



# FORTY YEARS OF CITU



M K PANDHE

A CITU PUBLICATION

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**O**n 30th May, 2010, CITU completes 40 years of its existence. The role of CITU in the Indian Trade Union movement has been remarkable since then. CITU advocated the concept of strengthening of class struggle to protect the interests of the working class and the people.

## **THE BACKGROUND**

CITU was born at a time when intense debate was going on in the trade union movement on the role of working class movement in the country's socio-politico-economic scenario. The decades of sixties was marked by intense economic crisis burden of which was sought to be transferred wholly on the working people. Deep unrest among the people was giving rise to a situation where the main ruling party at the centre and in most of the states -the Congress party was facing increasing isolation. After mid sixties, in many states they were ousted from the state Govt. In totality there had been a turbulent situation in the political spectrum.

## **CLASS STRUGGLE UNDERMINED**

At this moment of our observance of the 40 years of the establishment of CITU, it is necessary to recall the historical background under which the CITU was founded and also how the class collaborationist role of the then leadership of trade union movement compelled the founding architects of CITU to leave AITUC and provide leadership in founding the CITU with due incorporation in its constitution its firm commitment to Class Struggle.

In the background of economic crisis, attacks were being mounted on the life and livelihood of the workers and the common people in the form of increasing closure and jobless-

ness, increasing contractorisation, attack on workers' right to collective bargaining, denial of bonus and social security benefits etc. But in the midst of such attacks, a major section of established trade union centres were taking a lukewarm attitude in building united struggle against such attacks on the working class.

Main role was expected to be taken by the Red flag trade union, i.e., AITUC for bringing together all other trade unions in united struggle against the attacks on the workers and the Govt policies patronising such attack. But most unfortunately that was not forthcoming. Rather the dominant section of their leadership led by S A Dange was inclined to take a collaborative path in the name two-pillar policy, instead of sharpening class struggle. And such collaboration with the ruling classes and so called cooperation with the ruling polity was sought to be projected as a progressive stance. The very idea of class struggle used to be ridiculed by this section of collaborationist leadership. The Left trade unions which were a leading force in the trade union movement since the pre-independence days were made to gradually lose that position owing to reformist policies advocated by the dominant section of the then leadership led by S A Dange.

## **STRIVE TO CORRECT FROM WITHIN**

Within AITUC, the section of leadership at the national level and also at the industry level, who were for pursuing the path of class struggle and involving the working class movement in more focused struggle against the policies of the Govt had been making continuous effort to correct the path from within the organisation and bring the mainstream trade union movement on the right track. They tried their best to preserve the unity of the organisation and bring about a change in the policy approach towards class struggle through democratic process from within the organisation and bring the trade union activity on the track of countrywide struggle.

But brazenly undemocratic style of functioning of the then

dominant section of leadership of AITUC, led by S A Dange did not allow the democratic process of resolving the difference through discussion and debate within the organisation to work. Even affiliations of the unions favouring class struggle were denied or cancelled to keep the organisation under grip of the-then reformist leadership.

## **EFFORT TO PRESERVE UNITY**

Despite anti-struggle attitude of the leadership of the major trade union centres in the country, the struggle by the workers at the grass root level in different sectors were continuing. The period since mid sixties onwards witnessed big struggles by the steel workers in West Bengal, jute workers, workers of transport sectors, coal mines, textiles and various other industries throughout the country against attack on workers' rights and unlawful lock-out and closures etc. P Ramammurty's Report placed before the foundation conference of CITU gave detail accounts of such rising wave of struggles in the background of which CITU was formed.

The effort for preserving the unity of the organisation and re-orient the same for struggle against the exploitative policy of the ruling class on the part of the struggling section of the AITUC leadership viz., B T Ranadive, Jyoti Basu, P Ramamurty, etc continued for about a decade or so. Finally it was conceived that the task of building countrywide struggle against the attack of the ruling class and anti-worker policies of the Govt which got demonstrated in the form of advocating wage cut, denial of bonus, payment of rise in DA, increasing spate of unlawful closure, lock-out, lay-off etc can no way be compromised and rising work-place level struggles throughout the country need to be given voice through countrywide united action by the working class.

