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PROBLEMS

OF

WORKING WOMEN

AND

THEIR PARTICIPATION

IN

TRADE UNIONS

6TH CONFERENCE OF CITU
BOMBAY 18-22 MAY 1987

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SECRETARY

ALL INDIA CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE OF WORKING WOMEN (CITU)

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Problems of Working Women and their Participation in Trade Unions

It is a welcome feature of this conference of CITU that the special session of the Conference is dedicated to working women, their problems and their participation in the trade unions. The success of this particular issue depends upon the success of the total movement of the working class, in changing its attitude and how much enthusiastically and seriously it takes up this issue, keeping in view the fact that unless the involvement of the major sections of women workers in the struggles of the working class is not ensured, the movement of the working class as a whole is bound to remain weak. Considering the great importance of this issue, the CITU has taken the decision of mobilising working women on their specific problems and their promotion on the higher committees of the unions and Federations, while fighting against feudal tendencies in the trade union movement.

Question of Working Women Discussed On the International Forums

Today after more than a decade of our struggle we find to our satisfaction that the question and problems of working women and women in general are being discussed widely in our country, by various organisations, individuals. press and also by the Government. This question is also being highlighted in International forums. The world conference of women held at Nairobi in 1985 under UNO discussed many issues concerning their equality, equal status. The world conference of working women was held at Niscosia by WFTU on the same issues in 1979. The WFTU, TUI and other International bodies have been taking much interest in the problems of working women. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) also highlights the different issues such as equal Remuneration Convention and its application by the different countries which also helps us to take up these issues with our Government. WFTU in their sessions passed special resolution highlighting the importance of the participation of working women in trade unions. It has given a call for the 2nd conference of working women to be held soon, and requested the trade union movement to note the serious deviations in the working class movement and called upon the trade unions to fight agaist this.

Despite this guidence, as per our information many trade unions in our country are yet to pay adequate attention to this issue, and joint efforts have to be made to make a common cause to fight for the demands of workiing women.

CITU Takes Lead

CITU in their 2nd conference at Ernakulam in 1973 drew attention to the question of working women for the first time. In the CITU conference held in Bombay in 1975 it decided to call a convention of working women to discuss their problems and their participation in trade unions. Due to declaration of Emergency, all the activities in the trade unions were curtailed and the convention could not take place due to restrictions on the trade unions. After the working committee meeting held at Kota, Rajasthan, in 1978 a firm decision to convene the conference in 1979 was taken and ultimately it was held in Madras, Tamilnadu in 1979.

During the period of 7-8 years, the work of the All India Co-ordination Committee increased among various sections of working women, state Co-ordination Committees have been formed in a number of states, the problems of women workers under CITU are being tackled in Co-operation of State CITU. The question of the promotion of women workers on the higher committees of CITU, though, not yet solved to our satisfaction, there is progress to a certain extent in the attitudes of our leaders, and women are being promoted on the higher posts as Presidents or General Secretaries, or members on the Committees.

In almost all the capitalist countries, our country too, no exception, discrimination against women in one from or other continues. Equality on Employment, wages, and promotions is denied to women workers on the ground of sex. Working women are launching struggles on their specific demands like maternity benefit, creche etc. while fighting against the policies of discrimination by the Government and also the feudal tendencies in trade unions.

Question of Unemployment

Very serious situation has developed on the question of unemployment as a whole in our country, including among women as will be seen from the following table.

TABLE NO. I

Number of job-seekers on Live Register of Employment Exchanges at the end of the years 1982 to 1986

(In thousands)

Year	*Number of job seekers on Live Register (Total)*	*Percentage increase in Live Register over the previous year*	*Number of women job seekers on Live Register*	*Percentage increase over previous Year*	*Percentage of women job-seekers to total (Col. 2)*
1982	19753.0	10.7	3138.0	14.8	15.9
1983	21953.3	11.1	3581.6	14.1	16.3
1984	23546.8	7.3	4002.1	11.7	17.0
1985	26269.9	11.6	4447.5	11.7	16.9
1986	30131.2	14.7	5068.1	14.6	16.9

(Union Labour Ministry)

Women job-seekers on Live Register

The women job seekers on the live register continue to increase every year while replacement is much less. As per the figures in the table given above the women job seekers increased from 3138000 in 1982 to 5098000 in 1986. This increase is from 15.9 in 1982 to 16.9 to total number of job-seekers on the live register. The number of replacement in January to October 1981 was 50,615 while in January to October 1980 it was 56,788. There are jobless graduates numbered many among whom women will be noticable. Men and women in rural areas do not register their names. Women in Agriculture work for 4 to 6 months while many will not have work throughout the year. The position has become serious because employment continues to remain stagnent during the past 6/7 years as will be seen from the **Table II on page 3.** Besides there is retrenchment and ban on new recruitment.

Employment of Women in Organised Sector

As per the statistics given above, the total employment of women in 1980-81 is 27,93,000 which has gone up to 31,62,000 in 1984-85 showing 12.9 percent increase to the total employment in this sector. The percentage of women's employment increased from 12.2 in 1980-81 to 12.9 in 1984-1985 during the period of 4 years (Provisional). The percentage of women employed in Public Sector shows the increase of 9.7 in 1980-81 to 10.8 in 1984-85, while in private sector it is from 17.5 in 1980-81 to 17.7 in 1984-85. This shows practically there is no qualitative change in the employment of women in public or in private sector. Due to women taking up jobs as teachers, nurses, clerks in offices and so on, on a large scale, there is a slight increase in the Public Sector of only 1 percent to the total employment. As a whole, the employment of women in the organised sector has not increased much, with thousands of women working in Textile, Jute, Tobacco, Mines etc. have been already retrenched.

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TABLE NO. II

Employment in the Organised Sector* during the years 1981-85

(In thousands)

Year	*Public Sector*			*Private Sector*			*Public & Private Sectors Combined*		
	Total employment	*Women employment*	*Percentage of women employment to total*	*Total employment*	*Women employment*	*Percentage of women employment to total*	*Total employment*	*Women employment*	*Percentage of women employment to total*
1980-81	15484	1499	9.7	7395	1294	17.5	22879	2793	12.2
1981-82	15946	1580	9.9	7547	1320	17.5	23493	2899	12.3
1982-83	16456	1691	10.3	7522	1305	17.3	23978	2996	12.5
1983-84	16869	1774	10.5	7345	1283	17.5	24214	3058	12.6
1984-85**	17269	1864	10.8	7309	1298	17.7	24578	3162	12.9

* All establishments in the Public Sector, and all non-agricultural establishments in the Private sector employing ten or more persons.

Source-Labour Ministry

** Provisional.

NB : Figures in columns 2, 3, 5 and 6 may not necessarily tolly with totals in columns 8 and 9 rounding.

Women to Be the First Victims

The axe of retrenchment falls first on the women workers. Due to modernisation of Jute and Textile industries, women workers in West Bengal, Bombay, Ahmedabad have been retrenched, during 1959-60 period and practically nowhere one finds women workers in reeling, winding or in sacking dept. in Jute where they constituted a majority. Due to mechanisation in Tabacco, women workers have been thrown out in almost all the centres in Andhra. The Baveja Committee appointed by the Central Government has openly permitted the coal industry to retrench 50,000 women wagon loaders. In Pharmaceutical, plantations, Coir, Cashew, construction, Beedi, handloom and such other industries women workers still constitute a large number. With the introduction of mechanisation processes, women workers are sure to be affected in these industries too.

The recent announcement of the Central Government to import the hi-technique, computers and so on is bound to affect the working women in the offices in thousands since they are employed as clerks, typists, Stenos etc. on large scale.

In the present social and economic situation of our country, the question of employment for men and women is assuming great importance. It is impossible to meet the needs of a family with the earnings of male members only. Due to this economic compulsion large number of women are coming in the employment market every year.

Rapid Growth of Unorganised Sector

The striking feature affecting women's employment is the rapid growth of the unorganised sector of the economy. Today one finds a large concentration of women are being displaced, every day because of closures, retrenchments, mechanisation etc. from the organised sectors and forced to join the labour market for their livelihood. The recent announcements by the Central Government to invite the super-computers from foreign countries like Japan, USA are bound to add much more miseries for the common people, for women in particular who will be the first victims of attacks on their employment as the computers are installed in the banks.

Large Percentage of Women in Agriculture

About 87 to 90 percent women workers come from the agricultural sector. Every report from official sources or non-official organisation today speak of the great importance of organising them, by taking up their specific problems. In fact the main problem of workers in agriculture is the land and employment throughout the year. The women agricultural workers are the hardest hit by the present economic crisis. The seasonal work, non-availability of alternate employment, denial of minimum wage, introduction of mechanical processes in harvesting, weeding etc. where majority of women were working, are the main problems besides their social oppresion. During last two decades, with the increase in the number of landless labourers the work performed by women is now done by men.

Special mention also must be made about Adivasi and Scheduled caste women whose lot is worse in the villages. They are exploited by landowners, upper castes and discriminated as special target. Sexual exploitation by vested interest including the police is rampant in the villages.

Women Workers in the Unorganised Sector

The State Labour Minister Mr. P.A. Sangma told in Rajyasabha on March 10th, '87 that "the year 1987 will be the year of implementation of labour laws in the unorganised sector, particularly enforcement of the Minimum Wages Act. Out of 292 million work force in the country on March 21, 1985, only 24 million will be in the organised sector. The major section of the unorganised labour, women workers constitute a major force."

The consultative committee of the Ministry of Lbour quoting study report of National Labour Institute, said that, it mainly comes from agriculture, contract, casual labour, handloom and powerloom workers, Bidi, Sweepers, tanneries, tribal labour, garment, hoisieries, small scale industries etc. also included agricultural workers which constitute 64.4 million in 1981 in which female labour coustitute 28.5 million. It is said that the number of workers in the unorganised sector at present is about 115 million. Out of the 3.7 million in construction industry, near majority are women. The following table would give details of the situation.

TABLE NO. III

Workers by Industrial Category and Sex Un-organised sector

Industrial Category	*Total Workers*		
	Males	*Females*	*Total*
1. II Agricultural Labourers	35,909,403	28,454,317	64,363,720
2. III livestocck, forestry, Fishing, hunting, and plantations, orchards and allied activities	4,290,165	1,137,454	5,427,619
3. IV Mining and quarrying	1,109,691	174,218	1,283,909
4. V Manufacturing, processing servicing and repairs houshold industry	5,754,268	2,819,239	8,573,507
5. VI Constructions	3,278,124	429,996	3,708,120
6. IX Other services	16,509,624	3,401,927	19,911,551
7. Total of industrial categories II, III, IV, Va, VI and IX	66,851,275	36,417,151	103,268,426
8. Total workers	181,080,208	63,524,773	224,604,981
9. Total Population	343,930,414	321,357,418	665,287,832

Source : Census of India 1981 : Series-I Part-II species; report and table based on 5 per cent sample data Part II table.

