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THE WORKING CLASS

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CITU GREETINGS FOR THE NEW YEAR 2000 !

*Let the dawn of the New Millennium
strengthen our resolve to usher in a
society sans exploitation !*

*Let us rededicate to build worldwide
unity of the working people !*

PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE LASHES OUT AT GOVT

The Rajya Sabha Committee on Government Assurances has lashed out the Government of India for the inordinate delay/failure in enacting the law on Agricultural Labourers and proper enforcement/implementation and suitable amendment/ revision of Minimum Wages Act despite assurances given by the Govt in that regard.

The Rajya Sabha Committee on Assurances, in its Forty sixth Report presented on 21st December 1998, Observed inter alia, that :

ON LAW ON AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

“...One of the disquieting features... has been mammoth growth of in the number of agricultural workers engaged in crop production and their abject poverty. So far, very little seems to have been done to improve their lot..... **Since the year 1991, when the assurance under reference(for enactment of law for protection of agricultural labourers) were given first, the Ministry has been making requests to the Committee for grant of extension of time for fulfilment of the same....But no tangible progress was reported in the matter even after granting extensions after extensions of time.....**

The Committee expresses its concern over the snail's pace of the progress made in the matter. The Committee feels that there is veiled attempt to thwart the proposed legislation which is crucial for the betterment of the agricultural workers. In Committee's opinion, this is a typical case of procrastination and is a sad commentary on the decision making process of the Govt....the Govt should shed their indecisiveness on this vital and important matter which affects millions of agricultural workers....”

Referring to the reply of the labour minister to a starred question no 469 in Parliament on 20th July 1998, the Committee noted: “ **The Committee took serious exception... and expressed apprehension that such a reply would provide justification for dropping the bill altogether..... and is indicative of the cavalier fashion with which the Ministry of Labour has treated such an important issue.....**

The Committee...recommends that with all

emphasis at its command the Ministry should not deviate from the path of enactment of a Central Legislation for Agricultural Labourers and use all care and circumspection while drafting a reply to a parliamentary question.”

ON MINIMUM WAGES ACT, ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND AMENDMENT

“ The importance of payment of minimum wage to the workers should not be ignored.... But even after fifty years after of our independence, their implementation has left much to be desired. The Committee has noted during some of its visits that the Minimum Wages Act is being flouted with impunity even at the site of some PSUs. Not only the unorganised labourers get low wages, but there are wage differences between male and female workers,... prevalent everywhere..... The Committee notes with concern that an assurance on the amendments in the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 has been pending since 1987. The Ministry of Labour have been approaching the Committee from time to time for grant of extensions of time for fulfilment of the assurance....But...no tangible progress was forthcoming in the matter despite passage of a considerable long time,.....

The Committee notes with concern that more than 11 years have elapsed since the assurance was given on the floor of the House...The facts and circumstances of the case lead the Committee to the irresistible conclusion that the (Labour)Ministry has not treated the matter with the seriousness it deserved. This case speaks volumes of the Ministry's' inertia and indifference in the matter. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Labour should request the Cabinet Secretary to give some priority in listing this issue in the agenda for consideration of the Cabinet so that decision making process is quickened.....all the shortcomings which have come to the notice of the Govt regarding implementation of the provisions of this Act, should be taken care of by the Ministry of Labour while bringing the Bill for amendments in Minimum Wages Act before Parliament.”

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

JANUARY 2000

ALL IN THE GAME



We're concerned about the common man's interests... Are we involved in big defence deals? Only scams relating to rice, wheat, sugar, onion, kerosene...

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EDITORIAL

AS THE MILLENNIUM UNFOLDS.....

The New Year's Day, 2000 heralds the dawn of the new millennium. The hype and celebrations are on. As the millennium unfolds, it is celebrations-time for the captains of foreign capital as also for the Indian Big Business. The 13th Lok Sabha had given them a Government ever willing to fulfil every one of their requirements. They never had it so good before. First, it was the annual conference of the FICCI, where the Prime Minister, Vajpayee, delighted the Indian employer-class with a promise to kick-start the second generation reforms with a bang. Not to be outdone by the ruling alliance, the leader of the opposition, Sonia Gandhi, also pledged, on the same platform, all out support to the economic reforms process.

Next came the Indian summit of the World World Economic Forum. It was the turn of global big business to have the Prime Minister in its Forum, bending backwards with a pledge to carry out their tall orders. The Managing Director of the Forum minced no words in dictating to the servile Government to speed up privatisation and to cut subsidies.

Following these two events, the Vajpayee regime went about seriously proving its credentials of being an 'effective state'! The BJP Government briskly announced setting up of eight working groups under the auspices of the Trade and Industry Council. Comprising the top-brass of the industrialist lobby, these groups are entrusted with the task of making policy recommendations on every conceivable aspect of the country's economy. The Government has virtually surrendered its reigns over the policy-formulation business of the State, to the financial barons.

Inside the Parliament also, the BJP led Government was in full speed to go ahead with any number of bills - from the Insurance Regulation and Development Bill to a comprehensive Bill for repeating many of the direct- related laws. The Congress Party acquiesced in these moves.

The big business in India has expressed unconcealed glee at these developments. The CII had a task force of its own, to bring out a report calling for closure of three so-called weak banks and privatisation of eight other banks, including the State Bank of India. This, the CII ventured, even as another report of a (Verma) committee appointed by the Government itself was pending consideration!

This Government capital-nexus, operating in concert, to the detriment of the people's interests, is a big challenge.

"We will take it" is the answer given by the working people and democratic masses of the country. The NPMO action programmes are reported elsewhere in this issue. As the millennium, the new phase of struggle also unfolds now. Let us rally to defeat the anti-national conspiracies of the Govt-ruling class Combine!

Oppose Retrograde Govt. Policies! Prepare for nationwide struggle!

The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) comprising seven central trade unions, the national industrial and employees' federations and the mass organisations - of various affiliations - of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women and other professionals met at Delhi on 14.12.99. The NPMO discussed the countrywide action plans against the economic policies of the BJP Government causing disastrous impacts on the life and living of all sections of population. The meeting was presided over by V. Tiagi, Secretary, HMS and attended by the leaders from all constituents of NPMO.

The NPMO expressed grave concern over the retrograde economic policies being aggressively pursued by the BJP led Government despite the caution given by the trade unions and other mass organisations through the nationwide general strike on 11th December, 1998.

The NPMO noted that the ongoing process of liberalisation and privatisation has badly affected all sections of the working class, peasantry and other masses. The continuous price rise, gradual dismantling of the public distribution system and unemployment have made the conditions of the people

deplorable. The policies of the BJP regime has led to butchering of jobs in lakhs every passing year, with no prospect of new employment generation. This is creating serious tension and unrest in the society, particularly among the youth. Side by side, move is afoot to commercialise, privatise and communalise the educational and related institutions, posing a grave threat to the entire education system and the students community. Women are being subjected to worst discrimination and atrocities in the workplace and society. The long standing demand for 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies had suffered apathy and neglect from the ruling polity. Agricultural workers are the hardest hit, constituting major part of the poverty stricken population, owing to increasing concentration of land, shrinking rural development, curtailment of welfare and poverty alleviation schemes and sharply declining real wages in the liberalised policy regime.

The NPMO chalked out countrywide action plans and decided to step up bitter long drawn struggle by the trade unions and all other mass organisations against these policies. The NPMO congratulated the workers from all sectors for their massive participation in the country-wide

protest action on 29th November 99, in solidarity with the financial sector employees against the IRDA Bill.

The following programme had been decided unanimously:

*** National Convention of NPMO at New Delhi on 20th January, 2000, to be participated by thousands of delegates from various mass Organisations.**

*** State level conventions of NPMO during February onwards.**

*** Massive rally of mass organisations before Parliament, during 1st phase of next budget session of Parliament (date to be declared later on).**

*** Country wide General Strike during second phase of the next budget session, preceded by nation wide satyagraha, padayatra, dharna by various mass Organisations.**

*** The next meeting of NPMO will be held on 6th January, 2000, at New Delhi to decide on further details.**

The NPMO called upon the patriotic and democratic people from all walks of life to join the initiative and programmes of NPMO enmasse to cry halt to the anti-national policies of the Govt and save the country's economy and the people from disaster.

NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATION

**ALL INDIA CONVENTION
20TH JANUARY, 2000
MAVALANKAR HALL GROUND
RALLY ENMASSE**

CPSTU CALL:

NATIONWIDE STRUGGLES BY PSU WORKERS

The extended meeting of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) was held on 16.12.99, at New Delhi to decide on future course of action programme in view of the all out attack on the public sector and the PSU employees. The meeting was conducted by a presidium comprising J. Chittaranjan (AITUC), Ardhendu Dakshi (CITU), V. Tiagi (HMS), Michael B Fernandes (Joint Action Front, Bangalore) and K Brahmananda Reddy (PSU TU Coordination Committee, Hyderabad).

The declaration adopted at the meet expressed serious concern at the hasty steps being taken by the Govt. of India to put the entire public sector network in the country on outright sale.

The declaration noted that the Government of India has:

- * resolved not to revive sick PSUs;
- * decided to close down 12 sick units;
- * flouted its commitment to BIFR in many other cases;
- * deprived sick PSU workers of wage revision for a decade;
- * defaulted salary payments to several PSU workers; and
- * stipulated retrograde conditions in the name DPE guidelines and extension of Agreement period to ten years for new wage agreements.

The CPSTU chalked out the following programme of action:

- * **TO PREPARE FOR NATIONWIDE INDEFINITE STRIKE BY ENTIRE PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS.**

* To observe **ONE DAY WARNING STRIKE** in all the public sector units in the country (CPSTU or Core Group would declare the date for the strike within a week).

* In view of the ongoing preparations for joint struggles including strike actions in several industrial sectors, CPSTU called upon every public sector union to extend solidarity support with all such struggles against privatisation.

* CPSTU central leaders to address conventions, rallies of PSU workers to be organised at Industry/Region levels.

* To go for a **NATIONAL REFERENDUM** among the public sector workers on **11.1.2000** seeking support for effective long drawn **DIRECT ACTION** including **STRIKES** (For the format of referendum, See Box)

* Initiate consultations with Central Trade Unions and industrial federations who

are already in the midst of struggle against privatisation for organising joint **NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AGAINST PRIVATISATION** before/during the next budget session of Parliament.

The meeting extended full support to the decision for indefinite strike from 18th January, 2000 jointly by the workers affiliated to AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS & INTUC, in Port & Dock sector all over the country.

