

THE VOICE
OF



THE WORKING WOMAN

Vol. III No. 5 Sept. 1983 Re. 1

Indian Women's Delegation at Kremlin—Moscow



IN THIS ISSUE

Women Court Arrest	
Message by Soviet Women's Committee	2
Convention of Working Women	3
Death of Punnamma	
Wives Gherao Manager	4
Report of Kerala Committee	5
Women Workers in Kanak Industry. Release Mariyum Ferroz	6
Gujarat Textile Women Struggle.	7
Women's Convention of Bhatpara	
News from Tamilnadu	7
Kerala Govt. Teachers	
Women Decide Further Course of Action	8
China Curbs Feudal Tendencies	9-10
Moscow Seminar for Peace	11
Karl Marx and Women	12-15
Advertisement	16
Women in Pakistan Fight Against Military Rule	17
Working Women will March to Parliament	18
AIDWA Calls upon Women to Observe 23rd Nov. 2nd T.U. Convention	19
Advertisement	20
Plug the Loopholes	21
Appointment of Women Labour Inspectors	22
Govt's Apathy towards Women's Employment	23
Did you know?	24

Women Court Arrest

AUGUST 26, the last day of the monsoon session of Parliament saw an unprecedented protest action by women. The protest under the banner of the Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch (DVCM) was led by six national women's organisations, including the All India Democratic Women's Association, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU), National Federation of Indian Women, Mahila Dakshata Samiti, YWCA and the Lok Dal, and marked the resentment of women in India at the callous attitude of the Government towards the heinous crime of dowry deaths and increasing harassment for dowry. The protestors specifically expressed their anger at the non-introduction of the Dowry Prohibition Act Amendment Bill and other related legislation in the session of Parliament that was concluding as had been categorically promised by the Prime Minister herself to a delegation of the DVCM on July 26.

Shouting slogans — "Indira tere raj mein bahuen jal kar marti hain", "dahej kanoon mein sansodhan karo", (Indira, in your raj, daughter-in-laws die of burning. Make amendments to the Dowry Act), the demonstrators squatted on the road and succeeded in sustaining a road-block in the area for almost two hours. Subsequently, the demonstrators courted arrest, led by their leaders Susheela Gopalan, Kanak Mukherjee, Ila Bhattacharya of the AIDWA and CPI(M) MP; Pramila Dandavate of the Mahila Dakshata Samiti and Janata MP, Gyatri Devi of the Lok Dal; Vimala Ranadive of the AICCCWW and Vimla Farooqui of the NFIW.

Speaking on the occasion Susheela Gopalan called upon the Government to convene a special session of Parliament to immediately enact anti-dowry legislation, and condemned the Government for having given false assurances and deliberately misleading women's organisations.

Message of Soviet Women's Committee to AICCCWW

Extend Cordial Congratulations. Occasion National Holiday Independence and sincere wishes success — happiness, well being, peace.

Second Convention of Working Women, Vizag

Com. Nirmala, Vaizag

VIZAG District Working Women's Second Convention was held on 10 July 1983 in a very inspiring and auspicious spirit. Though raining heavily an appreciable number of working women with due representation from most of the establishments in the city viz., P&T, LIC, Collectorate, University, BHPV, VSP, Teachers, Doctors, Advocates, Contract Labour, etc.

A presidium consisting of Smt. Punyavati, Advocate, Smt. Suadamini (Secretary) P&T Women's Welfare Association) and Dr. Jayalaxmi conducted the proceedings of the Convention. Smt. Sarada, Convenor presented the report wherein a review of the past activities of the Working Women's Co-ordination Committee was made.

Com. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary of All India Working Woman Co-ordination Committee & Editor of 'The Voice of the Working Women', in her inaugural address stressed the need for getting organised and fight unitedly not only for the special problems of working women but to join the mainstream of working class movement as a whole. While concluding her speech, she appealed the trade union leaders to encourage the women employees to take active part in trade union movement.

Com. Suryavathi, in her message to the Convention, while outlining the past history of Mahila Sangam stressed the need for understanding the Government policies and its impact on the prevailing economic and social conditions of the country in general and on women in particular.

She appealed the working women to join hands with other democratic mass organisations, such as Mahila Sangam, Democratic Youth Organisations in the struggle for eradication of social evils, like Dowry System, atrocities on women, and against price-rise, unemployment, inequality in wages etc,

Com, P.V. Subba Rao, CITU Vice President said that it is the Vizag Working Women Co-ordination Committee which made the

District CITU realise the necessity of involving working women in T.U. movement. N. Krishnamurthy, LIC Union President, Smt. Dharmavaram, District Mahila Sangam President, Urban Development Project Officer also gave messages to the delegates of the Convention. Mrs. Padmavati (Press) spoke on the deplorable working conditions of the employees, such as, low rate of wages compelling the workers to do overtime work, non-observation of labour and other social welfare legislations in the Press. Miss Annapurna (BHPV) felt hesitant to participate in the discussion in the beginning but spoke with much enthusiasm, on the vulnerable position of a working woman under the present Society. She pleaded the Co-ordination Committee to educate the women in realising their own problems and giving a tough fight against any sort of injustice meted out to them.

