from any court of office.

Again section 14 of the Act provides that every proceeding before BIFR and AAIFR shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of

sections 193 and 228 and from the purposes of section 196 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) But the role of BIFR is redefined in the Bill as of conduction its proceedings through facilitation, mediation... in order to formulate a viable restructuring scheme...and it is laid down that it shall not Act like a Civil Court.

AAIFR ABOLISHED

One of the most important provisions of the original Act deleted in the Bill is the abolition of the AAIFR (Appellate Authority for industrial for industrial and Financial Reconstruction) It is needless to elaborate the serious effect of the denial of right to appeal of the workers aggrieved at the order of BIFR.

The present Board constituted under the Act shall be dissolved to be reconstituted under the provision of the Bill, when enacted, and all cases pending before the present Board shall be dealt with under the new provisions implying thereby that even the pending cases which are in the advance stage of processing shall have to be processed afresh under the new Act. The fate of such fresh exercise is obviously unlikely to be positive.

BLOCK THE PASSAGE OF THE BLACK BILL

As already mentioned above there is an urgent need to amend the SICA and change in the style of functioning of BIFR. Experience has shown that BIFR under SICA, 1997 has failed to fulfill the stated objectives of quick revival and rehabilitation of sick units and protection of employment.

The proposed Bill in question is a fraud on the trade union movement of the country. It has totally deviated

CITU DELEGATION VISITING CHINA

At the invitation of the All China Federation of Trade Unions, a 4-member CITU delegation will visit China from 28.7.97 to 4.8.97.

In extending the invitation the ACFTU had stated that this visit would further strengthen the friendship and understanding between CITU and ACFTU.

The delegation will comprise : W R Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU (leader of the delegation); Manik Sanyal, (Working Committee Member from West Bengal; K Hemalatha, (Working Committee Member from Andhra Pradesh) U K Vellingiri, (General Council Member from Tamil Nadu).

CITU Working Committee Meeting

The Working Committee of CITU will meet at Shimla from 11th to 14th September 1997.

The meeting will commence on 12.9.97 at 10 AM. The venue of the meeting will be announced later. There will be a mass rally on 11.9.97.

Notice for the meeting has been sent individually to all members.

The address of the Reception Committee:

**Com.Kashmir Thakur
General Secretary, Himachal Pradesh CITU
9, Bawa Building, Shimla 171 003
Phone: 253019**

from the positive aims and objectives for which the legislation was originally enacted; changed the preamble of the original Act and demonstrated an altogether negative attitude and adopted a destructive course in the matter of addressing the urgent and serious national question of industrial sickness. The Bill is yet another case of betrayal of the trust of the working class of the country by the UF Government. The trade union movement of the country cannot forget the costly and painful experience gained in dealing with the BIFR, the extreme difficulties they have been facing in reviving the sick industrial units due to the inconducive provisions of SICA, 1985. But if the Bill is allowed to be passed in its present shape then this shall be the last nail in the coffin of sick industries and BIFR shall really become the 'Board for Industrial Funeral Rites.' Therefore, the trade union movement of the country must be united irrespective of affiliations against the Black Bill, release the total strength of the working class in the country and launch a powerful united movement to block the passage of the Bill. We must compel the Government to change their negative attitude and take the trade unions into full confidence in redrafting the amendments to the SICA, 1985 to remove all the barriers in the way of reviving the sick industries.

HANOI CONFERENCE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

P R KRISHNAN

A 3 day long conference of Asia Pacific region countries in solidarity with the people of Cuba took place in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, from 12th to 14th June 1997. It was attended by 120 delegates from 14 countries from Asia and Pacific region. The participating countries and the number of delegates were: India (35), Australia (6), Bangla Desh(15), Cambodia (2), China (3), Cuba (9), Japan (1), North Korea (2), Laos (3), Malaysia (5), Myanmar (7), Philippines (3), Sri Lanka (1) and Vietnam (27).

The 35 member strong Indian delegation comprised of 11 MPs and prominent figures from different fields of life and organisations.

CITU was represented by P.V. Ramdas (Tamilnadu), Perurkada Sadasivan (Kerala) and P.R. Krishnan (Maharashtra). Pallav Moitra of Air Corporation Employees Union from West Bengal was also a delegate. Harkishen Singh Surjeet, General Secretary, CPI(M) led the Indian delegation.

In the world wide protest action against American blockade on Cuba, the Hanoi anti imperialist meet was the 3rd one and had assumed international importance. The first in the series was the 3000 strong representative conference held in Cuba's capital Havana, in November, 1994 and the 2nd Aisa Pacific Conference held in Calcutta in October, 1995. The main purpose of these conferences was to mobilise and build up worldwide mass movements against the inhuman imposition and continuation of U.S. blockade against Socialist Cuba and against the Helms-Burton legislation imposing trade embargo on nations rendering humanitarian help to the people of Cuba or having trade relations with that country. The delegate session of the Asia-Pacific Conference which commenced in the historic hall of International Convention Centre at Hanoi at 10 A.M. on 12th June was steered by a committee comprising the leaders of the delegations from participating countries. This famous conference hall was situate in the heart of Hanoi city which has hosted many such conferences of international importance in the past.

The proceedings of the Asia Pacific meet started with

the opening speech by the President of Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations, Ngueyan Quang Tao. It was followed by an inspiring welcome address by the Vice President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Madam Ngueyan Thi Binh. The prevailing situation in Socialist Cuba, political and social, beginning from the 40 year old blockade was explained in detail by the President of the Cuban Institute for Solidarity with the people, Sergio Correr. The deteriorating economic situation brought out as a result of the outrageous U.S. blockade was then explained by George Carriozo, leader of the Cuban delegation. In his speech, Carriozo narrated the innumerable difficulties and multifarious sacrifices made by the patriotic Cuban people to tide over the horrors of the continuing blockade. Carriozo was all praise for the continuing help that the people all over the world are extending to their Cuban counterparts.