CPSTU called upon the public sector trade unions, irrespective of affiliations, to build up united resistance struggle in respective PSUs and also join *enmasse* the countrywide action programmes being adopted by the CPSTU.

The signatories to the declaration are H, Mahadevan (AITUC), M.K. Pandhe (CITU), V. Tiagi (HMS), Micheal B Fernandes (JAF, Bangalore), and Y. Adinarayana, (PSU TU Co. Co. Hyderabad).

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES' NATIONAL REFERENDUM

11-1-2000

IN SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE LONG DRAWN DIRECT ACTION
INCLUDING STRIKES

- a) Against all forms of privatisation or disinvestment.
- b) Against non-revival and closure of sick PSUs.
- c) Against non-payment of wages in many PSUs.
- d) Against retrograde DPE guidelines on wage revision.
- e) Against attack on Trade Union Rights & Labour Laws.

Signature

Name of the employee

Yes No

(Tick in the box of your choice)

Name & Address of the Union/Organisation

ECONOMY ON RAILS ! HEADING WHERE ?

REFORMS HAVEN'T HELPED POOR, BUT MUST GO ON : MONTEK

Economic reforms undertaken in the 1990s have not benefited the poor as much as they should have, but they must be persisted with, according to planning commission member, Montek Singh Ahluwalia. Delivering a lecture on 'Implementing Economic Reform' here yesterday(19-12-99), Mr Ahluwalia ... acknowledged the reforms have by and large benefited those belonging to rich and middle classes. He said that, despite pronouncement by various finance ministers that something will be done to bring down fiscal deficit, "it continues to be out of control."

(The Economic Times, 20-12-99)

ALARMING TRADE DEFICIT !

India's Trade deficit touched an alarming level of \$ 13.24 billion during 1998-99 going by data furnished by finance ministry. The data also shows that the current account balance for the year stood at minus \$ 4.03 billion. The deficit is about \$4.84 billion higher than the provisionally estimated figure of \$8.42 billion for the year by the commerce ministry.....There has been wide variation between compilation of both export & import data by the finance ministry and the commerce ministry in past two years and it is still continuing...

(The Financial Express, 20-12-99)

SELLING NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR A SONG !

... But the answer does not lie in a distress sale....No Govt has the mandate to sell off national institutions, some of them of priceless value, built up by dedication and efforts of millions of proud Indians(and the taxes you and I have paid...), for a song. The GAIL disinvestment is a case in point. The shares were sold at Rs 70 to foreign investors when there were investors in India ready to pay over three times that price. Some of the shares were even bought by GAIL's business rivals, ENRON(through an associate company) and British Gas. Admittedly the purchases were small, too small for these rivals to have a say in the management of the company but big enough for

them to keep track of strategy and pre-empt its future move....there is absolutely no doubt... that it has been done in a shoddy and unplanned manner, at a price that is shamefully(and indefensibly) low. The Govt cannot explain why it sold the shares of a company that made a profit of over Rs 1000 crore last year for Rs 70 a share when it had only two years ago refused to sell it for Rs 115 because it expected Rs 125 per share. What was the sudden rush for ? ...Minister Ram Naik's argument in the Rajya Sabha... is specious and misleading. Will you sell off your family jewels at a fourth of their value because you are too

GOVT CAPITULATING TO MNC'S MUSCLE FLEXING

A fortnight back, the Cogentrix threatened to abandon the Mangalore power project undertaken in Karnataka, a fortnight after, the Govt of India granted them counter-guarantee. Along with Cogentrix, the Union Cabinet approved counter guarantee for the rests of the eight MNC projects in power sector which also include the AES of USA in the Ib Valley Project in Orissa.

Interestingly, this AES company of USA operating in Oorissa had demanded Rs 300 crore as compensation to the damages caused by super cyclone and threatened to increase the power tariff by three times if their demand is not conceded to. Such shameless muscle flexing has been done by the MNC at a time when not less than 80 PSUs, many of them in power sector like BHEL, NTPC etc, have undertaken rehabilitation work of the cyclone devastated Orissa, out of their own resources, besides donating in terms of several crore to Govt's relief fund.

The Govt of the day has been pushing most of those PSUs towards privatisation for handing over them to MNCs while clearing deck for guaranteed profit at the cost of Indian people for the obstinate MNCs having no concern for this country and her people.

A PATRIOTIC GOVERNMENT INDEED !

HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORKING WOMEN

The Publications Division of the Government of India has brought out a book entitled "Human Rights and Working Woman". The book has been compiled and edited by Jayastree Gupta, herself a working woman. The book contains all relevant information and extracts from the Constitution of India and other legislations, which relate to the rights of working women. It also gives an account of the working of the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for women. Other informative materials included in this source book are: The International Bill of Human Rights, UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women, the Declaration of the Fourth (Beijing) World Conference on Women and the Supreme Court judgement on sexual harassment. This will serve as a hand-book for all working women - more particularly for the activists on the working women front. Priced Rs.35, this book is available from all sales outlets of Publications Division.

The Editor in her preface has correctly emphasised:

"It is essential that working women acquire knowledge about their human rights. Knowledge will lead to courage and courage to action against injustice. They will be treated as equals, as first-rate citizens in their own right only when they know how to stand erect and fight tough" -Editor

embarrassed to say no to the jeweller for a second time?... No one should suspect that the family silver is being sold surreptitiously at the dead of night to those who are offering us but a fraction of their actual price.....

(Prithvi Nandy, noted journalist and Shib Sena MP in Rajya Sabha, Mid Day, 14-12-99)

WEAK BANKS: KILLERS PRESCRIPTION !

The National Task Force, constituted by Confederation of Indian Industries(CII) to deal on the problems of Non Performing Assets of the Nationalised Banks has recommended, inter alia, shut down the weak banks identified by Verma Panel and settling the NPAs (loans to big business- not returned) at sharp discounts, while other banks may take over the weak banks' deposits. Alarming rise of NPA, has been identified as one of the reasons and also symptoms of the weak banks by the Verma Panel. The BJP Govt is ready to oblige their new guardian, the CII in this respect.

As the national daily, The Observer dated 20-12-99, reported , three members of the said National

Task Force set up by CII, the self appointed guardian of the present BJP Govt at the centre, " SRF Ltd promoter Arun Bharat Ram, TISCO managing director Jamshedji J Irani and senior partner of Khaitan & company Pradip Kumar Khaitan and one more member of the CII national task force together reportedly still owe over Rs 100 crore to different public sector banks. Of the total Rs 58000 crore, the banks have as outstandings, 70% are due from private companies which are CII members." The Observer dated 21-12-99 again added the names of Shri N N Kampani of J M Morgan Stanley Ltd and Pradip Shah of Ind Asia Fund Advisors, both members of that CII Task Force as defaulters of about Rs 80 crore from Nationalised FIs.

Those who are usurping public money by not paying back thousands of crore rupees from the nationalised banks and turning them weak and sick are now giving prescription how to address the problem. And the solution prescribed is to allow the criminals of default another bonanza, " a sharp discount on settling unpaid loans."

When rogues become the preachers, what else one can expect !

ON TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

BY

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ENERGY IS A HUMAN RIGHT

ARDHENDU DAKSHI

"Energy is vital and is key for Economic and Social Development of peoples, life element, of all Human activity.

"Energy is driving force and factors of growth, full employment and lasting development.

but

"At the dawn of 3rd millennium, three billions of people, (3 hundred crore human beings) cannot get the elementary and vital access to energy.

"Hundreds of millions of men, women and children are compelled to live without electricity, coal or gas or even an electric lamp, as they have no money or housing.

"While the governments of the countries let the concealed great energy deposits, held by the nations, to be plundered by the forces of money of the multi-national corporations.

"Every where in the world, the multinational corporations try to dominate the political strategies, they put forward their financial logics, which aim only at : IMMEDIATE PROFIT FROM THE CAPITAL INVESTED"

The above is from the preamble of the introductory document placed before the international conference on energy held under the banner of the International Trade Union Forum held in Grenoble, France on 24-26 October 1999. The conference was organised by CGT National Energy union, CGT National Miners Union, CGT National Chemical Industries Union and was sponsored by International Energy and Mines Workers Organisation (IEMO). The organisers invited representatives of central trade unions and of unions in energy sector like oil, coal, electricity, etc. from all countries in the world. 240 representatives from 69 countries attended the conference which included India, China, Russia, Vietnam, Yugoslavia and many African, Latin American and other European countries. The Indian delegation consisted of W.R. Varada Rajan, Ardhendu Dakshi, T.S. Rangarajan, S.Kumar, Swapanesh Mitra, George K. Antony, D Sarswathi and Aliba Dakshi.

W.R. Varada Rajan placed a paper in the conference on behalf of the Indian delegation giving details about the Energy situation in India, the present context crisis and challenges. He emphasised that the matters are required to be dealt with politically also as the ramifications are far too wide and deep-rooted.

ENERGY IN MNCs GRIP

But, in the picturesque town of Grenoble at the foothill of Alps, the picture that emanated from the three day long deliberations, by one after another delegate from all countries, is really horrifying. No sensible world citizen can remain silent spectator to the devastating developments that have fairly

common features all the world over. In the current phase of so-called globalisation the entire energy sources in the world are already in the grip of a few multi-national oil giants, mostly based in the United States. Only China has been able to resist their jaws. We all know what is happening in India. The oil cartels, aided and abetted by IMF and World Bank are putting strong pressure on national governments to privatise and globalise energy sector and to transfer all rights over prospecting, production, distribution and consumption of energy to their hands. The same is the picture in other sectors like coal and electricity as well.

Universally, the visible effects of such bull-doing tactics are same everywhere, namely huge job losses, unemployment, increase in unit prices, and further marginalisation of the poor people and poor countries. Not stopping at this, these oil cartels are further strengthening their grip by mergers and acquisitions to form bigger corporatins, the oligarchies.

The other effects are still more alarming. These corporates are now most powerful private entities, enormously rich and powerful enough to subvert the national governments. They are in a position to dictate policies of the governments, domestic or external, and worse, they are using energy as a political tool to shape the governments in developing countries. They want to ensure their super-profit by any means.

