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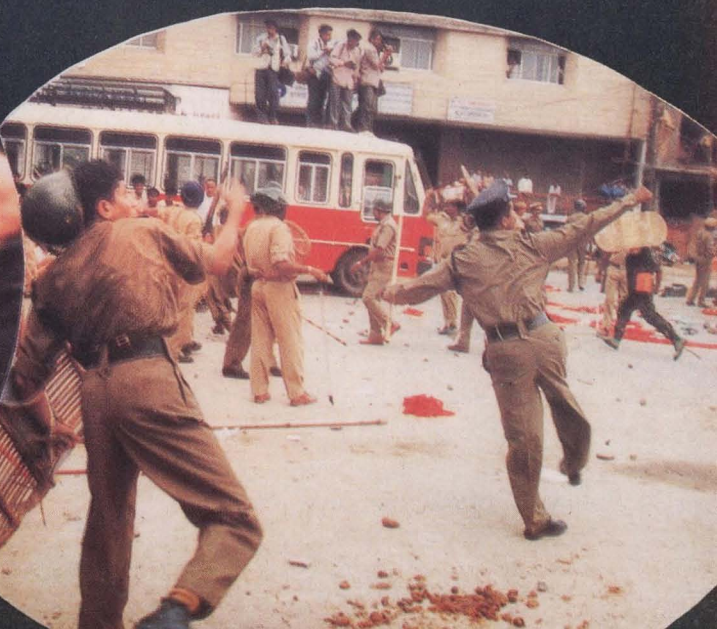
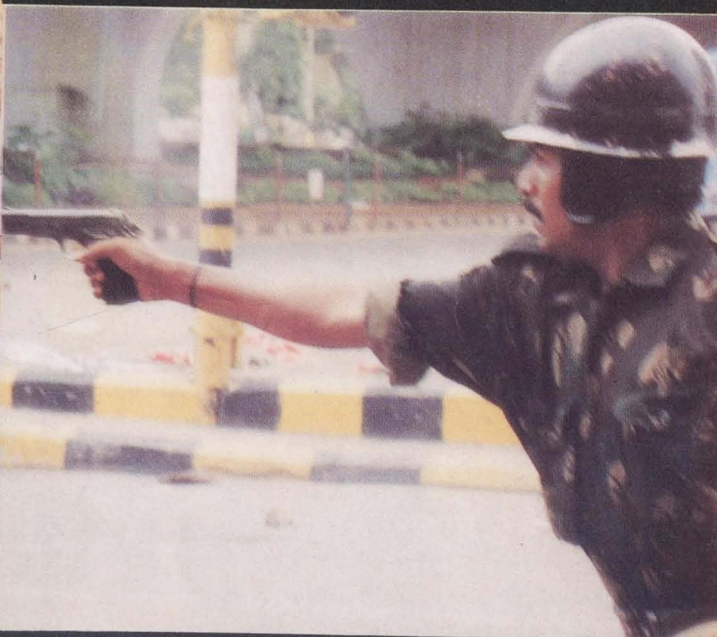
October 2000

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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

HYDERABAD HITECH BARBARISM



(Below we reproduce the text of the speech given by Fidel Castro Ruz, at the Millennium Summit, United Nations, on September 6, 2000 - Editor)

UN MUST SAVE WORLD FROM WARFARE AND UNDER-DEVELOPMENT

In our world, chaos reigns within and beyond borders. Blind laws are presented as divine norms that will bring the peace, order, well-being and security, so much needed by our planet. That is what they want us to believe.

The 30 developed and wealthy nations which have the monopoly over economic, technological and political power are meeting here with us to offer us more of the same prescriptions that have only served to make us steadily poorer, more exploited and more dependent.

There has not even been any mention of radically reforming this longstanding institution, which came into existence more than 50 years ago, when there were only a few independent countries, of converting it into an agency, which is truly representative of the interests of all the peoples of the world, without anybody having access to irritating and undemocratic veto power, and of initiating a sane process to extend the number of members and the representativity of the Security Council, and convert it into an executive body, subordinate to the General Assembly, which should make the decisions on issues as vital as intervention and the use of force. We have to state with total conviction that the principle of sovereignty cannot be sacrificed to an exploiting and unjust order in which a hegemonic superpower, with the backing of its power and force, attempts to decide everything. Cuba will never accept that.

The fundamental causes of current conflicts are to be found in the poverty and underdevelopment prevailing in the immense majority of countries, and in the unequal distribution of wealth and knowledge reigning in the world.

It should not be forgotten that this underdevelopment and poverty are the direct consequence of the colonial powers's conquest, colonisation, slavery and plunder of most of the earth, the emergence of imperialism and bloody wars fought in order to carve up the world again and again. Today they have the moral

responsibility to compensate our countries for the damage they have inflicted on them over centuries.

Humanity must become aware of what we have been and what we continue to be. Today, our species has acquired sufficient knowledge, ethical values and scientific resources to advance toward a new historical stage of genuine justice and humanism.

Nothing in the existing economic and political order is of service to humanity. It cannot be sustained. It has to be changed. It is enough to recall that we are now six billion inhabitants, 80 per cent of whom are poor. Centuries-old diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and other equally mortal illnesses have not been overcome in the Third World nations; new epidemics like AIDS are threatening to extinguish entire populations, while the rich nations are investing fabulous sums in military spending and luxuries, and every day a voracious plague of speculators are exchanging currencies, stocks and other real or fictitious assets, valued at trillions of dollars. Nature has been destroyed, the climate is visibly changing, water for human consumption is contaminated and insufficient, the oceans' source of food for humans is being exhausted, non-renewable and vital resources are being squandered on luxuries and vanities.

Anyone can comprehend that the fundamental objective of the United Nations in the century which is upon us is that of saving the world, not only from warfare, but from underdevelopment, hunger, disease, poverty and the destruction of the natural resources indispensable for human existence. And this must be done in haste, before it is too late!

The dream of attaining norms that are truly just and rational to rule over human destiny would appear to many as an impossible one. Our conviction is that the struggle for the impossible should be the theme of this institution, which has brought us together today!

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

OCTOBER 2000

HERE & NOW by Sudhir Tallang



I'm told the subject of Govindacharyaji's study is: Different types of masks and their impact on Indian politics!

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

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EDITORIAL

A SWADESHI'S VIDESH YATRA

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was very keen to undertake the visit to the United States of America. He did not even mind his knee-pain. Rather, it helped him to demonstrate that however acute his pain may be, he was steadfast in his resolve to kneel down before his masters, pledging to ever remain servile and sub-serve American interests.

Vajpayee had to cut short his stay in Nagpur, where his Party's newly elected President was installed in office. He left it to his trusted advisor Sheettigar to stage-manage the BJP orchestrating its support to the economic policies of the NDA Government.

As a preparatory step to the PM's visit, the Government of India opened up the STD and ISD services to foreign and private companies. The corporatisation of Department of Telecom Services from 1st October was declared. All this was to reassure the US business interests that the differences with sections of 'Sangh Parivar' on economic issues was no hurdle to implement the economic agenda dictated by the IMF/WB/WTO.

In the first lap of his foreign trip, Vajpayee addressed the UN Millennium Session. The summit was an occasion, where as a leader of a great country, India, the PM could have projected the issues faced by the third world, in the context of the burdens imposed by the profit greedy rich countries. But, he chose to the occasion only to excel in polemical rhetoric on the theme of Pakistan sponsored cross border terrorism. Even the best admirers of the PM, could not but point out that his address lacked statesmanship and a broader vision. The contrast is starking when one the address of Fidel Castro of Cuba at the same summit.

Vajpayee, while doing all that he could to appease America on the economic front, he utilised the occasion provided by the overseas friends of BJP, to please the Sangh Parivar. Indicating that in all other respects he was with them, Vajpayee declared himself to be a "swayamsewak" till the end of his life. He also asserted: "We will build India of our dreams", if the BJP gets a two third majority.

Vajpayee's efforts to wriggle out of the embarrassment of revealing his real agenda were slammed by his colleague in the Sangh Parivar - K.N. Govindacharya, who is on a mysterious study leave. He declared in an interview to the Times of India that he (Vajpayee) was as good a Swayamsewak and as stout a defender of Hindutva as he (Govndacharya) himself was.

It is a strange paradox that the "Swadeshis" of Sangh Parivar choose to hide the truth on our own soil but speak it out on 'Videshi' land. The paradox apart, the working class and the country must wake up to the dangerous portents of the economic and communal agenda of the Vajpayee regime.

6th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF WORKING WOMEN

"How happy Com. Vimaldi would have been!" That was the thought which crossed the minds of many who participated in the 6th All India Conference of Working Women [CITU], held on 16-17 September, at Haldia in West Bengal. This was the first time that the CITU was holding the All India Conference of working women separately from the conference of CITU and for two days. Earlier, it used to be held for one day, just prior to the CITU conference.

The reception committee at Haldia and the West Bengal State committee of CITU, made very good arrangements for the conference. From 15 States 294 delegates and 5 male comrades from the State Committees of CITU, who were in charge of the work among working women, participated in the conference. E. Balanandan, President, M K Pandhe, General Secretary and Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU, participated in the conference from the Centre.

On 15th of September, there was a big rally at Suta Hata, in Haldia, in which thousands of working women from various industries like beedi, plantations, anganwadi, construction, Banking, Insurance etc, as well as a large number of male workers participated, in spite of pouring rain. Tamalika Seth, Chairperson, Reception Committee and also Chairperson of the Haldia Municipality, presided. The rally was addressed by MK Pandhe, Kanai Bannerjee, Hemalata,

Secretary of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, Chittabrata Majumdar, Secretary CITU and General Secretary of the West Bengal State Committee, Brinda Karat, General Secretary, AIDWA, and Lakhman Seth, MP and advisor of the reception committee.

On the 16th, as a colourful procession, led by women carrying CITU flags approached the venue, Balanandan hoisted the CITU flag amidst slogans. The leaders followed by the delegates, paid homage to the martyrs.

The Swarna Jayanti Bhaban, where the conference was held, was beautifully decorated with flowers and banners carrying the demands of working women. The big backdrop on the stage pictured working women in different industries.

The presidium, consisting of KR Bhanumathy [Kerala], Leela Das [West Bengal], Prema [Tamilnadu], D Sarada [Andhra Pradesh], Veena Dev Burman [Tripura], Rampukari Devi [Bihar] and Ranjana Nirula [Centre], conducted the proceedings. Resolutions condoling the death of Comrades Vimal Ranadive, Saroj Vasisht, Sita Marandi and three women plantation workers, Leelavathy, three young men killed in the police firing in AP and Benoy Krishna Choudhury, leader of the working class, were passed and the delegates stood in silence for one minute.