## **UNITY FOR STRUGGLES ONLY**

Unity is not for unity's sake and it does not mean just unity of leaders. Unity is for struggle against exploitation and for uni-

ifying people in the struggle against the exploitative policy regime and this is the most important task before the trade union movement. If it is not brought on the track of class struggle and combat against the onslaughts and the policies together, not only the working class movement will suffer but also the democratic movement will be put on stake.

Precisely, based on this understanding CITU was formed. In the National Convention of Workers at Goa held on 9th and 10th April 1970, the issue was thoroughly discussed and it was noted that all the effort to preserve the unity of the organisation and carry the organisation in the path of struggle has finally failed owing to class collaborationist and undemocratic stand of the dominant leadership led by S A Dange and a new trade union centre needs to be formed to play the role of bringing the trade union movement as a whole in the path of struggle against the attack and anti-worker policy of the ruling class. From the Convention a resolution was passed to that effect.

## **FOUNDATION CONFERENCE OF CITU**

Pursuant to the Resolution passed by the Goa Convention, the first All India Conference was held on 27-31 May 1970 at Calcutta. The Bengal Provisional Trade Union Congress (BPTUC), a State unit of the AITUC, made untiring efforts to prepare for the All India Conference. A Reception Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Jyoti Basu, which made extensive preparations for the success of the Conference.

B.T. Ranadive, in his inaugural address explained the challenges faced by the trade union movement which can be tackled effectively if the trade union movement realised the importance of class struggle. P Ramamurthy gave a report to the Conference and explained the efforts to preserve unity within the AITUC and how it failed altogether despite sustained efforts made for more than six years. On 30th May 1970, a resolution was passed amid cheers and enthusiasm

declaring formation of the CITU with B.T.Ranadive as President and P Ramamurthy as General Secretary. A mammoth rally was held at Brigade Parade Ground to celebrate the foundation of a new revolutionary trade union.

## **CITU CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution of CITU noted as its aims and objective, inter alia, as under:

***“The CITU believes that the exploitation of the working class can be ended only by socialising all means of production, distribution and exchange and establishing a Socialist State. Holding fast the ideals of socialism, the CITU stands for the complete emancipation of the society from all exploitation.”....***

“It firmly adheres to the position that no social transformation can be brought about without class struggles and shall constantly repel attempts to take the working class along the path of class collaboration...”

## **CITU UNDER ATTACK**

Immediately after the formation of CITU, It had to face several attacks by the Government and a section of the trade unions to isolate CITU. However, CITU remained firm and steadfast in championing the cause of the working class and the path of class struggle. Also CITU advocated the need to change the social system of capitalism based on the exploitation of the working class and fight for achieving the goal of establishing of a socialist system which alone can bring basic changes in the working and living conditions of the working class. The CITU called upon the working class to participate in the political struggle so that the capitalist policies to loot the people for increasing the profits of the Corporate Sector are firmly opposed by the trade union movement.

Immediately after the formation of the CITU, a big attack was

made on the steel workers at Durgapur and a bitter long drawn struggle was launched by Durgapur Steel Plant and Alloy Steels Plant Workers under the leadership of CITU union there braving onslaughts and making immense sacrifice. The CITU organised countrywide solidarity action in support of the Durgapur workers.

The ruling classes made hectic efforts to isolate the CITU within the trade union movement itself. The INTUC, AITUC and HMS joined in a meeting convened by the-then Union Labour Minister Shri R K Khadihar to form the National Council of Trade Unions (NCTU) in 1971, with the blessings of the Govt of India. The NCTU took a line supportive of the anti-worker policies of the then Congress Govt. at the Centre.