Com. Punyavati, while speaking on Sea Food Industry, stressed the need of inculcating trade union consciousness among the Sea Food industry workers, whose condition of work is in such a deplorable state that even minimum wages are not paid and women employees are made to do night duties and long working hours, violating minimum legislative provisions.

Thus, a good number of delegates while participating in the discussions highlighted the general problems of the working women, such as transportation, rest rooms, toilets, working women hostels, creches, etc.

Keeping in view the general problems of the working women and stressing the local problems of the Vizag District the Convention passed the following resolutions: Transport facilities, NGOs' Strike, Illegal police lathi-charge firing and arrests of Contract Labour in Gyatri Engineering Company.

The Convention elected a committee of 31 members, Smt. Surya Mani (LIC), as the Convenor of the newly formed working women Coordination Committee of the Vizag District.

Who is Responsible for Death of Punamma?

Madhu Sethia, Rajasthan

PUNAMMA'S death on 11 June 1983, (she was posted as a nurse in a remote village Ravilgoan, District Kota, Rajasthan) has once again highlighted the sorry plight of women working in rural and remote areas and the apathy of state government of the question of providing minimum security to the working women.

Punamma was found dead in her room which she had rented in the house of Village Sarpanch a Cong(I) man. Red and blue marks on Punamma's body indicated that she was subjected to beating and torture before she died. Punamma had lodged a complaint with the district Family Planning Officer on 26 April, that one of her senior colleague Dr. Bansal was harassing her and for the sake of her life and honour she pleaded for a transfer. The district authorities later on transferred Dr. Bansal from the Sub Centre. However, he continued to visit the place at odd hours and threatened Punamma of dire consequences. The doctor was also a friend of the Village Sarpanch. It is a general feeling in the areas that the Sarpanch alongwith his notorious son and Dr. Bansal are responsible for Punamma's death. The police is however trying to dismiss the case as that of suicide, without conducting a proper investigation.

This is the fourth such case in recent years. In 1978 L. Hamilton died in Ajmer district, followed by Mary who was first raped and then crushed to death under a jeep and Amini who was hunt to death. The police did not conduct any serious investigation in any of these cases, due to political pressure.

There are about three thousand girls from Kerala working as nurses in Rajasthan. Due to nature of their job they are exposed to all kinds of risks, while the government has completely overlooked the need to provide even safe living quarters to these girls.

On 18 June, Ms. M.J. Little, President Rajasthan Female Nursing Association has demanded a repostmortem and an enquiry by CBI in this case. But despite repeated assurances nothing has been done by the Govern-

ment so far. The Jaipur unit of AIDWA is making efforts to call a joint meeting of various women's organisations on July 24 to chalk out a programme of action against this apathetic attitude of government and police and to demand minimum security for women working in remote and rural areas of Rajasthan.

Wives of the Workers Gherao the Manager

Com. Chandra Mohini, Saharanpur, U.P.

SINCE the 5th of May in the local cigarette factory, the Cigarettee Mazdoor Union (CITU) had started a relay hunger strike on their charter of demands. The management, with the connivance of INTUC, was launching attacks on workers every now and then. Since July, the union had to convert the relay hunger strike into 'fast upto death'. The management attempted to crush the struggle. The Administrative Officer's attitude was also anti-worker. By now the support for the striking workers started increasing all over the town. On July 6, about 60-70 women held a militant demonstration in front of the factory gate in support of the struggle. Despite the security staff, the women were able to snatch the keys of the factory gate after which they made their way in and gheraoed the General Manager. Every attempt to break the gherao was unfruitful. After the persuasion of the workers on hunger strike and the union leaders, the gherao was lifted after 2½ hours. This demonstration boosted the morale of struggling workers and gave way to a unique sense of unity due to which the management had to reinstate all victimised workers. All the cases and charge-sheets against employees were also withdrawn.

On July 31, a meeting was held at the local Municipal Corporation Town Hall, where about 125 women, from various sections attended.

The meeting concluded with the constitution of a 15-member ad hoc committee of Janawadi Mahila Samiti headed by Com. Chandramohini, Advocate.

Report of the Co-ordination Committee—Kerala

Com. A. Nazimuneza, Kerala

IN order to improve the functioning of the State Committee we had a discussion with the State CITU Centre. After the discussion the Centre took initiative to convene a meeting of the State leaders of the State and Central Government Employees and other Public Sector Employees' Organisations. The meeting helped to a certain extent clarify the confusion about the aims and objects of the Co-ordination Committee and they agreed that they would make efforts through their organisations to send the Women Workers to participate in the Co-ordination Committee at different levels.

After the discussions, we organised conventions in two districts viz. Alleppey and Trivandrum. In Alleppey convention, about 400 workers participated and new District Committee was formed. Taluk conventions were also held and Taluk level committees formed. These committees are taking up local issues and trying to propagate the aims of the Co-ordination Committee. Recently a Seminar on 'Communal Harmony' was held at Alleppey by our District Committee.