The morning session was thereafter addressed by leaders of each delegation. The first speaker in that order was Madam Tania Maceira Delgado, the Cuban Ambassador to Vietnam, followed by Harkishen Singh Surjeet from India. Others to greet the conference were U Than Shwe, Minister from Myanmar, Madam Nalia Sancho (Philippines-Cuba Friendship Association), Michael Pauer (Australia & Sydney Friendship Association), D.E.W. Gunasekara (Srilankan Communist Party), Re Yong Gun (Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea), Yang Mai (China-Cuba Friendship Association), Rashed Khan Menon (Bangla Desh Workers Party), Duong Sovan (Cambodian Federation of Trade Unions), Kambou Souniay (Laos National Assembly) and others. All the leaders criticised in their speeches, the anti people and anti freedom designs of the U.S. blockade, just because, Cuba had declared Socialism as its goal. The speakers, regardless of their political and ideological affinity, demanded withdrawal of the U.S. imposed embargo forthwith. Earlier, as is customary in Vietnam, the Children in their attractive traditional uniforms and with Vietnamese Fatherland flags in their hands extended an affectionate

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THE PARAMOUNTARY OF TU RIGHTS

SAROJ CHOWDHURY

If in India attacks on trade union rights have intensified, there is very little to be surprised at. The Indian workers enjoys very little TU rights. Whatever rights were guaranteed under the Constitution of India have remained on paper. The other labour legislations which are considerable in number, confer very little TU rights. Whatever has been provided therein are hedged in by the employers' sacrosanct rights and their whims and wishes. It is unfortunate that the question of TU rights did not receive the serious consideration it deserved. This may be so because of the overwhelming preoccupation with immediate problems of the workers which compel TUs attention.

In the recent conference of CITU at Kochi (April 97) the question of TU rights was discussed with special emphasis and several examples of brutal repression on workers and violation of TU rights were brought before the conference. It may be useful to recall the incidents narrated in the conference told by the sufferers.

The General Secretary of one of the unions from Bihar could not attend the conference as he continued to languish in jail without trial. In the North Western Indian state of Rajasthan where feudal and communal elements are strong, TU rights were never safe nor can they be. Anyone going round Hanumangarh-Ganganagar complex can find umpteen number of instances of workers being denied TU rights: meetings are not allowed or are disrupted by lumpens hired by the management. At times, they resort to violence if the workers are found to be determined to enforce their rights. Case of Niranján Singh as narrated in the conference made everyone sad and angry. When he was addressing a meeting at Ganganagar Spinning Mill gate, anti-social elements who enjoyed the patronage of BJP gouged out his both the eyes with a knife, thus condemning him to the life of a blind man for the rest of his life.

These BJP-sheltered anti-social elements assaulted the CITU leader Shivshankar Pandey. These elements also attacked and smashed the CITU office. At Raipur

500 workers were retrenched for the mere crime of forming a TU in the factory manufacturing Halogen lights. The BJP Govt. in Rajasthan has drunk deep in the well of privatisation. They are going about it indiscriminately and Hospitals and health Services are being privatised, workers in various hospitals who have shown the temerity of organising protest and opposition were being systematically hounded out and retrenched.

Haryana has set up its own record of sorts in the matter of suppressing TU rights. Here the employers approach the Police or Courts to ban any assembly meeting or demonstration for months together. Complaints to authorities have brought no relief. The employers think it to be their birth right to keep in force the ban for as many weeks and months they want. Unfortunately the courts do not vacate the injunctions even when approached.

The picture in UP, the largest and the most populous state in India, is not different either. In Panki industrial area, during the last long ten years no formal permission could be obtained to arrange a meeting of the workers. In the emerging industrial area of Shonebhadra district, workers do not enjoy any TU right.

In Bihar, trade unions are constantly exposed to attack by ruthless mafia gangs. The Dhanbad Coalfield area is their main playground where these mafias call the shots. It is no accident that these mafia gangs account for pilferage of coal worth one thousand crore and it is these gangs again whom the managements employ for union bashing and strike breaking.

In the recent years, Maharashtra has acquired notoriety in respect of mafia interference in TU work. The game was started by the employers and Khatak, a noted industrialist had to pay for it by his blood. With the passage of time these gangs have become very powerful with overseas contacts. It is one these gangs that killed the TU leader Dr. Dutta Samant in broad daylight. There is no end in sight of such killings as for some it is highly paying. In the most industrialized state, trade union rights are coming

under constant assault.

Killing of Sagarika Soren by the goondas having connections with INTUC and hired by the employers had rendered many dumb founded. This Sagarika was engaged in attempts to preserve unity of Bodos and Adivasis in the tea garden of Assam. This is not the first instance of cold blooded murder of TU workers. Indeed how many have been killed is anybody's guess. Anyone who knows the conditions of the less accessible in the tea garden areas would know that to try to form a TU was to attract the wrath and revenge of employers and endanger one's own life. Yet another category of violation of trade union rights is the denial of right to collective bargaining which is one of the basic labour standard developed by the ILO.

In the vastly expanding informal/unorganised sector anything called trade union right is unknown. In many industries, employers openly encourage workers to leave united common trade union and to form caste based or community based organisations.

It is to be regretted that the TU movement in India has not given sufficient attention to this problem. The CITU, however, has been pursuing the question at national and international fora. The CITU has been keeping close touch with international committee on TU rights. The CITU has sent last year a fairly detailed report on the situation of TU rights in India. The aforementioned Committee has decided to make extensive use of the materials contained in that communication of CITU.

Workers while surely fighting for their jobs, wages and other elementary facilities and benefits, must also come forward to defend their TU rights as there is none else to defend it for them. After all, a right is a right as long as the workers are conscious and strong enough to enforce it.

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-HANOI cont from page 10

welcome.

After the inaugural session, the whole conference contingent was divided in 2 separate commissions. Of these, the 1st commissions was on Solidarity Movement with the people of Cuba and the other commission was on Repercussions of Helms-Burton legislation. Each of these commissions was closeted in 4 separate sessions and after marathan discussions, the participants reached consensus and conclusions, which were placed before the plenary session. Both these reports contained different aspects of the solidarity movement conducted and spearheaded in the respective participating countries against U.S. blockade and called for a sustained, unified and wider programmes of action in different parts of the world. With the original presidium of heads of the delegations on the dias, these reports were unanimously adopted by the plenary session which decided to go in for a bigger and wider 3rd conference sometime in the later part of the year 1999.

Earlier, the conference had the privilege of Cuban President Fidel Castro's message of greetings to the delegates. In his message, the Cuban President said that the people of Cuba will never accept the U.S. hegemony, nor surrender to its attempts to subjugate but will resolutely fight out this onslaught. In this, President Castro was sure that the people of Cuba are not alone but have the support, sympathy, cooperation and solidiary of the whole people in the world.