From the above table it can be noted that in Agricultural and in Construction women constitute a significant part of the labour force. Also, it can be seen that a large number of women who constituted 25%

in Mining and quarrying, only 174, 218 women were employed out of 1,283, 909, in 1981. During last 5 years the employment of women in Mines has more or less dwindled.

Home Based Work on the Increase

Today in advanced capitalist countries and developing countries home work, part time jobs are growing in traditional as well as manufacturing and service industries. It is important to note that it is being promoted by multinationals in South Asia and part of Latin America. Both international and domestic capital are increasingly in search of homeworkers to reduce the overheads and thereby mobilise resources by avoiding labour laws, minimum wage, labour legislations and welfare benefit provisions. In India, lakhs of women are involved in this sweated labour and more and more of them are being forced into ranks of homeworkers. The common feature of work in such industries is the terrible low wage, piece rate, long hours of work, repetitive nature and its sporadic and seasonal nature. A large number of small children with their mothers continue to work in the homestead industries. Another important feature of this, is the work is done through chains of subcontractors, middlemen, retailers and so on.

It is a fact that the crisis in the traditional industries such as Coir, Cashew, Tabacco and consequent retrenchment is increasingly leading to homebased production. The increasing unionisation in these industries where women constitute the majority is being countered by the capitalists who easily found cheap labour by diverting work to home-work in handlooms, Beedi, Garment making, lace makers and so on. It is an established fact that because of sophisticated machinery installed due to new textile policy of the Government, women are losing their means of livelihood in large numbers and many more are likely to do so. This has taken place despite the Government's ten Point Technology policy which includes protecting the traditional industries as well as not to give licenses to the industries for importing machinery in the labour intensive industries as promised in the 6th five year plan. Another aspect of this type of employment is their increasing concentration around new technology like in Electronics. This is seen in Keltron, HMT under the public sector. Thousands of girls are concentrated in the electronic industries in India and also in pacific countries, like Malayesia, Thailand.

But these homebased industries can be found in most of the cities like Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta where women are engaged in preparing small parts of Engineering, wiring, peeling etc. One thing however is to be noted that the increase in number of unemployed women and the competition for work among the reserved pool of labour, facilitate the lowering of wage rate as a whole which also leads to lowering of the male wage rates.

In Ahmedabad alone 50,000 women are in the unorganised sector and out of this 1/3 belong to scheduled caste. 10,000 Harijan women are paper pickers from the streets who start from their houses at 5 AM in the morning. The traders in the paper collection give different rates to women from Rs 2 to 4 per day.

The important point to be noted here is, the complete denial of any legislation or welfare benefit to these women. There is no security of jobs, no maternity or provision of creche. In the home based industries there is no employer-employee relation. One cannot name a particular employer.

No Security of Jobs For Working Women

There is no security of jobs nor regularisation for Working women. The casual short duty telephone operators in P & T, there is no security of jobs, nor welfare benefits. Another case is of EDP (Extra Departmental Personel) girls who are in thousands. They are employed as casual so that whenever any technological development takes place they can be dropped. All these girls from P & T and EDP are demanding regularisation in their service who work as operaters or sorters for 5-6 years and trained.

Beedi industry has almost become a homework industry now. Factories having been closed, women are making beedies at home along with children. The contractors and middlemen earn their commissions while giving work to women. Despite the Beedi Cigar Act 1966, there is no application of this to these homeworkers. No inentity cards are given to the homeworkers and there is no Maternity benefit. Only where there is a strong movement of our union like Kerala and Karnataka women were able to get Maternity Benefit, Bonus, Provident Fund and better wages than the workers in other states. 10,000 contract workers have been working in 60 Textile

mills in Ahmedabad out of which more than 25% are women. Low wages and sexual harassment continues in Ahmedabad. Names were being changed every now and then to avoid to prove that a person was working at one place for a long time. Contracters are supposed to keep the records of the workers by law, but when inspector visits he is told that the records are lost.

5 lakhs of Trained midwives in the country are treated as casual labourers not regularised even after their training by the state govts. They are not even given Rs. 50/- as honourarium as per the instruction from the Central Government.

The Ist Conference of women in the unorganised held on 29th October 1985 in Tiruppur (Coimbatore Dist) Tamilnadu, brought out many important aspects of the women working in hosiery where 5000 women and children were employed without getting any benefits under ESI, Provident Fund, creche etc. They get unequal wages. In some ginning factories older women are employed with wages of Rs. 5-9, some of these women continue to work for 36 hours just to earn their livelihood. The women and children are working in match factories in terrible conditions with no protection what so ever.

Descrimination in employment Opportunities can be very well noted from the last report came to us from Orissa in March 1987. The case is of the Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack where men and women are employed since the inception of the institute, but they were not being regularised. After the struggle when the settlement was arrived at 93 male workers were regularised while the same number of women were not. No reason was given. The correspondence for getting regularisation continued from 1978 to 1985. It was surprising that after 7 years of the struggle, the services of the male members only were regularised while women were kept as casual workers. The impact of this development was very bad on women workers and it created division among male and women workers. This was precisely the game of the management. The institute is reported to be under the Ministry of Agriculture. A letter has been witten by AICCWW to the Union Minister of Agriculture. It was reported many women have in the meanwhile died while expecting regularisation during the past 30 years.

This is the situation of women casual workers and in the unorganised sector. The government and the Ruling Congress is fully aware of the present serious situation of unemployment among men and women. Therefore, they are putting forward different formulas for employment as "self-employment" part-time" jobs etc.

Right to Work as a Fundamental Right

Under these circumstances the right to employment assumes a great importance for the working women. The CITU has already called upon the State Committees and AICCWW to pay more attention to the workers in the unorganised sector and those who are unemployed. CITU also warned that these sections will be pitted against the workers in the organised sector by the employers and the ruling classes. The reactionery forces will try to divide the working class on communal lines. It is very important therefore, to organise women workers on the demand of the right to work as fundamental right to be enshrined in the constitution, and in the absence of this the workers should get unemployment relief.

AICCWW, has yet to taãe up this work seriously. The situation now demands that we concentrate our work on these sections, demanding a proper legislations, on minimum wage and other welfare benefits.

Maternity Benefit as a Right to Motherhood

In the Ist Convention of working women in 1979 at Madras it was demanded that working women should get Maternity leave with full pay for four months in all industries and establishments irrespective of any size, inciuding unorganised sector....." It was also demanded that the maternity leave should be given according to the choice of the working mother.

As per the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 the Act is applicable wherever more than 10 workers with power) or 20 workers without power are employed. The employers are required to provide Maternity leave with cash, for 3 months. The maximum period of leave is 12 weeks with full pay. The cash benefit is payable only if the women has been working in the establishment for a period of at least 160 days in a period of 12 months preceding the date of the delievrry. The cash benefit available under the Act is the daily wage or one ruppee, whichever is

higher. The miserable low rates of wages of women highlights the poor maternity benefit women are entitled to get. There is also an Employees State Insurance Act under which this benefit is extended to the working mother. The Government showed extreme callousness towards the working women by changing the provisions in a retrograde manner. Earlier the provision was that any one having paid ESI centribution for 13 weeks were eligible to seck relief, This helped the casual and badli workers who having job for even one day in a week for 13 weeks, could get this benefit. Now this clause has been changed. It is only after she works for 91 days that she can claim the benefit. The Congress (I) ministers who never stop to shed tears for the unorganised, casual and badli workers, have refused to restore the old provision when there were protests from all corners.

The following table will give an idea as to the small amount of maternity benefit women get in different industries wherever they are.

TABLE NO. IV

Percentage of claims made and Average Amount of Maternity Benefits paid in Factories, Plantations and Mines during the years 1976 to 1979 (By States)

State/Union Territories	*Number of Claims made per 109 women worker employed*				*Average amount of benefits paid per aceepted claims (in Rupees)*			
	1976	1977	1978	1979	1976	1977	1978	1979
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
FACTORIES								
Andhra Pradesh	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	376	438	302	410
Assam	—	8.6	—	—	—	284	—	—
Bihar	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.6	836	977	1,173	1,472
Gujarat	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.8	165	179	380	376
Haryana	—	0.6	0.5	—	—	1,587	902	—
Himachal Pradesh	—	2.9	—	0.8	—	1,847	—	635
Jammu & Kashmir	2.5	4.7	3.8	2.7	1,113	100	805	1,301
Karnataka	2.7	1.7	1.7	N.A.	340	476	469	N.A.
Kerala	1.1	2.5	2.4	4.0	256	80	59	247
Madhya Pradesh	1.6	2.0	1.7	2.1	1,104	954	1,312	1,891
Maharashtra	1.8	1.0	2.1	1.9	1,135	1,044	1,440	1,670
Maghalaya	—	—	—	7.1	—	—	—	1,998
Nagaland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orissa	6.0	1.8	1.6	1.4	843	817	801	1,011
Punjab	0.1	—	1.1	—	167	—	1,318	—
Rajasthan	2.8	0.2	N.A.	N.A.	918	—	—	N.A.
Tamilnadu	0.7	2,0	0.2	0.1	962	324	891	748
Tripura	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Uttar Pradesh	1.3	1.1	0.9	0.9	1,911	2,517	3,121	3,103
West Bengal	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.2	555	866	603	775
Andaman and Nicobar Island	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chandigarh	—	—	—	N.A.	—	—	—	N.A.
Delhi	1.4	1.6	1.5	2.3	893	808	661	1,061

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Goa, Daman and Diu	1.1	—	---	—	707	—	—	—
Lakshadweep	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dadra Nagar Haveli	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pondichery	—	—	—	1.3	—	—	—	1,185
Average	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.4	529	300	535	853
PLANTATIONS								
Assam	32.4	38.1	25.8	27.1	201	370	307	702
Bihar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Himachal Pradesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kerala	18.9	14 8	37.2	16.1	254	451	218	410
Tripura	13.2	17.1	15.3	17.7	150	141	185	223
West Bengal	15.5	13.2	13.3	15.0	249	283	382	462
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1.6	2.3	2.3	1.55	108	535	404	532
Average	20.7	20.1	24.5	19.2	231	368	285	542
Coal	74.6	77.9	72.5	60.0	1,063	1,053	1,155	1,517
Others	16.2	10.9	11.3	13.2	565	626	577	571
Average	19.1	13.5	14.4	15.2	652	716	709	692

—Nil N.A. Not available due to non receipt of return

Source : Annual Reviews pm the Working of the maternity Benefits Act (Central and States).