Taking into consideration the dangerous implication of this move of the ruling polity to divide the trade union movement into pro-govt and anti-Govt lines and diverting them from the real issues facing the working class, the CITU took initiative to bring all other trade union centres like UTUC, UTUC(LS), HMKP led by George Fernandes and industrial federations in Insurance, Govt Employees and other areas to form a common platform - the United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU) - to defend the working class. The UCTU launched united countrywide struggles on various issues facing the working class and later against the emergency rule.

Many important issues came to surface during this time. One was the Compulsory Deposit Scheme to deny the workers the direct payment of the rise in Dearness Allowance amount and depositing them in Provident Fund. Another important issue was the policy of wage freeze sought to be pushed through by the Govt in line with the Report of Dr Sukhamoy Chakraborty Committee. NCTU supported both the moves of the Govt and UCTU built up countrywide struggle against those moves which got magnificent response throughout the country from workers irrespective of affiliations. In the process, the pro-Govt. NCTU formation became defunct. Later, the HMS formally disassociated from the NCTU.

The historic twenty-day long strike by the railway workers in 1974, braving all victimisations, repressions and atrocities, had been the most important event of united working class action soon after the birth of CITU, which played an important role in bringing back the major part of the trade union movement in the country in the trajectory of united country-wide struggle. The NCTU line of collaboration and cooperation with the Govt got exploded. The National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle (NCCRS), which led the strike, emerged as the broadest industry-based platform of unity for action of the railway workers, involving also the major central trade unions except the INTUC, at that point of time. CITU played frontline role in organising solidarity with the striking railway workers braving all repression and on-slaught. CITU also organised legal aid in a big way for the victimised railway workers besides other forms of relief and support. The railway strike of 1974 had not only reflected the massive unity of the railway workers, irrespective of affiliations, but also had far-reaching impact in reorienting the united movement of the entire working class as a whole and also on the then political development.

## **DURING EMERGENCY DAYS**

Due to brazen pro-capitalist policies pursued by the Indira Gandhi Government and consequent acute economic sufferings of the toiling people resulted in wide-spread massive struggles of the people against the policies of Indira Gandhi Government.

Smt Indira Gandhi, seeing growing instability of her own government, declared National Emergency on 25th June, 1975. Several opposition leaders were arrested and detailed behind bars without any trial. The trade union movement was suppressed and not allowed to have any activity in the country. A strict censorship was imposed on the newspapers. Without clearance from the Govt. officials, no article could be published in the news papers. CITU had to get clearance from the Court to publish ILO Conventions on Freedom of

Association and for right to collective bargaining. The Censoring Officer did not allow even to publish an article written by Dimitrov during 1930s. It could only be published with the court directive.

Taking advantage of the emergency, the Government brought a Bill Parliament bringing down the minimum payment of Bonus from 8.33% to 4%. The CITU opposed this Bill and Members of Parliament expressed their views in Parliament. CITU actively supported the broader peoples' struggle against the emergency rule throughout the country with Jayprakash Narayan at the forefront.

In the emergency period, the strike was banned. Even legitimate Trade union activities were not permitted and CITU had lodged complaint to the International Labour Organisation against the governments steps to suppress the Trade union movement. In several industries, the wages of the workers were frozen and the government did not allow any wage rise despite rise in prices of essential commodities.

In the year 1977, government was forced to withdraw the emergency and in the elections, Indira Gandhi government was squarely defeated and the Government led by Morarji Desai was formed which was the first non-congress government at the centre since Independence. Smt Indira Gandhi herself lost the elections and the people gave a verdict against the emergency and the CITU welcomed this development.

The strength of the CITU and other Trade unions increased sizably despite emergency restrictions. The end of the emergency was an end of a shameful chapter in the history of Trade Union movement.