Tamalika Seth welcomed the

delegates on behalf of the Reception Committee.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

In his inaugural address, Balanandan drew the attention of the delegates to the mindless drive for liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation by the BJP led NDA government at the Centre, in spite of the disastrous effects they had on the country and the working class. He told that while the Prime Minister was telling that the country is advancing, actually the industrial and agricultural production was coming down. Unemployment and price rise were on the increase. The value of the rupee has fallen to a historic low. The Government is hell bent on privatising all the PSUs and is succumbing to the pressures of the MNCs and American Imperialism. He told that the State Governments of Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, led by the Left Front, are trying to fight these policies and to protect the interests of the working class and the people. Balanandan urged the delegates to organise the working women, particularly in the unorganised sector and strengthen the CITU and the trade union movement to fight and defeat the anti working class and anti women policies of the Government.

Pramila Pandhe, Vice president, AIDWA, greeted the conference. She told that women who were unorganised, did not get any benefits and were subjected to severe exploitation and sexual

harassment. Home based workers had no rights. The Government did not enact a law against sexual harassment. She told that AIDWA and AICCWW could work together on these issues to fight against the exploitation of women. Messages greeting the conference sent by Mary Johnson, Director, ILO, and Krishna Prasad, President, SFI, were read out.

Besides the Report of activities, two discussion papers, one on 'The Organisational Issues and Tasks' and the other on 'Home Based Workers' were placed before the conference. The discussion on Home Based Workers had to be deferred due to lack of time and it was decided that the State Committees would send their observations to the centre.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION

The reports noted that the activities of CITU among working women have increased on the whole during the last few years. Efforts have been made by the CITU centre and some State Committees to organise women workers in CITU unions and to develop working women cadres. The Centre had prepared a review report on the two decades of work among working women, which was discussed in the CITU General Council. In few States such reports were prepared and discussed in the respective State Committees of CITU. The Centre had organised a few training classes for working women activists. Efforts were also made to increase the circulation of The Voice of the

Working Woman. A Hindi bulletin was started to reach out to the working women in the Hindi speaking States.

The membership of women in CITU has increased from around 13% to 16.44%. There is some improvement in the representation of women in the CITU committees at different levels and also in the executive committees of the unions.

State and district level coordination committees have been formed in some States, but their functioning has to be improved. Several fraternal organisations and Associations were having regular conventions of working women and formed women's sub committees. These committees were functioning and the members of our co ordination committees play an active role in them.

TASKS

The report has proposed the following tasks :

The State Co ordination Committees should identify the priority areas where a large number of women are working and prepare a plan to organise them, in consultation with the CITU.

An All India campaign to be conducted on the three major issues of working women viz. maternity benefit, equal wages and sexual harassment - consisting of surveys, leaflet distribution, signature collection, group/gate/street corner meetings, rallies at district level etc, culminating in a big mobilisation of working women at Delhi, after the All India Conference of CITU.

Vimaldi's birthday on 10th April

should be observed every year, focussing on some major issue of working women.

State level classes for working women activists, by October/ November.

Involvement of large number of working women in the campaign of CITU, against the economic policies of the Government.

Around forty delegates, from all the States, participated in the discussion and enriched the report with their experiences, which was adopted unanimously.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, West Bengal Committee of CITU, greeted the conference and told that more and more women are working in the unorganised sector and as home based workers and that it was necessary to organise them in trade unions. He warned that a large number of NGOs are now trying to organise the working women and to divert their attention from the major issue of the attacks of globalisation on them. He clarified that the trade unions are workers' own organisations, while the NGOs cannot be workers' organisations, even if they might do some good work. He emphasised the need to organise women in trade unions as part of the efforts of CITU to strengthen the unity of the working class.

MK Pandhe, delivered the concluding speech, in which he observed that the conference indicated that the efforts of CITU, among working women during the last two decades have started yielding results. There was a lot of potential to develop

WORKING WOMEN : ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES & TASKS

women as leaders, not only of working women but of the entire class. It was also the responsibility of working women activists to fight against the feudal tendencies still prevailing among both men and women and to assert their participation in meetings and the union/ CITU activities. He assured the help of CITU in this regard. He told that the CITU General Council has decided that in the coming 10th Conference of CITU, to be held at Hyderabad, in December this year, 15% of the delegates should be women. He observed that the number of women attending the CITU conference would be more than those attending the Working Women's conference.

RESOLUTIONS

The conference passed a resolution on the three major problems of working women - maternity benefit, equal wages and sexual harassment, demanding the Government to make and implement the relevant Acts, and urging the coordination committees to mobilise working women on these issues. Resolutions were also passed on 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies, against violence on women and condemning the brutal police attack on the rally against power tariff hike in Andhra Pradesh, in which three young people were killed.

A new All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, consisting of 61 members, (including some vacancies for co-option) was elected unanimously with Hemalata as the secretary.

A Discussion paper on "Organisational Issues and Tasks" was presented in the 6th All India Conference of Working Women [CITU]. It analysed the major problems and weaknesses in achieving the objectives of the CITU in forming the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women. These were:

- * To organise the lakhs of unorganised working women, under the banner of CITU.
- * To train working women activists and develop their skills, to enable them to take up responsible positions in the Unions.
- * To create awareness in the leadership and the general members of the union towards the special problems of working women, the need to address these issues and the importance of bringing women into the union.
- * To ensure that active and competent women workers are promoted to leading positions in the unions/ CITU committees at different levels, and
- * To take the CITU ideology and its views to working women, including women office employees and develop them as activists of CITU.

An important weakness is that except in a few States, sub committees of working women have not been formed in the federations / unions, affiliated to CITU. Even where they are

formed, due to pressure from the higher committees, the federations / unions do not take sufficient interest to make them functional. At the All India level, no federation of CITU has formed a women's sub committee. It is necessary that the State co ordination committees should discuss the issue and ensure the formation and proper functioning of sub committees in the federations / unions affiliated to CITU, which no doubt, will require consistent and continuous efforts.

The report noted that the membership of women in CITU has increased in the last few years, though the increase is not uniform in all the States.

" In Construction, textiles and mines, the percentage [of women members], even in the States, where our unions are strong and have a large membership, does not correspond to the percentage of women in these industries. The co ordination committees at the State and district level, and the industrial sub committees should discuss the membership of women in take unions / federations and the necessary steps to increase women membership. The co ordination committee / sub committee members should take initiative to enrol members in the union. It was mentioned that the representation of women in the CITU committees at the State

and district levels has increased. But, " though women are included in the committees, because of pressure from higher committees, the lower committees, do not always pay proper attention to their development, by ensuring their attendance and active participation in the discussion." Though women are always in the forefront in struggles, in strikes, and in facing repression, the tendency to resist their promotion to decision making bodies of the union continues, on the excuse of lack of women cadre. Some times, women also hesitate to take up responsibilities of regular trade union activities. The report urged that the coordination committees should "impress upon the women workers to come forward and take up responsibilities in the decision making bodies of the unions and also convince the unions to promote women."

The report emphasised the importance of planned activities among working women. It pointed out that " the main thrust of our work in this field should be to organise these vast sections of working women left entirely out of the purview of the trade union movement, who are subjected to severe exploitation by the employers, contractors, middlemen etc. If the State Coordination Committees, in consultation with the CITU committees, take the initiative to prepare a plan and allot responsibilities, there is a vast scope to organise these working women."

The report reiterated the necessity of deploying women full timers for the work among working women, wherever possible, as decided by the Ghaziabad General Council of CITU. The decision was: " the co ordination committees should encourage women activists to

come forward, take more responsibilities and work as full timers. The CITU committees should be persuaded to allot a woman full timer for the work, or a male full timer, if a woman full timer is not available."

Noting that the feudal attitudes of looking down upon the abilities of women continue in different degrees at various levels, the report stated : " as advanced section of the working class, committed to unite the entire working class and end exploitation, the CITU committees and the co ordination committees should consciously fight against the feudal attitudes, both in men and women."

The report adopted unanimously by the conference, made some suggestions to the CITU and also has taken given some tasks for the coordination committees (see Box).

Tasks for the coordination committees

- * Promote awareness on gender equality in trade unions, particularly among the women members of the unions.
- * Make efforts at self education and leadership development.
- * Assert themselves.
- * Take initiative to organise working women in their industries as well as in the unorganised sector.
- * Enrol members in the unions.
- * Come forward to take up responsibilities.
- * Attend meetings regularly and discharge the responsibilities effectively.
- * Consistently fight against feudal attitudes in themselves, in their family members, and among their colleagues in the unions.

Recommendations to the CITU

- * Ensure financial support for working women to attend meetings and discharge other responsibilities.
- * Allot a woman full timer at the State centre for the work among working women. If a woman full timer is not available, a male comrade may be allotted to the work.
- * An office bearer of the CITU State committee should be given the responsibility of the work among working women.
- * Special attention to be paid to train, develop and promote women to leading and decision making positions in the CITU and the unions.

ANDHRA PRADESH: REFORMS BY THE BULLET

W R VARDARAJAN & N S ARJUN

Brutality could not have assumed such savage proportions as it did in Hyderabad on August 28. The police of the 'lap-top' CEO of Andhra Pradesh, Chandra Babu Naidu, let loose virtual terror on the protestors, who had assembled in Basheerabad in the capital city, in response to the 'Chalo Assembly' call by nine Left parties, led by the CPI(M), and the Congress (I). The police opened fire without any warning; no firing first in the air, nor showering rubber bullets. The intention was clear — not just to disperse the crowd, but to kill the leaders and the activists in the forefront of the people's movement against the steep hike in the electricity-tariff in the State.

Just a day before, the Home Minister of AP had held a meeting with the leaders of the Opposition on the question of the demonstration. Official permission had been granted for the Assembly March and holding a public meeting. The Opposition leaders had clearly told the minister that they would defy the 'ban' in the Gandhian way by courting arrest, and the police could take the protestors into custody.

Though the Left parties had given the call for Chalo Assembly well in advance, the Government had actually refused to give permission till the last moment. When the Left parties and Congress announced they would go ahead even without the permission, the Government relented just hours before the rally.

ATTEMPTS TO PREVENT RALLY

Chandrababu Naidu had put his entire State machinery to forcibly prevent the rallyists from reaching Hyderabad. The police created terror on the 27th in the railway stations in almost all districts, and lathi-charged people leaving for the Chalo Assembly. At the Vijayawada Railway junction rallyists were dragged down from the trains and beaten up within the station. District secretaries of the CPI(M) were arrested from the trains and taken to police stations.