The Hanoi conference concluded with a clarion call to all freedom loving people of the world to strengthen the solidarity movement to bring pressure on U.S. to lift the blockade against Socialist Cuba. The President of Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations Nguyen Quang Tao gratefully acknowledged the importance of this conference and extended warm thanks to the participants and for their countries.

As a part of the concluding ceremonies of the conference in the evening on 14th June, the Vietnamese artists, musicians and singers presented a variety of cultural programme in memory of the great Cuban revolutionary leader Che-guevara and in honour of the foreign delegates to the solidarity conference.

NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATIONS

CALL FOR COUNTRYWIDE ACTIONS AGAINST ECONOMIC REFORMS

The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) in its meeting held on 27.6.97 evening decided to launch country-wide actions against the disastrous economic policy of the Govt of India, culminating in a massive dharna before Parliament on 9th December 1997.

The meeting was presided over by A B Bardhan, Vice President, AITUC and was participated by the major Central Trade Unions, Industrial Federations and the organisations of the peasantry, agricultural workers, students, youth and women, besides representative from National Working Group on Patents.

The meeting noted with concern the severe impact of the economic policy of so called liberalisation being continued vigorously by the United Front Govt. on the entire economy of the country and on the lives of the common people.

Price rise continued unabated, which would be further aggravated if the proposed hike of petroleum prices materialised. Despite tall claims, industrial growth marked sharp decline in 1996-97, and unemployment and job losses were increasing at a faster rate. Contrary to the commitment made in the CMP to revive the sick PSUs, steps are being taken to close them, throwing tens of thousands of workers jobless.

The SICA Amendment Bill introduced during the last session of the Parliament is basically designed to rule out the prospect of revival and facilitate faster liquidation of sick units. In certain sectors like NTC, fertilizer, etc., the Government is going back from its earlier decisions of revival.

While no positive steps have been taken to benefit the working class, peasantry, agricultural workers and the common people, the Govt is moving fast in obliging the monopoly houses and foreign capital. In fact the whole crux of the economic policy measures of the Govt got amply reflected in the 97-98 budget which offered big concessions to the rich

at the cost of millions of common people.

The NPMO also noted with concern the the move of the Govt to submit to the increasing pressure of the industrially developed countries to dilute further the patent regime and dismantle all barriers to import through WTO and other multilateral agencies.

After indepth discussion, the NPMO stressed the urgent need for intensifying resistance to such disastrous policies of the Govt, which undermined the sovereignty and self-reliance of the country, through countrywide united agitations, besides various sector-wise movements.

The NPMO further demanded of the Govt not to accept the retrograde recommendations of 5th Pay Commission and to finalise the wage revision of central Govt employees in consultation with their unions/federations.

The NPMO also urged upon the Govt to introduce and pass the Bill on agricultural workers in the next session of Parliament, introduce the Bill on Secret Ballot for recognition of trade unions, and also legislate on the Reservation of Women in Assemblies and Parliament without any further delay, failing which Govt will have to face mounting unrest all over the country.

It also demanded of the Govt to withdraw the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill and reverse its decision on privatisation of Banking Sector including in rural areas.

The NPMO expressed its anguish on the bungling of the Govt with regard to the honorarium of the Anganwadi workers and helpers and demanded immediate fulfilment of its commitment to them by giving a respectable increase in their honorarium.

The NPMO also demanded of the Govt to come forward with the bill on compulsory free primary education in the current session of Parliament as per its stand to uphold the basic policy statement enshrined in the Directive Principles of the Constitution, in the 50th anniversary year of Independence.

Action Programme

In opposition to the on-going economic reforms and with the demand to reverse them, the National Platform decided the following action programme:

1. District/Regional level conventions and rallies to be completed by Septemebr 1997
2. State level conventions and rallies by October/November 1997
3. Massive Day long dharna before Parliament at New Delhi on 9th December 1997.

The meeting decided that the Central leadership of all the Mass organisations would monitor and participate in the District/State level programmes and

also in the dharna on 9th December at New Delhi. The meeting also decided to hold a meeting on 29th August at Delhi to explain the role of the working people in the freedom struggle and the significance of India's independence and the need to safeguard its sovereignty, in this 50th anniversary of the country's independence.

NPMO called upon all the mass organisations to prepare for country wide strike action after completion of the above programme in defence of the country's sovereignty.

M K Pandhe
(CITU)

A B Bardhan
(AITUC)

V Tiagi
(HMS)

THE DECISIONS OF THE CITU SECRETARIAT

A meeting of the office bearers of Centre of Indian Trade Unions was held at New Delhi on 19th and 20th July 1997. Com. E Balanandan MP, President chaired the meeting.

The meeting reviewed the developments since the last conference of CITU held at Kochi in April and decided on the measures to implement the decisions taken thereat.

GOVT. DECISION ON CENTRAL PAY COMMISSION DENOUNCED

The CITU denounced the decision announced by the Government of India on the Fifth Central Pay Commission report. The central trade unions had already criticised the main thrust in the pay panel report which on the one hand aimed at abolition of existing posts as well as drastic reduction in manpower and on the other altered the relativity between the officers and other cadres, by showering a bonanza of hike in pay and perks for the high paid bureaucrats and doling out a pittance of wage rise for the lowest paid government staff. The government while effecting a few cosmetic changes in the pay panel proposals in the realm of pay-hike, had made adverse changes in several aspects. The decision to abolish around 3.5 lakh posts lying unfilled over the years is a pointer to the direction in which the government is likely to move on other recommendations of the panel, not relating to pay

packet. The government decision has been resented by all organisations of Central Government employees laying bare the farce of consultation the Finance Minister was supposed to have had with the staff side. Moreover the Government decision will have a far reaching implication on the wider question of wage policy in public and private sector employments. The CITU has no doubt that the central government employees and their organisations will carry on a determined struggle against the injustice meted to them. While extending full support to their action programmes, CITU calls upon the working class at large to raise their voice against the retrograde recommendations of the Commission and the decisions of the Govt. there on. CITU has also decided to explore the possibility of joint campaign.