RICH - POOR DIVIDE

Where profit earning is the only motive, the commodities are bound to rush to the affluent. All published reports, including that of the UNDP, say that 87% of all energies are available to or are

consumed by only 20% (100 crore) of the world population. Lowest 100 crore people consumed barely 3% of available energy. On an average, oil consumed by an American per day is equal to what is consumed by an Indian in a full year. 17 litres of oil is consumed per head in advanced countries for heating only whereas it is negligible, if not zero, in the third world countries, some of which suffer from quite cold climatic conditions. The present trend of consumption is not towards improving the quality of life of the poor people and spurring development, but just the opposite one. The poor are now less entitled to energy than before.

The huge profits earned by MNC's are being further used to establish complete control over the rest of the known or discovered sources of energy and also to wrest total right for prospecting or exploring new sources, anywhere in the world. National governments or boundaries have become meaningless in today's state of affairs.

Ardendu Dakshi addressed the conference and highlighted that the money being used by IMF to subjugate national governments are coming from the profits of oil and gas industries. It is a huge money. This money is also being used in speculative activities in stock-markets and money markets. One trillion dollars is changing hands in money market everyday (Rupees 44 lakh crore). A fraction of this money can change the life of the majority of the world population, the poor. But the IMF/WB brand of globalisation is cruel, capricious and ruthless. The poor are getting poorer.

GLOBALISATION - WORLDWIDE IMPACT

It was a revelation to us that this brand of globalisation is hurting the working class with equal ferocity in the developed countries as well. Delegates from France, UK narrated their woes because of loss of jobs, unemployment and social turmoils. Their concern for the plight of developing countries was serious and sincere because, they felt that, the crises in those countries and people are reaching their shores equally affecting the working class there.

The CGT and IEMO had taken the lead, as biggest and most powerful trade union organisations, to hold this conference, to bring the trade unions of the world together to form a consensus opinion against this globalisation and to conduct co-ordinated activities worldwide against its negative effects.

RESOLUTIONS

The objectives and inferences of the conference have been outlined in precise details. " How the

trade union movement, through struggles, can be a fulcrum (pivot) so that the energy wealth, the earth has got, be made inheritance of the future humanity, be put out of the field of financial speculation"- was the big question raised by the Forum ' It enjoins upon us a duty to find an answer to it. The trade unions have to work together and co-ordinate their activities to enlighten the workers and the people at large about the overbearing dangers created by MNC's and the globalisation drive by IMF/World Bank.

The conference was a great success. It did not deal with day-to-day issues of energy workers or the working class, but it addressed the problems posed by the capricious profit-motiveness of the corporate world that has put the entire humanity in great jeopardy. The CGT and IEMO deserve appreciation from the working class of the world, for highlighting these dangers we are already experiencing and also those we will be facing tomorrow.

The conference ended with the slogan "Energy is a Human Right, energy is for all not for the MNC's" It is a daunting task to relaise the demand, as we know that today in the unipolar world, the MNCS backed by the ruthless US administration, are on the rampage. The glimmer of hope is that resistance is also growing both in developed and developing countries. The resistance should find place in voice and action. The MNCs the IMF, the World Bank will have to be stopped to make our future safe and better,

From Grenoble we came back, assured that we are not alone in the battle.

....all developments that contribute to satisfying the world's energy needs - which are vital needs - can only happen, *not through privatisation* that is fashionable today, **but through nations taking in hand energy as much possible...**

What is vital for humanity - as energy is (and not only energy!) - cannot and should not be treated as ordinary goods and therefore subjected to ordinary market "laws".

Short term profits and sustainable development are incompatible and so are private interests and the general interest.

(from the Discussion Paper)

SECOND LABOUR COMMISSION: DESIGN TO IMPOSE SLAVERY ON LABOUR

The Second National Commission on Labour is the offshoot of the decision of Tripartite Labour Conference. But the Govt, despite assurance given in the Indian Labour Conference, did not consult the trade unions while constituting the Commission and while finalising the terms of reference. Some persons have been put in the Commission whose names were never heard even... Unlike the first labour commission, a political person having association with RSS and BJP has been made chairman of the Commission.

All the more dangerous are the terms of reference. All the national trade unions including the BMS in a recent meeting with Union Labour Minister, had jointly requested him to recast the terms of reference of the Second Labour Commission. The terms of reference has been decided based on the demands of the employers. Since this Govt came to power, day in and day out, there have been statements from the industrialists assaulting labour, despite the fact that labour is bearing the main brunt of the reforms, despite the fact that labour unitedly supported Government's position in recent WTO meet on the matter that labour standard issues should be de-linked from trade. And, in return, this raw deal is given to labour!

The FICCI had made a

statement. "The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry(FICCI) President, Sudhir Jalan wants Govt to take tough and unpopular decisions, specially relating to industrial disputes and labour protection. He observed that few million industrial workers were holding the country to ransom and creating islands of plenty in the midst of oceans of poverty." Commission's terms of reference has been written in the same line of this atrocious statement against labour by FICCI.

Out of 182 ILO Conventions, Govt of India has ratified only 35. Out of seven basic Conventions of ILO, viz, Rights to freedom of Association, Collective Bargaining, right to strike, Maternity benefit etc, Govt of India has ratified only two. This reflects the attitude of the Govt towards labour.

Every day, from the employers' side statements are being made against labour. Few days back, while celebrating passing of the IRDA Bill, the CII Chairman, Rahul Bajaj said in a meeting, "The current labour policies put a heavy burden on corporate houses, as it did not allow companies to let the employees go, so as to restructure and become competitive. Industry is afraid to employ people, since it cannot get rid of them. A pro employer labour policy is needed." Exactly the same thing has come in the terms of

reference of second labour commission. The terms of reference mentioned, "Restructuring and flexibility of labour power". The flexibility of labour power means freedom of hiring and firing. The trade unions, the labourers are very much apprehensive. The trade union movement is being sought to be frightened. This cannot be tolerated.

We urge the Govt that it may not listen to others but it should at least listen to its own trade union centre. We know the Govt is biased in favour of the employers but in this matter they should accommodate at least the demands of BMS. The BMS along with other trade unions has demanded that the terms of reference of the second labour commission should be changed. The Govt should accept this just demand of the trade union or face the music. The labour has lost everything. And now the Govt, under the dictate of the employers lobby, is trying to impose slavery on the workers. Regular wages are not being paid even to the workers of many public sector units. Factories are being closed down. Bonus Act has not yet been revised. Nothing has been done in favour of labour. Now the Govt is imposing slavery on labour. Such a design would be opposed with all the strength and might in the command of the working class movement, here and everywhere.

ON MINES AND MINERALS BILL

We oppose the bill. On the face of it, the bill appears to be for transferring the power relating to prospecting, leasing and mining to state Governments and for stopping illegal mining. But Govt of India's policy for opening the entire mining sector to private sector and MNCs, has got a serious bearing on this move of the Govt at the centre to transfer certain power to State Govts. If this bill is passed, will there be any necessity for a Mines and

Minerals Ministry at the centre? Secondly, this would generate unholy competition amongst most of the State Govts to allure Multinational Companies and hand over the precious mineral fields to them for reckless exploitation. So we oppose the bill.

If the centre is really interested to transfer authority in regard to monitoring and administering mining activity to State Govts, that can very well be done by framing appropriate rules under

the existing legislation for delegating powers to State Govt, as has been done in the matter of handling industrial disputes in CPSUs.

This has got serious bearing on the basic interests of the country and the bill warrants in depth scrutiny by a select committee and parliamentary standing committee.

[Excerpts from speech of comrade Jibon Roy, MP, Secretary CITU, in the Rajya Sabha on 13-12-99]

DISINVESTMENT: GET THE MONEY AT ANY COST!

Any policy is an offshoot of an objective. Once a policy is formulated, implementation is being looked into. So far as disinvestment of PSU shares is concerned, there has been a lot of confusion both in the objective and its implementation and the whole issue needs a thorough review.

About the objective of disinvestment, the Industrial Policy Statement of 1991 (Congress rule) says, the disinvestment was "... to raise resources and encourage wider public participation". The Govt has already received Rs 18000 crore through disinvestment. Has this led to wider public participation? (Certainly not.) The United Front Govt said on the objective of disinvestment that, "The revenues generated from such disinvestment will be utilised in two vital areas, that is, health and education, particularly in poor and backward areas of the country. A part of such revenues

will be earmarked to create an investment fund, which will be used to strengthen other public sector enterprises." Again about this, where do we stand now? (Probably nowhere).

We were opposing the disinvestment of public sector. One of the reasons is that, without creation of another asset, any disposal of assets, and without creating any asset out of it, disinvestment does not make any sense.

As on date, after 8 years, Rs 18000 crore worth shares have been disinvested. What assets have been built out of this disinvestment? (There is no specific answer).

Next point is about raising efficiency of public sector through disinvestment... I say, mere ownership of a company does not decide efficiency. (Efficiency depends on fulfilment of certain requirements-parameters, fulfil it and be efficient). The shareholding pattern of a company does not

decide efficiency of management of a company. There are some losing PSUs but there are many profit making, efficient PSUs as well. There are some good private companies and there are many bad private companies as well. In some good private companies, the public sector financial institutions have more shares. Dilution of Govt shares cannot automatically ensure efficiency or profitability of a plant. There are other factors responsible for that.

Further, the Public Enterprise Survey, has enumerated the objectives of public sector. One of those objectives is to provide for balanced regional development, beside promoting redistribution of income. This relates to allocative efficiency, which has been the major thrust on public sector. While assessing the efficiency of the PSUs, one should take into account these factors and then assess their efficiency.

In the recent Orissa Cyclone, 80 PSUs were called to adopt the devastated villages. BHEL, which has least business in Orissa, has to adopt 5-6 villages. This is one of the objectives of public sector enterprises. How many villages have been adopted by all those new friends of this NDA Govt, namely, CII and FICCI etc? By disinvesting those PSUs who are spending for the cyclone affected areas, the Govt is defeating and maligning the very objectives of PSUs.

Govt is the owner of public sector units. They want to sell the PSUs, all public properties. The private sector players, both domestic and foreign, are the prospective buyers. Buyers would always like to buy at the minimum, lowest possible price. Now, what kind of prudence is this to seek advice of those buyers in CII, FICCI or elsewhere in the world on how

to disinvest, on how to sell those PSUs? Is this the way for the custodian of public property in Governance to handle the public property. Does basic sense of propriety and rationality permit such behaviour what the Govt is indulging in while dealing with the sale of PSUs? What business does the Govt have in hobnobbing with the prospective buyers while selling public assets under their control? There is no answer.