## **UNITED STRUGGLES**

The exercise on uniting the trade union movement since the birth of CITU passed through various distinct phases. And in every successive phase the canvas of unity got widened. The first one had been in the form of United Council of Trade

Unions (UCTU) in the face of pro-Govt. combine of some major trade unions under the leadership of the INTUC. Then, during the Janata Party regime, the phase of struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill 1978 could bring all the Central Trade Unions in the united platform for a certain period. Thereafter, the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions was formed with all the central trade unions and industrial federations, except the INTUC in 1981. The subsequent period also saw the consolidation of the countrywide united platform of the public sector workers' movement. Then came the formation of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions, in the nineties, to fight against liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation which brought together, besides the major Central Trade Unions, almost all independent all India Industry wise Federations in industries and service establishments. Presently, we are witnessing in the current phase a bigger unity involving the INTUC and BMS as well.

Following the emergence of CITU, the united struggle of trade unions could be brought to the trajectory of struggle against the policies. The Industrial Relations Bill 1978 witnessed countrywide united resistance by all the central trade unions, AITUC, INTUC and BMS, on a wider platform of unity. This phase culminated in throwing the Bill into the dustbin.

### **National Campaign Committee**

The INTUC deserted the united movement after the Congress came back to power at the Centre. But, the efforts to forge a united platform of struggle of the working class continued. The National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions (NCC) was formed from a massive all India convention at Mumbai in June 1981, which comprised all the Central Trade Unions except the INTUC, besides numerous major industrial federations. It succeeded in repulsing a number of attacks on the rights of the workers till late eighties. Notable was the historic countrywide general strike on 19th January 1982, at the call of the NCC. This was the first powerful nationwide industrial action of the working class in the annals of the In-

dian Trade Union movement. On that occasion, the joint statement issued by B. T. Ranadive and P. Ramamurthy, President and General Secretary of CITU, congratulated the workers for the successful united strike action and noted: "Braving the barbarous repression let loose by various Congress (I) ruled States through arrest of our 50000 workers under NSA, police lathi-charge, firing and the attacks by hoodlums, in which several workers died, millions of workers have come out in the strike and thus had created a history in the annals of the trade union movement in the country."

### **Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions(CPSTU)**

Public sector workers played important role in country's trade union movement. PSUs also occupy strategic position in the country's industrial economy. CITU played frontline role in unifying the public sector unions in the united platform of struggle. The CITU unleashed countrywide independent campaign against the conspiracy to denigrate the public sector by the Central Government. The secret Report recommending and drawing a detail blue-print for denigrating and dismantling public sector network authored by Dr Arjun Sengupta Committee appointed by the then Indira Gandhi Govt was brought to light by CITU and circulated among the people. This exposure campaign along with rising struggle in various public sector units created the necessary condition for the formation of CPSTU.

In 1985, from a massive convention of the CITU affiliated and friendly unions held at Bangalore, which was chaired by Com B T Ranadive and also attended by Com. P. Ramamurthi and Com.Samar Mukherjee a decision in principle to form the All India Coordination Committee of Public Sector Unions was taken and at a subsequent convention at Durgapur Steel Township the committee was formally launched. This Committee took further initiative for formation of a broader platform of Public Sector Unions. In 1986 from a widely attended convention of PSU workers' unions held at Hyderabad, the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions was constituted

with the PSU unions affiliated to major central trade unions along with the unions attached to Joint Action Front, Bangalore and PSU Trade Union Coordination Committee, Hyderabad.

The CPSTU, through various united struggles, became the united platform of public sector workers and was recognised as the consistent champion of the public sector and the rights of its workers.

### **Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions**

The economic policy, hitherto pursued by the ruling class, took a quantum rightward shift since 1991, moving away from self reliant development to imperialist driven neo-liberal globalisation. Following the introduction of the economic policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) at the dictates of the World Bank and IMF in 1991, the united movement of trade unions entered an altogether new phase. As the INTUC and BMS preferred to stay away from the united movement against the LPG policies, all other trade unions joined in the countrywide strike action on 29th November 1991. This paved the way for the formation of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions. Except INTUC and BMS, all the Central Trade Unions joined the Sponsoring Committee along with other major independent all India federations of the employees in Central and State Govts, defence, pharmaceuticals, fertilisers, bank, insurance and other industries, representing an overwhelming majority of the employees of those sectors. This was a further widening of the united platform of struggle.