In many places, the rallyists conducted rail rokos and dharnas in front of police stations protesting these brutal attacks. Even the buses and lorries carrying people into Hyderabad were forcibly

stopped at the outskirts of the city.

It was clear the Naidu government wanted to terrorise the people from participating in the rally.

IT WAS "A SEA OF RED"

In spite of all this repression, thousands of people poured into the city to take part in the Chalo Assembly rally. It was a "sea of red" on 28th August in Hyderabad. A huge procession led by the leaders of the nine Left parties marched to the permitted venue of Babu Jagjivan Ram statue, in Basheerbagh.

The approaches to the Assembly were barricaded with barbed wire and thousands of policemen were manning it with rifles, tear gas shells, rifles and water cannons. Specialised anti-naxalite force, "GreyHounds", who have nothing to do with mob control, were deployed in strength, along with the regular forces.

Unable to prevent the people from rallying, the CEO of AP had decided what reception they would receive. Even before the procession reached its venue the police started beating up the leaders, who were in the fore front of the procession.

Under his instructions, the police surged into action even before the meeting could assemble. From one of the two roads leading to the assembly site — underneath a huge flyover — they started firing. On the other road, they began the water canons and firing of tear-gas shells. The aim was plainly to force the people on the second road to move to the first road where the firing was on. As the people began running hither and thither to escape from the firing, water canons and tear-gas, they were set upon by the police in an indiscriminate lathi-charge.

Worse was to follow later in the evening at the MLA's quarters, the venue of the indefinite hunger-strike by MLAs belonging to the Congress and CPI(M). In view of the fascistic police action in the forenoon, the leaders decided to call off their fast, as clearly the Gandhian mode of protest would not evoke any response from the Naidu Government.

The MLA quarters happen to be quite a distance from the scene of the police action earlier in the

day. Yet a large contingent of police surged into the quarters and mercilessly beat up the leaders of the opposition parties inside. B.V. Ragahavulu and Koratala Satyanarayana of the CPI(M), Sudhakar Reddy of the CPI and several other leaders were lathi-charged. The volunteers, who tried to protect their leaders from the brutal police action, were equally dealt with.

Following the lathi-charge, the police took into custody 22 leaders, including three women, and foisted a criminal case against them, including a charge of attempt to murder.

CM's RESPONSE

As was to be expected, the Chief Minister, far from condemning what had happened, justified the action of his police. He charged that the violence near the Assembly was pre-planned by the PWG (People's War Group) and other naxalite elements, and blamed the Congress and the CPI(M) for being in league with the ultras.

This was but a ploy by the CM to one, try and divert the attention of the people from the main issue - the unjustified hike in the electricity tariff, and two, to give a cover-up to the police terror as a counter-action to the alleged naxalite violence. But, the people were not to be so easily fooled. They called the CM's bluff the very next day (the 29th) by coming out in a spontaneous Statewide bandh. It was a phenomenal event — by indiscriminate preventive arrests and lathi-charges at innumerable places throughout the State, leaders and cadres of the opposition parties were by and large prevented from participating in the bandh; but far from proving a deterrent, the people came out en masse to register their anger with the Government's policy and its manner of treating peaceful protest. Even in the regions/districts where the Left movement is not particularly strong, the bandh was complete. The administration made a fake attempt to run some of the APSRTC buses in a caravan; but the buses, with police protection, were making only empty trips.

In addition, in several cities the police intimidated the cable operators not to exhibit the video recordings of the police action against the "Chalo Assembly" protesters. They were scared that if people viewed the police brutality on the small screen, the support to the movement against the tariff hike would swell.

EXTENT OF BRUTALITY

Sitaram Yechury, CPI(M) Polit Bureau Member, along with B.V. Raghavulu, State CPI(M) secretary and W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU, went round the hospitals and met and spoke to the injured undergoing treatment.

Over two hundred persons suffered bullet and lathi injuries during the police action. Of them, 140 were admitted to the Apollo, Osmania, Medwin and CDR hospitals. Of these, 114 belonged to the CPI(M) and mass organisations like the CITU, SFI, AIDWA and DYFI. Of the 18 who suffered bullet injuries, 12 were CPI(M) cadres.

A CPI(M) rallyist from Nalgonda, Mahesh opened his shirt and dared the policemen to shoot him. Without batting an eyelid, one policeman fired a bullet into his chest from point blank range, killing Mahesh instantly. The unprovoked firing continued for another half an hour, with many policemen aiming to shoot to kill. The Left cadre did not show their backs to the firing and continued their protest at the venue.

All this was captured by the video cameras of local channels.

Many newspapers drew a parallel with veteran freedom fighter Tangutri who had similarly bared his chest against the British police in Madras, during the 'Simon Commission Go Back' agitation. The British police did not have the courage to do so, wrote Vaartha, a Telugu daily.

With blood splattered on the road, footwear scattered and people carrying the dead and injured, it was a heart-rending scene. The video clearly showed how the rallyists dropped like birds when hit by bullets, and how weeping comrades picked them up to rush to the hospitals, even as the firing continued.

Vishnu Vardhan Reddy, a CITU activist in Hyderabad city, was severely injured in the head. He was taken to the hospital in an unconsciousness state, with parts of the brain coming out. Despite emergency surgery, his life could not be saved. Another Baluswamy, a Congress supporter died owing to a bullet injury in the chest. Four other comrades are in a critical stage, struggling for their lives.

Com. Ramakrishnan succumbed to the head injury a few days later.

The bullet injuries and the lathi-charge wounds

revealed a pattern. The bullets had been sprayed above the waist, aiming either at the chest, the neck or head. The lathis were wielded to strike on the head. The motive appeared to be to inflict a fatal wound. The doctors at all the hospitals did a remarkable job in attending to such a large number of serious cases pouring in. But for their prompt attention at these hospitals, the casualties would have been much more.

Those of the injured, who were conscious and could narrate what happened that day, gave accounts which indicate that the police had acted according to a pre-meditated plan. Most of the police shots were aimed point blank at their target. Even while chasing people, when the police caught hold of fleeing protestors, each of the victims was surrounded by a group of policemen who hit them with their lathis till they fainted. Many suffered fractures of the collarbones, upper arms, hips and legs, bruises on the head, etc.

Most shocking was the attack on women. In all cases it was the male police who were involved in the attacks. Each of the women victims was held by two policemen from behind while two other policemen from the front wielded their lathis on them. They tore off the blouses of the victims, assaulted them on their private parts and indulged in the most shameful and obscene behaviour. Leelavathi, a CPI(M) Municipal Councillor and her two daughters, Prasanthi, a leading cadre of the Anganwadi Union, Narayanamma, Lakshmi and several other women, were particularly targeted for these barbaric attacks. Even six-year-old

Kavitha, who was riding on the shoulder of her father, was hit straight on the head.

It was remarkable that despite all they had suffered, the victims were united in their resolve to carry on the fight; the police vendetta had not diminished their courage; rather they were all the more steeled in their determination.

JUDICIAL ENQUIRY DEMANDED

The A.P police atrocities against peaceful protesters deserve outright condemnation. If the AP Chief Minister has any vestige respect for democratic governance, he should at the least order a judicial enquiry to be carried out by a sitting Judge of the High Court, as demanded by the Opposition. But, despite his repeated interventions during the debate on an adjournment motion in the Legislative Assembly on the 29th, Chandra Babu Naidu was silent on this demand.

The Hyderabad attack against the democratic protest on the 29th shows that the CM is determined to carry forward the Power Sector reforms by bullets. The World Bank-IMF dictated reforms are dearer to the CEO of AP than the interests of the people of his State. He should realise that the people's verdict in his favour in the last Assembly poll was, at best, a mandate for five years of democratic rule - not an authorisation to dictatorship. The people of Andhra who have manifested their anger and protest against the autocratic behaviour of Chandra Babu Naidu Government, will teach him a bitter lesson.

The democratic forces all over the country must raise their voice of protest against the brutality of the AP Government and rally in support of the people's movement against the power tariff hike.

MASSIVE DELHI RALLY ON 27TH SEPTEMBER

As decided by the Kozhicode session of the General Council of CITU in last April, mass signature campaign on petition addressed to President of India, against the anti-national and anti-people policies of the Vajpayee Govt, had gone on in full swing all over the country.

Delhi witnessed massive workers' rally and demonstration on 27th September for presenting the petition to the President. This mass rally was participated by the workers from Delhi and adjoining States, viz., Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh etc. Preparations for the massive mobilisation for the 27th September rally had been going on in the respective States, through various programmes like district level conventions, processions and area-level meetings etc., along with the mass signature campaign. The effect of these intense preparations was reflected in the massive turn out at the rally

The rally was addressed by the CITU leaders from the centre, including M.K.Pandhe and leaders from the Hindi speaking States. *(A detailed report will be published in the next issue - Editor)*

[The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in a despatch on 12th Sep 2000 on the ICFTU online, recounted instances of repression against labour and trade unions. These are not isolated happenings but a part of premeditated attack against the workers worldwide, in the context of IMF-WB-WTO dictated economic dispensation. We reproduce the ICFTU despatch (slightly abridged), the contents of which, we trust, will serve as an alert for taking on the affronts ahead. Editor]

ANTI UNION REPRESSION WORLDWIDE

At least 140 trade unionists were assassinated, disappeared, or committed suicide after they were threatened, because they had the temerity to stand up for workers' rights against the state or unscrupulous employers, according to an annual survey published today (September 13) by the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The Survey details violations of trade union rights in 113 countries during the period from January 1, 1999 to December 31, 1999. It says that nearly 3000 people were arrested, more than 1,500 were injured, beaten or tortured and at least 5,800 were harassed because of their legitimate trade union activities. Another 700 trade unionists received death threats.

"This year's report gives an opportunity to denounce the prevailing hypocrisy which sees government officials parading at international gatherings, ostensibly promoting basic workers' rights, while those who actually defend those fundamental rights at home are being harassed, attacked, threatened, sidelined or silenced - sometimes for ever," said Bill Jordan, General Secretary of the ICFTU while presenting this year's findings.

Abuses compiled in the survey range from murder to subtle legislative arrangements that make trade union activities increasingly looking like a daunting obstacle race. Some 12,000 workers were unfairly dismissed or refused reinstatement, sometimes with the complicity of the government, because they were active members of a trade union. At least 140 strikes or demonstrations were repressed by governments, sometimes with the support of the employers using strikebreakers, while 80 of the 113 countries mentioned in the survey restrict the right to strike altogether.

"Ruthless repression in Latin America, attacks and interference in Asia, arrests and imprisonment in

Africa, severe restrictions and non-payment of wage in Eastern Europe and a growing trend to "union busting" activities in industrialised countries" are key findings of this year's report.