DEMONSTRATION BEFORE PARLIAMENT ON 2.9.97 AGAINST GOVT PENSION SCHEME

The CITU has called upon the workers to stage a massive rally before Parliament on 2.9.97 against the pension scheme formulated and implemented by the Government of India. The CITU will also meet the Speaker of the Lok Sabha on that day and present him a memorandum signed by over 50 lakh workers. The CITU noted that even the organisations which had supported the government scheme are now disillusioned with the government not keeping up its commitment on review of the scheme, indexation of pension benefit etc.

SUPPORT TO COAL AND BANK SECTOR STRIKE

The CITU hailed the proposed 3 days strike by all workers in coal industry from 28th to 30th July, 1997, at the joint call of CITU, AITUC, HMS, INTUC and BMS, against the government move to privatise coal mines, and extended full support.

The CITU also welcomed the two days strike call given by the United Forum of Bank Unions, comprising all organisations of officers and employees in the banking industry, on the 28th and 29th August 1997 against the government policy of floating local area private banks and other demands. The CITU called upon all the affiliated unions and workers to express solidarity with their striking brethren in coal and banking industries.

RETROGRADE SICK COMPANIES BILL '97 OPPOSED

The CITU decided to approach all central trade unions to raise a united protest against the retrograde bill, introduced in the last session of Parliament, which aimed at swift liquidation of the sick industrial companies. The United Front Government had given a go-by to the commitment in the Common Minimum Programme which promised revival of sick industries and protection of employment of the workers thereof.

The CITU called for united resistance to block the passage of the Bill in its present form and decided to press for wide ranging consultations with the trade unions on the subject.

FIGHT AGAINST ECONOMIC POLICIES

The CITU welcomed and endorsed the call of the National Platform of Mass Organisations to carry forward the fight against the economic policies of the government at the dictates of the World Bank and IMF, culminating in a Mass Dharna before Parliament at New Delhi on 9th December 1997.

CELEBRATE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

The CITU decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence highlighting the historic role of the working class in the freedom movement, the significance of Indian independence and the need to safeguard the same in the context of all round attacks mounted by imperialist, communal and divisive forces. The CITU called upon the working class of

the country to carry forward the anti-imperialist traditions of the freedom struggle. The state committees and affiliate unions will organise seminars, conventions and other appropriate functions during the golden jubilee year.

CITU MEET AT SHIMLA

The CITU also finalised the preparation for the meeting of the All India Working Committee of CITU at Shimla from 11th to 14th Sept 1997.

-Hindi Speaking cont from back page

The meeting reviewed the plan for and progress of implementation of the various programmes of movement chalked out by the National Platform of Mass Organisations in these States and decided to further intensify steps in the matter. Moreover, the mobilisation plan for the 2nd September demonstration before Parliament against the Government Pension Scheme was discussed. Since the major mobilisation has to be from the adjoining States, it was decided that the State committees should go for the best possible mobilisation to make the demonstration a grand success paving way for announcing further action programme including strike.

Balanandan in his concluding speech stressed the need for continuing the joint exercise on sustained basis to overcome our organisational weakness in these States. He also underlined the need for changing the co-relation of class forces with the aim of intensifying class struggle.

The full Secretariat meeting of CITU held on 19-20 July thoroughly reviewed the decisions of the above meeting and identified various steps to be undertaken by the centre for strengthening the work and organisation of CITU in these States. One concrete decision was that the available Secretariat at the Centre must collectively ensure constant monitoring and coordination of the work of the Hindi speaking and other organisationally weak States. A proper mix of our priorities for both organised and unorganised sectors has been mentioned as an important task. The Secretariat noted that instead of leaving it to the individual office bearer, collectively drawn advance planning and effective review of the guidance of centre to these states is an urgent need.

IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

Whither Russia

- *20 million unemployed workers including those latently unemployed
- *6 million refugees
- *15 million people with an income twice below the subsistence minimum
- *2 million homeless children
- *a death rate one and half times higher than the birth rate
- *wage arrears equivalent to almost 10 billion US dollars
- *- such was Russia's luggage as it entered the year 1997

**

The education system of Russia is in a plight. 30% of the schools and 40% of the nurseries are in a crying need of overhaul. A great deal of them have been closed altogether leaving one and a half million children out of school. The government is also in debt to the teaching staff of higher institutions, amounting to more than a billion US dollars

(Source: Inform contact, Moscow)

UK

Human Cost of Industrial Injuries

A workers' Memorial Day was commemorated at the end of April to pay tribute to workers who have died in industrial accidents or from occupational injuries or diseases. Outside Sheffield's Crucible Theatre twenty wreaths were laid by MPs, trade unionists and safety representatives around a tree planted in honour of those killed at work.

UK's record on health and safety?

208 workers were killed at work during 1995-96. That means 4 workers per week killed across all industries.

16506 major injuries.

129969 over 3 days injuries.

But under John Major's Tory government, like most government departments, the health and safety

executive was also starved of funds.

The British TUs are demanding of the Labour Government to restore financing for Health and Safety.

(Source: The Industrial Pioneer, Cheshire)

SOUTH AFRICA

Employment Bill & COSATU's stand

The South African Labour Minister Mr Tito Mboweni recently launched a Basic Conditions of Employment Bill proposing to: (i) extend basic conditions to temporary and part time workers, excluded from current legislation

ii) introduce statutory wages for vulnerable groups such as domestic and farm workers

iii) provide age restriction of 15 years for child labour

iv) increase annual leave from two to three weeks

v) Introduce Family Responsibility Leave entitling workers to three days of paid leave a year to attend the birth of their child or a death of a close family member; and

vi) requiring employers to pay double salaries on Sundays and public holidays.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was not satisfied with the Bill.

COSATU and all its affiliates are demanding a 40 hour week while the Bill provides for a reduction in working hours to 45 hour week.

In the Bill, government allows employers to vary employment standards individually and through collective bargaining 'to suit their business needs'. COSATU general secretary Sam Shilowa argued that allowing employers to vary standards downwards would lead to further deterioration of working conditions already low by international standards.

Shilowa said the Bill was an improvement on the existing act in scope but needed technical refinement in the parliamentary process and COSATU was committed to the shortest possible negotiations on it.