The chart shows that the claims made are not always accepted and are not paid either. Advantage also is taken by the employers of the total ignorance of women of the exact date of the delivery. All attempts are therefore made to evade payment of the maternity benefit, except wherever the unions are strong and women constitute majority such as like in Plantation. Since 160 days of conntinued working required to qualify for maternity payment the employers often give a break in service. If delivery takes place at home, the materity benefit is denied to her on one plea or the other.

Temporary, casual and women in tne unorganised sector are not covered by the maternity protection. Nearly 90% of women work in agriculture. These women in general continue to work upto their delivery. Many of these women therefore if entitled to get the benefit do not get the same. The Government enforcement machinery by and large is defunct and corrupt and totally subservient to management and never acts in favour of women workers. That is why only few complaints are entertained and employers are not prosecuted for violations at all

The CITU, AICCWW and many other women's organisations have demanded that maternity leave and payment be made in full. Beedi women workers do come under this Act. But actually majority of women are deprived of this benefit because of the Beedi industry going out of the factory to home based work. The women workerss in Karnataka and Kerala get most of the benefits including maternity Leave because of the strength of the unions beloging to CITU. Even if the women workers sit at homs and roll the Beedi, employers hove to pay maternity while acepting the obligation by giving identity cards to such women workers. Most of the employers elsewhere evade giving the identity cards and thus women loose the maternity benefit and other welfare measures.

Since the strength of women workers in the organised industries has gone down considerably in mines, tobacco and also in plantatioas many of them have been already deprived of the matrnity benit.

Working women in office such as in the Banks. and other Government offices are covered under the ESI do get maternity benefit. Some of the middle class employees are also getting the maternity leave according to their choice.

4th Pay Commission Curtails the Maternity Benefit

The recent recommendations of the forth pay commission has restricted the right to Maternity upto two children. The Congress rulers have almost accepted this and will start implementing also. The 4th Pay Commission said "Presently there is no limit on the occasions on which maternity leave may be availed of by women Government employees. We recommended that, in consonance with national objective of a small family, maternity leave may not be allowed to women employees having two children". The reactions on this recommendation and the object announced, revealed a deep resentment among many organisations including the Training Nurses Association, the recognised wing of Congress (I) who did it in a milder way. The TNA said the 4th Pay Commission "has male bias". Some others said it was a "curious mixture of compassion and male bias'. Some years back the Congress Government tried to bring this proposal in the Kerala Assembly which could not bc carried out due to opposition from many corners. The same idea is being pushed forward under the national objective of a small family to control the population growth. The experience of the compulsory family planning during emergency is there for everybody to see. In fact, no sensible person will object to have a small family. But the Commission wants to make it legal, by punishing only women employees.

The question was rightly put by some organisations whether men would never be made accountable for violating the family planning policy, even when they are directly employed by the Central Government. The commission said that the maternity leave can be taken for one year, if there are difficulties for the mother. Strangely they did not say whether this one year leave would be paid as it is paid under socialism. Another question is raised whether she can afford to stay without pay for one year under the present economic strains. Therefore, the women employees in many states protested on behalf of their unions.

Another point which received large publicity in the press in the month of April May 1986 was the denial of Maternity benefit to the so called "unmarried" mothers. One telephone operator from Bhuj, Gujarat applied for marternity leave and was rejected by the officer. The reason given was "she is unmarried." The Union Home Minister which is very much concerned for morality of women issued orders to the General managers that they should not entertain maternity claims for unmarried female employees. Later after the particular operator went to the court against the denial of maternity leave, the whole thing was exposed. Many women do not change their names after they are married, or many would keep their maiden names. Under these conditions women were being denied maternity leave and were asked to change their names *i.e.* to put their husband's names. Ahmedabad telephone officers even went to the extent of describing the particular telephone operator as a case of "Moral Terpitude" !

This is how the Congress rulers look at the cases of the so called "unmarried mothers". The Supreme Court recognised the injustice and struck down the circular. The Home Ministry was thus compelled to withdraw the circular and issue another one, informing that unmarried women are entitled to and should be given meternity leave. Even the ILO Convention of 1952, nor the Maternity benefit Act lays down marriage as the qualifying condition, while women's organisation and AICCWW based their arguments on equality and social reality in our country.

"The "Prestisious" institute, AIIMS in Delhi has violated the maternity benefit Act by not paying it to their nursing staff under section 9 *i.e.* miscarriages, abortion etc. by denying the 3 months leave as well as maternity benefit. Despite many representations to the Health and Family Welfare Ministry they did not change their policies.

The policies of the Central Government with regard to women's employment their legislations or welfare benefits are thus exposed and the feudal mentality behind all these moves once again comes out. The Act under which women workers are entitled to get, are often deprived of their benefit due to employers' tactics. The Government on the other hand, wants to curtail the benefit by accepting the recommendation of the Pay Commission under the slogan of control in population.

Working Women's Welfare Bill In Parliament

In the working women's welfare Bill introduced in Parliament by Susheela Gopalan in 1984 it was suggested that a provision be made to set up a Working women's Welfare Fund. The Government shall contribute

an equal amount to 10 per cent of the pay of women workers, and the employer will contribute another 10%. Women workers will not have to contribute anything to this fund. If this scheme comes into operation well and good. But whether the Government will contribute and compel the employer to contribute in the welfare Fund remains to be seen.

The working women demand the right to Maternity Benefit as a social necessity. The Government claims motherhood as a sacred right in the directive principals. It is the duty of the Government to see that every woman employed gets the benefit while strict enforcement of the Act is done. The 4th Pay Commission recommendation should be withdrawn and women should not suffer due to the social conditions prevailing in the society.

In a deputation on behalf of AICCWW which met the Union Labour Minister for their demands the reply given by the minister on June 1985 in this question was "the question of widening the scope of maternity benefits including the question of extending maternity leave from three to four months is under consideration.".

With no proper machinery to enforce the payment, women workers are not assured of their claims despite the legal provision. The trade unions or women's organisations are not associated with the enforcement machinery. With all these lacunae, if women are able to get the quantum, it is a very small amount as it seen in the chart given earlier, which will not he sufficient for re-couperating her health. The medical bonus of Rs. 25/- is a hoax which is only Rs. 4-5 in the term of value of the rupee today. Therefore the demand has to be made to increase the medical bonus to Rs. 500/- minimum so that the delivery and medical expenses can be met.

PROVISION OF CRECHE FOR WORKING MOTHERS

A creche for the small children is a basic and urgent need for working mothers. In the absence of it, it is difficult for women to concentrate on their work wherever they are employed. Besides, their children also suffer physically in the absence of proper care. Many serious accidents are reported to have taken place when children are unattended by their parents. Under the Factory Act, Plantation and Mines Act, the provision of creche is compulsary wherever 20 or more women are employed. The particular quantity of milk, etables, toys etc. are to be provided in the creche and 'Dais' and Trained nurses are also to be provided according to the Acts mentioned above. This provision however, is not yet been made for the women employees in offices and establishments. In a recent statement, the Department of women's welfare said that "creche in other areas are set up on a voluntary basis with assistance from the department of women's welfare". In fact, the statutory provision existing under the Factory Act, should be extended to the working women under the public and private sector, in offices and establishment where the employment of women is increasing and the demand for the creche has become urgent. In the conferences and conventions of working women, this demand is repeatedly made, but the Government is not coming out wilh a statutory legal provision. The statistics given below will show the position of creche during the years 1976 (P), the latest information provided by the Government.

TABLE NO. V

Number of factories providing creche facilities during 1976 (P) by Industries

Code Number and Industry	*No. of working factories sub-mitting returns*	*No. of factories providing creches*	*No. of children utilising creches*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
00 Agricultural production	7	—	—
02 Livestock Production	9	—	—
03 Agricultural Services	9	—	—
05 Forestry & Logging	7	—	—

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
12	Metal Ore Mining	—	—	—
19	Other Mining	12	—	—
20	Manufacture of Food	28,875	422	12,744
21	Products			
22	Manufacture of Beverages, Tobacco & Tobacco Products	903	144	6,077
23	Manufacture of Cotton Textiles	4,335	159	1,537
24	Manufacture of Wool, Silk & Synthetic Fibre Textiles	1,700	16	141
25	Manufacture of Jute, Hem & Mesta Textiles	285	38	524
26	Manufacture of Textile Products (including Wearing Apparel other than Footwear)	1,429	8	95
27	Manufacture of Wood & Wood Products, Furniture & Fixtures	4,993	—	—
28	Manufacture of Paper & Paper Products & Printing, Publishing & Allied Industries.	4,610	5	46
29	Manufacture of Leather & Fur Products (Except repair)	565	—	—
30	Manufacture of Rubber, Plastic Petroleum & Coal Products	2,305	9	122
31	Manufacture of Chemicals & Chemical Products (Except product of Petroleum & Coal)	3,345	24	322
32	Manufacture of Non-Metallic Mineral Products	3,388	41	660
33	Basic Metal & Alloys Industries	3,308	13	185
34	Manufacture of Metal Products & Parts, except Machinery & Transport Equipment	4,885	2	10
35	Manufacture of Machinery, Machine Tools & Parts Except Electrical Machinery	5,820	16	307
36	Manufacture of Elecrical Machinery, Apparatus, Appliances & Supplies & Parts	1,720	18	443
37	Manufacture of Transport Equipment and Parts	1,339	4	74
38	Other Manufacturing Industries	962	10	81
40	Electricity	573	3	18
41	Gas & Steam	69	—	—
42	Water Works & Supply	120	—	—
50	Construction	5	—	—
51	Activities Allied to Construction	4	—	—
60	Wholesale Trade in Food, Textiles, Live Animals, and Intoxicants	11	—	—
61	Wholesale Trade in Fuel, Light Chemicals, Perfumery, Ceramics and Glass	5	—	—
62	Wholesale Trade in Wood, Paper, Other Fabrics, Hide and Skin & Inedible Oils	25	—	—