THE AMERICAS

The Latin American continent remains the most dangerous place in the world for trade unionists. 90 trade unionists lost their lives, twice as many as any other continent, and about 70% of those arrested worldwide for carrying out trade union activities were from Latin America.

Forming a trade union within an enterprise is virtually impossible in many Latin American countries. Workers' rights are ignored in the export processing zones (in particular in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras) and strikes are severely repressed: 726 trade unionists were injured or beaten for trying to enforce their rights. Those defending the workers' cause are constantly harassed by the authorities and employers. In at least two export processing zones, renowned multinationals were described as resorting to pregnancy tests before recruiting workers.

In Colombia, 76 trade unionists were assassinated or reported missing. These included 23 trade union leaders, 52 grass roots union activists, and a union bodyguard. There were 676 death threats, 13 attempted assassinations, 22 kidnaps, 28 forced exiles. The authorities used unnecessary force to end strikes, 149 people were injured and 418 arrested.

In Argentina, mass demonstrations in several provinces to demand the payment of wages were brutally repressed by the police, leaving five dead and 25 injured. The situation for trade unionists in Guatemala remained very dangerous. Three of them were assassinated and there were at least 20 death threats against trade union leaders. Violence was particularly bad against workers in

the banana plantations, where transitional corporations tried to destroy the trade unions.

In Costa Rica, banana workers trying to form unions risk the sack, and are put on black lists. The suppression of labour unions enables employers to ignore safety regulations. Sometimes with dramatic results, the use of, otherwise forbidden, pesticides have led to the death of workers. Cases of sterility and of women delivering deformed babies were also reported.

In the United States, freedom of association and the right to strike are severely restricted. At least one in 10 union supporters campaigning to form a union is illegally fired. The instances of extreme exploitation have increased, in particular of foreign workers recruited through private employment agencies. About 40% of public service employees are refused the right to strike and to bargain collectively. Workers regularly face harassment.

AFRICA

Trade union repression is rife in Africa. In this continent, nearly four out of five arrests worldwide took place in Africa. 80% of the world total of those given prison sentences for their trade union activities were in Africa. Strikes and demonstrations were also harshly repressed. The legislation of 23 of the 31 African countries covered contains restrictive measures on the right to strike. Trade unionists are frequently harassed in Africa. The survey lists 834 cases, in nearly two thirds of African countries, a higher average than any other continent.

An overriding feature in Africa is government interference in trade unions internal affairs. In Libya, Sudan, and in Equatorial Guinea the ban on independent trade unions remained. In the Central African Republic, the government continued to target the USTC and its leader, Theophile Sonny-Cole, was beaten up and prevented from attending international conferences.

In Ethiopia, two leaders of the teachers' union ETA died in prison because of poor conditions, while another received a 15-year prison sentence, as part of continual harassment of the ETA. The national union centre the CETU remained under government control. The authorities in Djibouti imposed their own candidates at the top of the UGTD and the UDT, and froze their assets,

claiming that the genuine organisations were illegal.

In Morocco, 23 trade unionists were sent to prison after striking over labour law violations; 21 of whom had been tortured by police in detention.

In Swaziland, trade unions continued to be repressed, and the SFTU and its leaders were regularly harassed. The police detained the entire national executive committee of the Swazi Teachers Union, accusing them of "un-Swazi" behaviour because they had carried a coffin during a march.

Zimbabwe was another country where respect for trade union rights deteriorated dramatically, and three leaders of the ZCTU were attacked following a strike. Strikes were declared illegal, and those taking party severely harassed.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

At least 37 trade unionists lost their lives during strikes and many others were wounded in 1999. All the countries in the survey have legislation limiting the fundamental right to organise. In some countries, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan workers have no trade union rights in the export processing zones, while in other countries such as Thailand, Fiji, India and Sri Lanka, trade unions are not allowed in practice. Strikes and demonstrations are fiercely repressed. 19 of the 25 countries in the region have anti-strike legislation. In 40% of countries, trade unionists were beaten or injured as a result of their trade union activities.

The authorities frequently intervened in trade union affairs, as according to the survey, nearly half of all cases of interference took place in Asia. In and Burma, the authorities have banned the formation of independent trade unions.

In Indonesia, although the trade union situation has improved since the fall of President Suharto, the police and military still brutally intervene in most strikes. In South Korea, 230 people were arrested, more than 150 were injured and over 650 were harassed in anti-union repression.

The recent history of Australian trade unionism has been one of continual assaults on trade unions at national and state level through the introduction of repressive legislation to deprive unions of their rights.

There was no improvement in Pakistan's poor

trade union rights record, and in 1999 the government added to the already severe restrictions. A wide range of workers cannot belong to unions, and in the country's export processing zones workers cannot form unions, bargain or go on strike.

In Turkey the police have a record of continually repressing demonstrations.

MIDDLE EAST

Trade unions are virtually non-existent in the Middle East, according to the ICFTU's trade union rights' survey. In all the cases examined by the ICFTU, legal barriers prevent workers from organising or from holding strikes. In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, foreign workers, who make up at least two thirds of the labour force have virtually no rights and are not covered by any of the existing collective agreements. The situation is slightly better in Kuwait, where workers who have been in the country for five years are allowed to join unions.

In Israel, the government used the law to ban strikes in the public sector, and Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who work in Israel cannot join Israeli trade unions nor can they organise their own unions in Israel.

EUROPE

Seven people in Europe lost their lives owing to their trade union activities, while another two committed suicide to draw the authorities' attention to the conditions they faced. In one quarter of the

countries examined, trade unionists were injured or beaten. In nearly half of Eastern Europe, the government interfered in the trade unions' internal affairs. This interference amounted to about one third of the world total.

In Belarus, President Lukashenko has established total state control over trade unions, making it impossible to start independent trade unions, or for unions to carry out legitimate activities. Trade unionists have been arrested for taking part in demonstrations or threatened with the sack if they do not leave the union.

In Russia, four trade unionists were assassinated. Throughout the year the authorities refused to listen to the strikers' demands, often over the non-payment of wages.

In Malta, the entire leadership of the General Workers Union as well as striking workers were charged with criminal offences, during the six-month industrial dispute, and 80 trade unionists were injured and 41 arrested. Restrictions on trade union rights persisted in Western Europe. In the United Kingdom companies used anti-union legislation still on the statute books to interfere in union affairs. 300 strikers were fired during a dispute with Lufthansa sky chefs, the world's largest catering company.

Belgium is mentioned for court decisions which undermine the right to strike, and Germany and Switzerland ban the right to strike for certain categories of civil servant.

WITHOUT COMMENTS

HYPOCRISY THY NAME IS WORLD BANK !

The World Bank's "World Development Report" has recognised that radical measures need to be taken to reduce extreme poverty, but is still coming up with recommendations for action which, by its own analysis, have failed, said the ICFTU today.

"The World Bank appears to want to continue its love affairs with privatisation and the need for market access as the cure for world's ills, despite its analysis of examples such as the former communist countries, which shows that privatisation was not the key to the success (of reducing poverty)", said ICFTU General Secretary, Bill Jordan.

The World Development Report describes how almost one-quarter of world population now falls into the category of extremely poor who has to live on \$ 1 a day.... One of World Bank's suggestions for improving the poor's situation is the removal of the basic services such as education and health care from public sphere (through privatisation). However, at the same time it acknowledges that large-scale privatisation - for example in the provision of potable water - has exacerbated the problems faced by poor people.

(From ICFTU On-Line, 12-09-2000)

ECONOMY ON RAILS!

BOTH SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT RATES FALLING.....

The Gross domestic Saving has been declining since 1995-96 onwards, from 25.5% in 1995-96, it reached 22.3% in 1998-99....Investment rate moved down in tandem with savings rate. The rate of nominal Gross Capital Formation(GCF) declined from 23.4% in 1997-98 to 21.8% in 1998-99 and the decline has set in since 1995-96 itself, both in public and private corporate sector. The rate of Gross Domestic Capital Formation (GDCF), i.e., GCF adjusted for errors and omissions, was down at 23.4% in 1998-99 from 26.2% in 1997-98 and it was also down below 1995-96 level. The average share of net capital inflow from abroad in the investment rate stayed around 5.7%(or 1.5% of GDP) during the 1990s compared to 8.8% (or 2.0% of GDP) during the 1980s.

(From the Annual Report of Reserve Bank of India. 1999-2000)

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION GROWTH SLIPS DOWN IN APRIL-JULY

Industrial production decelerated to 4.6% in July 2000, against 6.2% in July 1999, reflecting a slow down in the economy. For the first month of the current fiscal too(April-July 2000), there was deceleration, with the growth rate coming down to 5.4% from 5.9% in April-July 1999.

As per quick estimates of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for July 2000...the decline in growth rate was mainly because of poor performance in manufacturing. This sector...grew by 5.1%, against 6.8% in July 1999. For the April-July 2000 period too, manufacturing showed a lower growth rate, 5.7% against 6.7% during the corresponding period last fiscal.

Decline in growth rate of electricity was even more drastic, only 1% in July 2000 against 6.2% in July 1999.... As per use-based classification, except for consumer goods, all sectors showed deceleration in growth. Only growth was fabulous in Consumer durables, by around 23%....

Economists, however, do not regard durables' performance even as silver lining. Planning Commission member S P Gupta said that fabulous growth in durables "reflects performance in the past." The fact that capital goods continue to register negative growth shows excess capacity, he added....Pradip Srivastava, Chief Economist, National Council for Applied Economic Research said, " We have been warning for two quarters about the sustainability of the high growth..." Capital goods registered absolute decline by 1% in July and by 0.3% in April-July 2000....The basic goods also showed sharp decline in growth rate, it grew only 2.9% in July 2000 against 5.3% in July 1999...

(From The Financial Express, 13-09-2000)

POVERTY REDUCTION SLOWED DOWN AFTER REFORMS

The pace of poverty reduction in the country slowed down after economic reforms began in early 1990s, despite an average economic growth rate of 6% per annum during 1990-98. This damning observation is contained in the World Development Report 2000-2001(World Bank) released on Tuesday(12-09-2000).

This highly respected international document endorsed the findings of national sample survey that the poverty reduction slowed down in the 1990s, that too specially in rural areas.... The World Development Report also pointed out that emerging signs of increasing inequality nationally. An important point in the slow rate of poverty reduction was slow growth of average consumption as measured by NSS.....

(The Observer. 13-09-2000)

"GLOBALISATION NO PANACEA"

Economic recovery of East Asia and the impact of globalisation on developing countries received prominent attention at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) here (Bangkok) on Friday (28 July 2000).