The Navaratnas, BHEL, NTPC etc are being disinvested. As per Govt declaration, the Navaratnas are the Global players, attaining a global structure, and that is a fact. Now the NDA Govt is seeking to hand over the shares of those global players of India to their global competitors abroad. Whom the Govt wants to benefit from this, the Navaratnas, the country or some others?

We oppose the whole aspect of disinvestment of PSU Shares

since we believe, this is not for the benefit of the country. The NDA Govt, Congress and some others may not agree to that. But they must agree that whatever they are doing in the name of disinvestment must follow the norms of economic prudence and be compatible with their declared objectives and it should not cause loss to the country. But what is happening in the disinvestment front, in selling the shares of Navaratna Companies, is just the opposite and is not compatible even with their own declared objectives, not to speak of economic prudence. In reality, selling PSU shares has turned into a part of the budgetary exercise, a means to fill up the budgetary gaps, to collect money by any means, at any cost to meet current expenditure. The Govt must de-link disinvestment from budgetary exercise, if they have to prove themselves true to their own objective, of course, the declared ones.

SALE OF GAIL SHARES : LOOT ON PUBLIC WEALTH

Recent selling of shares of GAIL is a straight case of distress sale as a part of the second generation reform.

I oppose disinvestment. But the Govt is violating its own declared objectives, declared principles made known to this house, while selling PSU shares.

The Disinvestment Commission's Report while recommending establishment of a Disinvestment Fund, noted, "The Fund could also help the Govt in undertaking disinvestments at the most opportune time in the market for maximum realisation." The Commission also recommended

to de-link disinvestment process from budgetary exercise of the Govt. The Govt must come out clear before this house whether they disown or do not accept these recommendations of the Commission appointed by them or not.

The public sector Gas Authority of India Ltd(GAIL) has all along been a tremendous performer, and its turnover has gone up from Rs 4000 crore to Rs 6000 crore in the last four years along with increasing profit. It has contributed to Rs 1.5 billion to National Defence Fund for Kargil. How much have the ENRON one of the takers of GAIL share, operating at

Maharashtra, contributed? There is just no answer.

Now on the economic prudence of the Govt in the matter of sale of GAIL share. In October 1997, first GDR issue for GAIL was launched, the Reserve price was fixed at Rs 125 per share. The prospective buyers offered a price of Rs 115 per share. The then Govt deferred the GDR issue. The present Govt has made a statement that "On account of low demand, even at prices below the minimum approved price, the issue was withdrawn." The Annual Report of GAIL (1997-98) noted, "GAIL was received well by the international investors....

However, due to unexpected crush of international stock market, international offer of equity was deferred by the Govt of India." In fact, it was decided by the then Govt in 1997 that GAIL is a financially sound and performing company and it should wait till the recovery of the market, it should not make haste. Is there much change in the international stock market position from October 97 to November 99 when GAIL shares have been sold at a low price, lower than the domestic stock market price? For what purpose, and with what objectives in mind Govt decided to sell off substantial shares of GAIL at such a lower price which does not conform to basic principles of selling and buying? In October 99, the average value of GAIL share was Rs 91.40. Then how can Govt justify the sale of GAIL share at Rs 70 per share in UK. It is estimated that

the country has lost Rs 600 crore in this deal.

Is disinvestment for causing such huge loss to the country? Do the Govt have any answer? The selling price of GAIL share is also not even consistent with the evaluation of its book value. In 1997, the book value of GAIL share was Rs 30 and it got a price of Rs 115 in the GDR market and still Govt did not find it right to sell the share at that price. Now when in March 1999 the book value is Rs 48, how do the Govt justify selling the share at Rs 70. It was nothing and nothing but distress sale of the GAIL shares, to the detriment of the interests of the country and that of the blue chip company. GAIL has been earmarked as NAVARATNA company. In the concerned notification, the Govt mentioned its decision to make the Navaratnas global players. The shares of one such global player, GAIL have been allowed

to be taken over at a very low price by ENRON and British Gas etc, the global rivals of GAIL, the prospective global player. The Govt must answer as to why and in whose interest, distress sale is made of the shares of GAIL, why substantial part of the shares of GAIL have been allowed to be cornered by its global rivals, ENRON, British Gas etc, thereby damaging the competitive strength of GAIL. It is not in the interest of the country in the least. Rather, it is a complete sell out of our national asset in collusion with the MNCs. We therefore, demand a parliamentary probe into this shady deal.

[Excerpts from the speech of Com Dipankar Mukherjee, MP, working committee member of CITU, in the Rajya Sabha on 13-12-99 and 8-12-99]

ASSAULT ON PF INTEREST ALSO?

An unstarred question on FICCI and CII demand for reduction of interest on PFs was answered in writing in Rajya Sabha on 21.12.1999.

Jibon Roy, MP and Secretary, CITU, had asked the Minister of Finance:

- whether it is a fact that FICCI and CII have sought from government to reduce rate of interest on provident funds available to employees and workers at present;
- if so, what is government's reaction thereto; and
- what is government's stand on the issue?

Balasaheb Vikhe Patil, Minister of State for Finance in his reply to (a) to (c) stated:

"Suggestions are received from time to time from several forums for reduction of interest on Provident Funds, which are considered in terms of existing policy of the Government of India. As of now, there is no such proposal to reduce the interest rate on Provident Funds.

It is significant to note that the Minister had not denied that FICCI and CII had made this suggestion, though he was vaguely hinting "several forums". And his denial is also only "as of now!"

That means employers are planning a further assault of the interest earned by workers for their hard earned money deposited in Provident Fund. The Government, which is out to oblige every demand from the vested interests is, perhaps, only waiving for an appropriate time. Workers beware!

“GAIDA’S MOTHER!”

W R Varada Rajan

While in Baghdad, attending the 12th Congress of the General Federation of Trade Unions, Iraq, in November 1999, our programme of visits to sites of devastation caused by US attacks included a visit to Al-Amiriya shelter. Al-Amiriya is a suburban town adjoining Baghdad. The air-raid shelter there was attacked by US missiles carrying chemical weapons of mass destruction in 1991. While the Iraqis have reconstructed every other structures razed by the US, this shelter is preserved, as it is, as a “monument”—a grim reminder of the barbaric onslaught by the imperialists.

As the bus carrying the international delegates cruised to the Al-Amiriya shelter, all of us alighted, to be welcomed by a middle-aged woman, may be in her forties.

Our interpreter introduced her as the guide who was to take us around the shelter.

“You are now visiting a site, where one of the most heinous crimes against innocent civilians was committed by the US imperialists. Here, 400 young children along with a few elderly women were done to death by the chemical bomb hurled in by the US missiles,” the guide started her narration, in Arabic.

Our interpreter added a stunning piece of information to the guide’s narrative:

“And this women lost all her eight children in that attack and ever since she has chosen to live here, as a caretaker and guide!”

The “guide” continued to narrate the horrifying episode, taking us along inside the two storeyed underground shelter.

“In Iraq, there are 44 such underground shelters, ordered to be built by our President Saddam Hussain, where our people can take shelter at the time of air-raids by the enemy planes and missiles.

“This Al-Amiriya shelter is the strongest of all such shelters in Iraq. The entrance gates to this shelter weigh 5 tonnes each and once closed, those inside can be safe from any type of attack, including chemical bomb-attack, for days together.

“But this is the place where the enemy hurled his missile on the small chimney for air-outlets. First one missile blasted the chimney and landed on the first floor of the shelter, making a deep hole from outside. Within a few minutes the second missile rocked the shelter dropping the chemical bomb through the hole created by the first missile.

“The children huddled together on both the floors of the shelter were thrown helter-skelter and the poisonous gas suffocated all of them to death.” The guide went on, stopping in between for the interpreter to translate to us in English.

There we saw a series of photographs of children, who were done to death on that day, with wreaths placed in a long row. The guide stopped to show the photograph of her children, somewhere in the middle.

“Only a few bodies could be retrieved. For most of the others, it was flesh and bones hanging from the ceiling or the wall. A mass of flesh was all that could be collected, scrapped from the floors, walls and ceilings,” she added, and went on to show us round.

The delegates who had come from Islamic countries recited prayers from the Holy Quran, standing around the guide.

We were all dumbstruck by the horrendous crime, described in every minute detail, by the guide.

We came out from inside the shelter and it was time for us to board the bus. One by one we all started taking leave of the woman.

I took her hands in mine and kissed them, offering my condolences. She also kissed my forehead.

I could not resist asking her the question: “You have lost all your eight children here, how do you undergo this agony of narrating this tragedy day-in and day-out to visitors like us? Where do you get the courage from?”

“I have nothing left in my life. Being here, I feel like I am in the company of my children. Mine were only eight among 400 children killed by the enemy. It is not my agony alone. But who else, other than me, can describe more vividly the atrocious crime by the US imperialists,” she replied, with no emotions on her face!

I asked: “Do you remember the date of the attack?” She replied: “Thursday, 13th February 1991”.

My next question was: “What is your name?” “*Umma Gaida* - Gaida’s mother—!” was her reply. She was identifying herself as the mother of her eldest daughter—Gaida. For she has become “*anamika*” nameless, otherwise!

I was moved. Once again I paid my respects to “*Gaida’s mother*.” Her parting words were: “Do not take pity on me. I need not be consoled. But please do whatever you can to help the fight against imperialism. Let humanity be saved”!

SEATTLE: WTO MEET FAILS

THE Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will be remembered by the world for the protests that it saw on the streets in Seattle, the complaints regarding lack of transparency, openness and participation of all members in the negotiations from participating governments and the collapse of talks without any agreement.

The developing country members of the WTO at the Seattle Ministerial Conference were finding that the negotiations were being manipulated by the American, European and Japanese delegations. This resentment was well reflected in the statements of various delegations.

The delegations from developing world were also very open in their criticism of the WTO Director General. In the corridors of the convention centre there was an open talk of how he was booed by the member countries for not being in control of the negotiations in the committee. US Trade Representative (USTR), Charlene Bershetsy was being accused even by the E U of takeover of the negotiating process. Hammering of an agreement on the issues under discussion by the developed countries among themselves was more difficult this time because the developing world, particularly Africa, was far more assertive and conscious of its own priorities. Opposition by the developing countries to the extension of the WTO into non-trade issues was a complicating factor. This factor was making

difficult for the developed countries to arrive at a deal which would also satisfy their own respective home constituencies.

Developing countries' delegations were particularly critical of the US position for the creation of a WTO working group on labour. Clinton's suggestion that the United States would be prepared to use trade sanctions to enforce core labour standards came under criticism from many quarters. The EU commissioner was compelled to say that the EU was opposed to the use of sanctions. The EU had proposed the creation of a joint "standing working forum" between the WTO and the ILO on trade, globalisation, and labour issues to promote a better understanding of the issues".