COSATU which had called for a one day strike decided to change its action to country wide mass

protest rallies, in view of the change in situation and having at heart the needs of vulnerable and unorganised workers

(Source: The Industrial Pioneer, Cheshire)

New TU International Founded

A new Trade Union International of Workers in Agriculture, Food, Commerce, Textiles and allied industries was formed at the first constituent conference participated by delegates from the five continents and held in Paris in May 1997.

Delegates from Algeria, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Federation of Republics of the former USSR, China, Cyprus, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, France, India, Libya, Mexico, Uzbekistan, Poland, Czech Republic, Russia, Senegal, Syria, Ukrain, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yugoslavia and WFTU and FAO attended the conference.

Freddy Huck (France) was elected President and Dimitri Dozorine (Russia) as General Secretary of the new TUI, the headquarters of which is located in Moscow.

The new organisation will function to meet the demands of the struggles undertaken at the present time with emphasis on the need for solidarity, coordination and unity amongst trade unions and of cooperation to combat the designs of the transnational companies, reactionary circles and imperialism

Repression in Bolivia

The Bolivian Workers Centre (COB) is in the midst of a thick struggle in defence of peasants, miners and teachers and demanding social security for workers and others. Protests by peasants and workers with large scale mobilisation and hunger strikes have taken place. The Bolivian Govt. unleashed a violent repression which resulted in brutal murder of peasants and miners leaving many injured.

The World Federation of Trade Unions had taken its had taken its condemnation of the Bolivian Govt. to ILO and UN Human Rights Organisation by end-May, 1997

APPEAL

1997-98 is the silver jubilee year of Jana Natya Manch; we also complete 20 years of continuous work in street theatre. In this period, Janam has produced 10 proscenium plays and has done about 6,500 performances of 47 street plays. About 70% of these performances have been done in working-class areas.

We plan to celebrate these twin anniversaries with a year-long series of events, including cultural jathas, nukkad melas, children's workshops and proscenium and street performances in working class and other areas, publication of our plays and other material, etc. To do proscenium theatre more extensively, we are designing a mobile theatre to be used by us and other similar groups which want to do cultural work amongst the people. We also plan to buy a vehicle. The mobile theatre is likely to cost around Rs. 3 lakh, and the vehicle Rs. 6-7 lakh. The total expenditure involved in the silver jubilee celebrations is likely to be about Rs.12-15 lakh.

Janam has always had a close relationship with the working class and its organisations. The working class has inspired our creativity; it has also funded our cultural work. As always, we look towards you to donate generously on this occasion.

Please send DD/crossed cheque payable in Delhi in favour of Jana Natya Manch. Our address is J-147, R.B. Enclave, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110063.

MOLOYASHREE HASHMI

Convenor

Jana Natya Manch

**Attention CITU Affiliated Unions
Please submit 1996 Annual
Returns & Affiliation Fees
immediately**

REPORTS & EVENTS

Tamilnadu News Letter

TRANSPORT WORKERS GO ON PROTEST STRIKE

Protesting against the attack on State Transport Workers in Thirunelveli by Police forces, State Transport workers went on a statewide strike in Tamilnadu on 20th June, 1997.

The Statewide strike was a sequel to an attack on a Driver by an ASP belonging to Tamilnadu Police on 19th evening. As the bus was stopped on the way side for some women passengers to board, the ASP pulled out the Driver and assaulted him. As he was beaten and taken to some unknown place, transport workers stopped vehicles and protested. More Police men were brought in and there was lathi-charge and more attacks on workers. Policemen entered the depot of the transport corporation and mercilessly attacked workers and officials including women and damaged vehicles. On the whole more than 100 workers and public were injured in this attack and 55 were hospitalised, with grievous injuries.

As this news of attack spread, transport workers in the district went on strike which spread to nearby districts. As no efforts were being made by the Government to take action against the Police Personnel, CITU led State Transport Employees Federation called for statewide strike. By 20th morning state transport buses had stopped plying and only after this, Government woke up.

State Transport Minister called a meeting of T.U. leaders. In this meeting CITU demanded immediate suspension of the A.S.P. and action against Police Officials besides leave, treatment facilities and compensation to all injured workers. Minister agreed on all the demands except suspension of the Officer and agreed for an enquiry and transfer of the Officer. CITU demanded suspension of the officer as he had a notorious record. As all the unions agreed to the Minister's proposal, CITU expressed dissatisfaction over not taking immediate action, but decided to withdraw the strike in the interests of the suffering public.

The strike was withdrawn by afternoon on 20th. But,

workers belonging to the Kattabomman Transport Corporation, where the attack had taken place, unanimously continued the strike demanding action against the police official.

Government in the meantime announced a Judicial enquiry by a retired High Court Judge. Central TU leaders including A. Soundara Rajan, General Secretary, CITU federation and State Ministers rushed to Thirunelveli. Continuous discussions were held. State Government announced monetary compensation of Rs.5000 each to all the hospitalised persons and assured action against all concerned after the enquiry. The anger amongst the workers was so high that it was very difficult for the leaders who had agreed to withdraw the strike without immediate action against the Police Official to face them. Finally, on 21st evening, the strike was called off.

CITU state committee, which was in session at Chennai, on 20th and 21st congratulated the workers who had unitedly protested against the police brutality and called upon the Government to ensure that such attacks by policemen are not repeated in the State.

SEP 9 : UNORGANISED SECTOR STRIKE

Tamilnadu state committee of CITU has decided to organise one day statewide strike on 9th September in the unorganised sector.

The state committee, elected by the state conference in March '97 held its first meeting at Chennai, on 20th and 21st June. The state conference had decided to organise this strike in support of the charter of demands of workers from various unorganised sectors. A state level co-ordination committee has already been formed and district committees are being formed.

The state committee discussed in detail about the programme of action, which includes preparatory meetings all over the state, district level conventions and rallies. 75,000 copies of a booklet on demands of the unorganised workers will be published.

While discussing about the industrial situation in

the state, it was pointed out that industrial sickness is spreading in various industries in the state. The state committee decided to collect details about industrial sickness, closure, retrenchment and VRS Schemes implemented in various establishments and plan for actions.

It was also noted that the attacks on T.U. rights are continuing in various sectors. The attitude of the state government is also not helpful. Police atrocities are also increasing. The state committee decided to organise movements to face the situation.