Emphasising that globalisation is no panacea for

HEADING WHERE?

economic revival. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh in his statement at the PMC said: "Economic liberalisation alone does not eliminate fundamental problems in national economies". Recommending gradual globalisation in accordance with a country's individual priorities Mr. Singh asserted that "globalisation ought to be a human and benign process".

(The Pioneer, 29 July 2000)

NCAER WARNS OF TWIN THREATS TO ECONOMY

Six months into the current fiscal year, the "feel good" factor about the Indian economy is gradually evaporating with concerns of inflationary pressures and recessionary conditions surfacing prominently.

According to economists at the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the twin phenomenon of depreciation of the rupee and the rise in world oil prices have an inflationary potential that would have to be managed carefully.

Data analysed by NCAER economists show that capital goods output is nearly stagnant at last year's first quarter levels and the intermediate sector's growth rate had declined. However, the consumer goods sector retained the growth momentum but was lower than the last quarter growth rate of last fiscal year.

The overall investment scenario also looks less positive. According to the NCAER economists, higher investment expenditures are not evident from capital market issues. Reinforcing this fact is the near stagnant output in the capital goods sector and the negative growth in capital goods imports. It is also being felt that the volatility in the capital markets has meant fluctuations in the valuation of capital stock and may have adversely affected financing of new investments.

The NCAER's business expectation survey has also revealed a decline in the confidence index for June vis-a-vis April this year. The reduced optimism is on account of proportionately fewer respondents who rate the present investment climate as good.

(The Hindu, 19 September, 2000)

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS DECIDE ON FUTURE ACTIONS

The meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions affiliated/ associated with CITU was held on 18TH and 19TH September at Calcutta.

The meeting was attended by 170 delegates from the public sector unions from all corners of the country covering 16 states and more than 100 industries/units. The meeting was presided over by a presidium consisting of comrades Kali Ghosh and Ardhendu Dakshi, both Secretaries of CITU. A report prepared by Com Jibon Roy, Convenor of the Coordination Committee, was placed in the meeting. Com M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU initiated the discussion. 40 comrades took part in two-day long discussion.

The meeting noted that in the coming winter session of Parliament, the Govt would try to rush through many privatisation bills-on coal, electricity, Bank, Insurance and telecom and various other PSUs, in view of which much bigger resistance movement has to be developed. The meeting welcomed and supported the decision of strike action by the united platform of Bank Employees during the winter session and the strike decision by the Electricity employees on 12th December and the ongoing agitation by the telecom employees and Junior officers.

The meeting decided the following programmes: 1) Massive anti-privatisation conventions in all public sector centres/States/regions, 2) State level rallies, 3) Massive demonstration in all the PSUs at the beginning of the Winter session of Parliament in November against Privatisation/ closure, 4) Public sector unions & workers to join enmasse in the countrywide jathas being organised by CITU in December.

ATTACKING POVERTY !, WORLD BANK STYLE

A DAKSHI

It is the greatest joke of the year. After going through the voluminous report by the World Bank titled 'Human Development Report-2000/2001', even cursorily, one has to awe at the level of hypocrisy one can exhibit. After pushing hard the bitter recipe of "Economic Reforms", "Structural Adjustment", "Privatisation", "Globalisation" down the throats of rest of the nations at the behest of United States and its cohorts, and making sure that poverty is perpetuated among 80 per cent of the humankind, today World Bank is shedding crocodile tears for poverty, to dupe the gullible and to please its bosses in Washington.

Even a child knows that World Bank/IMF was opposed to and worked against Soviet Union, because there was full employment, total literacy and total free education and free health care and was one of the strongest economy in the world. Western countries, who created World Bank and IMF and pay them for their services, did everything possible to destroy Soviet system. When they succeeded, the hordes from World Bank and IMF landed in Moscow to "REFORM" the economy. They did it. Now there are beggars, homeless people, school drop-outs, prostitutes and millions of employees, even soldiers, not paid salary for months. A number of "IDEAL"

countries have been born from the old "EVIL EMPIRE", as Ronald Reagan called the USSR.

Now, World Bank blames that the "Grand Corruption" for the failure of "Reforms" in Russian Federation. But who created those "THUGS" Mr. World Bank? were the bribes paid in Roubles or in Dollars? Is there anybody to answer?

"Poverty" in a grand scale is a must for the affluence of the capitalist class and its fellow travellers. The developing countries should compete with each other to sell their products as cheap as possible to Western market, through multi-national corporations, who will make huge profit AT THE COST OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN THOSE COUNTRIES. World Bank's job is to perpetuate this system and supply financial, technical intellectual support and, of course, dollars to carry out this task. Otherwise, how can one explain why India should export tea at a price of only 2 dollars a kilogram, when it sells at 50-60 dollars a kilogram in London?

The result of all the "work" done by World Bank is that the per head GDP of 20 richest countries which was 18 times of that of 20 poorest countries in 1960, has now increased to 37 times in 1995. The report says 280 crores of people all over the world have an income of below

2 dollars a day of which 120 crores earn less than one dollar per day. World Bank has suddenly woken up to the hard reality that: "But at the start a new century, poverty remains a global problem of huge proportions. ... widening global disparities have increased the sense of deprivation and injustice for many". So, it seems that the problem has suddenly developed, even after nearly 60 years of persistent "efforts" by World Bank to alleviate poverty. Thanks to World Bank for this valuable piece of information. We are more enlightened that it is only a SENSE OF DEPRIVATION AND INJUSTICE has increased, but nothing substantive or tangible.

There is deception in every line of the report. It tries to elucidate that average income in developing countries has more than doubled between 1965 to 1998, but avoids telling how the average income in developed countries has increased in the same period. Life expectancy has increased by 20 years in the last 4 decades - it declares. But how? It is silent. We all know that discovery of antibiotics (almost at the same time World Bank was also born) has caused some dramatic changes, but life expectancy could have been far more, if poor people could buy those miracle medicines. Fact is that 14 per cent of children die before the age of 5 in developing

countries.

One remarkable thing in the whole report is that nowhere it gives the data about the current per capita income in developed countries and how it has increased in the last 10 years, when market reforms became fashionable and expedient to the masters whom the World Bank serves. Is it because of the fact that those will be too uncomfortable and revealing?

The entire document is an unconcealed propaganda in support of "Market Reforms". The rise of poverty is not failure of "Reforms", but only a result of "slow" or "late" or "less forceful" or "half-hearted" implementation of the reforms programme. Where the results have been miserable and a total failure is evident, there also extremely laboured arguments have been forwarded that despite the failures, there are bright spots, too. And the advice is to carry out the 'reforms' "with a measured and realistic approach". A job well done, Mr World Bank!

Now, there are some great discoveries about how the poverty should be attacked. We are glad to be enlightened. Some for our readers:

1) Promote global financial

stability (present unequal economic order should continue) and rich markets to be opened to poor countries (a good thing to learn that liberalisation and globalisation principles are yet to start there!).

2) Bridge the digital and knowledge divide, thus bringing technology and information to people throughout the world (want to sell some computers, eh!. But to whom? To those who earn less than a dollar per day?)

3) Providing financial and non-financial resources for medical and agricultural research, (to be patented by Monsantos and Pfizers, and the like? And help them to make super profits?)

4) increasing aid and debt relief to countries ...(how much? But is it agreed that market reforms have only increased the debt?)

5) Giving a voice to poor people in global forums, including through international links with organisations of poor people (come on, don't create problems, my dear poor people, come to Washington, give a lecture and go home, rest we will see, don't worry!)

The President, World Bank claims, "In the aftermath of protests and in the midst of controversy, this report offers real substance to the public

debate".

No, we don't agree. There is no 'controversy' anywhere, people know what is happening. Protests? Yes. Seattle to Geneva, to Bangkok to Melbourne, protests are there today. But the portent of violence is growing and the present "happy" world order is not going to last, it will be smashed by the people, because it is unequal, unhealthy and sick.

The report wants to hide the reality - the reasons for the appalling widespread poverty. International monopoly financial capital and Multinational Corporation have established their firm grip over the world economy and ensured a one-way traffic of wealth to the rich only, which is tearing apart the world to two different planets.

The World Bank is a Bank of the Rich world supervising and steering the course of developments of poverty. Now they have come out exhorting the virtues of one tube-well here, another school there and a co-operative in yet another place for achieving 'OPPORTUNITY', or "EMPOWERMENT" or 'SECURITY"! Wonderful!

This big report is a fig leaf, a small fig leaf, even for hypocrisy!

The Report's findings and recommendations are also contradictory on the topic of social protection. On the one hand the Report recognises that people will never climb out of poverty without some public assistance for confronting risks such as old age, unemployment etc., as was illustrated so clearly during the Asian financial crisis, which resulted in terrible economic hardship for workers in the countries such as Korea. Yet, while citing the example of East Asia, where social assistance programme would have helped the unemployed, the Report, rather oddly, asserts that "not every country needs to set up a comprehensive social safety net" and overtly discourages measures such as Unemployment Insurance.... However, disappointingly given its proclaimed commitment to reducing poverty, the World Bank has not, up till now, followed up its recommendations with a reform of its own policies and practices. Instead, it appears to be continuing with its simplistic free market strategies for solving poverty, which, by its admission have failed.

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CITU PROTESTS COAL SETTLEMENT

The Memorandum of understanding arrived at between the Coal managements and INTUC, BMS, AITUC and HMS regarding Sixth Bipartite wage settlement in the Coal industry was not signed by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

The agreement is valid for a period of 5 years from 1st July 1996 till 30th June 2001. The CITU agreed for a minimum wage of Rs.3689.23 and the basic wage of Rs.3300. However, it did not agree with the other provisions of the agreement since they gave paltry benefits to the 6.5 lakh Coal miners.

The rate of annual increment was only Rs.50 to 180, which was lowest among all major public sector undertakings, which are paying much more than that.

The underground allowance agreed to by the 4 Unions provided cut of Rs.1900 from the basic wage and 20 per cent of the amount after deduction would be paid to the workers. This works out to be only 8 per cent of the basic at the minimum level. Since majority of the Coal miners are

underground workers, this has made a mockery of underground allowance.

House rent allowance has been increased only to Rs.75 per month, which is extremely low in view of the rents prevailing in the Coal mining areas.

The transport subsidy has been raised from Rs. 3.50 per day to Rs.5, which is extremely on the lower side compared to other public sector undertakings.

The night shift allowance is raised to only Rs.7 per night, while other public sector undertakings are paying more to the workers.

The agreement provides for payment of arrears of all allowances from 1 January 2000 which will deprive workers of nearly 3 and half years of arrear payment.

While supporting the wage rise demand of the executives of Coal industry, the CITU considers benefits given to the workers are paltry and highly inadequate.