The Trivandrum District Convention held on 11.1.1983 was attended by 263 Women Workers. The participation from CITU Unions was not encouraging. There was no representation from Coir and Cashew Sectors even though the majority of workers in those sectors are women under CITU. Women Workers in Keltron, Electricity, Transport, Handloom and Weaving, Press etc. Teachers & employees in State and Central Govt. Offices attended the convention. New District Committee was formed. The campaign work conducted in connection with the convention evoked tremendous response from all sections of women and we could raise a fund of about Rs. 6000 from the workers.

Regarding the activities among women in trade union affiliated to CITU it may be mentioned that the women workers in Cashew and Coir industries are taking part enbloc in all the struggles launched by the trade unions even if their participation in working women meetings is poor. Efforts are afoot to bring them under Co-ordination Committee also. 20 women workers from various unions have been elected

to the General Council of the Trivandrum District CITU. The women workers in Keltron are very active in their trade union as well as in the working women Co-ordination Committee.

In Electricity the women workers are actively participating in all programmes. Their participation in the recent strike is good. Women's representation at State-Division-Unit level Committee is also increasing. Due to their efforts 8 women of INTUC (I) and AITUC Unions attended our Trivandrum District Convention.

The Working Women's Co-ordination Committee is functioning well in the Government Secretariat, Accountant General's Office, Post & Telegraph and University Office and among NGOs and Teachers. Work has just begun to activate nurses and Press Workers.

Some programmes such as observance of International Women's Day, Seminars on 'Women Employment' and on 'Struggles for Peace' were conducted under the joint auspices of Working Women's Co-ordination Committee and All India Democratic Women's Association and other Mahila Organisations. All India Democratic Women's Association observed Employment Day and staged Dharna in front of the Secretariat in which Co-ordination Committee participated and gave financial assistance.

The State Committee has not been convened since September 1982. With a view to correcting this lapse and to spread the activities to other districts also a high level body which consists leaders from CITU, State Centre, Service Organisations and Co-ordination Committee has been formed last month.

The Magazine is accepted in general by all. It is distributed among middle class employees. No one hesitates to receive it. Some articles appearing therein are translated in local magazines. It will be appreciated if the speeches and articles of trade union leaders highlighting the objects of working Women's Co-ordination Committee and the necessity of women to actively take part in trade unions are published in our magazine, as it will be helpful for the new sections.

Women Workers in Kanak Industries Fight

Subhasini Ali, Bombay

KANAK Industries is a large, garment-manufacturing unit in Bombay owned by the Amersey Group, manufacturing ready-made clothes with the Milton label. This is one of the most successful export units of the kind in the country. 850 women are permanently employed and the number of temporary women is between 150 and 200. The wages being paid are very low and the women receive monthly salaries of about Rs. 250 a month. There was an internal union in the factory which was totally ineffective and when the workers started agitating for an interim relief increase in their wages about two years ago, the union did not encourage it.

Soon after the agitation started, some of the activists met us and asked us to help them. We advised them to form a union affiliated to the CITU and they readily agreed. The union was formed and all the women enthusiastically became its members. A letter was sent to the Management asking them to revise the pay scales and to introduce proper grades in the company.

The managements immediately retaliated by giving a break to 175 temporary workers and by intimidating and harassing the others. The supervisors were instructed to abuse the women, talk all sorts of filthy things to them, threaten them and go on nagging them to leave the union. The workers exercised great restraint and refused to be provoked. Many of them were then charge-sheeted and suspended. The union, however, stuck to its stand of demanding that the Minimum Wages prescribed by the new law of the Govt. be implemented. All the garment manufacturers had gone to the courts to stay this law.

On June 6, 1983, the management changed its tactics. It hired some well-known goondas who came into the office, carrying a red flag and shouting slogans. They broke a tube-light and pushed one or two of the officers around and then left, leaving their flag behind. The next morning, the management put up a notice that due to the intimidation by union goondas and the atmosphere of terror created by them, they were declaring a lock-out. The lock-out has not yet been lifted. Since the very beginning,

many action programmes have been organised by the union: processions, mass deputations, dharnas etc. Several cases are being fought in the Labour Court and the Management has initiated criminal cases against the activists. A few days after the lock-out was declared, the management tried to take out its machines in trucks in the middle of the night. From that day onwards, batches of women workers take turns to sit outside the gate continuously, throughout the day and night. The factory is situated in a very dark and desolate part of the city but neither this nor the torrential rain of the last 6 weeks have deterred the workers from ensuring that no machinery or finished goods are taken out of the factory.

Other CITU and non-CITU have come to the help of the workers financially and otherwise. The Govt. has also been approached for its intervention. Meanwhile the workers are determined not be cowed down by the management's threats of closure and are waging their battle very courageously.