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
63	Wholesale Trade In All Types of Machinery, Equipment, including Transport and Electrical Equipment	1	—	—
64	Wholesale Trade in Miscellaneous Manufacturing	5	—	—
67	Retail Trade in Fuel and other Household Utilities and Durables	2	—	—
68	Retail Trade in others	11	—	—
69	Restaurants and Hotels	3	—	—
70	Land Transport	6	—	—
71	Water Transport	4	—	—
72	Air Transport	7	—	—
73	Services Incidental to Transprt	15	—	—
74	Storage and Warehousing	359	2	7
75	Communications	—	—	—
82	Real Estate & Business Services	22	—	—
90	Public Administration and Defence Services	2	—	—
91,	Sanitary Services	50	—	—
92	Education, Scientific & Research Services	39	—	—
93	Medical & Heulth Services	1	—	—
94	Community Services	—	—	—
95	Research & Cultural Services	46	1	2
96	Personal Services	204	1	3
98	International and Other Extra Territorial Bodies Services	2	—	—
99	Services not elsewhere classified	15	—	—
X1	Activities not Adequately Defined	11	—	—
Y0	Repair Services (If not included Under 97)	3,275	4	25
	Total	79,703	940	23,423

TABLE NO. VI

Number of Factories Providing Creche Facilities During 1976(P) by States/Union Territories

States/Union Territories	*Number of Factories submitting returns*	*Number of Factories providing creche*	*Number of children using creches*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Andhra Pradesh	7,764	185	6,582
Assam	886	135	6,385
Bihar	25,237	26	443
Gujarat	6,657	42	368
Haryana	1,260	—	—

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Himachal Pradesh	105	—	—
Jammu & Kashmir	212	1	3
Karnataka	1,821	85	2,208
Kerala	3,826	229	5,026
Madhya Pradesh	618	—	—
Maharashtra	9,996	57	659
Manipur	81	—	—
Meghalaya	36	—	—
Orissa	363	5	113
Punjab	2,991	2	106
Rajasthan	1,261	6	6
Tamilnadu	6,435	75	344
Tripura	34	2	17
Uttar Pradesh	3,989	7	36
West Bengal	3,937	80	1,098
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	23	—	—
Chandigarh	126	—	—
Delhi	1,721	—	—
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	11	—	—
Goa, Daman & Diu	110	—	—
Pondicherry	203	3	29
Total	79,703	940	23,423

P—Provisional

Source : Statistics of Factories—1976

TABLE NO. VII

Number of units employing women workers providing creche and those deficient in staff and other amenities

Sl. No.	*Mineral/Mineral group*	*No. of units studied*	*No. of units exempted from providing creche*	*No. of units under statutory obligation to provide creche*	*No. of units actually providing creche*
1.	Coal	18	1	17	12
2.	Manganese	10	1	9	3
3.	Iron Ore	11	4	7	5
4.	Stone	8	4	4	1
5.	Limestone & Dolomite	10	1	9	6
6.	China clay, Fire Clay & Gypsm	12	4	8	4
7.	Other Minerals	18	2	16	4
	All Minerals	87	17	70	35

Source : Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India, Dec. 28, 1978.

Different studies and surveys by the Labour Ministry and the Indian Labour Journal publishs, the present conditions in the industries with regard to Maternity benefit and provision of creche. What do these reports point out on the situation of creche in different industries ? In the survey on women workers in Textiles, Khandsari and Sugar Products Industries published in March 1986 it says the following :

"Although in most of the sampled factories, women were working in the day shift in some cases, they were found to be employed during night shift also.....women workers in some sampled Khandsari and cotton ginning factories were provided with the creche facility, creche were actually functioning in only some factories covered under Cotton and Jute Textile, workers in the remaining industries, studied, this facility was virtually non-existant." It further remarks that : "some of them were not properly furnished or maintained in clean and sanitary conditions....." It also states no proper washing facilities were provided.

In 1984, Indian Labour Journal quoted ".....Most of the creches in Northern and Northeastern plantations were found to be not only below the prescribed standard of construction but also were wanting in sanitation and clealiness. In almost 88 per cent of the cases, creches were looked after by untrained staff. In some cases creches existed only in the "form of tents.....with the result only about 23% of eligible children were actually attending....."

The actual conditions prevailing in Plantation are miserable. In most of the North East parts, creche as such do not exist, wherever they exist, they are on paper or in tent or even a board with the word 'creche' on the door also was found by one study group.

The supply of milk, food, clothes and toys is rare. The trained ayahas are not employed. The situation described in the survey in Plantation Industry does not tally with the actual conditions even in plantation in south at many places. Trade unions too do not press this demand as one of the essential demands of women workers. Women if questioned as to why they were not bringing their children to creche, give the reply that "they are not likely to be looked after well." Some Plantation owners in South want to pay 25 paisa per day for milk to escape their responsibility. The social welfare department of the State Government had been considering for quite some time, a scheme to train the attendents so that they can look after the children better. One does not know when the scheme will come into practice.

In another survey "women workers in mines" (1978) it was stated that "Utilisation rate was very poor for most of the creche studied in mines. The report said the main reasons "for unpopularity of creches were lack of adequate facilities, improper care of children, unsuitable location and lack of motivational factor from the employers' side....."

While the proper implementation of the provision of creche in plantations, mines etc. is required, this facility must be extended to the women employees in offices by the Government.

"Most of the women workers are temporary or casual . . . . . inadequacy of space for construction of building for creche . . . . . small number of eligible children etc . . . ." These were the reasons given by the employers. The survey also suggests the following measures to be taken if the creches were to function properly. "The enforcement machinery should have better supervision and effective control over the working of creches and maintenance of it".

The child care facilities is one of the points in the new 20 point programme announced on 15th of August, 1986. Whether it is implemented or not, this programme can continue to remain there as long as Congress rule is there. Working women are in dire need of creche. But no legal provision is made by the Congress even during the period of women's Decade, where the provision of creche exists under the Factory Act, women are being retrenched, made casual or temporary. The employers thus escape the responsibility of the provision of creche. There is no extension of this provision to the women employees in the offices. Unless the Federations, Associations and working women take up the problem, Government will not extend this provision to them. The Social Welfare Department wants to leave this to the voluntary organisations only. And therefore, women employees will have to wait for the creche while their children may become grown up during that period and the women employees too will retire from the services !

Wages for Women Workers—Very Poor

Women workers in industries in general get low and unequal wages. The employers find different ways and means to create surplus profit out of the women employment as it is available in plenty and cheap in the market. Secondly, women workers are always employed in those industries where no skill is required. There are plenty of instances elsewhere, where women are employed on a large number such as in construction, Beedi, Garment and so on. They are "women preferred" industries in the terms of Planning Commission and also Govt. The wages are so low, that nobody would go for these jobs except those who are in dire need of maintenance. In these industries, most of the work is done on piece rate with the result women's health is sacrificed. They have to work much more time to earn the wage which is earned by others in 8 hours. In Beedi, women earn Rs. 5-10 daily. If women are not able to sit and work, the family has to starve. The employers, therefore have found this method suitable for them. They export the hosiery articles, ready-made garment and so on and earn huge profits exploiting the cheap labour of women workers. A survey made by our Delhi Janavadi Mhiala Samithi in the working class areas in Delhi brought out the poor working conditions of these women. Extraction of wire strands earn Re. 1 only for 600 wires, each with 15-17 strands. Peeling of 25 kgs. of almond bring them only Rs. 10 or 40 ps. per kg., safety pins made by machine maintained by the workers bring Rs. 2 per kg. and so on. There were so many products manufactured by groups of women at home sitting whole day if the work is sufficient, along with their children.

All these products are brought by contractors, middlemen and so on and taken by them to the firms and sold in the wholesale or retail market. In the industries such as ready-made garments, they are exported to foreign countries with highest prices. The poor women do not even get $\frac{1}{4}$ of wage from the sale of that product, while the middle men swallow all the commission. This is sheer exploitation of cheap labour of women to the extreme. Not having any other choice to survive they accept whatever they are offered.

Women workers in plantation industry get Rs. 7.50 to 8 on an average. In Assam women workers get 0.50 Paise less than the male workers. In Maharashtra women Beedi workers earn Rs. 6.25 per day per 1,000 Beedi. In Bihar they get only Rs. 6.10 per day while men get Rs. 9.50. In Gujarat women in Textile in Saraspur Mill get Rs. 9.50 per day. In Cashew industry which earns a good foreign exchange, women get Rs. 4.75 to 9.80 per day while men Rs. 6.50 to 14.85 per day. Women are predominent in Coffee curing in Karnataka. They get Rs. 10.55 per day for 8 hours. The minimum wages Act is not properly applied at many places under public sector like Construction with the result women loose a number of benefit besides getting poor wages.

The CITU and co-ordination committee therefore have to demand that the minimum wage must be applied to all these sections with all the welfare benefits available to the women workers in the organised sector.

Equal Remuneration Act just on Paper

Everybody knows as to how much noise was made by the Congress rulers and the Govt. about the Equal Remuneration ordinance and later on the Equal Remuneration Act during the International women's year in 1975, An impression was created as if equality was given to women already by the piece of this legislation ! During the women's Decade again the question of equality, equal status and development of women was taken up to show that her status has gone up and so on. In actual practice, it will be noted that the status has gone down in every respect. The dowry deaths continue to increase, molestation and rapes on Adivasi and Harijan women is a daily occurance, in the Congress ruled states.

The Equal Remuneration Act came into force in 1976 and the owners and employers in the industries and offices tried to find out ways and means to escape the implementation. They continue to exploit the cheap labour of women in construction, plantation, Beedi, Garment, etc. Despite the enforcement machinery, increasing awareness of the women, unions taking up the cases, the unequal wage continues in almost all the industries. The statistics provided by the Government in their journals, study groups and the trade unions speak eloquently of this

great injustice made against the women workers. Wherever the unions are strong enough, they were able to check and compelled the owners to pay the equal wage in plantations, beedi, etc.

The Indian Labour Journal in Jan. 1984 issue states "however, the practical experience in this regard is a little disturbing one. At certain other places some employers were found using covert means of fixing lower wage rates". It must also be noted that after the trade unions had intervened by way of struggle in West Bengal and Tripura, the employers had to agree to pay the equal wage. Tripura Left Front Govt. was the first Government to implement the Equal Remuneration Act in plantation.

Unequal wage continues in the industries under public sector such as construction and Railway. For instance, 200 women Mazdoor in Railway in Vijayawada division of South Central Railway were kept casual as soon as the notification of equal wage was applied to Railway. Women workers in Railway were working in Vijayawada division for about 10-12 years in this department. This was done while their junior male collegues were absorbed permanently. This has affected their emoluments, social security, retirement benefits including pension. After repeated representations to the Ministry by the union, statement by the AICCWW to the Government, they were put in some other department and made permanent. In construction the difference in wages under public sector remains to this day between Rs. 2 to Rs. 6 in different states. The difference in construction is so blatant that it would appear as if the Government does not bother about the enforcement of this Act even during the women's decade. In Plantation in Assam, where INTUC controls the major unions unequal wage continues. The unequal wage in Beedi industry is much talked about. 80% women and children are working here, while the Beedi industry is flourishing well. The disparity in wages is blatant here difference being from Rs. 4-6 for 1,000 beedies. For instance in one of the agreements arrived at between the representatives of workers of INTUC, Congress cell and the employers, in Bihar in January, 1985 Women would get Rs. 6.10 while men would get Rs. 9.50. This is an absolute violation of the Act, openly done by the Congress Govt. and the Congress Party.