When the life of Coal miners is in danger every day, the memorandum of understanding signed by the 4 Unions has let

down the legitimate interests of the Coal miners.

While financial conditions of 3 Coal companies is not satisfactory, financial position of Coal industry as a whole is definitely in good shape to pay better wages to the Coal Workers. The Vajpayee Government is planning to bring a bill to privatise Coal mines in the winter session of Parliament and has refused to restore the custom duty on imported Coal, which will further allow import of Coal and result in closing down of Indian Coal mines. When unity of the workers is extremely important to fight against privatisation, the paltry wage rise agreed to by the 4 unions has only brought disunity in the struggle. This will only embolden the BJP Government to privatise Coal industry and allow import of more Coal.

The CITU appealed to all the Coal workers to protest against the derogatory agreement and prepare for a countrywide united struggle against privatisation of Coal mines by the BJP led Government.

COUNTRYWIDE MOVEMENT BY TEXTILE WORKERS

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Textile Workers met at Delhi on 9th and 10th of September to decide about the action plans to be taken in view of the Cabinet decision to close

down most of the NTC mills in the country.

The meeting was presided over by Gopal Bhattacharjee and attended by D.L. Sachdev, Arvindraj Swaroop, Raghunath Vaishnav

(all AITUC); P.K. Ganguly, Gopal Bhattacharjee, Daulatram, Dinesh Prasad (all CITU); S.S. Yadav (INTUC) and V. Tiagi (HMS).

The meeting condemned the Government for totally ignoring

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the suggestions of the trade unions and announcing its decision to close down the "unviable" mills of the NTC. Particularly, it has been decided to close down all the NTC mills in the five subsidiaries in W.Bengal, U.P., M.P., Gujarat and Punjab. This step alone will throw out nearly 54,000 workers from about 45 mills in these five States.

The meeting noted that in 1995 there was an unanimous agreement with the trade unions to revive 79 mills. The agreement was in the process of being implemented. But, after the BJP-led Govt. came into power, not a single meeting was called by the Govt to discuss with the trade unions, despite assurances given even by the Prime Minister. The Govt. unilaterally rejected the agreement.

After continuous pressure and agitations, the Govt ultimately called a "Tripartite Meeting" on 5th July, 2000, chaired by the Labour Minister, inviting the private sector also to discuss the public sector NTC. In the meeting, the Govt placed a paper stating that out of 119 NTC mills, 25 were fully working, 51 were partially working and 43 were not working. It did not spell out the details of the mills. The Textile Minister who attended the meeting, proposed that only 25 fully working mills will remain, and the rest may be closed or privatised. The trade unions totally objected to any privatisation, as "no privatisation" was one of the 8-

point unanimous agreement in 1995. They unequivocally stated that the 25 mills would naturally remain as they were fully working. The 51 partially working mills have to be revived to make them fully working. So a total of 76 mills can be fully working. For the rest of 43 non-working mills, the trade unions demanded discussion with the trade unions millwise, so that the maximum number of the NTC mills can remain. After that, over 2000 NTC and BIC workers demonstrated at Delhi on 25th and 26th July and met the Textile Minister in a large delegation along with five MPs. Joint letters were given to the Group of Ministers constituted by the Govt to discuss with the trade unions. But, the Govt remained totally insensitive to the proposals of the trade unions and went ahead with announcing its most retrograde decision.

Regarding the BIC mills, likewise, the Govt has refused take any action to stop their liquidation. The case is still pending at Allahabad High Court. Over 10,000 workers of the five BIC mills - 3 in Kanpur and 2 in Punjab will be affected by the liquidation. The meeting further noted that no salaries have been paid to the workers for the last three months. In the above circumstances, the JAC decided to intensify the agitation at an all India level, as per the following action plan:

Action Plans:

1) All India Protest Day to be observed on 22nd September in all

the NTC and BIC units in the country by holding demonstrations, rallies, courting arrest etc.

2) An All India Convention of NTC and BIC workers will be held at Kanpur on 16th October, 2000. The Convention will mobilise the NTC and BIC workers all over the country and give a call for further countrywide actions.

KANPUR:

TEXTILES CONVENTION

The States, where the Govt proposes to close all the NTC and BIC mills, namely, W.Bengal, U.P, M.P., Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab, will send 2-3 workers from each mill and trade unions to attend the Convention at Kanpur. The other States like Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, etc will send as many delegates as possible. All delegates will reach Kanpur by 15th October. There will be no delegate fee. They should inform details of their arrival at Kanpur on 15th October to the following addresses:

- 1) Com. Md. Wasi,
Jt. Secretary, Textile Udyog Mazdoor Sabha (CITU),
Ram Asrey Memorial Centre,
87/152-153, Raipurwa, Kanpur
- 2) Com. Arvindraj Swaroop,
AITUC, 111/98-A, Water Works Colony,
Ashok Nagar, Kanpur - 208012
- 3) Com. Ram Kishore Tripathi,
Secretary, HMS UP State Committee,
128/239, 'K' Block, Kidwadi Nagar,
Kanpur - 208001

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TAMILNADU CITU STATE CONFERENCE

Various sections of workers, employees and rural masses are on struggle against anti-people policies of the Central and State Governments in Tamilnadu. The CITU unions, while fully involved in all these struggles, have been busy with the organisational conferences also.

From May to August, CITU has conducted district conferences in all the 34 districts. In addition to these, working women's conferences were held in 22 districts.

WORKING WOMEN'S STATE CONFERENCE

The 6th conference of the State Working Women Co-Ordination Committee was held at the hosiery town of Tirupur on 16th and 17th August.

The conference was attended by 200 delegates from all the districts, covering almost all the industries and sectors.

The conference began with an enthusiastic procession of more than 2000 working women from Tirupur and adjoining districts. After the procession reaching the venue, named after Com. Vimal Ranadive, open session was held. This session was addressed by K.Hemalata, Secretary, AICCWW, T.K. Rengarajan, General Secretary of State CITU and Raji, State Convenor. Easwari, a Textile worker leader, hoisted the flag.

The delegate session which began in the afternoon was inaugurated

by Hemalata and continued till the evening of the next day. The session, discussed a report submitted by the State convenor and also a paper on the issue of sexual harassment at work places. The conference was greeted by U. Vasuki of AIDWA, Girija, Joint convenor of South Zone LIC working women committee and D.Janakiraman, Treasurer, State CITU.

Many resolutions were adopted and a new committee with M. Raji as convenor and T.A. Latha, Prema, Bhagavathi, Mallika and Malathi as Joint Convenors, was elected. There are 43 other members in the Co-ordination committee.

STATE CITU CONFERENCE

While the district conferences were being held, Madurai urban committee had started preparations for the State conference. P. Mohan, Member of Parliament from Madurai, is the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Hectic preparations were on all over the State.

FLAG DAY

Thousands of Red flags were hoisted on 5th September, the day of martyrdom of Golden Rock martyrs, who lost their lives during the 1946 Railway strike and also anniversary day of Com. A.Balasubramaniam, one of the founders of CITU in Tamilnadu, who was also a Vice-President of State CITU for a long period.

STATE WIDE JATHAS

While campaigns had begun with the Flag day, 5 Jathas from Chennai, Pondichery, Hosur, Nilgiri and Kanyakumari covered all the districts in the State, reaching Madurai on 26th September.

The State conference was held from 27th and concluded with a massive rally on 30th September. A state level seminar on the "Challenges before the Trade Union Movement" was held on 28th evening. Leaders of other Central Trade Unions and CITU leaders, including M.K. Pandhe, addressed the seminar.

M.K. Pandhe, R.Umanath and W.R. Varada Rajan attended the conference from the centre (Detailed report will appear in next issue)

(Report from A.K. Padmanabhan)

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BANK EMPLOYEES FIGHT PRIVATISATION/VRS

A meeting of the United Forum of Bank Unions comprising 9 organisations of Bank Officers and Employees was held on 31.8.2000 in Calcutta. The meeting, on a review of all the developments, reiterated its firm resolve to fight back the issues of privatisation and VRS uncompromisingly. Privatisation of banks is against the interest of the nation. Nationalised Banks are nation building institutions and must remain so.

The meeting declared to go on one day strike within 72 hours, in the event any ordinance is promulgated or otherwise by the Govt. for privatisation of banks. The one day strike shall be followed by more strikes and if necessary by indefinite strike also. The meeting called upon all bank employees/officers throughout the

country to prepare themselves accordingly.

The UFBU chalked out a series of programmes on this issue and also resolved to submit mass petitions to the Prime Minister/Finance Minister/Reserve Bank Governor, against privatisation of Banks.

On VRS, the meeting decided to submit mass signatures of officers and employees to the respective banks' Chairman.

Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry has given clearance to the VR Scheme which may shortly be acted upon by respective banks at the instance of the IBA. In this background, the UFBU called upon all the constituent unions to step up, intensively and extensively, the campaign against VR Scheme, which is nothing but retrenchment aimed at deunionisation. The UFBU urged

all the bank employees, regardless of category, age or sex or station to reject VRS. What banks need is more recruitments and not retrenchment.

In the event, in any Bank Board VRS Scheme is discussed, the workmen/officer directors would raise their protest inside the Board, to be backed up by joint demonstration of all bank employees in front of the Board meeting place.

Extensive posterage against both Privatisation and VRS would be undertaken by all the unions.

At this moment, these issues are of prime importance. Privatisation and VRS constitute the gravest attacks on the bank employees, their jobs and job security as well as national interests. No price is big enough to defeat these attacks.

PRIVATISATION OF MARINE ENG. INST. OPPOSED

Internationally acclaimed Marine Engineering Research Institute (MERI), is a prestigious educational institution of National importance. It was formerly known as Directorate of Marine Engineering and Training (DMET). Although it is primarily and essentially an educational institution, it is not under the Ministry of H.R.D.; it is under the Ministry of Surface Transport of Govt. of India.

There are three other subsidiary Marine Engineering Institutes in

India which are Mumbai based. The Institute in Calcutta is the principal one. It imparts a 4-year Training Course to Cadets, who are admitted after passing an Admission Test conducted by I.I.T. The Marine Engineers, who are turned out each year, on successful completion of the Training Course, are employed in Merchant Navy of India and also of foreign countries. The Institute is housed on a 30 Acre plot of land at Taratolla, Calcutta, which the Govt. of West Bengal had

provided.

With the assumption of the present BJP-led coalition Govt. in the Centre, the efforts of privatising the institute via the route of Society formation have gained a serious momentum. It appears that the Govt. of India have made up their mind to privatise it, going back on the earlier commitment to convert it as a Deemed University, which was given by the Narasimha Rao Govt. in the Lok Sabha. The Chief Minister of West Bengal had already written to the

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Prime Minister opposing the move.