The committee noted with concern, the recent caste clashes in the southern districts in the state. These clashes have created a situation in which the unity of toiling masses is threatened. It was decided that all efforts should be made to safeguard the unity of the people. CITU unions along with other mass organisations had observed peoples unity day on 30th May (CITU foundation day). The state committee called upon unions to keep vigil over the situation and intervene by mobilising the toiling masses.

While discussing the report on activities, it was pointed out that during the last 3 months, Electricity, Railway, Transport, Textile, Handloom and Construction workers had conducted various state level struggles and campaigns, planned by their Federations. The state committee decided to continue these struggles along with the programmes of other sections of workers.

The state committee decided to intensify the signature campaign against the pension scheme, to be completed by end July.

The issue of membership enrollment and increasing the circulation of the CITU Journal was also discussed and decisions were taken.

P.V. Ramdoss, Vice President, who had attended the Hanoi conference on solidarity with Cuba, reported on its decisions.

The committee also decided to organise seminars, meetings and other activities in connection with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Indian Independence.

PROTEST RALLIES AND DHARNAS

More than 3000 construction workers including hundreds of women, marched to the State Secretariat on 1.7.97 at the call of Tamil Nadu unit of Construction Workers Federation of India, led by

R Singaravelu, R S Rajandran and other leaders.

Tamil Nadu Government has announced implementation of the Welfare Scheme for construction workers. At the end of the rally a memorandum was presented to the Secretary to the Chief Minister demanding proper implementation of the scheme and registration of workers.

More than 4000 electricity workers participated in a massive dharna in front of the head quarters of Tamil Nadu Electricity Board on 10.7.97. The dharna was led by D Janakiraman, President of the Central Organisation of Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees (CITU). The demands included settlement of the charter of demands pending since 1.12.96. A delegation later met the Chairman and presented a memorandum.

Protesting against privatisation move by Tamil Nadu Government, thousands of transport workers staged a rally on 15.7.97. The other demands included regularisation of casual workers, proper maintenance of buses and roads etc.

A Soundarajan, General Secretary, CITU federation and others addressed the rally. Demonstrations were held in all the districts also.

Save IISCO Convention Demands Modernisation

Under the auspices of Save IISCO committee comprising CITU, INTUC, AITUC, BMS and HMS, a convention was held in New Delhi on 4.7.1997, which was attended by all central trade union organisations and plant level leaders of IISCO.

The convention, presided over by C S Mukhopadhyaya, pointed to the inordinate delay in modernising IISCO, each day passing spelling doom of the steel plant. The convention urged the government to extend interim financial help for maintenance and revamping of the steel plants which are in bad shape. The convention also sought the intervention of the Prime Minister to expedite modernisation of IISCO.

The convention also decided for plant level preparations for an all steel plants strike in support of modernisation of IISCO.

CALCUTTA: RALLY PROTESTS STOPPING CONSTRUCTION WORK BY METRO

At the call of Steering Committee for extension of Metro, comprising Central Trade Unions, (except INTUC and BMS), unions in Banks, Insurance, Defence and three affiliates of AIRF, viz, SERMU, ERMU and MTP Rly, Men's Union, a massive demonstration was held before General Manager's Office, at Metro Bhawan on 3.7. 1997 at 1.30 pm.

Addressing the rally Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, West Bengal told that the proportion of surface transport in Calcutta was very insufficient in comparison to its requirement. And there is no scope of further improvement also. As a result, the importance of underground railway can hardly be exaggerated. The extension work has been included in the Railway Annual Plan - 1997-98. Hence, there is no reason to stop this on going project. The centre must release fund immediately to start the extension work. There is an attempt to downsize the present infrastructure including shifting of

different construction agencies which had acquired efficiency in metro construction work. It will bring social problems also including unemployment etc. The veteran CITU leader told the mass gathering that while submitting the memorandum, the General Manager was requested not to disband the construction wing in the light of the discussion held on 16.6.97 by the West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu with the Union Railway Minister and the Vice Chairman, Planning Commission. But there has already been a decision to hand over the Metro Rly to the Ministry of Urban Development which should also be protested, he added.

A memorandum was submitted to the General Manager, Metro Rly, for keeping the present construction wing intact till the matter of extension is finally settled by Chief Minister of West Bengal with Rly Minister, Govt of India. Mass gathering was addressed by different leaders representing various organisations in the Steering committee.

WATER FRONT FEDERATION

A public rally of the workers and staff of the Nava-Sheva Port held on 1.7.97 gave a call for strengthening the unity of the port and dock workers in India and to get themselves prepared for struggle for realisation of their demands to be submitted to the authorities early next year. The rally was organised as a part of the 2 day long working committee meeting of the Water Transport Workers Federation of India.

M K Pandhe, M M Lawrence, Subhash Chakravarty and other leaders addressed the rally.

The Nava-Sheva Bundar Kamgar Sanghathana, an affiliate of the Federation, hosted the meeting and organised the public rally.

Pandhe pointed out that "the government before and now, have not been taking adequate steps for expansion and modernisation of the old ports nor have they chalked out a proper plan for the development of additional ports in India.

M M Lawrence deplored that in Maharashtra, which had a glorious past, a joint front of communal forces like Shiv-Sena and BJP was in power. He however noted that the Kamgar Sanghatana was able to

organise the port workers under the banner of CITU. The main problem before the trade union movement in the JNPT Port at Nava-Sheva port, as in other ports in India, is the fast increasing contracting out of different operations and privatisation and consequent largescale employment of labourers on casual basis and on wide spreading contract system. Even though this is comparatively a new port which is a high-tech modern port with largescale container facilities, there are about 5000 such contract workers here. This includes those employed through Mathadi Board. It has to be specially mentioned here that except the core activities, all other jobs in this harbour are executed on contract basis. This exposes the workers to unending exploitation as they are deprived of statutory minimum wage, provident fund, ESI, bonus, gratuity and other benefits and facilities. The Nava-Sheva Bundar Kamgar Sanghatana has decided to launch a programme of action against this nefarious methods, including legal proceedings and representation to the State and Central Governments and Port authorities.

(Report from P R Krishnan)

AIR HOSTESSES RAISE BANNER OF REVOLT

The air hostesses of Air India at Mumbai have risen in revolt.