"Release Mariyam Ferooz" Women's Demonstration at Indian Embassy

More than 100 women belonging to All India Democratic Women's Association and National Federation of Indian Women demonstrated at the Iranian Embassy on 14.7.1983 to demand, "Release Mariyam Ferooz", restore the democratic rights of the people, "Listen to the Voice of the people, Khomeni" with festoons and flags of the organisations. Women demanded that a delegation should be allowed to see the Ambassador. But the watchmen, officers and the staff only watched the shouting women helplessly. In spite of repeated demands the doors were not opened to let the deputation enter. "The memorandum demanding release of Mariyam Ferooz and other democratic people was then stuck on the chained door of the Embassy.

Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President of AIDWA and Vimala Farooqui General Secretary of NFIW addressed the gathering. After an hour long demonstration while women were returning, the police appeared on the scene.

Gujarat Textile Women Struggle

Com. Damyanti Parikh

WOMEN workers in Sarangpur Mill No. 2, Mihir Textile, New Cotton Mill and Soma Textile are launching struggles for wages, against lock-outs, discrimination, and inhuman treatment meted out to them. 15 women in Sarangpur Mill went on hunger strike in front of the mill gate on 17-18 July against the lock-out, and demanding abolition of contract system, regularisation of jobs, increase in wages. Women workers in other mills came out in support of them. The women went on Dharna from 28 July in front of the office of the Mill Owner's Association. Com. Yashi, a woman worker in Soma Textile is being harassed by the supervisor and had to work longer because no reliever was to be found to replace. When she fainted due to over work she was suspended. A massive meeting was held at the gate in protest in support of Com. Yashi. Women workers in Atlas Factory accounting about 110 are demanding the minimum facilities in their factory such as rest room and creche. The women here are getting Rs. 10-13 as wages even after 10-12 years. Those who are working since 2 years are getting Rs. 4 only. After their protest against this, management declared a lock-out. A meeting was held at the gate to protest against this where Com. Damyanti spoke.

In a procession on 1st August at Gandhi Nagar by CITU for submitting a charter of Demands more than 300 women from different mills participated. The police tried to disrupt the demonstration and resorted to lathicharge when many women were injured and arrested. In a deputation to Shri Sanat Mehta, the Labour Minister, demands were made on the specific questions of women mentioned above which he promised to look into.

Women's Convention at Bhatpara 24-Parganas—West Bengal

A Convention of Women, most of them from the Industrial areas, was held on 21st August '83 at Shramik Kalyan Kendra, at

Bhatpara on behalf of Ganatantrik Mahila Samity where more than 400 women were present amongst whom were wives of workers. The Convention raised the slogans such as open the closed mills, nationalise the jute Industry, more powers to the states, prohibition of Dowry etc. The main resolution was moved by Vandana Banerjee and supported by Shibani Bhattacharya and Kalyani Dey. Com. Kamai Sengupta spoke in detail about the political situation and appealed women to come out in support of 28th September "Bengal Bandh".

News letter From Tamilnadu

In Check-Ind Leather Factory at Pallavaram near Madras, there are 150 women out of 200 workers, subjected to worst exploitation. Their wage is less than Rs. 130 which is less than the minimum wage. When a CITU Union was formed and demands were placed, the management laid off 35 workers, all women. The women workers fought heroically and approached the Government to intervene in their problem. When the discussions were on, the owner deducted the salary ranging from Rs. 30/- to Rs. 50/- from 68 workers. The other refused to get the salary. After 3 months of struggle, they achieved their demands.

Avadi Ordinance Cloth Factory

In this factory the management is partial in allotting the overtime. The management first completely banned the O.T. for ladies and after the intervention of the Union with a great difficulty, the O.T. was restored. They banned the O.T. with a pretext that some of the ladies who are young wodonwn had some sort of relation with men workers outside the factory hours. For this kind of misconduct both men and women are responsible, but the management punishes only women workers, which shows the feudal outlook of the management. The active member was suspended. The matter was reported to Com. Sushila Gopalan to take up case in Ministry level. The AICCWW wrote the Labour Minister protesting against the discrimination.

Government Teachers in Kerala on Warpath

Soni Kamath, Kerala

DURING the last two years there were no separate actions or programmes in the teacher community, especially in the sector of Govt. School teachers. But at the same time there was a lot of actions, agitations and struggles in the part of teachers and state employees for common demands.

In 1982 the Government of Kerala particularly the Minister for Education changed its transfer policy and issued thousands of special orders to transfer the teachers including lady teachers violating the rules and norms. Against this illegal transfers a chain of actions were conducted during the period of June 1982 to October 1982.

Mass dharnas, demonstrations, and public meetings were conducted all over the state. A good number of lady teachers participated in these actions, in the month of October 1982 a picketting programme had been arranged in the District Educational head-quarters. More than eight thousand teachers took part in this picketting programmes. Out of this more than a thousand teachers were ladies. They were arrested and cases were charged against them. In November our Association President started an indefinite hunger strike in the state head-quarters and Distt. level leaders started hunger strike in the Distt. headquarters. During the ten days' prolonged hunger strike thousands of lady teachers observed hunger strike for one day during school time. Thousands of lady teachers participated in the mass dharna conducted in the Sub-District headquarters.