An un-official resolution had also been adopted in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly against the

Central Govt. decision to privatise the MERI, Calcutta.

The CITU and other Left Trade Unions and Federations of employees and workers in West

Bengal have voiced their strong protest at the move to privatise MERI, Calcutta.

(Report from Ajoy Bowmick)

MASSIVE RALLY BY FMRAI

One of the biggest rallies seen at Delhi in recent times, was organised by the Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives Associations of India. (FMRAI) on 18th September. About twenty thousand field workers, organised under FMRAI, came from all the States of India and camped at Bharat Scouts and Guides Cottages at Nizamuddin. The procession started from there and culminated near the Parliament Street Police Station. Delhi witnessed one of the worst traffic jams in the 8-km. route of the procession. The rally was organised with a 27-point long pending demands of the Medical and Sales Representatives, which included job security, implementation of SPE Act, minimum wage, no surrender to WTO and safeguarding the Indian

Patents Act, halt to closures and sickness, strengthening the public sector units in the industry, reduction of drug prices, etc.

The rally was presided over by Sudhir Kumar, President, FMRAI, and addressed among others by E. Balanandan, President CITU, W.R. Varada Rajan and P.K. Ganguly, Secretaries of CITU, D.P. Dubey, General Secretary, FMRAI, Harish Sharma (BEFI), B.S. Punir(AIIEA), J.S. Majumdar (FMRAI) and three MPs namely, Basudev Acharya, Tarit Topdar and Manoj Bhattacharya.

Later a delegation led by Manoj Bhattacharya, M.P. met the Labour Minister and submitted the memorandum of demands to him.

FMRAI DEMONSTRATION DEMANDING REVIVAL OF IDPL

Over two thousand field workers

of various Pharmaceutical Companies including IDPL, organised under FMRAI, staged a demonstration before the Ministry of Chemicals at Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi on 19th September demanding revival of the Public Sector IDPL. They protested against the dilly dallying tactics of the Govt. in reviving IDPL for the last several years and condemned it for calling international tenders to sell out the company.

Among the speakers were Sudhir Kumar, President, FMRAI, D.P. Dubey, General Secretary, FMRAI, S. Khastagir, IDPL Convenor, P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU and Manoj Bhattacharya, M.P.

Later a delegation met the Secretary, Ministry of Chemicals and urged him to call a broad meeting of the trade unions to discuss the revival of IDPL.

“REVIVE WINTER SPORTS PROJECT”

Government of India. Ministry of Tourism in the year 1968, set up a project viz. Gulmarg Winter Sports Project, with the ambition to impart training and promote Tourism such as Snow Skiing, Summer Skiing, Water Skiing, Trekking,

Mountaineering, Para-gliding etc. In this connection Chalrlift, Skilift, Ski Hire Shop, Snow Clearance Units, were installed besides other required paraphernalia.

The Institute was not only running smoothly but also flourished

during past three decades, earning good-will and fame throughout India and abroad. Unfortunately, the advent of militancy in the valley proved a set back, not only for the sports activities in the State but also for various developmental activities. The major casualty was

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Winter Sports and with the passage of time the higher authorities at the Centre lost interest in reviving the project, despite repeated requests.

It is now learnt that the authorities are going to close down the project, which will bring lot of hardship and humiliation to the staff of the project. In order to ameliorate the problems of the staff and to promote the sports activities, there

are only three alternatives available which can resolve this issue permanently. These options are:-

- 1) Revival and reactivation of the department.
- 2) Overall supervision/control by the principal Hotel Management and Catering Institute, Nehru Park, Srinagar, Kashmir.
- 3) Merger/Absorption of the institute with the J&K Tourism

Department, along with the assets/liabilities and the staff.

The J&K Coordination Committee of TUs had urged the Central Government to revive and reactivate the Department, which will not only resolve this issue but will set at rest the misgivings created between the people of the State and the Centre.

(Report from Mohd Maqbool)

PENSION CASE IN SUPREME COURT

The case against the Employees Pension Scheme 1995 was scheduled to come up for final hearing in the Supreme Court on 31st August, 2000. But the reconstituted Bench, before which the case was listed first in the Court's business on that day, declined to hear the case. One of

the Judges on the Bench, Justice Shetty had dealt with the same matter in the lower Court, when he was a judge in the Karnataka High Court. He felt it would not be appropriate for him to deal with the same now, in the Supreme Court.

The matter will now be referred

to the Chief Justice for posting the case before a reconstituted Bench of the Supreme Court. This process, it is understood, will take some more time.

It is three years since the case is pending before the apex Court. The delay is causing much resentment among the workers.

WAGE AGREEMENT FOR BHEL EMPLOYEES

On 12th September 2000, the Wage Agreement (7th round) for the BHEL employees has been concluded in the Joint Committee of BHEL. On the whole, as a result of the

agreement, the BHEL employees will get a wage rise to the tune of 36.5 per cent of their pre-revised basic pay plus a monthly payment as service-weightage, which amounts to around 1.8 to 3.5

percent of old basic pay. Further, there has also been increase in various allowances being paid to the employees. The new dearness allowance will ensure full neutralisation. The tenure of the agreement is for 10 years.

NPCC REVIVAL URGED

A delegation of NPCC Ltd. Workers Union of India led by its President, Basudeb Acharya MP, met Union Minister for Water Resources Minister Arun Sethi and Minister for Labour S.N.

Jatiya. The Union submitted a memorandum to both the ministers. They drew attention mainly to the fact of non-payment of wages/salary and other

statutory dues, which are not being paid to the 2000 employees of NPCC for the period ranging from 2 to 19 months. Union also urged for early wage settlement of workmen which is due from 1.1.

REPORTS & EVENTS

1997 and at the same time requested for early revival of NPCC. The Water Resources Minister has also been urged to give due consideration to the

suggestion in the revival package under preparation by the IDBI. The concerned Ministers assured the delegation to arrange for payment of at least a part of the

dues before Durga Puja and to take note of union suggestions for revival package.

(Report from Binoy Mukherjee)

ICHALKARANJI POWERLOOM WORKERS REPRESSION

The two fundamental and long-standing demands of over five lakh powerloom workers in Maharashtra spread over the four major centres of Ichalkaranji, Solapur, Malegaon and Bhiwadi have been the implementation of the minimum wages act and the promulgation of a comprehensive law giving security and benefits the unorganised powerloom workers.

The powerloom industry in Maharashtra has been thrown into crisis as a result of two main factors. One is the removal of restrictions on imports - a fall-out of liberalisation - due to which cheap cloth from abroad is being dumped into the Indian market. The second is the tremendous hike in power tariff, thanks to the disastrous and anti-national deals with Enron made by Congress and SS-BJP regimes. Under cover of both these factors, the powerloom owners are denying even the minimum demands of wage hike made by powerloom workers.

INDEFINITE STRIKE

Against this background, a major struggle was launched last month by the powerloom workers of Ichalkaranji, under the leadership of a joint front of trade unions called the Powerloom Workers

Struggle Committee. This comprised unions affiliated to the CITU, AITUC, INTUC and even a dissident faction of the Shiv Sena.

On August 1, 2000, over 1500 powerloom workers from Ichalkaranji came to Mumbai and held a dharna to focus attention on their demands. They met the State Labour Minister and gave notice of an indefinite strike from August 14, if the minimum demands were not conceded. The State Government, as usual, did nothing. Thus, the indefinite strike by nearly 50 thousand powerloom workers in Ichalkaranji, Kurundwad, Rendal, Vadgaon and other centres began on Independence day eve. The trade union unity that was achieved ensured that the strike was a big success. It was this very success that alarmed the big powerloom owners of Ichalkaranji, who were led by the local Congress(I) MLA, who is also Minister of State for textiles in the DF regime.

BRUTAL POLICE REPRESSION

On the fourth day of the strike, August 18, a massive public meeting of over 15,000 workers was held and it was addressed by the Struggle Committee leaders.

On that ground was a covered statue of Lokshahir Annabhau Sathe who, along with Shahir Amar Shaikh and Shhir Gavhankar, formed the legenday Communist trio that had taken the stirring message of the Red Flag to every nook and corner of Maharashtra during the fifties and sixties. The statue of Annabhau Sathe, put up by the municipality, had remained covered for nearly two years, waiting for a political bigwig to inaugurate it.

Before the public meeting began, CPI(M) state secretariat member and CITU State Vice-President Suryaji Salunkhe uncovered the statue and, as a mark of respect to this Communist veteran, garlanded it on behalf of all the workers at the rally. The public meeting then continued peacefully for over two hours. But, seizing upon this incident, the powerloom owners and the police began their attack.

The same night, anti-social goons attacked the CPI(M) and CITU office at Ichalkaranji. Suryaji Salunkhe, Bharna Kamble, Sada Malbade, Mahdukar Chikhale and Atta Ravla went to the police station to lodge a complaint against the miscreants. Three other leader of the struggle

REPORTS & EVENTS

committee -Bajrang Lonari and Shantaram Gotad of INTUC and Madan Murgude of the dissident SS union - were also brought to the police station. Here, in the Ichalkarnji police lock-up itself, police officials mercilessly assaulted and beat up all the above eight trade union leaders and activists for over an hour without break!

They were all hit repeatedly with lathis dealt blows all over the body and were kicked with shoes. Many of them fainted, all of them bled profusely and one even sustained a fracture of the knee-cap.

But this was not all. The same night, a large police party went on a rampage in a working class area of Ichalkaranji called Asaranagar. The Police beat up the workers and then thrashed and arrested 14 of them. Fabricated cases were lodged against the victims themselves. All the above 22 activists were consigned to police lock-up for four days until they

were released on bail on August 21. Such atrocities on the trade union movement in Maharashtra are unprecedented in recent times. The leaders of the CITU, including Ahilya Ranganekar, rushed to Ichalkaranji. A large protest meeting was held on 20th attended by over 15000 workers. An all party delegation met the District Collector on 22nd and demanded action against atrocities committed by the police. On 29th a large number of women from the families of the striking workers courted arrest. On 31st, powerful demonstrations were held throughout the State and the people of Ichalkaranji observed a total bundh, defying all threats by the police and authorities.

As a result of all this cumulative pressure, the powerloom owners were finally forced to conclude an agreement with the Struggle Committee on September 1. According to the agreement, all powerloom workers will get a

wage hike ranging from Rs.125 to Rs.150 per months and they will also get a minimum bonus of 15 per cent for the coming Diwali festival. Considering the crisis-ridden state of the powerloom industry, this has been hailed as the best possible agreement under the circumstances by the workers.