The women workers in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are getting Rs. 3-4 less wages per thousand Beedis than their counterparts. The nature of work in Beedi does not differ with women constituting the major force.

In a book "women who roll Biddies published by SEWA for ILO study, a reference has correctly been made as follows : Since the Beedi industry is highly labour intensive and uses little machinery it is quite mobile. In Kerala for example, the Left Front Government sincerely tried to implement these acts with the result that all the major companies left the states and set up production in the adjoining states of Karnataka and Tamilnadu". (P. 77) Noting this peculiar nature of industry, the CITU has formed a south zonal committee and launched struggles against all the disparities with the result the working condition are much better there. Women are getting not only equal wage but maternity benefit, Provident Fund, Bonus, medical aid, educational facilities for their children, etc.

In Agriculture, women are getting unequal wage for the same nature of work like harvesting with the exception of West Bengal and Tripura where Left Front Government try to enforce the equal wage.

The Survey made by the Ministry of Labour published in March, 1985 (I.L.J.) also stated that in a sampled factories, the Equal Remuneration Act had not been enforced and women workers found being paid less than their counterpart".

A deputation on behalf of AICCWW when met the Union Labour Ministry on 5th August, 1985 and submitted a charter of demands, the Govt. replied on this particular issue that "The appropriate Government under the equal remuneration Act is, the Central Govt. in relation to any employment under Central and State Government in relation to any other employment". By replying this, the Central Govt. in fact avoids the responsibility of taking up action against the enforcement machinery as well as giving relief to women against injustice. Their apologetic attitude could be seen from their replies. When cases of violations of the Act were brought to the notice of the Govt., the Govt's. reply was "Most of them are minor violations like non-maintenance of registers and forms, etc.,

prosecution have also been launched". In the Central Sector number of prosecution launched in 1984 were "187 of which 40 cases disposed off, 38 ending in conviction and 2 in acquittal"...In reply to a demand that the right to prosecute should be given to workers, the Govt. merely said "that would be examined".

Due to pressure from Trade Union movement, women's organisations, co-ordination committees of working women and also from the International Trade Union movement, perhaps the Govt. was thinking to bring amendments to the Act. "The Govt. may soon amend the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, to make the violation of the provision of the Act cognizable by courts on receipt of complaint from institutions notified by Central and State Govt. The Act may be amended on the lines of the Dowry Prohibition (amendment) Act, 1984 ". This statement further clarifies that "the detection of violation over ten years ago is negligible ...Inadequacy of inspecting staff, is a major constraint in bringing the violation to light and offenders to book. Another reason the Govt. admits. openly is "the large enactment, which the staff has to ensure enforcement the laws relating to women and children receive low priority..." This is an open admission of the feudal mentality of the Congress rulers who are not ashamed to state that being women they receive low priority even though an offence is committed against them. These are the same people who always talk about equality and equal status of women. Hypocracy out and out.

Prosecutions Launched—But Few

According to available figures given elsewhere prosecutions under the Central Govt. the number of prosecutions launched during 1982, 1983 and 1984 was 15, 58 and 67 respectively. And the respective conviction for three years was 8, 25, 38. "With a view to speeding up and increasing detection of offenses under this Act, creation of a separate, machinery which will enforce the legal provision relating to women in each state is also under consideration..." (ET)

From this it is very clear, that wage discrimination continues unabated, detection is on the increase and according to the statement, convictions also are on the increase. The conviction is only to pay fine a few hundred rupees. The Government is not serious of the implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act.

The CITU, AICCWW has submitted a report on violation of Equal Remuneration Act to the International Labour Conference held at Geneva, on 6th June, 1985. This particular question in our note was on the Agenda No. III, Part-4. India was represented in the Conference. The particular issues concerning unequal wages in Railway, Beedi, construction mentioned in the note were taken up and circulated.

There are a few cases of wage discrimination in case of women employees in offices and establishment and sometimes they are reported in the press.

It must be recorded that it was CITU who first took up this question in 1975 and wrote to ILO about the non-implementation of ratified ILO Convention in India. On this complaint, the ILO inquired from the Government after which the present Act was enacted in 1976 and CITU was invited for discussion. The clarification on the "nature of work or of the same value" in the Act was made in the government notification. The employers and the government continued to deny the equal wage to women workers till that time.

The Role of Trade Unions on the Advisory Board

And it is here the role of the Advisory Committee in the states and at the centre assumes importance. CITU and co-ordination committees went on hammering that the Committees appointed by the Government should associate the women's organisation, Trade Unions and AICCWW at the centre and at the states. Very few places, except in Tamilnadu, CITU or AICCWW was represented on Equal Remuneration Committee. Unless the women and trade unions who are well known for their dedication to the enforcement of women's legislation are taken on the committee, no justice will be done to the cause of women workers. The experience of the trade

union committees in the Soviet Union on the implementation of the legislation concerning women should be noted here. Special women's committees are appointed to visit the factories to inquire about their working grievances.

This shows the attitude of the Socialist Governments towards the problems of working women, and their solution

Training Facilities for Women

Women are generally found to be employed in "Women preferred industries". It is also accepted in the statement by the Government. They are employed in unskilled job, where not much education is required. They can work in electronics, garment, watch making handicraft and so on. Women would certainly like to work in skilled or engineering industries if they are given training. The Ministry of Labour has announced a number of schemes for training women. Institutes of vocational training facilities for women and men do exist in India. In the new seheme, the Central Government has set up one National Vocational Training Institute for women at Bombay, Bangalore and Trivandrum. Three additional Regional Vocational Training Institutes are also being established at Hisar, Calcutta and Tura as per the report by DGET Ministry of Labour. The following charts of Vocational Training for women will explain what is this training and how many women have got through training courses in total comparing to men.

TABEE No. VIII

Vocational Training Programme for Women

NVTI/RVTI (Functioning) — As on 31-12-86

Name of Trade	*NVTI New Delhi*	*RVTI Bombay*	*RVTI Bangalore*	*RVTI Trivandram*
1	2	3	4	5
A. BASIC SKILLS :				
1. Hair and Skin Care	16	16	—	—
2. Secretarial Practice	16	16	32	16
3. Electronics	16	32	48	32
4. Data Preparation Assistant	20	—	—	20
5. Consul Operator-cum-Programmer Assistant	20	—	—	20
6. Dress Making	—	16	16	—
7. Isntrument Mech.	—	—	16	—
Total	88	80	112	88
B. ADVANCED SKILLS :				
1. Dress Making	80	12	12	—
2. Embroidery and Needle Craft	20	—	—	—
3. Secretarial Practice	16	16	16	—
4. Hair and Skin Care	12	—	—	—
5. Garment Knitting	12	—	—	—
6. Business Service	12	12	12	—
7. Electronics (TV Repair and Servicing)	12	12	—	—
8. Electronics (Measuring Intt.)			12	—
Total	164	52	52	—
C. INSTRUCTORS TRAINING	40	20	20	

Vocational Training Programme for Women

TABLE No. IX

Statement showing the total number of seats in Industrial Training Institutes and total number of trainees including women passed out during the period 1979 to 1983

Year	*Total No. of Seats at the end of September of each year*	*Trainees passed at the end of July each year*	
		Total	*Women*
1979	1,59,432	7,1811	4,244
1980	1,60,282	7,3515	4,242
1981	1,64,222	6,5506	3,449
1982	1,68,311	6,6487	3,418
1983	1,99,338	7,9248	8,648

Industrial Labouring Institute

The first chart of the Training programme shows that the Labour Ministry would prefer women to be trained for "hair and skin, Dress making" "Garment Knitting" and so on. This is a special skill no doubt which is meant to cater for only those women who belong to higher class.

What are the training facilities for women workers who are thrown out because they have no skill in the technical engineering departments, or who have been retrenched on a large scale in Jute textile and tobacco, etc. ? Could not have these women been given training and continued in the same department ? These Vacancies and departments have been alloted to men now.

The Approach paper to the 7th Five Year Plan, 1985-90, also provides "the need for reviewing the existing training programmes, training facilities in identical critical areas of shortage, provision of vocational and technical courses etc. Almost all statements by the Government the journals published by the Labour Ministry, welfare Ministry and so on, make a lot of noise of the training facilities for women as if that is going to solve the problem of employment. It is also a fact that in the absence of these facilities women can not take up skilled jobs which pay much better and also helps promotion to higher posts. The 7th Five Year Plan has asked women to take "Vocational Training in Brick-layers, mason, turner, plumber, painter, fitter..." These jobs are considered to be skilled jobs. Women are already helping in mason work, Is this to be taken a 'skilled' job for women ? In fact these jobs considered to be inferior and rejected by the men, are now offered to the women as 'skilled'. Working women demand training facilities in skilled jobs such as in Engineering with stipend for the period of training and guarantee of employment.

In this connection the experience narrated by our women in Tamilnadu explains some important weaknesses of the schemes in training facilities.

As per the information there are total 50 polytechnics, out of which 43 are meant exclusively for men, out of 16 districts, only 5 have polytechnics for women. The study reveals the following feature.

(1) There are as many courses as 31 offered in men's polytechnics in mechanical Engineering and electrical Engineering available "full time" in 28 institutes and 'part time' in 10 polytechnics.

(2) Out of total 13 courses available to women's polytechnics, 10 are designed specifically for women, not available for men. These include like costume designing, dress making, bakery and confectionary, cosmetology

etc. These courses prepared for women are relatively ill paid and of a subordinate nature. With regard to ITI in Tamilnadu, out of a total 35 ITI, only 3 are specifically for women. Only 3% of the total seating capacity for 35 ITI's is available to 3 women ITI's. The remaining 32 are supposedly co-educational. The ITI too predominantly train women for cutting and training, emrboidery and needlework, and stenography.

What are the reasons given for women not coming forward to take up the training ? It is "the heavy and rough nature of the jobs which are not suitable for women". This was the reply from the authorities. The fact is, that these institutions are believed to be exclusively of men's institutions. Even women too take these institutions for men only. No woman in fact is allowed to apply for these courses.

The total number of seats and women passed out after training in the 2nd chart showed that while the women trainees passed since 1979 to 1983, the total number came to 4244, 4,224, 3,449, 3,418, 8,648 in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 respectively, the total number passed including women and men was 71,811, 73,515, 65,506, 66,487, 79,248 during the same years. That shows a very small number of women were trained in comparison to the number of men.