At last the government was compelled to settle the demand and maintained statusquo in the matter of transfer policy and to withdraw cases framed against the teachers during the period of picketting.

In February 1983 there was a spontaneous strike against the denial of surrender leave benefit. In this strike majority of lady teachers in Government Sector participated. In the month of April 1983 we conducted a statewide camp for state level lady teachers at Trichur.

In the month of July, the state employees and teachers were conducted a token strike for D.A. interim relief and the pay revision where a good number of lady teachers parti-

cipated. On July 31, we conducted a day seminar for lady teachers in all district head-quarters.

We have also decided to conduct a statewide conference of lady teachers in the month of November. This conference will take decisions to chalk out separate actions and programmes for lady teachers for their own legitimate demands.

Social Welfare Women Workers in Delhi decide further course of action **Pramila Pandhe, General Secretary**

The Social Welfare Mahila Karmachari Union, Delhi has served 10 days notice to the Directorate of Technical Education and Training cum Production Centre under the social welfare Department, Delhi Administration.

The notice was served by the union due to the failure of the authorities to settle the just and genuine demands of the Women piece-rated workers.

The union had submitted a charter of demands to the authorities in May 1982. Since then the union is trying to settle the demands amicably. The workers went on Dharna to focus the attention of the authorities. The Dharna was lifted on the assurance by the Chief Secretary, Delhi Administration that all the demands would be settled sympathetically. However, despite persistent representations by the union representatives to the authorities continuing nearly for one and half years, no favourable settlement could arrive.

The Working Committee of the union held recently decided to demonstrate in front of the office if the authorities failed to settle the demands within the notice period. The meeting also decided to go on indefinite strike if necessary.

The women-piece-rated workers have decided to see the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi to present their case and to bring the pressure on the Administration to settle the demands as early as possible. The Memorandum of the Working Condition of these Women also would be presented to her at her office.

Socialist China Curbs Feudal Tendencies

THE news coming from China regarding increasing number of divorces, infanticides, wife beatings and desertions of wives for not giving births to sons etc., is disturbing no doubt. That even after 30 years of socialism such incidents take place is something for us to think about. The Chinese Government, mass organisations including China's Women's Federation are fighting against these feudal tendencies ideologically and politically and the results obtained, according to the Chinese sources are very encouraging.

The Beijing Review, the official organ of the Communist Party of China expressed that "it was indeed distressing that cases of female infanticide occur in Socialist China although they are very rare". What is the background and where are these incidents taking place?

Historically feudal domination continued for more than 2000 years in China. The concept that a man is superior to a woman was so deeprooted as it is in India, that a failure to produce a male child to carry the name of the head of the family led to desertion of a wife as well as killing the newly born baby girl. The female infanticide was rampant in China in old days, in the villages in particular.

Land Reforms give Women Piece of Land

It was the decree of land reforms, land given to women for the first time that gave a fillip to fight against the feudal system after the liberation of China in 1949. As a result of the land reform movement all over the country, the people's livelihood improved considerably, women joined men in productive labour on a vast scale, were treated equal to men in general. Women fought side by side with the men in building socialism.

According to the Article 49 of the Chinese Constitution, "Children are protected by the State and the maltreatment of old people, women and children is prohibited." Article 15 of the Marriage laws states "infanticide by drowning and any other acts causing serious harm to infants are prohibited". Protective laws concerning women's equality in every

field is guaranteed in the constitution. These laws again strengthened in 1980 and in 1982.

But the Chinese Communist Party correctly stated "that the equality of men and women in law does not always mean equality in practice". The attainment of these requires long term efforts. And this is quite true.

According to the Chinese sources the period between 1966-76, the period of cultural revolution in China, all the educational work and activities came to a standstill and the feudal ideas began to surface rapidly during that period. In some places political and ideological work has been neglected resulting the ideas of superiority of men and women cropped up again. Arranged marriages started taking place, girls started demanding the bride money and gifts, (In India a girl has to give a dowry to a boy) parents desired that their children chose partners who are well matched socially and economically, thus violating the right to choose their partners. These feudal concepts did disrupt the family life when mothers were abused by their husbands for giving births to girls and so on. When the question of looking after the children and household arose women were being treated unequal, taking for granted it was the sole responsibility of women only. It was also observed that women were being discriminated in employment and men were preferred instead.

Ignorance, lack of knowledge and disregard for state law have led these people to commit so many offences. Although they are a handful in the society, nevertheless their wrong doings have drawn grave concern from all quarters.

Another important point noted from the Chinese journals was it was found that "some officials at the grass roots level do not pay enough attention to women's issues, and believe that sexual equality is already a reality since most women in China are now working. They fail to pay adequate attention to the fact that women are still discriminated against and illtreated. The result is they do not adopt resolute measures to curb such actions thinking that these problems are of minor nature".