But this stalemate on labour issue was clearly preventing the US from assuring an agreement on other issues. It was finding difficult to come forward with concessions on the remaining issues in which both the EU and the developing countries' governments had also strong home interests to protect. The fight was this time clearly a triangular one.

This is not to say that the developed countries' governments were not attempting to divide the developing world. In this round, the governments of developed countries were compelled to think of the strategies that would divide the developing countries' governments and prevent them from taking a united stand on the package agreement.

In this connection, it needs to be

mentioned that the approach of Indian delegation is a source of serious concern. It is an area of struggle for the people who want the developing world to put up a united fight in the WTO fora. The Indian delegation believed that the unity of developing countries was difficult. Its view was that the interests of developing countries are so diverse that it is useless to spend time on the business of bringing them together for a deal. It was therefore spending more time on assuring deals with the developed countries. It is no coincidence that this suited the Indian industry which too was pushing for the approach of striking a compromise with the US.

The WTO talks at Seattle have ended without any agreement. It is good that the developing countries including India resisted the overbarring attitude of the US unitedly. However, the US not given up its efforts and vigilance is required to thwart further moves.

The collapse of talks at Seattle is only a small pause in the negotiations. Discussions on the built-in agenda of negotiations on agriculture and services are going to begin in January 2000 in Geneva. There is no change in the schedule of the negotiations on these issues. For the developed world there is much at stake.

We need to be watchful, particularly of the attempts that are likely to divide the developing world and prevent its governments from taking a common stand in the WTO talks. There is an urgent need for mass mobilisation in the country.

(courtesy: Dinesh Abrol)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF OIL & GAS WORKERS

The international conference of the oil and natural gas trade unions was held in Paris, France on 18-20 October, 1999. The conference was organised jointly by CGT National Union of Chemical Industries, Union of Mediterranean Oil Workers' Organisation and International Energy and Mines' Organisation.

From India only CITU was invited to attend the conference. The CITU delegation was led by S. Dev Roye, Secretary. The conference was conducted on the basis of identified themes. For each session presentation of key note address was followed by response and contribution from the delegates.

A 'preparatory discussion note' circulated by the organisers raised certain basic questions: "should planning of energy policies be left exclusively under the influence of market laws or does it require public involvement"; "should not oil be an element of cooperation rather than weapon"; "consuming countries must stop treating the producing countries simply as reservoirs"; "should OPEC be allowed to hold the world oil market into ransom". Apart from these issues, the note also underlined the importance of trade union unity, co-operation, co-ordination among the trade unions of the industry at international and regional levels, exchange of information, solidarity struggle etc.

PRESENTATION BY CITU

The CITU delegation presented a paper titled "A Trade Union Approach to Global Oil & Natural Gas Industry". On the new global trend in the oil industry the CITU paper noted: "The technology driven changes in mode of operation is taking place in the oil industry throughout the world. With their control on the technology and capital, the TNCs are making rapid inroad into the oil industry across the globe. Although initial investment is going up but overall operational cost is really reducing. The UNCTAD report says: "Rapid advances in petroleum technologies have reduced the cost of exploration and production by nearly one half in 10 years." The other development is merger of firms. The oil industry has witnessed the largest mergers. The British Petroleum and Amoco and the Exxon with Mobil mergers are bound to have deep rooted impact on the oil industry. According to UNCTAD report: "the

merger of BP and Amoco is expected to save \$3 billion in administrative costs, while Shell International plans to reduce costs by \$2.5 billion per year over the next few years." It is very much significant to note that major part of the burden of cost reduction shall be put on the shoulders of the workers and on the other hand, additional benefit shall also be appropriated by the producers. With the further intensification of the grip of TNCs in the world oil industry, the cartel controlled pricing mechanism is bound to have its serious impact in the oil market."

With regard to the policy pursued by the Government in India under the 'new economic policy', the paper noted: "It is unfortunate and shocking that the ruling parties in our country, ignoring the horrible experience of dealing with the foreign oil companies in the past, are extending huge undue concessions to the foreign and indigenous private oil companies against the interests of the country. The oil cartels which were made to vacate our oil sector, are now given red carpet welcome. The main argument of the Government to justify the invitation to foreign oil MNCs is that it is not in a position to make necessary investment for undertaking new discovery of crude oil reserve. Going by this argument, the overseas investment in the oil sector should have come for new discovery. But the reality is that only discovered oil fields are handed over to the private sector. Such step may increase the crude oil production for the time being, but in the long run, the problem of shortage of crude oil cannot be overcome, unless the country can ensure new big discovery.

The stand of CITU on international unity of oil sector trade unions as was presented in the conference: "It has been very aptly said that, 'oil industry is perhaps the most international industry of all.' It may not be an exaggeration to say that international importance of oil industry is unparalleled. Any development relating to production, availability and price of oil can shake the entire globe. Therefore, it is dangerous for the world community to allow the bulk producing countries to be the reservoirs of the bulk consuming highly industrialised countries. At the same time, the producing countries must not be allowed to hold the entire world to ransom, by their

oil power'. What is required is a balanced and mutually supportive approach in the operation of the oil sector for the greater interest of the humanity but that is not automatically expected of the MNC tycoons operating in the field.

The working class is historically placed with the best international vision and understanding. With the scientific and technological development continuously attaining ever faster pace, industrial operation has been witnessing sweeping changes. The revolution in information technology and unprecedented global domination established by the highly industrially developed countries and the MNCs operating therefrom is pointing to the urgent imperative need for developing better international understanding and forging unity of the working class on a global scale. Considering the growth and spread of the MNCs throughout the world, the then Director General of ILO, Michael Hansenne noted: "The ever-growing presence of multinational enterprises means that satisfactory results from collective negotiation at the national level are increasingly difficult to obtain."

"The working people in both the developing and the developed countries are the worst victims of the profit-quest-operation of the MNCs on a global scale and the experience in the oil sector is no way different. It is the working class movement which can make pro-people intervention on the direction and operation of this vital sector, so crucially related to the daily-living of the world populace. And such intervention must be made on a global scale. Therefore, need of the hour is to develop closer and functional co-ordination among the trade unions of the oil sector across the borders in defence of the rights and interests of the workers and common people.

The trade union movement in the oil industry have so far watched, from side line, one oil crisis after another. But we have not responded, much less acted, to the development of deepening danger of cartelisation of the entire oil industry in the world. After the break up of Soviet Union and east European socialist countries, the process has gathered further momentum. Oil the precious gift of nature - is being used as powerful weapon by the oil oligarchies to blackmail and/or disrupt the natural dynamics of civilisation".

The CITU deeply appreciating, the current initiative is definitely urged that the conference should give a concrete organisational shape to the initiative.

THE DELIBERATIONS

88 delegates representing 30 countries attended the conference. Georges HERVO, Secretary

General of FNIC, CGT, France delivered the inaugural address. The entire conference was structured into eight sessions. In all, 43 delegates participated in the deliberations.

By and large the direction of the speeches was encouraging. But some of the speeches made excellent analysis of the world economic situation; severely criticised the doctrine of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. The speakers narrated their shocking experience with the MNCs operating in their respective countries. The sharpening contradictions between the advanced industrialised countries and the rest, between the labour and capital was also dealt with by some delegates while participating in the discussion.

The delegates from the major oil producing countries told as to how they are facing onslaught of privatisation in their countries. Taking undue advantage of their total grip over the new technology for oil industry and huge investment requirement, the MNCs are making inroad into the oil industry.

THE CONCLUSION

A nine member committee was elected to draft the concluding declaration of the conference which included S. Dev Roye. The draft declaration was placed by Vincent Rene of INIC, CGT and was adopted with some minor modification. The declaration condemned the US blockade against Cuba and Iraq. It called for international united action to defend trade union rights. It stressed the need for close co-operation among the trade unions in the oil industry to fight the onslaught of MNCs. It expressed concern at the increasing inequalities between the North and South. It condemned the role of the industrialised countries in utilising the global oil industry for establishing political hegemony. It resolved to hold such conference at regular intervals. The invitation of CITU to hold the next conference in India was accepted by the conference.

Many delegates appreciated the presentation and intervention of CITU delegation in the deliberations of the conference. In fact some delegates in the course of their speeches upheld the position taken by the CITU on many points. In the drafting committee also some of the suggestions of CITU representative were accepted. Strong criticism against the MNCs; against privatisation of oil industry; against the design of the industrialised countries in maintaining domination over the global oil industry; the urge for international co-operation amongst the trade unions in oil industry and united action were voiced by the conference.

PROTEST RALLY IN PORT BLAIR

The A & N Islands State Committee of CITU observed All India Protest Day in Andamans on 29-9-1999, against Privatisation Policy of the BJP led Central Government, price hike in Diesel and consequential increase in the prices of commodities of

day-to-day etc. In Port Blair, a procession was taken in the evening of 29th, from Crusade House premises, passed through important places in the city and culminated in a mass rally at Municipal park, Aberdeen Bazar. H.N. Parial chaired the

meeting, A. Rajan, P.A. Samad and B. Chandrachoodan spoke. The speakers severely criticised the Central Government against adoption of Insurance Bill, privatisation of banks and other institutions under pressure from multinationals.

NPCC UNION DELEGATION MEETS PM

The NPCC Workers' Union of India met Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister, S N Jatia, Union Labour Minister and C P Thakur, Union Minister for Water Resources on 14-15, December, '99 along with Basudev Acharya, Adul Hasnat Khan and Bikash Chowdhury, MPs, and urged revival/revamping of National Projects Construction Corporation Limited

(NPCC) and demanded payment of overdue salaries to the employees.

NPCC is facing severe crisis mainly due to anti-PSU, discriminatory policies of the Govt. of India. As a result, the NPCC employees have been facing severe hardships. About 1500 out of the total 3500 employees in different work sites in India are not getting regular

salary for a period ranging 4 to 20 months and in some units employees have been practically starving for months together with their families.

The Union demanded immediate payment of unpaid salaries and also to take necessary steps so that NPCC is given necessary new work orders.

(Report from Binoy Mukherjee)

SUCCESSFUL STRIKE BY MERIND FIELDWORKERS

The Merind field workers all over the country, under the banner of the Federation of Medical & Sales Representatives Association of India (FMRAI) and fully supported by All India Merind & Allied Companies Employees Union (AIMACEU), observed a successful one day strike on 15th December '99. They demonstrated their firm determination to challenge and defeat the management's interference in the legitimate trade union activities of the field

workers and attempt to deunionise them.