During Nineties, and in the first decade of the 21st century, the Sponsoring Committee played an important role in unleashing a series of countrywide actions, including strike actions, against the LPG policies. Since 1991, 12 countrywide General Strikes were organised and every successive strike action has drawn even a bigger section of working people in its fold. Besides countrywide General strikes, numerous

sectoral strikes were organised in banks, insurance, Jute, plantation, coal and other public sector units.

With the initiative of the Sponsoring Committee, the mass organisations of the people from other walks of life - the peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women, lawyers and other professionals – were drawn to the united struggle against the disastrous economic policies through formation of National Platform of Mass Organisations in 1993.

Moreover the struggles for revival of sick industrial units like NTC, IISCO and many others saw almost total unity of all the unions in the concerned sector. The atmosphere created throughout the country by the campaign and agitation from the platform of Sponsoring Committee and NPMO was such that even the leadership of INTUC and BMS, though staying away from the united movement at the national level, could not come out publicly in support of the LPG policies, despite being ideologically wedded to it. Nor could they restrain a major section of their followings from joining the united countrywide struggle. Unorganised sector workers also joined in a big way in these waves of struggles by way of strikes and road-blockade, picketing etc on the day of strikes. All these were instrumental to a considerable slowing down of the pace of privatisation and implementation of the policies of liberalisation during successive Congress, United Front and BJP led regimes followed by the UPA rule.

### **All-in-Unity in Struggle**

The crisis and unrest at the ground level has already created ground for widening the platform of opposition to the grievous fall-out of their policies on the people. Coming together of all the central trade unions including INTUC and BMS in the joint platform of trade unions to raise the voice of resentment against price rise, massive job-losses owing to recession, and disinvestment and to demand concrete five point measures to address the situation is a new development signifying all in unity of the working class movement on common

issues.

We have to harness this opportunity of emerging all in unity in the trade union movement and carry the message of unity to the grass root level to unify the working class at the grass root level and ensure broadest mobilisation against the policies affecting the life and livelihood of the people.

The crucial task is to transform the situation of coming together of the leadership of all the trade unions at the top into unity of grass root level workers 'on the issues raised and measures pressed for', which alone can pave the way for heightening the struggle for reversal of the neoliberal policies and combating the offensive of the ruling class and that is precisely the need of the hour.

From this all in united platform a massive dharna in front of Parliament was organised on 16th December 2009 and countrywide Satyagraha and jail-bharo were organised on 5th March 2010. It has been jointly decided to hold all India Convention at New Delhi on 15th July 2010 and the Convention is going to decide the on countrywide united General strike. CITU has to take pioneering initiative to carry the campaign to the grass root level workers on the one hand and ensure maximum possible mobilisation in all the joint programmes and widen the unity of the workers below to retain and consolidate the united platform for further actions in the days to come.

### **Experience of United Struggle**

The phase of united countrywide struggle both at national level and at industry level have become a regular phenomenon in the trade union movement of the country mainly after emergence of CITU which played an important role in channelising the trade union movement in the trajectory of joint countrywide movement on policy issues. And for maintenance of continuity of such process of united struggle, independent initiatives on certain crucial issues facing the trade union movement and certain turning points also played an

important and cementing role.

In the coal workers' sixth round wage negotiation in 2000, CITU had to take a dissenting role, in view of other unions taking a pro-management role in signing an anti-worker MOU. Following that MOU, CITU had to go for three days' strike in coal industry single-handedly in November 2000, which was responded to massively by the workers of all unions and ultimately the anti-worker MOU had to be scrapped and renegotiated. And this single handed initiative paved the way for united movement by all the unions in coal industry in subsequent phases.