The Chinese Communist Party, the Government, mass organisations including the Chinese Women's Federation considered the problems of the rising feudal tendencies which have arisen due to the wrong policies pursued in the years of cultural revolution seriously and a campaign to root them out started on a wide scale, especially in rural areas. Premier Zhao Ziyang in his report on the sixth Five Year Plan at the Fifth session of the National People's Congress stated, "the whole society should resolutely condemn the criminal activities of female infanticide and maltreatment of the mothers, and the judicial departments should resolutely punish the offenders according to law".

Many measures have adopted to curb such barbaric incidents by the Government. A special campaign was taken up in the month of January 1983 to educate the people. The mass media was utilised to expose and censure the criminal practices of female infanticide and maltreating women as inferior who give birth to girls.

The criminal law of the People's Republic of China stipulates: who ever intentionally commits homicide shall be sentenced to death or to life imprisonment or to imprisonment for not less than 10 years or in less serious cases, to imprisonment for three to 10 years. Recently a worker in the North-east City of Dandong was convicted of killing his infant daughter and sentenced to 13 years in prison. It is to be noted that the open criticism of these issues in China is "aimed at stopping it and educating the people. It shows the firm attitude of the Chinese Government against such erroneous behaviour."

The Chinese Women's Federation Intervenes

During last few years most of the branches of Women's Federation in China are actively working to improve the conditions, to root out these feudal relics among the rural people. While discussing in details with the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party regarding the tasks which women's federation have to carry in this regard, an enlarged meeting of the executive of the All China Women's Federation passed a resolution which stated "it is the unshirkable duty of women's federation at various levels to uphold the legitimate rights

and interests of women and children". A decision was taken in this meeting to publicise the provisions of the protection of women and children, the Marriage law and so on, on a wide scale to motivate the entire people to concern themselves with the work for women. It was publicly informed that the Federation should not depend only on the Government, but more on their own efforts.

In the Fifth National Women's Congress of Chinese Women's Federation opened at Beijing on September 2, 1983 with 2000 delegates from all over China with 4000 from the Capital. The leader of women's movement, Kang Keqing in her report to the Congress, said "the recurrence of female infanticide, continued preference for boy babies, sale of brides and other abuse of women and children showed the deterioration of social values in the chaotic ten years of the "cultural revolution", the persistence of feudal ideas, and the influence of bourgeois ideas from abroad..." and appealed to women to strengthen their sense of self respect to defend their own rights and interests.

According to the latest reports the Federation has successfully intervened in compelling the courts to review the cases on wrong matrimonial disputes. They are intervening in the matter of marriages in favour of the girls who want freedom to marry. They defended women who were victims of beatings.

In the year 1983, the Personal Bureau of Human Province refused to recruit women. A responsible member of the county said "women cannot shoulder heavy responsibility and they are not talented". As soon as this news spread the women activists intervened and brought this matter to the knowledge of their leadership. The County Government was told to correct themselves since it was a violation of the constitutional provision.

Chinese Women are referred to as "half the sky" in terms of their role in the revolution and in building their country towards socialism. They are again proving themselves worthy of the praise while working at present to root out the feudal relics.

Moscow Seminar Resolves to Struggle for Peace

THE All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICCW) and All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) were invited in a bilateral seminar held at Moscow from July 18-26, between the Soviet Women's Committee and the Women's organisations in India. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, AICCW and Manjari Gupta, President, AIDWA represented their respective organisations. The other organisations represented were the National Federation of Indian Women, All India Women's Conference, National Association for Rural Women and the Indian Housewives' Federation. The total Indian delegates were nine while the Soviet women were represented by delegates.

The main subject of Seminar was "Women's Social Status and Participation in the Struggle for Peace". Manjari Gupta and Vimala Ranadive presented papers on women's position in family and women's labour activities in town and country respectively.

The Seminar expressed deep concern at the worsening international situation because of the aggressive actions of the imperialist forces led by the USA. The participants supported the Soviet peace initiatives for preventing a nuclear war and noted that these initiatives played a great role consolidating all the forces opposing the danger of war. The Seminar also highlighted role of the Non-Aligned Movement to carry forward the anti-imperialist, anti-war and anti-colonialist policy, which was demonstrated in the New Delhi Conference. The Seminar noted that women around the world can make contributions to the struggle against the arms race, against the aggressive and expansionist policies of imperialism, and for peace, security and national independence. The participants agreed that women's true equality and development was possible only in conditions of world peace.

The Seminar also noted with profound satisfaction the development of the traditional friendly relations between the people of India and the Soviet Union and voiced confidence that the all round cooperation between the people of the two countries based on the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation would continue to develop success-

fully in the interest of peace and social progress.