The striking field workers participated in day long dharna and submitted memorandum to the management.

This was the first joint action of two streams of fieldworkers, earlier working in TATA Pharma & Merind India Ltd, but now members of FMRAI & AIMACEU subsequent to the take over of TATA Pharma by Merind in 1997. Merind (India) Ltd was taken over by the fast growing

Indian Pharmaceutical Company Wockhardt Pharmaceuticals who till date is maintaining Merind as a separate entity. On 15th December '99, Wockhardt field workers also worked in the field wearing "protest badges" expressing solidarity with their colleagues in Merind. This joint action by has sent a clear message to the Wockhardt & Merind management any attempt to divide, deunionise and attack the field workers, that under the cover of mergers/take over, will be

strongly resisted.
In Delhi the dharna was addressed

by Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU,
S.R. Saini (AIIEA), Sudhir

Kumar, President, FMRAI,
besides others.

FDC FIELD WORKERS ON INDEFINITE STRIKE

From 16th November 1998, the fieldworkers of FDC (a Mumbai based Pharmaceutical Company) working all over the country are on indefinite strike. The strike is against the management policy of "hire and fire" and dismantling the forum of the "grievance committee" in existence for over 18 years. More than 55 field workers have been summarily terminated and 54 others, (together constituting nearly 45% of the work force), have been illegally advised to "STOP WORK" on the plea that marketing activities in their respective territories have been discontinued. False cases have been filed and large number of activists have been detained and harassed by the police at the behest of the management. In several States the management has

obtained "stay orders" on demonstrations and dharnas; attempts were also made to stop publication of "FMRAI NEWS" the monthly bulletin of the organisation.

FDC had a turnover of 6 crores 19 years back when FMRAI was recognised as the union representing FDC field workers all over the country. This rose to 140 crores in 1999 drawing attention in the industry as an example of rapid growth consequent to cordial industrial relations among other things. But the new management team installed in 1997, aiming to achieve a growth of Rs. 600 crore turnover by 2000, set about dismantling the "grievance committee" of the fieldworkers, and resorted to a policy of "hire and fire". Repeated attempts of FMRAI for negotiations were

rejected by the management. FDC fieldworkers supported by other members of FMRAI decided to oppose this unilateral "restructuring", which would destroy their hard one trade union and collective bargaining rights. FMRAI has approached the Central Government for referring the dispute to the National Tribunal.

Field workers all over the country, under the banner of FMRAI staged half-a-day strike on 16.9.1999 in support of FDC workers. They will stage an all India strike again on 7th January 2000. As a part of the campaign on their demands, the field workers will be working on the field wearing protest badges on 4th to 6th January, 2000 and conduct torch light procession on 4th January.

T.N. CITU PLANS CAMPAIGN AND STRUGGLES

Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU met at Erode, on 10-11, December 1999 with J. Hemachandran, MLA, President, in the chair. T.K. Rengarajan, General Secretary, in his report explained the present day political situation, the ill effects of the economic policy and the struggles that are being conducted by various sections. The work report was presented by Assistant General Secretary, A.K. Padmanabhan. The decisions of the All India Working Committee

at Jaipur were reported by R. Singaravelu, Secretary.

The State Committee decided to organise badge wearing and Street Corner symposiums on 24-25 December, 1999, highlighting people's unity and to fight caste-oppression, in memory of the 44 agricultural worker-martyrs of Kilvenmani Village in East Thanjavur, who were burnt alive by the landlords on 25th December 1968. Thousands of handbills will be brought out. Highlighting the problems and

issues confronting various sections of workers, both in organised and unorganised sectors, the CITU will conduct State-wide campaigns. The first phase will conclude with massive dharnas on 24th January in district head quarters and other industrial centers. The campaigns will continue in the second phase and conclude with a massive rally in defence of workers' rights, during the Budget session of the State Legislature, in the last week of March 2000.

REPORTS & EVENTS

Various district committees have collected Rs.1,33,000 towards Orissa Cyclone Relief Fund and the amount has been sent to CITU, Orissa State Committee.

The State Committee noted with satisfaction that the 29th November demonstrations have been successful. Thousands of men & women from various sectors participated in the demonstrations. In many centres processions were taken out braving heavy downpour.

Leaders of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, AICCTU, UTUC(L-S), ATP (AIADMK), TMTUC (Tamil Manila Congress) and Bank, Insurance, Central/State

Government employees and Teachers organisations participated in these rallies. BMS leaders participated in Chennai.

A massive joint procession was taken out in Chennai on 9th December, protesting against IRDA.

The State Committee called upon the district committees to continue the joint struggles.

The State Committee noted with concern, that the State Government and the Police authorities are not allowing processions, demonstrations etc. in Chennai and other major towns. The Committee decided to contact other T.U. Organisations for a

joint struggle to safeguard the democratic rights.

19 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, working in Saudi Arabia, who were first detained by Iranian authorities while fishing in the sea are now in Pakistan jail for the last six months. State Committee called upon all unions to continue the campaign for release of these fishermen and to send telegrams to Prime Minister requesting immediate intervention.

The State CITU will hold district conferences from March to July 2000 and the State Conference in Madurai, during September.

(Report from A.K. Padmanabhan)

INDEFINITE STRIKE BY PORT & DOCK WORKERS

Consequent upon the failure of talks in the bipartite wage negotiation committee on 15.12.99, due to recalcitrant attitude of port managements, the representatives of all the five recognised Federations of Port & Dock Workers, in the wage negotiating committee, have unanimously decided to mobilise the Port and Dock Workers at all the 11 major ports in the country to launch an indefinite all India strike with effect from 18th January 2000; for securing satisfactory settlement of the common charter of demands concerning wage revision and

liberalisation of service conditions.

This was announced in a joint statement signed by S.R. Kulkarni, President, All India Port & Dock Workers Federation (HMS), Shanti Patel, President, All India Port & Dock Workers Federation (Workers) (HMS), M.K. Pandhe, Vice-President, Water Transport Workers Federation of India (CITU), G. Kalan, General Secretary, Indian National Port & Dock Workers Federation, (INTUC) and V.V. Ramarao, General Secretary, Port Dock Water Front Workers Federation of India (AITUC).

The Federations also decided to observe 29-12-1999 as the All India Protest Day. On the same day, the affiliated unions of the 5 federations will serve the notice of strike to all the Port authorities and Dock Labour Boards.

The Federations demanded that the Government of India should abandon the policy of privatisation and proposed amendments to Major Port Trusts Act. Instead, the Government of India should recognise the full functional autonomy of the major ports. The Government should set up suitable authority to prevent inter-port unhealthy competition.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' FEDERATION MEETING

The 25th meeting of the working committee of Construction Workers Federation of India (CWFI) was held on

17.11.1999 at Jaipur. M.K. Pandhe President CWFI, chaired the meeting.

The meeting decided that All

India Demand Day on 5th January 2000 - will be observed by all the unions of the following demands-
a) No entry of Multinational

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Corporation in India Construction Industry.

b) Immediate implementation of central legislation for construction with necessary amendments.

c) Cost of Construction Materials to be reduced.

d) More allocation of funds in

troth the Central & State Govt. budget for construction jobs.

The unions will present a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Govt. of India, New Delhi and the Chief Minister of respective State on these four demands.

It was also decided that the CWFI will host the Asia-Pacific meeting of Construction union on 21-22 March, 2000, in New Delhi.

The CWFI will also bring out a booklet on MNC activities in Indian Construction industry.

(Report from Debanjan Chakraborty)

PRIME MINISTER URGED TO REVIVE IDPL

A joint trade union delegation met the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on 21st December '99 to discuss about the revival of IDPL, which is pending since the last three years. The delegation submitted a memorandum to him with signatures of more than 100 MPs belonging to different parties viz CPI(M), CPI, RSP, Forward Block, Samajwadi Party, RJD, TDP, BJP, Congress and Shiv Sena.

The delegation comprised Basudev Acharya, Tarit Tofdar, CPI(M) Gita Mukherjee, Indrajit Gupta, (CPI) Jayaprada and Yerran Naidu (TDP), P.K.Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, Sudhir Kumar, President FMRAI,

S.K. Khastgir & K.K. Basu, FMRAI, S.N. Reddy, Venkaiya (CITU, Hyderabad) and others from AITUC and INTUC, Hyderabad and Gurgaon. A revival scheme for IDPL was approved in August 1997 by the then United Front Government at a cost of Rs.246 Crore. However, after the fall of the U.F. Government, the revival scheme became infructuous and BJP Government announced its official policy of closure of all sick PSUs. In this background, a joint delegation had met Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1998 also. Meanwhile, another revival scheme was prepared by L.K. Behl Committee in 1999; but since then no meeting of the trade

unions has been called by the Govt.

The delegation reiterated the demand for revival of the company, after discussing with the five major central trade unions. They also demanded payment of regular salaries to employees. A few days earlier, a delegation had also met, Chemical Minister, Suresh Prabhu.

The Prime Minister assured that he will take up the issue immediately after the present session ends on 23rd December '99.

In the meantime, the unions have chalked out countrywide action plans including big rally at Delhi demanding revival of IDPL.

TRADE UNION CLASS FOR ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES

A trade union class for 2 days together with a workshop on organisation was held for the activists of the Karnataka Rajya Anganwadi Noukarara Sangha, affiliated to CITU. The class and the workshop were held at Sirsi in Uttara Kannada district, in the first week of December. ILO has extended assistance by sharing the expenditure of the 2 day class. 26 activists from 12 districts

participated in the programme. K.Hemalata, Secretary CITU and General Secretary, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers inaugurated the programme, and took the session on organisation. VJK Nair, General Secretary, CITU State Committee, Varalakshmi, General Secretary of the State anganwadi union conducted the other sessions. Each session was

followed by lively group discussions. The state committee has decided to follow this up by district and project level classes.

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The Working Woman
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IT EMPLOYEES' CONFERENCE

The 34th All India Delegates Conference of Income-tax Employees Federation was held at Bangalore from 10th to 13th December, 1999. The Inaugural session of the Conference on 10th was addressed by M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU.