The Congress rulers, and the Government including some of the women ministers want our women to be "an image of an 'Indian' woman" not a modern type but a 'feudal housewife'. They want, women to work in traditional industries, 'women preferred' jobs where the training is given in embroidery, garment, knitting, bakery and so on. Women employed in Electronics Assembly or assembly of radio or pharmceutical packing, etc., get low wages, work is tedious and exploitation is extreme.

The list provided by the DGFT is of 64 trades in Engineering and non-Engineering which require minimum education of 8th class, Matriculates with mathematics, and physics. Middle class educated women can perhaps take some of the courses like stenography or in non-Engineering training. More over these women who would like to go for Engineering, will be discoruaged as they were women.

A study sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research said in one of their report as to why there is a poor access to training facilities for women. It was because of socially low status of women in the industrial sector and the adverse effects of protective labour laws. Although the figures of women trainees in the Engineering trades quoted in the paper are rather old, it gives a picture of inferior status of women. During 1960 there were 143 women trainees, twelve years later in 1978 there were 625. And what about men trainees ? 92,078 in 1966 and 1,40,212 in 1978 during the same years. Women constituted less than 1% of all Engineering trainees. This shows women are virtually excluded from the Engineering trades.

The arguments forwarded by the management, are in support of the policies of the Government. 'The provision of training facilities for women would mean a big investment for nothing" one employer told. Another argument was "women stick to their jobs only till they are married". This shows once again the attitude of the employers and the Government towards women. Women workers and employees are entering in the labour market on a large scale and it is a welcome feature. They demand to have training facilities in skilled jobs with stipend. Women in socialist countries have been doing marvallous jobs, with no discriminatinn in the field. The present policies of the Congress rulers must change to treat women on the equal footing and give opportunities to them to develop their skills.

Night Shifts

The ILO Convention No. 89 bans the night work for women under the factory Act, ILO Convention (No. 45) forbids to employ women in the Night Shifts or under ground. A few years back in the Indian Labour Journal the question was raised whether women should be employed in the night shift again considering their reduction in employment due to night shift such as mines etc. Not much response was available to this proposal and trade

unions totally rejected it. But one may notice from the reports from the Surveys made by Government or from the reports received by CITU, that at many place, night shift for women still continue. Under Public Sector, Indian Airlines started rostering of lady staff in the night shift despite protests by their union. At a time when the union was protesting against the lady traffic staff being rostered in the night shift by replacing men from the roster, the Manager, Bombay Airport through a notification rostered more lady staff in the night shift. When the question was raised by the Union, the reply given by the Manager was "only unmarried girls have been rostered in the night shift".

Thc Indian Labour Journal (Jan. 1986) also gave instances of night shifts for women in certain cases. Women working in fisheries continue to work late at night and even in the night shift. The reason given is the work is to be completed when the fish is brought ashore. In Orissa the night shift for women is practiced at many places. All these cases come under the violations of convention No. 89 and is also violation of Factory Act.

Considering women have to work at home, to look after the Children etc. the night shift is banned for them. Despite this it continue in connivance of the management, while Government does not intervene effectively.

Health Hazards

There is a lot of discussion in the International trade union movement and also recently in our country about the health hazards facing the workers in factories and elsewhere. Women in mines, textiles, fisheries, beedi, tobacco, tanneries etc., do suffer due to various particles raised in course of working. The women in fisheries have to stand for 10-12 hours at a time and even the whole night without gloves or shews. Due to working in fisheries the fingers become numb, become useless for work after some years. The coal women leaders have no protection against the coal dust and they become victims of T.B. The same thing can be said about the women working in Tobacco, Beedi and Cashew. The women workers are employed in Ginning factories on a large scale in Tamilnadu and other places. Due to cotton particles, the lungs are affected, while women continue to work, loading and unloading the cotton. In watch factories a number of accidents took place when women and children died. There is no protection against the hazards. Women in coal or iron or manganese in Orissa and elsewhere face the danger of lung diseases. A special hospitals for the treatment of T.B. is very necessary for such patients. There is no medical units even to treat the injuries at mines. Whatever protection under thc rules of Factory Act exists the employers just flout them, they are not taken to task by the Government and continue to exploit women and men workers irrespective of the existing rules and regulations.

Discrimination in every Field against Working Women

As mentioned earlier Working Women are being discriminated in wages, employment, promotion, job opportunities and so on at many places. The case of Air hostesses is significant one in every respect. The women Air hostesses are blantary discriminated on the ground of sex. It is well known that women in Pharmaceutical industries are out as soon as they get married. There are number of instances in all states, where employers refuse to employ married women under some pretext or the other. This practice was prevalent in Public Sector undertaking like Air India International. During 1980 itself, 20 Air hostesses made a writ petition to the Supreme Court (May 1980) stating that "we are working women and not sex symbole". The reason was the age limit of termination of service for them was 30. They can continue working unmarried upto 40 years while male members can continue to work upto 55. Women Air Pilot too can continue to work upto 55. Again a second batch of 50 Air hostesses of the IA moved the Supreme Court on October 9, 1980 challenging the service rules restricting their right to marry and providing for compulsory retirement at the age of 30. They got the stay order from the Supreme Court, when this issue was discussed in Parliament in Jan. 1981, the reply given by the Minister of Civil Aviation was that the hostesses know about the age before they join and nothing could be done. The whole debate on the airhostesses, was marked by objectionable remarks on women as 'Sex' on part of some male members ! That shows as to how the Congress Rulers respect the dignity of women and equality enshrined in the Constitution.

The same issue came up in the Air India. Those recruited in India are required to compulsorily retire on marriage, if the marriage takes place within four years of their joining or if they become pregnant. This case was transferred to Supreme Court. The judges reacted sharpely to the remarks made by the IA management, while the discussion in the court and in press was continuing, the Late woman Prime Minister too issued a statement and supported the stand taken by the management. The AICCWW and other committees protested vehemently against this statement and attitude of the management that Air hostesses should be treated as sex symbols and demanded withdrawal of the insulting remarks. The Prime Minister reported to have said to the delegation of Air hostesses that 40 is too old for an Airhostesses, and only in very exceptionable cases do women keep their looks and figures. Fortunately for the Air hostesses the Supreme Court judgment struck down the AI and IA regulations on retirement at 35 and 40 as well as the pregnancy bar on service of Air hostesses. The judgment given by the Supreme Court was notable. It said that the argument that Air hostesses should be young, attractive and possessing, pleasing manners, is an open insult to women, in bad taste and Proof of denigration of air hostesses, that 40 is too old for an air hostesses, and only in exceptional cases women keep their looks and figure (Sept., Oct. 1981). This was a sharp rebuff to the policies and outlook of the management of both the airlines, and also the congress rulers who hold the feudal outlook on women.

The feudal attitude shown towards the air hostesses is not the only one instance. The same attitude is experienced by lady telephone operators nurses and others.

Legislations Concerning Working Women

Even from the Government sources, it is established that equal remuneration Act 1976, maternity benefit act 1961 Plantation and Mines Act, Minimum Wageg Act, Factory Act and so on are not properly implemented, the enforcement machinery is inadequate and corrupt. The denial of the associations of the women's organisations, trade union representative, AICCWW by the Government on the equal remuneration Committees, Advisory Committees, Employment Committee etc. make matters worse. The reply was sent to CITU by the Government that there was no necessity for more representatives on the committee, there are already representatives of Trade Unions. Recently a note was published on 27.3.1987 by the Government in which it is said the Union Labour Ministry was contemplating changes in the above mentioned legislations. The note says "the Government plans to introduce a comprehensive emendment to the minimum wages Act to ensure speedier disposal of complaints and stringent punishment for violations. To reduce disparity in minimum wages and to avoid flight of industries or business from state to another, certain guidelines to set up regional minimum wages advisory boards have been formed..." In the Annual report of the Minister of Labour for 1986-87, it is stated that "there are proposals to carry out emendments to the maternity benefit Act 1951 to widen the coverage, and benefits and make the existing penal provisions more stringent. Sanction to prosecutes under the minimum Wages Act has been delegated concurrently to join Labour Commission and under the Equal Remunetation Act to regional Labour Commissioner. Some legal machinery for health and safety of workers in building and construction was under consideration...".

Because all the trade unions, CITU in particular, were demanding drastic changes in the present legislations so that the existing inadequacies can be removed, the Government seems to have been awakened now and considering the introduction of the amendments. In the 1st convention itself, AICCWW demanded the basic changes in these acts. The CITU and AICCWW sent notes to ILO, WFTU besides bringing it to the notice of the Labour Ministry the unequal wages persisting in various industries. Provision of creche is just on the paper, minimum wages for women in agricultural, construction Beedi etc. are not being given, Maternity benefit is being avoided by the employers under so many excuses. When complaint was made the reply received by the AICCWW was the Government would consider. It is well known that a detail and lengthy discussion on the Equal Remuneration Act and its application continued for 2 years on the question of "nature of work" when the Equal Remuneration Act was passed. The women were deprived of the benefit till the real meaning of the "nature of work" was decided and published in the press.

The Indian Labour Journal 1986 produced an article in which it said the "Government may soon amend the equal remuneration Act, to make the violation of the Act cognizable by court on receipt of complaints from institutions notified by the central and state government." What are these changes ? Under the present Act, only inspecting personnel of the Government are empowered to report offence covered by the Act, and initiate the proceedings. Now the Government wants to include the institution who will complain. According to the Government the inadequate detection of the violation is due to inadequacy of the staff. With a view to speed up the increasing detection of offence under this Act, "Creation of a separate machinery which will enforce the legal provision relating to women and children in each state is also under consideration." This explanation by the Government itself shows the Government is completely on the defensive so far the implementation of the legislation concerning women.

The experience of Dowry amendment Act is there for everybody to see. The special machinery, the Government is going to introduce, one does not know how far it will work. The CITU and AICCWW have repeatedly suggested to associate the women's organisation and AICCWW on the committees appointed by the Government. Sometimes "the Government talks about the voluntary organisations" which will be given opportunities for detecting the violations. One is unable to understand who are these agencies, and on what basis the Government selects them. In every deputation taken on behalf of co-committees in states and at the centre this point was raised. But there is no satisfactory reply.

The actual implementation of these Acts, by the Government sources itself, shows how these Acts are ineffective in toto.