The Soviet delegates who submitted papers were Zoya N. Timofeyeva, Deputy Editor-in-Charge of Robotnitsa, magazine; Valentina Fedotova, member of the SWC, Presidium and Editor-in-chief of the Soviet Woman; Tamara E. Alova, a research officer at the Institute of the State & Law of the USSR Academy of Science and a member of the Soviet Committee and Galina P. Sevgeyeva, Senior Research Official at the Research Institute of the USSR State Planning Committee and a member of the Soviet Women's Committee. The papers on the four subjects mentioned above were informative on the position of women in the society before revolution and the vast changes now taken place in every field after the revolution substantiated with facts and figures.

The paper submitted by Galina on the Women's Work in Urban and Rural areas explained that in pre-revolutionary Russia, the employment of women was only 19 per cent, most of whom were domestic servants and farm labourers, while 13 per cent were in the industry and public services. Now, more than 90 per cent of women are in "the economically active age bracket from 16 to 54, work in the national economy". Out of this 51 per cent are from the factory and office while 46 per cent farmers. Women account for 82 per cent in the head service and social security, 75 per cent in cultural and 40 per cent in science. It was really surprising that more than a million women were holding managerial positions in the various branches of the economy, at present.

In 1978 a new prohibitive list was approved by the Government where women were forbidden to work from 500 occupations and provided other jobs. The Soviet women try to solve the problem by giving more privileges in the work for working mothers such as by prolonging paid and unpaid maternity leave, promoting flexible work, shorter working day etc. and also expanding the consumer services and improving the pre-school institutions for children.

The paper warned that it was not enough for just to take part in social production, there was also the need for the social conditions that ruled out any exploitation of man by man which the women in Soviet Union are trying to achieve.

Marx and Women

WOMEN in our country will join lakhs of men and women of the world in paying tributes to one of the greatest personalities of the 19th century, Karl Marx. He is near and dear to us not only because he offered scientific explanation to all the so called theories put forward by the bourgeois parties, by left and right opportunists with the intention of perpetuating the exploitative system but also because he guided the working class by arming them with the scientific theory that it was the only class who could overthrow the bourgeois rule and establish its own dictatorship. Marx and Engels together worked jointly on the basis of their practical experience of the movement of the working class, peasantry and other classes, wrote innumerable articles, scientific books on important economic and political problems arising hundred and fifty years back and contributed to the theory and practice of Marxism.

Marx's teachings are of utmost importance for women and working women in particular, without which no emancipation of women from the feudal-bourgeois rule could be conceived. One would read pages after pages in 'Capital' as to how the women and children were exploited to the utmost as cheap labour by the rising bourgeoisie in the beginning of the 19th century. It is astounding to read the brilliant way Marx explains the methods adopted by the rising capitalists to exploit the labour force, when they opened the gates for employing the labour of women and children at the introduction of new machinery where muscular strength of a man was unnecessary.

Marx on Female Labour

The capitalists thought it most useful to employ the weak and less muscular human beings, available in plenty on whom they could make surplus profits. The families and children of the workers were brought in the labour market for the first time dispensing with the male members of the family. How did these happenings reflect on the labour market? Marx explains in this way:

"The value of labour power was determined not only by the labour time necessary to maintain the individual adult labourers, but also by the necessary to maintain his family. "Machi-

nery by throwing every member of that family on to the labour market, spreads the value of the man's labour power". It thus depreciates his labour power. He explains further: "To purchase the labour power of a family of four workers may perhaps, cost more than it formerly did to purchase the labour power of the head of the family, but in return, four days' labour takes the place of one and their price falls in proportion to the excess of the surplus labour of four over the surplus labour of one". The capitalist who was employing one male head, paying him according to his labour power, now with the employment of women and children gets more benefits, with the law of supply and demand coming into force, more labour comes in the market depreciating the value of the labour power. Thus what he was paying to the male head of the family before, now he gets surplus profit by employing four more members of the family.

"In order that the family may live, four people must now, not only labour but expand surplus labour for the capitalist".

Inhuman Condition of Women Workers

On the basis of various enquiries made by Members of Parliament, Marx quoted instances after instances of the acute exploitation of women and children by capitalists who were driven mad to earn as much surplus profits as possible. The capitalists did not care a bit whether women and children were dying due to over work or starvation. They did not care about the total break up of the family, nor the total estrangement between mothers and the children, brought about as a result of the employment of women.

There were specific reasons for employing the labour of women, Marx quotes:

"One Mr. E informed me that he employed females exclusively at his power loom..." Why? "... gives a decided preference to married females, especially those who have families at home dependent on them for support; they are attentive, docile more so than unmarried females, and are compelled to use their utmost exertions to procure the necessities of life...." Thus are the virtues of the female character "to be perverted to her injury ... thus all that is most dutiful and tender in her nature is made

a means of her bondage and suffering" (speech by Lord Ashlay — March 15th, 1844).

The married woman, who has to look after the children, to provide food for the family is bound to be "docile" "more attentive"! She would not grumble — because she could not afford to — if she was asked to continue to work till 12 P.M. in the night! This was how the women were exploited, and these were the mean and cruel methods of the manufacturers to use the good nature of a woman who was compelled to sell her labour power.