The Income-Tax Employees Federation is the only recognised

organisation in the Income tax Department, representing the entirety of Non Gazetted Employees. It has a paid-up membership of nearly 87% of the total working strength of Group C & D employees in the Department. Over 600 delegates and observers participated in the Conference, which was held in

Gurunanak Bhawan, Bangalore. K.K.N. Kutty, General Secretary, presented the report, highlighting the present situation caused by the policies of the Govt. and the problems faced by IT employees. The conference adopted a number of resolutions and chalked out programmes of action in the coming period.

ZONAL CONFERENCE OF PEERLESS EMPLOYEES

The Second Zonal Conference of All India Peerless Employees' Union (AIPEU), South Central Zone was held at Visakhapatnam, 4-5, December, '99.

The Conference commenced with the hoisting of Red Flag by Nityagopal Dutt, Working President, AIPEU.

Shyamal Chakraborty, Secretary, CITU, inaugurated the

conference. Ch. Narasinga Rao, CITU, Vizag Dist. and Chairman, Reception Committee delivered welcome address. Anudeb Ghosh, General Secretary, AIPEU, also addressed.

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU addressed the conference on 5.12.99.

Later, T.P.C. Raju, General Secretary, South Central Zone placed the report. The conference

was attended by more than 100 delegates and observers from all over the region.

The conference unanimously elected the zonal committee with Nityagopal Dutt as President and T.P.C. Raju as General Secretary. On the occasion, Rs.2000/- was donated to Com.B.T.R. Memorial Fund.

(Report from A.V. Ramanarao)

CITU-ILO ALL INDIA TRAINING PROGRAMME

An All India Training Programme on Trade Union Organisation and Leadership Development, was held at the new premises of CITU, viz. Com. BTR Bhawan in New Delhi from the 9th to 17th December, 1999. The training programme was sponsored by ILO, as part of its Workers Education Assistance Project in Select Asian Countries, including India. The programme was inaugurated by M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, on 9.12.99. Peter Mortensen, Chief Technical Advisor of the Project,

ILO, was the Chief Guest. 19 comrades from all over India participated in the programme. CITU Report on Organisation, CITU and Contemporary Trade Union Movement, Structural Adjustment Programme and its impact, Emerging Challenges to Trade Unions, Gender Equality in Trade Unions, Planning for Organisational Development, Organising, Strength and Weakness of TUs, T.U. Cooperation and unity, Workers' Education and T.U. Training, were the topics covered during the

programme. The participants were divided into four groups and after presentation of each subject, groupwise discussions and reporting was held, where all the participants were actively involved. The training programme concluded with a valedictory address by M K Pandhe.

**CITU
WORKSHOP
ON
ORGANISATION
18-20, FEB., 2000
NEW DELHI**

YET ANOTHER STRIKE BY INSURANCE EMPLOYEES

Thousands of Bank, insurance and other financial sector employees participated in the March to Parliament and rally of 29.11.99 in protest against the IRDA Bill placed in the Parliament. Leaders of the CITU, AITUC and BMS, of different Left and other political parties and MPs belonging to Left parties, AIADMK and Samajwadi Party greeted the rally and extended support to the struggle against the

moves of the Government to open up Insurance, privatise the Public Sector Banks and other financial institutions, and against reduction in employment through so-called VRS. In accordance with the decisions taken at the joint meeting of the financial sector employees' Unions held in Mumbai on 10.11.99, the finance sector employees called for a day's strike on the day following the day on which the IRDA Bill is

discussed in the parliament. As the IRDA Bill was taken up for discussion in Parliament on 30.11.99, the insurance employees, including the officers, in both the Life and General Sector, staged yet another day's strike on 1.12.1999. In support of their brethren in insurance sector, nearly 1.5 lakh Bank employees also joined the strike on 1.12.1999 at the call of Bank Employees Federation of India.

CAMPAIGN ON WORKING WOMEN'S DEMANDS

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, which met in New Delhi on 18-19 December 1999, decided to launch a countrywide campaign on three major issues of the working women—both in the organised and unorganised sectors. The issues were—extension of maternity benefit to all the working women, including those in the agricultural sector, equal wages and for immediate enactment of a law against sexual harassment at work place. The committee has noted that the Government of India has not

ratified the ILO convention on Maternity Protection. It has decided to discuss with the agricultural workers' union and the AIDWA and prepare a plan for joint campaign on the issues.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU participated in the meeting for some time. He explained the importance of intensifying the struggles against the economic policies of the Government and asked the AICCWW members to work hard to mobilise working women in large numbers in these struggles.

The Committee decided that it was

necessary to get more information on the various sub-committees and their functioning and to improve their functioning. The centre was directed to get the information through a questionnaire. It was also decided to double the circulation of The Voice of the Working Woman and the states have taken quotas accordingly. Because of the increased cost of production the AICCWW suggested that the annual subscription of the journal should be raised to Rs 25/- and the price of a single copy to Rs 5/- from January 2000.

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS DEMONSTRATION

On 17th December 1999, thousands of public sector workers demonstrated before the Industry Ministry at Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi demanding reversal of the Govt policies on Privatisation of PSUs, immediate

steps to revive sick PSUs and payment of unpaid wages to concerned PSU employees and withdrawal of retrograde guidelines of Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) including extension of agreement

period to ten years, on the wage revision of PSU employees. The leadership of the PSU unions who came from all corners of the country participated in the demonstration along with the public sector employees of Delhi

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and adjoining areas.

The workers rally was addressed by K L Mahendra, General Secretary AITUC, M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, Michael Fernandes, Convenor Joint Action Front, Banagalore, Y Adinarayana, Convenor PSU Trade Union Coordination

Committee, Hyderabad, Chittabrata Mazumder, Secretary CITU, and Dipankar Mukherjee, MP and Subhasini Ali from CITU. The speakers, while condemning the anti-PSU policies of the Govt also reported before the demonstrating workers the decisions of the extended session

of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Union(CPSTU) calling upon the PSU workers to prepare for country wide indefinite strike to be precede by one day strike in the coming months. From the demonstration, a memorandum was also submitted to Industry Minister.

AIRPORT WORKERS DEMONSTRATION

Hundreds of workers demonstrated before the Civil Aviation Ministry at Rajib Gandhi Bhawan, New Delhi on 22nd December 99 demanding discontinuance of contract labour system in permanent perennial areas of work and regularisation of the contract workers already deployed in those areas. The Airport workers along with the workers of Air India(AI) and Indian Airlines(IA) have been struggling for this demand since long.

In July 1999, the Central Advisory Contract Labour Board(CACLB) submitted a report recommending discontinuance of contract labour system in certain occupations in

AAI, AI and IA. The concerned workers under the leadership of Airport Employees Union(CITU) demonstrated before the Union Labour Ministry. The Labour Ministry had to issue Gazette notification on 16th November 99 prohibiting contract labour system in some of the occupations(not all) mentioned in the CACLB recommendation.

Now the workers have taken a series of programmes of agitation for implementation of the Gazette notification by the Civil Aviation Ministry and amendment of the notification issued by labour ministry to include all the occupations recommended for abolition of contract labour system

by CACLB.

The demonstration before the Civil Aviation Ministry on 22nd December was addressed by comrades Jibon Roy, MP, Tapan Sen, both secretaries of CITU, h Pant from Delhi State CITU besides com Ram Naresh and Ranjit Singh of Airport Employees Union. A memorandum was submitted to Civil aviation Minister demanding immediate implementation of the concerned Gazette notification dated 16th November 99. The Union is also planning to hold similar demonstration before the labour ministry for inclusion of the occupation dropped out in the notification.

STATE LEVEL CONVENTION OF HARYANA CITU

11th December 99, The state level convention of Haryana state CITU held at Hissar decided to undertake state wide campaign and agitation against the anti-worker and anti-people policies of the State and the Central Govts. The convention place was named after late com Vimal Ranadive. Around 200 delegates from various industries, brick kilns, stone queries, Forest workers,

Anganwadi workers, village chowkidars, and other unorganised sector industries from about 16 districts of the state took part in the convention.

The convention was presided over by Com S N Solanki, President, Haryana State CITU and was inaugurated by com Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU. In his inaugural address, Tapan Sen dealt on the thrust of the so called second

generation liberalisation being pushed through by the BJP led regime at the centre which is aimed at complete privatisation of PSUs and all welfare and essential services and drastically curtailing all trade union rights. Countrywide movement programme is being planned by the National Platform of Mass Organisation including massive Parliament March followed by

REPORTS & EVENTS

Countrywide General Strike and Haryana workers must prepare for joining enmasse in that struggle, he reiterated.

Com Satvir Singh, General Secretary, Haryana State CITU while speaking on the repressive regime and anti worker policies of the Haryana State Govt, placed before the convention the outline of state wide programmes of agitation and the charter of demands representing the basic demands of all section of workers including the agricultural labourers which include minimum

wage of Rs 3500, opening of the closed factories, supply of seeds and fertilisers to poor peasants and un-interrupted supply of electricity, implementation of labour laws and action against flgrant violation of labour laws by the employers etc.

Around 15 delegates covering all the industries/districts took part in the discussion and put forth important suggestions on programmes and charter of demands. Among others who spoke in the convention were comrades Prithwi Singh from

Kisan Sabha, Ram Kumar Pradhan from Agricultural Workers' Union, besides Balbir Singh Dahya and S N Solanki, Vice president and President of State CITU respectively. The convention decided a series of district level campaign programmes to be followed by demonstration before district head quarters on different days during 20th January to 7th February 2000, and massive demonstration in the state capital at Chandigarh thereafter.

CALCUTTA: ELECTRICITY EMPLOYEES' RALLY

The workers and employees of West Bengal State Electricity Board and West Bengal Power Development Corporation Ltd. observed a series of programmes since June '99 culminating in a mammoth gathering before the Bidyut Bhawan, Salt Lake, Calcutta on 07.12.99. Addressing the large gathering Shyamal Chakraborty, Secretary, CITU said:

"The continuous threat and attack

of the Central Government on the power industry and the process of industrialisation of West Bengal have been challenged and encountered by the people and working class of West Bengal. In spite of all evil attempts, the dream of Bakreswar Thermal Power Project has come to a reality not only within the stipulated period but ahead of its schedule through our valiant effort."

Chakraborty also warned the employees that a section of technocrats and managerial high-ups are willfully trying to weaken the power industry of West Bengal from inside in refuting and delaying the formation of Rural Energy Development Corporation. Kedar Mukherjee, State Secretary, EEFI, Sukhomoy Pal and Prashant Nandy Chowdhury also addressed the gathering.