The Air India Cabin Crew Association (covering the air hostesses as well) signed a settlement on 5.6.97 with the Air India management behind the back of its members. The general body of the AICCA rejected the settlement. 700 employees in writing conveyed their disapproval of the terms of settlement to both the Association and the management. Despite this, the AICCA leaders comprising Shiv Sena elements signed the settlement on 5th June.

The Cabin crew (both male and female) deserted the AICCA and joined the Air India Hostesses Association in protest. The settlement signed by AICCA incorporated several adverse changes in the service conditions of the Cabin crew, by extending flight duty time, reducing after-flight rest hours by 24 hours, reducing air hostesses crew strength by one, increasing the waiting time for the next flight upto 14 hours, increasing productivity even sacrificing flight-safety and linking the wage revision of cabin crew to performance-based incentive and

promotion. This was a clear discrimination against the cabin crew. All other categories of employees in Air India have separate wage settlement and incentive scheme/promotion policy.

The settlement also discriminated against the female cabin crew on several counts.

Around 700 cabin crew predominantly air-hostesses, declared that the settlement with the AICCA was not binding on them.

The representatives of Air India Hostesses Association, comprising Flight Assistants and Hostesses met the Civil Aviation Minister C M Ibrahim and State Minister Jayanthi Natarajan and sought their intervention. They were accompanied by E Balanandan and M K Pandhe, President and General Secretary of CITU. The matter has since been taken up with the CLC at Delhi and RLC at Mumbai. The Air Corporation Employees Union is extending full fraternal assistance to the cabin crew.

Meanwhile, the Air India Management has sought to impose the changed service conditions on these employees which is being resisted by them.

Trade Union Convention at Port Blair

A Trade Union Convention was organised at the Hinterland Seamen Union Auditorium at Port Blair on 7.7.97 on the economic policies of the Central Government.

Speaking on the occasion, Samar Mukherjee, Vice President of the CITU, who was on a 4-day visit to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, lambasted the economic policies evolved and pursued by the previous Congress(I) Government at the Centre at the dictates of the IMF and World Bank. He said that the CPI(M) and other Left parties along with trade unions and other mass organisations have waged a relentless struggle against these anti-people policies of the Congress(I) government since 1991. He called upon the working class in Andaman and Nicobar Islands also to join the movement being launched by the Left parties and trade unions all over the country against these retrograde policies which are being pursued even by the United Front Government. He

said that it is incumbent on the working class not only to fight for pressing issues connected with employment and better facilities but also to fight for protection of our economic freedom which is being compromised by the present day rulers of the country. B.Chandrachoodan, General Secretary, CITU A&N State Committee also spoke on the occasion. C Babu, Secretary, CITU presided over the convention. A large number of workers and trade union functionaries of Port Blair town attended the convention.

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Bank Employees and Officers to Intensify Struggle

After the magnificent success of the one day All India Bank Strike on 4.7.97, which totally paralysed the Banking operations in the country, the United Forum of Bank Unions, comprising the employees and officers of Banks, has decided to intensify the struggle against establishment of local area private banks and ban on recruitment and on other demands. The action programme includes:

- *March to Parliament on 4.8.97
- *Dharnas in all state and district capitals on 22.8.97
- *National convention in Delhi and
- *Two Days All India Bank strike on 28th and 29th August 1997.

The National Platform of Mass Organisations, it may be recalled, extended total support to the 4th July strike.

The CITU and The Working Class, while pledging solidarity with the struggling bankmen, calls upon the Government and the Bankers to reach a negotiated settlement with the United Forum of Bank Unions.

TEXTILE WORKERS RALLY

At the call of Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers several thousands NTC and BIC mill workers from Bengal, Kanpur, Indore and Ahmedabad held a rally near the Parliament Street Police station at New Delhi, on 23-7-'97 where they were stopped, demanding revival of the NTC and BIC mills. The rally was addressed by a number of MPs and leaders of the Central Trade Unions.

Later in the evening a delegation of the Central Trade Unions comprising the JAC met the Prime Minister Shri IK Gujral, alongwith a number of MPs of different political parties. The delegation again met the Prime Minister on 24-7-'97 and had a detailed discussion regarding the implementation of the revival plan of NTC as per the unanimous agreement arrived at in the Special Tripartite Committee on 9.4.1994. On the issue of BIC mills, the delegation urged the Government to submit a revival plan, in absence of which the BIFR and AAIFR had given closure notice to six BIC mills. The delegation urged the Prime Minister to keep the notice and proceedings

in the Allahabad High Court pending.

The delegation further urged the Prime Minister to take measures so that the loans of NTC and BIC mills are waived as directed by the BIFR.

The meeting was also attended by the Textile Minister, the Textile Secretary, the Cabinet Secretary and officials of the Finance Ministry.

The Prime Minister sought time to decide the issue, since the issues of Bombay NTC land sale and writing off loans were involved.

Another meeting was fixed on 4-8-'97 to discuss the matter. In the mean time, four MPs, namely Basudev Acharya, Tarit Topdar, Gurudas Dasgupta and Pramathesh Mukherjee will discuss the matter with the Textile Minister on 29-7-'97. The Prime Minister also agreed for release of salaries to the workers, which have fallen due from May.

The delegation to the Prime Minister included, among others, P K Ganguly, W R Varada Rajan, and Subhashini Ali of CITU.

BHEL WORKERS DEMONSTRATE COUNTRYWIDE

The employees of Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd spread over various plants and offices all over the country staged massive demonstration in all the BHEL centres/units on 8.7.97 and submitted their seven point charter of demands to management. In particular the BHEL units at Hardwar, Bhopal, Jhansi, Tiruchirappally, Ranipet, Hyderabad, Calcutta in many other cities reported good response from the common workers in the demonstration.

The All India Coordination Committee of BHEL Unions comprising of CITU unions and other friendly organisations had decided to launch phased agitation/movement programme to press for vital demands of the workers such as immediate commencement of wage negotiation, formulation of separate pension scheme for BHEL employees, Revision of promotion policy, withdrawal of ban on recruitment, end of contract system in permanent perennial areas and regularisation of all contract workers engaged in permanent nature of jobs and also the NMR Workers, employment of dependent of deceased employees while in service etc.

While the BHEL workers in all the BHEL centres submitted the above mentioned charter of demands

through demonstration on 8.7.97, they would also wear demand badges and hold block level meetings/campaign during 28th July to 2nd August 1997 and also hold day long dharna in all the BHEL centres on 12th August 1997. The Coordination Committee has also decided to hold a joint dharna/rally in the

BHEL corporate centre at Delhi on 3rd September 1997 to be participated by representative from various BHEL units all over the country.