Recently, all the federations in coal industry jointly decided for a three days strike action on 5th to 7th May 2010 against disinvestment and outsourcing from a joint convention held on 27th March 2010. But subsequently following two phases of meeting with the Coal Minister and Finance Minister, the leadership of three major federations withdrew themselves from the strike programme although in both the meetings, both the ministers reiterated the decision for disinvestment in coal India. In that situation CITU went ahead with the strike action in coal industry on 5th May 2010. Although leaders of some of the federations backtracked from committed strike action, workers en masse, much beyond the support base of CITU federation joined the strike action of 5th May in a big way declaring their resolve to resist disinvestment in coal India Ltd.

Similar situation erupted in the current phase of wage negotiation in steel industry where CITU had to go for two days strike in public steel plants against pro-management MOU signed by some other unions in 2009 which received overwhelming response from the mass of the workers resulting pro-worker changes in the wage agreement.

In the current phase of wage negotiations in PSUs, joint struggle by the public sector unions under the banner of CPSTU compelled the Govt of India to change their directive

for 10 year tenure of wage agreement for the workers. But at the time of industry level negotiations, in certain PSUs, some of the unions succumbed to the pressure of management for signing agreement with 10 year tenure.

CITU refrained from signing such agreement with 10 years tenure in most of the places despite remaining alone in the negotiating forum. CITU considers signing of ten-year agreement a surrender to management's ploy and also surrender of the achievement earned through united struggle. CITU prefers not to compromise on such principle issues even running the risk of temporary set-back and is confident that the vacillating unions will ultimately realise the blunder committed by them.

Without such principled stand on certain issues facing the movement and consistent struggle based on those principles, trade union movement cannot be kept on right track, nor the unity based on unprincipled compromise can ever be sustained.

### **Independent struggles**

There had been occasions when CITU had to go alone to defend the interests of the working class. In the year 1971, when the Congress Govt. introduced Family Pension Scheme, CITU published a booklet "Family Pension Scheme – A Hoax" which was translated in several languages. Other Central Trade unions welcomed the Scheme but CITU pointed out that workers pay more and receive less in the Scheme. The Govt. had a net balance of Rs.14000 crores when the scheme was wound up to be replaced by the Employees Pension Scheme 1995.

On the Employees Pension Scheme introduced in 1995, the CITU again opposed the scheme on the same ground that whatever is being taken away from the workers for the pension fund, workers will not get back even a small fraction of their own contribution in the form pension. Moreover, CITU

had shown through its publication containing detail calculation that the scheme based on funding proposed by the Govt cannot be sustainable and workers will stand to lose further. CITU demanded the scrapping of the scheme and demanded introduction of pension scheme as a third retirement benefit in addition to PF and Gratuity. However, other Central Trade Unions supported the Govt and CITU had to fight virtually alone.

CITU along with a few other unions went for one day strike against the scheme which received good response among the mass of the workers. Present status of the Employees Pension Scheme and the meagre return received by the workers has proved every assessment of CITU made during the introduction of the scheme. Over and above the Govt of the day has made unilateral change in the scheme by way of reducing the benefits further exercising the power under the relevant legislation which was once supported unconditionally by all the Central Trade unions except CITU. The Steel workers Federation of India fought in the Supreme Court pointing out the shortcomings of the scheme, but could not succeed. Now after long drawn experience all the Central Trade Unions have become critique of the scheme.

## **ORGANISATIONAL OUTLOOK**

A revolutionary organisation of the working class must have revolutionary organisational outlook. One of the basic aspects of such outlook is to unleash initiatives at all levels of organisation and across the sectors to ensure spread of struggle horizontally embracing all the sectors of activities. Emergence of CITU has witnessed widespread initiative to develop industry wise federations in different industries and sectors.