CII RECIPE FOR CLOSURE OF 3 BANKS CONDEMNED

The Banks Employees' Federation of India has opposed the irresponsible and motivated recommendation made by the National Task Force of Confederation of Indian Industries on NPA for liquidation of the so-called weak banks - Indian Bank, UCO Bank and United Bank of India. Such a recommendation may cause a very negative impact on these banks'

present and prospective depositors and the banking public, thereby worsening their conditions. It has already created a panic among the 80,000 employees of the three banks. It is obvious that this recommendation is aimed at having the dishonest business houses, including those belonging to the Confederation, released from the obligation to repay overdue loans with impunity. The

BEFI urged the Union Finance Minister to make a public announcement the Govt. not only reject the CII - NTF recommendation but will also take stringent measures against the defaulters of bank and FI loans, if necessary by amending all relevant laws. The Bank Employees staged massive protest demonstrations before the CII offices throughout the country.

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

| Sr. No | Centre | Aug 99 | Sep 99 | Oct 99 | Sr. No. | Centre | Aug 99 | Sep 99 | Oct 99 |
|--------|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Gudur | 441 | 444 | 457 | 45 | Amritsar | 383 | 387 | 388 |
| 2 | Guntur | 413 | 418 | 424 | 46 | Ludhiana | 383 | 383 | 386 |
| 3 | Hyderabad | 395 | 397 | 401 | 47 | Ajmer | 418 | 417 | 423 |
| 4 | Visakhapatnam | 412 | 414 | 420 | 48 | Jaipur | 398 | 397 | 395 |
| 5 | Warangal | 415 | 417 | 431 | 49 | Chennai | 446 | 446 | 459 |
| 6 | D D Tinsukia | 386 | 391 | 402 | 50 | Coimbatore | 397 | 407 | 424 |
| 7 | Guwahati | 439 | 444 | 451 | 51 | Coonoor | 407 | 408 | 422 |
| 8 | Labac-Silchar | 379 | 379 | 386 | 52 | Madurai | 422 | 431 | 443 |
| 9 | Mariani Jorhat | 415 | 417 | 433 | 53 | Salem | 407 | 423 | 435 |
| 10 | Rangapara-Tezpur | 420 | 425 | 440 | 54 | Tiruchirapally | 461 | 458 | 469 |
| 11 | Jamshedpur | 390 | 407 | 415 | 55 | Agra | 409 | 410 | 409 |
| 12 | Jharia | 364 | 376 | 380 | 56 | Ghaziabad | 454 | 455 | 451 |
| 13 | Kodarma | 380 | 390 | 397 | 57 | Kanpur | 437 | 442 | 440 |
| 14 | Monghyr Jamalpur | 418 | 421 | 433 | 58 | Saharanpur | 396 | 390 | 391 |
| 15 | Noamundi | 377 | 379 | 387 | 59 | Varanasi | 481 | 485 | 486 |
| 16 | Ranchi-Hatia | 416 | 422 | 429 | 60 | Asansol | 399 | 404 | 416 |
| 17 | Ahmedabad | 428 | 433 | 437 | 61 | Calcutta | 433 | 443 | 468 |
| 18 | Bhavnagar | 452 | 453 | 466 | 62 | Darjeeling | 387 | 390 | 396 |
| 19 | Rajkot | 414 | 414 | 415 | 63 | Durgapur | 444 | 449 | 475 |
| 20 | Surat | 438 | 442 | 445 | 64 | Haldia | 466 | 475 | 490 |
| 21 | Vadodra | 410 | 412 | 417 | 65 | Howrah | 482 | 493 | 525 |
| 22 | Faridabad | 446 | 446 | 448 | 66 | Jalpaiguri | 405 | 414 | 423 |
| 23 | Yamunanagar | 395 | 393 | 402 | 67 | Raniganj | 369 | 373 | 388 |
| 24 | Srinagar | 463 | 466 | 467 | 68 | Chandigarh | 456 | 455 | 456 |
| 25 | Bangalore | 405 | 407 | 413 | 69 | Delhi | 485 | 483 | 498 |
| 26 | Belgaum | 459 | 460 | 460 | 70 | Pondicherry | 466 | 471 | 477 |
| 27 | Hubli-Dharwar | 429 | 431 | 436 | | | | | |
| 28 | Mercara | 444 | 445 | 450 | | All India | 426 | 429 | 437 |
| 29 | Alwaye | 422 | 422 | 427 | | | | | |
| 30 | Mundakayam | 447 | 442 | 450 | | Additional Series of Labour Bureau | | | |
| 31 | Quilon | 429 | 427 | 433 | 1 | Kothagudem | 425 | 436 | 444 |
| 32 | Thiruvananthapuram | 473 | 463 | 466 | 2 | Himachal Pradesh | 406 | 413 | 416 |
| 33 | Balaghat | 391 | 391 | 394 | 3 | Bhilwara | 420 | 425 | 427 |
| 34 | Bhilai | 372 | 386 | 392 | 4 | Chhindwara | 418 | 428 | 428 |
| 35 | Bhopal | 443 | 442 | 455 | 5 | Tripura | 412 | 413 | 417 |
| 36 | Indore | 433 | 429 | 434 | 6 | Goa | 489 | 485 | 489 |
| 37 | Jabalpur | 436 | 444 | 453 | | | | | |
| 38 | Mumbai | 471 | 471 | 472 | | | | | |
| 39 | Nagpur | 445 | 445 | 447 | | | | | |
| 40 | Nasik | 427 | 433 | 435 | | | | | |
| 41 | Pune | 465 | 470 | 475 | | | | | |
| 42 | Solapur | 448 | 454 | 460 | | | | | |
| 43 | Barbil | 393 | 390 | 398 | | | | | |
| 44 | Rourkela | 396 | 396 | 405 | | | | | |

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Shimla - 171 004

SUPREME COURT RULING:

"EPF SCHEME MEMBER A CONSUMER"

In a significant judgement, the Supreme Court has held that an employee-member of the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) scheme is a 'consumer' and the scheme a 'service' under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

The court has also held that the delayed payment of Provident Fund to an employee-member amounts to 'deficiency in service' under the Act.

"The provisions of the Act can, therefore, be invoked against the Provident Fund Commissioner by a member of the scheme for the delayed payment of Provident Fund," the court said.

The ruling was handed down by a Division Bench comprising Justice S Saghir Ahmad and Justice R P Sethi while dismissing an appeal by the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner against a judgement of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

The respondent, Shiv Kumar Joshi, who was a member of the scheme, applied for the payment of his Provident Fund on July 15, 1992. It was found that the application filed by him was not complete as required by Para 72(5)(d) of the scheme. The claim of the respondent was settled on August 24, 1992 after verification obtained by the area inspector from the factory of the employee-member.

However, the respondent filed a complaint before the Faridabad district consumer disputes redressal forum on August 26, 1992 alleging deficiency in service of the appellant and claimed damages to the tune of Rs 65,000 along with costs for the alleged delay in payment.

The district forum, by its order dated November 11, 1992, directed the appellant to pay interest at the rate of 18 per cent and costs of Rs 1,000. The order of the district forum was upheld in appeal by the Haryana State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission and the National Commission. Hence the appeal before the apex court.

The Supreme Court, in its judgement, said that a combined reading of the definition of 'consumer' and 'services' under the Act and looking at the aims and object for which the Act was enacted, it was imperative that the words 'consumer' and 'service' as defined under the Act should be construed to comprehend consumer and services of commercial and trade oriented nature only.

"Thus any person who is found to have hired services for consideration shall be deemed to be a consumer notwithstanding that the services were in connection with any goods or their user. Such services may be for any connected commercial activity and may also relate to the services as indicated in Section 2(1) (b) of the Act," the court observed.

The court said a perusal of the scheme unambiguously showed it was for consideration which was applicable to all those factories and establishments covered under the Act and the scheme. "It cannot be held that even though the employee is the member of the scheme, yet the employer would only be deemed to be a 'consumer' for having made payments of the administrative charges. Admittedly, no service is rendered to the employer under the scheme which is framed for the benefit of the employee under Section 5,6 and 7 of the Act," the court pointed out.

The court rejected the argument that the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, being the Central Government, could not be held to be rendering 'service within the meaning of the Act and the scheme. "The commissioner is a separate and distinct entity. It cannot legally claim that the facilities provided by the scheme were not 'service' or that the benefits under the scheme being provided were free of charge."

The court said that even if it was held that the administrative charges were paid by the Central Government and no part of it was paid by the employee, the services of the commissioner in running the scheme should be deemed to have been availed of for consideration by the Central Government for the benefit of employees within the meaning of that word used in the definition of consumer.

"Both the State as well as the national commission have dealt with the definitions of 'service' under Section 2(1)(0) and 'consumer' under Section 2(1)(d) of the Act. Both have rightly come to the conclusion that the Act was applicable in the case of the scheme on the ground that its member was a 'consumer' under Section 2(1)(d) and the scheme was a 'service' under Section 2(1) (0) of the Act.

(Courtesy: Business Line, 18-12-1999)



95th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF COM B T RANADIVE

19TH December 99, the 95th birth anniversary of Comrade B T Ranadive was celebrated at Bangabhawan auditorium, New Delhi. Com Samar Mukherjee, Vice President CITU presided. E Balanandan, M K Pandhe, Biplob Dasgupta MP on behalf of ALL India Kisan Sabha, Pramila Pandhe from All India Democratic Women's Association, Sukomal Sen, General Secretary, All India State Govt Employees Federation, and K M Tewari, Secretary, Delhi State CITU addressed.

E Balanandan, while inaugurating the discussion pointed to the international scenario which is featured by the imperialist forces to expand their political, economic and militarist hegemony on the developing countries along with rising protest by the workers and democratic world community against such machination.

Pramila Pandhe from AIDWA, recalled the guidance and initiative of late com B T Ranadive in organising the working women and the importance he used to give on developing leadership from among the woman workers. Sukomal Sen recalled that Com BTR used to stress on the task of developing political consciousness of the workers to prepare them for struggle for confirmation of the society. Biplob Dasgupta while recalling his long association with com BTR, mentioned about the importance assigned by him on building of the workers-peasants alliance in the struggle against exploitation in a country like India.

M K Pandhe recapitulating the early days of CITU after its foundation in 1970, outlined how along with the passage of time, the platform of unity in the TU movement got broadened through the struggle against disastrous anti people, anti worker policies of the ruling class. Samar Mukherjee, in his concluding speech stressed the need for projecting the alternative policy in the united struggle against the policy of liberalisation and globalisation.

(Photo courtesy: J Ballabh)