Specific Problems Concerning Women Employees in Offices and Establishment

Working women have a double role to play, in the house as well as in the factory, mines or in the office for instance. The problem of transport is very acute and serious for all, but for working women to get into the train, bus or in any other conveyance during the Aeak hours is an harrowing experience for almost all working women in the cities. The AICCWW from its inception took up this question and succeeded to a certain extent to give relief to working women in Tamilnadu, Kerala, Bombay. The sad happenings of sexual harrassment experienced by women, college students, Telephone girls and Nurses highlights the seriousness of the situation. Unless special arrangements are made for transport for working women by the companies, employers and Government, the situation will be very difficult to deal in the future. Some special bogies to the trains, bus services at the peak hours have to be made by the authorities. The women employees are demanding Transport facilities in the cities.

Another problem is faced by working women who are not residents of the cities and come for service from other places, is the hostels for working women. This issue has been clinched by the welfare Ministry and statements issued that their number would be increased in the 7th Five Year Plan.

The department of Social Welfare was to introduce a scheme of 170 hostels in addition to the existing, with a total capacity of 11,752 seats for working women. This promise was made in 1978-79. Nothing much concrete has come out.

At present, according to the official information the number of existing hostels in our country is only 380 where 24,191 working women can reside. The 7th Five Year Plan envisages 300 more working women's hostels with Rs. 30 crores expenditure. These are to be constructed with the help of the voluntary organisations. The Central Government in general depends upon the voluntary organisation for most of the schemes meant for women. They are not prepared to take help from women's organisations nor the trade unions who are mostly connected with the common people. With this attitude, one is doubtful of the outcome of the working women's hostels, or creches for working women spelt out in the 7th Five Year Plan.

It is really surprising that offices of LIC or Reserve Banks and some others have no special rooms for women to rest or take food. In many places there are no separate toilets even. When demanded, the women are asked to go outside. In many places some struggles for separate toilets were launched. In Durgapur Steel Plant hospital, there is no special room for the staff (women) to change or rest. Under the Factory Act, toilet arrangement is compulsory. Reports from survey indicate that there is no special arrangement or very rarely, it is there but no curtain is provided. This is the responsibility of the management. But it is also a fact that our unions have not taken up these so called 'unimportant' issues nor the women working in the offices have taken it up as they should have taken.

The question of transfers of women or their husbands sometimes create problems. In almost all the cases, a woman employee who is transferred has to leave the job. Many such cases were referred to CITU and AICCWW.

According to the Home Ministry, there are standing instructions about "The desirability of keeping the husband and wife to-gether as far as practicable." Some people forgo promotions. In some cases the wrongful attitude of the officers even if to keep the couples lot the same place is possible creates unnecessary problem for the family.

Another such case was referred to the Government when it was found that the Government had discussed this point and formulated policies on the question of transfers in 1976. It must be anyhow understood that the AICCWW did not demand the transfer as a right. As far as possible, both working people should work at the same place, so that the normal life and the children's education is not disrupted. After a lot of discussion, correspondence, with the concerned ministries, the Government of India, Ministry of Personal issued the circular dated 3rd April, 1986 in which it stated that "it is the policy of the Government that as far as possible and within commitments of administrative possibilities the husband and wife should be posted at the same station to enable them to lead a normal family life and to ensure the education and welfare of their children." The circular gave some concrete guidelines under which the transfer can be made. Any way this circular helped many cases such as Manju Roy in DVC to fight their cases to get justice. Persistance in correspondence by CITU and AICCWW brought out to open the first discussion in the committee held in 1978 and later on issuing the above circular in 1986. This should help many women employees to put up resistance against unjust and available transfer orders.

Economic Policies of the Central Government Towards Working Women

According to the official figures, the female work force participation rate remains as low as 20.85 per cent and only 14 per cent have full timework. This shows the serious situation of employment among women in our country. Women are the worst sufferers and more so when they are entering the labour market on a large scale to find any petty jobs to survive from the acute economic crisis. Under such circumstances, various plans, schemes offered by the Central Government in the 6th and 7th Five Year Plan makes a mockery of the slogans raised by congress rulers for the development of our women in every field during the women's decade and later.

The Planning Commission set up a working group on employment of women in September 1978, the findings of the working group were published in September 1985, after 7 years of the setting up of the commission. Following recommendations were published : Reserve certain number of seats for women in service training, training to a large number of women, impart literacy or non-formal education, rebate to industries which employ a large number of women etc. Except the programme of training facilities and literacy classes nothing substantially turned out of the recommendations. Instead of creating employment for women, or compelling the employers not to retrench women wherever their strength lies, the planning commission suggests 'rebate' to the industries who employ a large number of women ! The "appearsing" policies of giving rebate etc. to industries who are bent upon reducing the strength of women anyhow to get more profits does not help to increase the employment opportuniies for women nor the prestige of the Government.

On the eve of the General Election in 1984 a meeting of the National Committee on women was held on 24.4.1984, with the Union Labour Minister in Chair. The subject discussed was "discrimination against women" and "what steps should be taken with regard to employment". The committee was surely aware of the 30.70 lakhs of women unemployed at the end of 1982 and many more in the rural areas. More than 1 lakhs men and women in post and telegraph, railways, were employed as part timers, work only 2 hours with salary of Rs. 135 only. A new system of extra departmental work (EDP) with a salary of Rs. 250-300 and no other benefits is continuing where major part of women are employed. Now a "panacea" on the present unemployment situation has been found, and that is "self-employment" which is being given wide publicity. A sure cure on the ills due to unemployment. The Central Government Labour Ministry, Welfare Ministry, etc. is making much noise and a committee on self-employment is recently formed to study the unemployment situation, home based industries, etc. The committee recommended as per the report that "as the system of piece rate work led to exploitation in case of women and child labour, the concept of piece rate wages should be substituted by a time rate for employment in all spheres and activities... ."

The idea is very correct and if the Ministry is serious, a legislation should be brought forward to bring all the workers in the unorganised industries, the major section of women workers under the time-rate system. Sometime back there was a talk also to bring a legislation for unorganised sector. The Ministry of Labour had taken up a few cases of discrimination against women in departments of government in the meeting. They received complaints on barring pregnant women from taking a life insurance policy, as well as barring appointment to government services to women in advanced stage of pregnancy. Are these the only instances come to the notice of the government for the first time ? Does the Labour Ministry not know that application Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, etc. were the reasons to dispense with services of women at many places ?

New 20 Point Programme for Women

The second edition of the 20 point programme was announced by the Congress rulers on the 15th August, 1986. The slogans announced were not very much different from the earlier ones. This time, in the 20 point programme, issues raised were "enhance the status of women, enhance the awareness of problems of women, create mass consciousness about women's rights and employment for women and training"... This programme advised women to participate with equality in socio-economic development. Lastly it appeals the public to rouse public opinion against dowry and ensure effective implementation of anti-dowry legislation.

So far, the 15th August programme, goes, nothing is wrong. These are all well established principles of any government which proclaims itself as a democratic government. Public is to be roused against the discriminatory attitudes, dowry deaths and so on. But who will believe the congress rulers when claims and the practices are totally at variance to each other. The latest example is of the Muslim Women's Protection Bill, where the Prime Mnisiter took keen interest to get it passed appeasing the muslim fundamentalists. Dowry deaths are on the increase, atrocities on Adivasi and Harijan women is a daily affair. It was due to the pressure of the women's movement the Dowry Act was passed. The daily 'Mantrams' on T.V. and radio against dowry system, or, statements and speeches on employment, development of women and so on will not help to improve the situation with regard to women or employment for them. At the Nairobi conference and before, much noise of the women's equality and equal status was made. During elections in 1984 and after, many promises were made. What has concretely come out of all these is, women have become more conscious of their rights, of the right to work, and whose policies are responsible for keeping their status low. The result is, all sections of women are launching struggles on their demands.

Mr. M.S. Dayal, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Human Resources again made many promises on 3rd Oct. 1986, 22 lakhs Anganwadis are expected to be functioning by the end of 7th Five Year Plan under the ICDS programme of the Government. 66 lakhs children belonging to low income group families in the country will be covered in the project of ICDS. The number of districts covered will be 2,200 from 1,346 in 1986. The present

poor conditions of the women in these schemes have come out from the recently held demonstrations of women Anganwadi. In the month of March-April 1987 when these women held Dharnas on the demands for raising their salary from Rs. 275 for 5 hours to Rs. 500 and for helpers from Rs. 150 per month to Rs. 250. The exploitation of the Anganwadis was brought to light. The women not educated much, have to go to such jobs. There is no training. After "they had failed to meet the Prime Minister, the Welfare Minister, they had taken the path of struggle". This is what the secretary said. Thousands of Prasavsevikas are waiting for regularisation who do not eve get a meagure amount of Rs. 100 per month as honorarium. Therefore, who will believe these promises ? The problem of hostels for working women is covered in the speeches and meetings, the urgent necessity for those who come for service from their states, the question of their security is also discussed. It is possible a few hostels may come up with the "assistance and financial help given by the welfare ministry, and with the help of the voluntary organisations". Bnt considering the dire need for the working women, the security involved under the present conditions, unless government takes these programmes in a big way, this programme too will remain on paper. In one of the discussions in Lok Sabha in 1984 March, it was said, there was also an emphasis on promotion of self-employment among women and modernisation of traditional occupations of women such as spinning and weaving, match making, coir, cashew, fisheries. The self employment and modernisation is closely connected no doubt as per the present policies are persued by the government. The government is definitely moving towards modernisation of traditional industries such as they have already done in tobacco. The same thing they are planning to do in case of match and coir. And those women who would be displaced by these processes will be offered job in self-employment schemes. This seems to be the ultimate object of such statement. The schemes announced for self-employment is "the Khadi and Village industries, processing of cereals, pulses, fibre, cane and bamboo work. "The SEWA, the womens organisation is exactly doing this type of work, a few women get jobs, with low payment and the organisers are dependent on the availability of the market which is already shrunk. The self-employment for men and women when crores of people are unemployed and are in search of jobs, is a hoax for the needy working people. This problem is a very serious problem and needs a drastic programme of industrialisation of our country on a large scale and introduction of land reform. Employment for women in industries is to be created with a target and policy to be enacted by deeds. The right to work must be accepted as a fundamental right enshrined in the constitution, and relief for those who are unemployed.

Important thing to remember is under no bourgeois government the real equality or equal status for women "however advanced capitalist country" it may be, is possible. And women have to fight for their rights and wrentch them from the bourgeois government, at least in law.