The first federation to be formed by the CITU was the All India Plantation Workers Federation. A National Convention was held in Darjeeling in December, 1971 which was inaugurated by B.T.Ranadive. Subsequent period has witnessed forma-

tion of Water Transport Workers Federation of India comprising workers of port & dock and seamen, All India Road Transport Federation of India (1973), Steel Workers Federation of India (1981), All India Coal Workers' Federation (1982), Construction Workers Federation of India, Electricity Employees Federation of India, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers & Helpers All India Beedi Workers Federation.

Federation of Medical & Sales Representatives Associations of India is another all India federation which was constituted with a number of CITU affiliated unions and also a good number of independent unions in the concerned sector. Over the period almost all the constituent unions of FMRAI got affiliated to CITU.

CITU has also taken initiative in formation of industry based federation in certain sectors with the unions affiliated to various central trade unions. Fertiliser Workers' Federation of India formed with unions having allegiance to different central trade unions in public sector fertilisers plants did function effectively for decades in championing the interests of the workers and the industry. Owing to sickness and closure of most of plants, this federation became non-functional now. Petroleum & Natural Gas Workers' Federation of India was formed with unions having allegiance to different political lines and independent unions of petroleum sector and is being led by the CITU leaders along with others.

All India Fishers and Fisheries Workers' Federation is a newly formed federation to coordinate the movements of the fishers and fisheries workers being organised in different states by the CITU and All India Kisan Sabha and develop a nation wide movement. In view of the huge number of fishers, both inland and marine, and the fisheries workers, all the state committees of CITU have to make efforts to organise the fishers. There is vast potential to develop an all India movement of this section of the exploited population.

Besides above sectors, efforts are being made develop and

activise all India coordination committees in Food Corporation of India and the ASHA and mid-day meal workers.

### **Working Women**

Organising the working women in the trade union movement with special focus is considered as an important class task by CITU. In the Indian trade union movement, CITU took the pioneering role in organising the working women and bringing them in the frontline of the movement and the leadership. In 1979, from a convention of working women, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women was formed and that happens to be the first ever initiative in the trade union movement in the country. Subsequently other unions also started taking similar initiative. This initiative notably improved women membership and also their participation in trade union activities and struggles and in the organising role as well. At present women membership's share in total CITU membership is over 25%.

Much better organisational and mobilisation capacity of the women member dominated unions clearly reveals the potential and leadership ability of working women in the trade union movement. Recently held 20000 strong mobilisation and two day long dharna of anganwadi employees and around 7000 strong ASHAs at New Delhi at the initiative of CITU is the testimony of the same. CITU has decided to organise year long observation of the centenary of the International Women's Day. This occasion would be utilised to highlight the specific problems of working women as well as to increase organisational interventions to ensure more active role for working women in the decision making bodies of CITU

### **Unorganised Sector Workers**

CITU has also taken pioneering initiative in organising the unorganised sector workers in trade unions. At present around 50 per cent of the membership of CITU is from unorganised sector representing mainly the workers of beedi, construc-

tion, head load, brick-kiln, forest, cashew, private transport, hawkers, street vendors etc. Various struggles are being conducted in sectoral level by CITU unions throughout the country. For comprehensive legislation and social security for the unorganised sector workers, campaigns and agitations were also organised at all India plane and successful countrywide strike was organised by the unorganised sector workers demanding effective comprehensive legislation for the unorganised sector workers.

### **Bhubaneswar Document**

After a great deal of deliberations within the organisation, the CITU adopted in 1993 a document on organisation at its working committee meeting held at Bhubaneshwar which self-critically reviewed CITU's functioning and shortcomings. It was an attempt to link up the day to day activities of the trade unions with the final objective of achieving social transformation of the society. It dealt extensively about the erroneous trends in the trade unions and emphasised the need to fight against such trends. It further dealt with democratic functioning of trade unions and enhancing the role of the rank and file workers in the activities of the trade unions. The question of women workers was also dealt with and pointed out that the women's demands should be treated as trade union issues. The document called for formation of Confederation of Trade unions as a step towards formation of one trade union in one industry and one national trade union centre in the country.