Till this report going to press report for massive response to badge-wearing and block level meetings was received from BHEL units at Hardwar, Jhansi and Tiruchy.

PM ASSURES TIME BOUND NEGOTIATION ON ALL DEMANDS

COAL WORKERS STRIKE DEFERRED

The retrograde policy of the Govt of India to allow private capital both domestic and foreign and weaken the public sector has created serious problem for the public sector coal industry in the country. Govt has already declared opening of the coal mining sector to private and foreign capital. While encouraging import of coal by drastically reducing customs duty on coal, the Govt. has proposed to amend the Nationalization of Coal Mines Act to facilitate privatisation of coal mines. Govt is also creating hurdles for modernization of coal industry by stopping the budgetary support to public sector coal industry Govt. had no consideration of the fact that public sector coal industry is also bearing the burden of public welfare, supposed to be shouldered by Govt, through pricing mechanism and other measures. On the whole Govt. policy was aimed at complete dismantling the public sector operation in Coal Mining Sector.

CITU along with other trade unions has consistently opposed such design of the govt of India. Govt appeared not to heed to the protest of the working class.

In such a situation CITU unions in coal industry along with others affiliated to INTUC, AITUC, HMS and BMS held a massive all India Convention of coal workers at Dhanbad on 5-7-97 which called for three days' strike in coal industry on 28-29-30th July 1997. All the five major central trade unions viz CITU, INTUC, HMS, BMS and AITUC jointly endorsed the strike call on five point demands a) stop privatisation of coal mining industry including exploration and excavation. b) Withdrawal of proposed amendment to Nationalisation of Coal Mines Act c) Restoring the Customs Duty on

imported coal to 1989-90 level and stopping import of coal to protect Indian Coal Mining Industry d) Reorganisation of Coal Industry to make it a unified single company with full autonomy e) Restoration of the budgetary support to the coal industry.

The coal workers decided to go on strike not on any economic demand but with the resolve to defend the Indian coal industry from destruction. The preparatory campaign for the strike at the pit level in all the coal mines in the country had created wide enthusiasm among the mass of coal workers. The strike was slated to be almost total, evident from the response of the common workers.

The conciliation at the level of CLC(C) yielded no result. At this stage the Prime Minister had to intervene in the matter and call the trade unions for discussion.

On 25-7-1997, the meeting between the Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral and the leadership of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and BMS was held where the Union Home Minister, Agriculture Minister, Coal Minister and the departmental secretaries including the cabinet secretary were also present.

At the meeting called by the Prime Minister, the Govt. assured that no policy initiative regarding coal industry will be taken without discussions and negotiation with the trade unions. The trade unions were requested to defer the strike to facilitate a negotiated settlement. The minutes of the meeting recorded the commitment in clear terms as under.

"That the discussion will commence within one week of signing the understanding and will be completed within two months.

All efforts will be made to arrive at a mutually accepted understanding on the issues.

Pending finalisation of discussion between the

parties the Govt will not take any policy initiative in regard to the Coal Industry and the Central Trade Unions agree to defer the proposed strike."

This was possible only because of the firm resolve of the mass of the coal workers to strike back at the sinister design of the Govt to privatise coal industry as reflected by massive preparatory campaign for the strike by seven lakhs coal workers. The Govt was ready with the amendment bill for privatisation of coal mines in the current session of Parliament. But ultimately, Govt was compelled to retreat and agree for negotiation with the trade unions. The battle is not yet over. All the trade unions must prepare itself to strongly uphold their resolve against privatisation in the proposed negotiation slated to commence within one week.

The countrywide strike-preparation of the coal workers could bring the Govt to negotiating table. The same warm preparedness for strike action, throughout the entire industry again can help keeping the negotiation in track and defend the industry and the country's interest.

CITU congratulates the coal workers for their active response to strike preparation and also calls upon them to be prepared for country-wide action in the days to come, if required for the defence of public sector coal industry.

CITU ACTIVITIES IN HINDI SPEAKING STATES REVIEWED

A meeting of the senior leaders of the States of Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh was held at the New Delhi on 5-7-1997. President, General Secretary and other Secretariat Members from CITU centre attended the meeting. Due to unforeseen reasons none could attend from Bihar. The meeting was convened in pursuance of the decision of the Kochi conference of CITU to discuss and finalise concrete organisational steps.

Pandhe in his opening speech observed that for further strengthening of CITU organisation in these states it is necessary to identify the steps and draw proper plan of action. In the process it was noted that the CITU centres in these states must be

augmented and properly organised with a team of functionaries, proper co-ordination between the district centres and leadership to the big industrial federations in these States and the state centre in the respective states shall have to be further strengthened and consolidated. The States must draw proper strategy to expand our work in the organised sector of technology based heavy industries with priority, which is necessary to ensure effective intervention of CITU in the trade union movement of the respective States. At the same time the importance of our work in the unorganised sector should not be underestimated. The democratic functioning of the State committees needs to be improved and collective leadership must be ensured. Steps should be taken to develop young cadres and programme for trade union education on the basis of centrally prepared syllabus must be undertaken.

Our weakness in implementing the tasks on organisation set forth in the Bhubaneswar document figured in the discussion sharply. It was decided that a status report should be submitted by these State committees to the centre for preparing a consolidated paper outlining the plan of action for putting into practice the organisational tasks. It was decided to organise a central trade union school jointly for the leading comrades of all the Hindi Speaking States.

To ensure better coordination and more involvement of the centre in the work of those State committee, various suggestions were put forward by the comrades from the States. It was decided that at least once in six months such meeting should be convened. The circulation of CITU Mazdoor should be increased in these States. Each Hindi speaking State should fix one comrades to act as correspondent of the journal and if possible, the editorial board of CITU Mazdoor may be reconstituted with representatives from these States.

The meeting discussed indepth the question of membership of CITU in these States. A review revealed that there has been appreciable improvement in this regard. However, it was felt that continuous membership drive throughout the year and special drive on the successful conclusion of specific programmes of struggle, signing of settlement etc is to be undertaken. Membership target for the States was fixed in the meeting. *cont on page 15*