Left Front Governments

Acting under great strain of centre state relations, without sufficient funds, the West Bengal and Tripura Left Front Governments were able to do a few things on the question of employment for women, equal remuneration, ICDS schemes, food for work programmes, etc. The welfare department in the West Bengal, could provide jobs for women numbering 19,000 in the ICDS, giving nutritious food for children. Under the Congress Government there were only 2 projects which increased to 800 under the woman welfare minister in Bengal. As was mentioned earlier Tripura was the first government which enacted the Equal Remuneration Act and did many things for tribal women, like litaracy classes and work centres for women. The destitutes houses for women were raised from 100 to 150. The social welfare Advisory Board is trying to do many things. During the Nayanar Ministry in 1980, 236 creches were established for coir and agricultural women workers, it was the Nayanar Government who started pension for widows, and later on in West Bengal. Minimum wages already are given in both the States.

Atrocities on women, on scheduled caste and scheduled tribes are very small in numuer while in Congress ruled states they are in hundreds and thousands, while there are so many communal riots in Congress ruled states, there is communal harmony in West Bengal and Tripura. The election viotories in West Bengal and Kerala show

that majority of men and women support the policies pursued by these Governments despite the weaknesses in carrying out the policies in favour of the people due to the congress rule at the centre.

Struggles Launched During Last Six Years

One of the important features of the last few years is the spurt in the women's movement of all classes including the working women. Not only the most backward sections of women workers such as women bonded Labourers or scheduled caste and tribes are in action fighting for minimum wages, regularisation of their jobs and so on but middle class employees of Central and State Governments, Nurses and Teachers have also been launching struggles for their specific demands. The house-wives and ordinary women are launching a big movement under their organisations separately and under the joint auspices against dowry deaths, and molestation of women and succeeded in forcing the Government to bring the legislations on these issues in Parliament. There is no doubt that it was the result of the pressure of the women's movement and public awareness to fight against such social evils. It was due to repeated demand made by Co-ordination Committees and women's organisations before the Select Committees of Parliament, the Government had to accept the necessity of forming separate women's cells and commissions for early solution of these problems. The Equal Remuneration Act and other Acts are being amended largely because of the pressure of CITU.

Women Workers in Action

A few struggles of women workers from different states fought under the CITU or otherwise are given below for the information of our comrades so that they may know the issue on which they faught, the militancy and tenacity of women who were involved in the struggles.

Heroic Struggle of 2,500 Adivasi Contract Women in Jamshedpur

Since February 11 April 1981, 10,000 contract workers in TISCO Plant have been on indefinite strike demanding absorbtion as permanent workers, of whom 2,500 were tribal women, who showed examplary courage and determination taking an equal part in the common struggle, even seizing the ini iative in repelling the attacks of the police and factory security guards. From February 11 to 15, the workers remained inside the plant. 2,000 women workers inside fought vigorously taking out procession within the plant premises while carrying their small babies. More than 1,000 policemen were employed in the factory to remove the workers. Women workers were beaten and dragged into waiting buses, were driven over 40-50 kilometers out of town to a jungle and left there. Immediately they started walking back to join the rally which was marching to gherao Union Steel Minister. Security officer fired on them when about 15 women and 20 men were injured. Women demanded the arrest of the security officer which ultimately was done. The Dharna was continued at 7 gates. When once in the night 400 men and 100 women were arrested and sent to jail for 18 days, 60 men and women violated Section 144 the next day in protest. The struggle continued with more vigour. This shows that once the women become class conscious, they participate vigorously and sometimes take lead in the struggles.

Women Coalminers Back Strike on November 8, 1982

At the call of unions under BCCL, in Bihar and West Bengal thousands of women workers came out in support of the strike, participated in demonstrations at Dhanbad on November 4, walked covering 7 kilometres distance from Dhanbad to BCCL office. While protesting against their retrenchment as wagon-loaders, women from Asansol, Raniganj Jharia and Dhanbad Coal Belt took leading part in picketting at mines faced goonda-attacks which were organised to disrupt the strike. Women in coal belt are very militant in general and they protect their unions and leadership wisely, even hiding them from the police.

In the present economic and political situation in Bihar, at the call of Joint Action Committee for a "Rasta Roko" movement 30,000 out of 1 lakh people who got arrested from May 9-14, 1983, 20,000 were women.

They blocked the Collectorate gates, halted office work and batches of satyagrahis courted arrest under the leadership of our women comrades. The demand was a political one, resignation of Chief Minister, who was ruling with the help of landlords, mafia lobby, police and corrupt officials.

Women Coir Workers in the Forefront in the Struggles

Working women in Kerala, in Coir and Plantations, Teachers, Nurses, Government Employees etc. are in the forefront in every struggle during the last so many years. But the women in Coir who were a major section in the industry, launched a most militant struggle since January 1983, spread over 250 villages. The majority belonging to CITU and others presented a charter of demands. For 2 months the unions held meetings and jathas. The movement was stepped up by picketting and courting arrests, from January 1 to 10. Out of 7,000 workers who courted arrests 5,000 were women 1,500 were sent to prison because after their release, they refused to go away and the Magistrate who was called there, sentenced to one month's imprisonment. A few years back, the very same militant women fought against the husking machines which would result in their retrenchment and went to the extent of breaking them. The continuous pressure of the movement compelled the Government to sit for negotiations with the union leaders. The role of women workers in Coir industry is a historical one. They have launched struggle during the period of 1930/40, formed the factory committees, faced unprecedented repression under British rule. The heroic tradition continues.

The valiant fight by women cardamon workers in Iddukki District against the goondas was narrated by Com. Mary in the Kanpur Conference of CITU. The women were very brave and fought against looting of household materials and against molesting of women workers by the Congress goondas. This struggle was actually for defending the right to choose their own union, CITU, and to protect it.

Rajpura Textile Women Fight Back

Out of 4,000 total workers in BCI in Rajpura in Punjab 500 are women. One of the demand in the charter was the minimum wages of Rs. 340 p.m. Having failed to subdue the workers, the management belonging to the Birla group adopted different tactics of attacking women workers. The supply of raw materials to the workers was stopped. When women workers were inside, the police and CRP suddenly attacked them entering the mill on 14.9.82. Without giving chance to go out the police kicked them with boots, push lathis, hitting private parts and abusing in filthy languages. Inspite of these barbarous planned attacks on women, they continued picketting, attend the meetings and fought against the brutal police attacks sometimes hitting them back. Two delegates from Rajpura Textile Mills who attended the 5th Conference narrated the incident and told how women fought to keep the Red Flag of CITU flying inspite of the arrests, tortures, starvation and jail. Due to this experience of such long struggle they have emerged confident and steeled, ready to continue the fight under the banner of CITU.

Women Plantation Workers in Krishnakali Tea Estate in Assam

Unheard of repression, molestation of women activin & abuses and what not were experienced by women plantation workers in Kokrajhar District between February 14 and May 1981 when they launched a movement on the question of bonus. The anti-socials and INTUC goondas, police and gun-wielding manner went into the house of plantation workers in Krishnakali Tea Estate, molested women and fired on the workers. When such repression continued, all men had to take shelter in the jungle and the heroic fight was continued by women workers. They held secret meetings, gathered in hundreds, outside the Section '144', beat those anti-socials and succeeded to remove the manager for sometime. The militancy and courage of these hundreds of women was something exceptional, as if the total movement of the workers in this district against repression on CITU flag was carried by militant women.

Tobacco Women in Andhra Continue their Fight against Mechanisation

The displacement of thousands of women in Tobacco in Chirala, Parchur, Guntur and other places due to

introduction of threshing plants created a stir among the workers and the fight is still continuing. CITU is leading the struggle against the ILTD Division of India Tabacco Co., a subsidiary of a big Multinational Company. These women went on Dharna, hunger-strike, deputation and so on. From the Centre an agitation and propaganda continued, with joint meeting with trade unions and women's organisations. In spite of deputations to the Union Labour Minister and to the late Prime Minister, women continue to suffer without any alternative job for them.

The problems of mechanisation in different industries like Coir, Match, Mines and also in Agriculture is being faced by the women workers who are being thrown out of jobs.

Unisankiyo Ltd. is a small but highly prosperous company, producting drugs in collaboration with a Japanese firm situated in Rajendnagar, Hyderabad. Out of 40 workers employed by this firm twentyfive are women. Their job is to collect urine of women in an early stages of pregnancy for use as the raw material for one of their drugs preparation. These women draw only Rs. 70 per month. As soon as they formed the union under CITU, management started harrasing them, and ultimately discharged them. Management threatened them when they started agitation. They were arrested, put in jail. This was in November 9, 1981. But the struggle of these women and men for their union continued till they won the case in 1985 or so.

In Karnataka where Women Workers in Beedi Outnumber the Men

In the Fourth Conference of the Karnataka State Beedi Workers' Federation held on 24-25 April 1982, and this was perhaps the first conference where, women delegates outnumbered the men. Otherwise, despite women constitu ing majority in some industries men are generally in the forefront. The majority of women in Beedi industry here are Muslim. But the burkhas and the religion never came in the way when hundreds of them gheraoed the manager in his office at Tumkur on the demand of bonus, disconnected the telephone wire lest he would call the police, and lifted the gherao only after they got the promise. Salima Begum, a leader of Tumkur District has set up an example when she made an appeal to the working class to shed all communal and religious prejudices and develop comradely relations. She told the meeting, "Razia or Radha, Salima or Sulochana we are all sisters and 'Sukurseth or Ganesh'—who exploit us are the same—CITU is our home .." She asked "why Muslim contractors insist, we must wear burkha ? Do Abida Ahmed, Muslim Women M.P. and others wear burkha ?" These women fought during the Emergency in 1975, they were arrested when their menfolk were already in prison. Considering the backward Sections of Beedi women and that too Muslim, it is remarkable that their religious sentiments do not come in the way of their struggles against Hindu or Muslim Employer. In the conference held in February, 1987, 10,000 women participated in the procession.

Bombay Textile Women Fight

Women textile workers in Bombay have a glorious tradition of militant fight for many years. The Bombay Textile strike of 2,50,000 workers created history by continuing the strike for nearly two years from January, 1982 to 1983. The militant women prevented the strike breakers who entered the factory in the night with kerosene tins with the intention of setting it on fire. The women in Prakash Cotton Mill were very active during this period, held meetings and processions. A strong Morcha of 1,000 women strikers organised by Shramik Mahila Sangh and NFIW was taken out on April, 1 1982. The women held street corner meetings spoke in support of the strike, went round in a jeep to address the workers, culminating in a huge meeting at Parel. Women textile workers were in the forefront of the "Jail Bharo Andolan". On the morning of 16 August, 1982, 300 women in Worli, in Bombay joined 1,500 male workers to offer satyagraha. Many women were taken to the police stations, were released in the night.

Immediately after the arrest of policemen in Bombay on August 19, 1982 as many as 500 wives of policemen demonstrated in front of the Naigaon Police Station demanding release of their leaders. This is the militancy and courage of women, the wives of the policemen who refused to join duty.