### **STRENGTHENING PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM**

Indian Trade Union movement is a part of the world wide struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation. In the foundation Conference itself, CITU advocated strong international solidarity of the working class. It had developed friendly ties with WFTU. However, in eighties when WFTU advocated de ideologisation of the working class and gave up struggle against imperialist machinations, CITU strongly

voiced its opposition against such approach. However, since Havana Congress of WFTU, there has been change in the policies of WFTU which spoke against imperialism and advocated class struggle as the bedrock of WFTU policies. The CITU welcomed this shift in policies and strengthened ties of friendship with WFTU and also has taken leading role in many of its wing organisation such as TUI-Energy, TUI-Steel, TUI-Public Services etc.

CITU also developed ties of friendship with Trade unions viz ACTU of Australia, KCTU of South Korea, COSATU of South Africa, CUT of Brazil, KMU of Philippines, Zenroren of Japan, CGT of France who are outside the framework of WFTU. It is playing a prominent role in the activities of Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) which fights against imperialism and Globalisation. CITU hosted two SIGTUR Conferences in Kolkata and Kochi which were very successful. CITU is playing an important role in International Energy and Miners Organisations. Though International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) does not fight globalisation and imperialist machinations, many of their affiliates who are pursuing anti-globalisation and anti-imperialism lines are keeping close relations with CITU and maintaining regular exchanges of delegations and interactions.

The CITU Conferences are attended by larger and larger number of International organisations and CITU has developed bilateral ties with more than 40 countries in all the four continents. The CITU delegates attending ILO meetings are championing the cause of trade unions in developing countries and strengthen the ties of friendship with all trade unions that take anti imperialist positions and fight against the policies of neoliberal globalisation.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO A BRIGHT FUTURE**

The decision of the CITU's 13th Conference at Chandigarh to increase the membership to 75 lakhs by the next conference is a big challenge before us. We have to pay more

attention to the work among the unorganised sector workers. Major section of them is yet to be organised in the trade union movement. We must also take special initiative in organising the contract workers whose number has been increasing every day in all the industries. We also have to strengthen our activities among the core sector of economy such as financial, energy, transport and communication sectors whose striking power against capitalist operation are of great significance.

We cannot meet the capitalist offensive effectively unless we give more emphasis in strengthening our organisation and struggles in weaker areas. The prestige of our movement is stronger areas cannot be lasting unless we make advancement in the weaker areas. If we give more emphasis on organising local struggles in these areas, possibilities of growing are immense.

We have to further improve our work among the working women and involve them more and more in trade union activities. It is possible to increase the percentage of our women membership much beyond 30 per cent in the next three years.

There is urgent need to streamline and improve our organisational framework at all levels to expand the intervening capacity of the trade union movement. Directions and guidelines of the Bhubaneswar resolution need to be specially emphasised and implemented. Alertness by all our leading bodies to pressing issues of the working class and reflect them in our activities would result in faster expansion of the movement. We must fully harness the growing urge among the working class for unity and united struggles.

We must pay more attention to heighten the level of ideological and political understanding of our cadres. We must pay full attention to implement the decisions of 13th Conference of CITU in this regard. Year long education campaign at all the level of our organisation as decided by the 13th Conference must be taken up with all seriousness as a part of ob-

servance of 40th Anniversary year of CITU.

Our struggle against erroneous ideologies within the working class movement must be strengthened so that correct class ideologies are percolated among the mass of the working class all over India.

Popularisation of socialist ideology among the working class is of paramount importance today when capitalism is making strenuous efforts to sow illusions among the workers. The project of P Ramamurty Memorial Trade Union School will have to be completed at the earliest for which support of the mass of the working people is solicited by CITU.

The working class and trade union movement in India must move forward with revolutionary orientation. The CITU has to play a crucial role in achieving this goal.

**Let us move forward to a bright future.**

Working class and the people of India can decide their own destiny if they are united, ideologically equipped and determined to fight for changes for a bright future.

**Long live CITU.**

**30th May 2010**

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