On September 2, a large mass rally of workers was held where the agreement reached was explained. After this meeting, over 10 thousands workers marched on the Ichalkaranji police station, denounced the criminal acts of the police officials and vowed to continue the struggle until action was taken against them by the State Government.

As a result of mass pressure, the State Government has sent Inspector Amar Ingle on forced leave, but no action has been taken against the other two police officials.

(Report from Ashok Dhawla)

TELECOM: STRUGGLE AGAINST CORPORATISATION

The massive participation in the two days total strike of telecom employees on August 24, 25, 2000, against corporatisation /privatisation has sent a clear message to Vajpayee Government that telecom workers are not going to accept the anti-people decisions of the Government lying down. The strike call given by the National Action Committee (NAC) was enthusiastically responded, not only by members of its seven affiliated unions, but

also by a good number belonging to other unions. Unfortunately, the 3 Federations in Telecom, viz. NFTE, FNTU (INTUC) and BTEF (BMS) failed to recognise the reality and danger. They accepted and even welcomed Corporatisation. They organised 3 days Strike from 6th to 8th September and made agreement with the Government on the modalities of Corporatisation. They even agreed for privatisation as is evident from some of the

clauses of agreement. The interest of the nation, the people and the workers were thrown aside for some paltry temporary benefits.

The federations and the Govt. feel that the way for corporatisation and privatisation has become clear. But they have misjudged the workers and their dedication to the cause. The NAC has called upon the workers to defend the telecom services.

(Report from V A N Namboodiri)

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	May 2000	June 2000	July 2000	Sr. No.	Centre	May 2000	June 2000	July 2000
1	Gudur	442	448	440	45	Amritsar	383	383	389
2	Guntur	438	439	439	46	Ludhiana	398	400	402
3	Hyderabad	424	422	422	47	Ajmer	435	436	438
4	Visakhapatnam	440	438	436	48	Jaipur	406	404	407
5	Warangal	437	446	452	49	Chennai	477	476	476
6	D D Tinsukia	387	388	387	50	Coimbatore	433	437	437
7	Guwahati	459	462	463	51	Coonoor	434	436	434
8	Labac-Silchar	378	378	375	52	Madurai	432	440	440
9	Mariani Jorhat	415	415	416	53	Salem	434	433	432
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	405	402	406	54	Tiruchirapally	476	476	481
11	Jamshedpur	405	404	408	55	Agra	399	401	402
12	Jharia	359	361	364	56	Ghaziabad	445	447	450
13	Kodarma	370	368	371	57	Kanpur	423	427	433
14	Monghyr Jamalpur	409	409	409	58	Saharanpur	398	398	401
15	Noamundi	398	397	392	59	Varanasi	465	468	473
16	Ranchi-Hatia	417	415	414	60	Asansol	409	410	415
17	Ahmedabad	439	443	446	61	Calcutta	439	440	450
18	Bhavnagar	473	473	472	62	Darjeeling	379	382	380
19	Rajkot	441	446	449	63	Durgapur	460	461	473
20	Surat	449	449	447	64	Haldia	478	476	479
21	Vadodra	434	435	437	65	Howrah	494	495	501
22	Faridabad	440	447	452	66	Jalpaiguri	395	393	405
23	Yamunanagar	409	416	416	67	Raniganj	377	379	378
24	Srinagar	467	465	477	68	Chandigarh	453	457	463
25	Bangalore	425	423	423	69	Delhi	518	520	524
26	Belgaum	478	477	479	70	Pondicherry	476	476	479
27	Hubli-Dharwar	438	436	439					
28	Mercara	459	460	454		All India	440	442	445
29	Alwaye	442	449	447					
30	Mundakayam	453	459	455		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
31	Quilon	455	448	441	1	Kothagudem	437	445	442
32	Thiruvananthapuram	501	515	522	2	Himachal Pradesh	426	428	436
33	Balaghat	380	386	390	3	Bhilwara	436	439	441
34	Bhilai	390	395	397	4	Chhindwara	415	416	419
35	Bhopal	451	452	455	5	Tripura	324	327	417
36	Indore	446	445	449	6	Goa	523	526	529
37	Jabalpur	450	451	454					
38	Mumbai	511	513	512					
39	Nagpur	454	456	475					
40	Nasik	455	456	471					
41	Pune	492	491	497					
42	Solapur	466	468	483					
43	Barbil	406	410	413					
44	Rourkela	401	404	406					

Government of India
Ministry of Labour
Labour Bureau
Shimla - 171 004

VERDICT ON HARTAL

NINAN KOSHY

The Judgement by the Kerala High Court in June, declaring that the "enforcement of a 'hartal' call by force, intimidation, physical or mental coercion would amount to an unconstitutional act", is a follow-up of its verdict on bandhs three years ago. What it does in effect is to add to the flaws in the earlier judgement. In the judgement of July 28, 1997, the court had declared that "the calling for a 'bandh', by any association, organisation or political party, and the enforcing of that call by it is illegal and unconstitutional". The decision of the Court on bandh was confirmed by the Supreme Court in an appeal by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The reorganisation of States in India and the recent creation of new States, like Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, were all preceded by mass protests including bandhs and hartals. Extra-parliamentary struggles are necessary in a democracy like India for people to maintain, restore or achieve many of their rights. They cannot be all written off or muzzled by dubbing them unconstitutional.

In both the judgements, the High Court has taken the view that bandhs and hartals are not in the interests of the nation and tend to lead to national loss of production. The interests and progress of the nation cannot be confined to production nor does production in itself become the highest goal of a nation. A protest by people on the question of distribution of what is produced may be in the larger interests of the nation, especially at a time when the state, following the dictates of globalisation, is withdrawing from its commitment to social justice.

The judgement says that if the Election Commission has the power to register a political party, it has also the power to deregister.

Is it that self-evident as a general principle of law? There are many laws in which the appointment can be done by an authority but the removal can be only by a higher authority. One example may suffice: under the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993, members of the State Human Rights Commissions can be appointed by the Governor, but they can be removed only by the President of India. Even if it is conceded that there is inherent power in the Election Commission to deregister a political party, which violates the principles of the Constitution, there are neither provisions nor

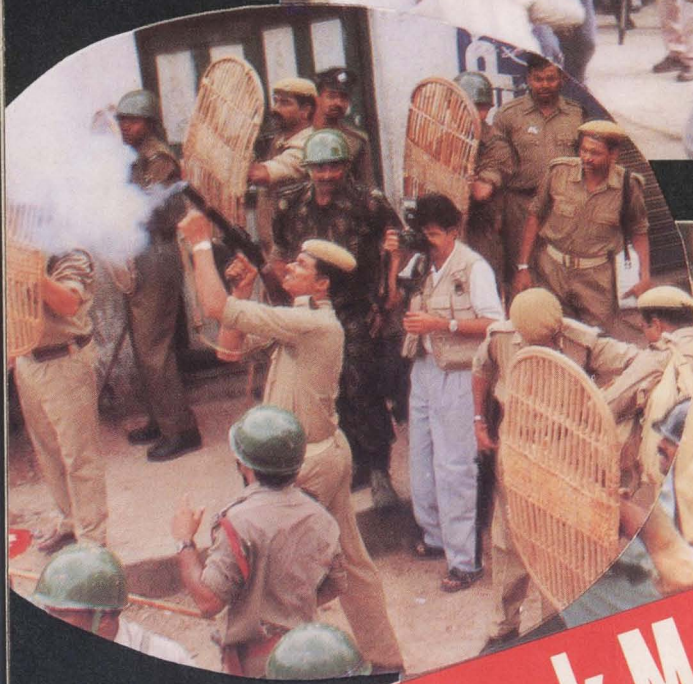
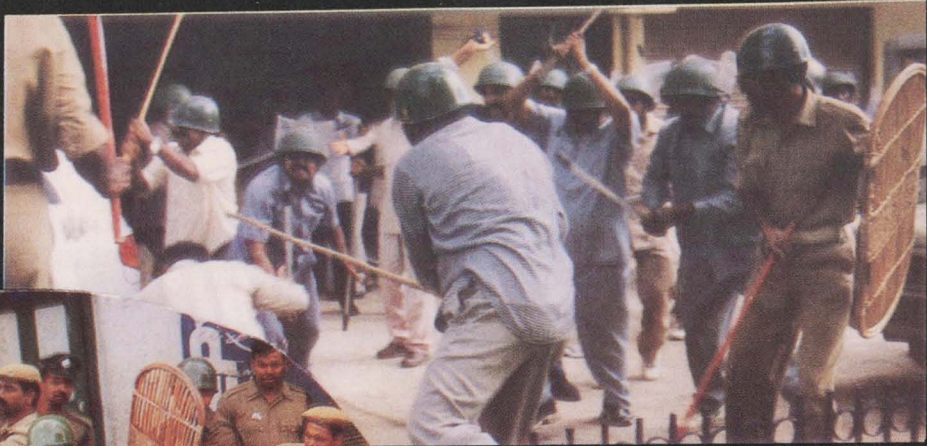
procedures laid down in the Act for that.

The issue of political parties acting in violation of the principles of the Constitution deserves close examination. The Kerala High Court has concluded that the calling of a hartal "in the new form" violates two principles of the Constitution - democracy and sovereignty. A few questions may be relevant here. Did not the Congress party grossly violate the constitutional principle of socialism by adopting the new economic policy in 1991? Is not the BJP guilty of flagrantly violating the constitutional principle of secularism by joining and/or justifying the Ayodhya movement and the demolition of Babri Masjid? One may recall that the then Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, stated that "the Constitution lies shattered". Was it not incumbent on the part of the Election Commission to cancel the registration of the political parties responsible for this "shattering" of the Constitution? These may be better cases to be taken up even now by the Commission, while it proceeds with "hartal" cases with its newly discovered powers.

A party whose Government joins the World Trade Organisation is definitely more guilty of violating the principle of national sovereignty than a party that calls for hartal, even if it causes loss of production for a day. In fact, a protest against the WTO or any other institution or instrument of globalisation by 'hartal' or 'bandh' is a defence of the principle of national sovereignty. Therefore, before proceeding further on deregistration of political parties calling for hartal, the EC should clarify the procedure for deciding an act by a political party as unconstitutional.

If a hartal involves force, intimidation or violence, action should be taken against the culprits by law enforcement agencies on the basis of statutes which are there. If a political party calls for hartal and clearly makes an appeal against violence and intimidation and then some miscreants indulge in violence, is the political party responsible for that? The Kerala High Court judgement will be interpreted to curtail fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution. It will not be difficult to extend the conclusions of the verdict to general strikes and declare their "enforcement" also as unconstitutional, as they are treated on a par in the 1997 judgement on bandhs.

(Extracted from 'The Hindu', 22 August 2000)



Aug. 28th Black Monday