One Saunders, a factory inspector remarked in his report in 1844: "Amongst the female operatives there are some women who, for many weeks in succession, except for a few days, are employed from 6 A.M. till midnight, with less than 2 hours for meals, so that on five days of the week they have only 6 hours left out of the 24 for going to and from their homes for resting in bed..."

It was reported at that time, that there was much resistance to employ women by men workers. The capitalist by using the female and children's labour brought them into the ranks of the workers and machinery at last "broke down the resistance of the male operatives in the manufacturing period who continued to oppose to the despotism of capital".

His way of describing the death of Mary who was made to work for continuous 3-4 days in a small unhygienic crowded room to finish a fashionable gown for a lady who was to attend a posh dance party that day, was pure and simple projection of an incident which took place in the course of existing capitalist — labour relations! No other outcome was possible from the production relations existing at that time. Women were once employed to drag the small boats ashore because the cost of the labour for women was found to be cheaper than using the horses!

The capitalist finds different ways and means to create surplus profit out of the labour power of the workers. In the natural course, unless a worker has some rest he can not work the next day. To overcome this "physical hindrance", an alternative was found by him, the "Relay System", day and night work. This relay-system worked in cotton and spinning mills where the production continued for 24 hours, women being the major force. In some branches of industry the girls and women worked throughout the night together with males. The working day was on an average

of 12 hours, and on Sundays too they used to work.

Table of Mortality

In the 19th century the capitalists made women and children work beyond their capacity and the death rate was high which can be noted from below :

The death rate per 1 lakh men in tailoring, printing in agriculture etc. Dr. Simon the chief medical officer quoted from census figures as Londoners was as follows :

Industries	Age 25-35	Age 35-45	Age 45-55
Agriculture	743	805	1,145
London Tailors	958	1,262	2,093
London Printers	894	1,747	2,367
Forth Report (1863)		(Page 465 Capital)	
		Moscow 1965	

"The high death rate ... is due to the employment of mothers away from their homes, and to the neglect and maltreatment, consequent on her absence such as amongst others insufficient nourishment, unsuitable food and dozing with opiates ... besides this there arises an unnatural estrangement between mother and child and as a consequence intensional starving and poisoning of the children" (The Enquiry of 1861). The system of capitalism brought such a situation where mothers would not care whether their children die due to starvation, neglect and also would not care if they continue to sleep till they return from the work by giving the opium. Engels has given enough instances stating that the mothers returned back with their blouses wet with "incessant flow of milk from their breasts".

Degradation of Women

In such conditions the morality among women was the lowest. One of the commission's report says (P-469) "It is no wonder that ignorance and vice abound in a population so brought up. Their morality is at the lowest ebb, a great number of the women have illegitimate children and at such immature age that even those most conversant with criminal statistics are astounded..."

Marx pointed out that this moral degradation of young girls, was the natural result of the circumstances for which the system of capitalism was responsible. He writes:

"The greatest evil of the system that employs young girls in this sort of work, consists

in this, that, as a rule, it chains them fast from childhood for the whole of their after life to the most abandoned rable. They become rough, foul mouthed boys before nature has taught them that they are women. Clothed in a few dirty rags, the legs naked far above the knees, hair and face besmeared with dirt, they learn to treat all feelings of decency and shame with contempt ... their heavy days work at length completed, they put on better clothes, and accompany the men to the public houses”

Participation of Women in Social Production the only way Leading to their Emancipation

Despite the serious consequences of employment of women on their private lives, including moral degradation, neglect of their children and so on, Marx showed the progressive side of the whole affair. Till that time women were just housewives, backward with no knowledge of the outside world. As soon as they were released from this bondage, they came across with the class conflict in the factory, started realising the minute mechanism of the machinery as well as the character of the opposite class, the exploiter. Despite the extreme limit of exploitation of female labour, Marx welcomed this process which ultimately paved the way for their emancipation.

He, came to conclusion that by drawing the female labour into social production it opened the way for them to further progress. “For, social labour frees women from the narrow confines of domestic and family relations; high mechanised industry aids in their development, raises their class consciousness and involves them in the liberation struggle of the working class”.

Marx and Engels after studying the inhuman conditions where women and children were working explained that women workers “by collectively organising in production process laid the foundation for a true emancipation of women, as it freed them from the age old economic and political domination”. In the modern family “man is the bourgeois, while the proletariat is represented by the woman”. Therefore Marx and Engels insisted that the emancipation of the working class had to go hand in hand with the class emancipation of the “proletariat in the family”.

Lenin Carries Forward the Work

Lenin, later on insisted on the stress to be given on the “unbreakable connection bet-

ween women’s human and social position and the private ownership of the means of production”. He said “this will draw a strong, ineradicable line against the bourgeois movement for the emancipation of women”.

Under leadership of Lenin, the proletariat in Russia with the alliance of peasantry and exploited people established the dictatorship of proletariat in 1917 and the production relations changed with the result that women have been emancipated completely. The equality among the sexes, equal status and opportunities for women were the first steps the socialist Government took. With the equal position and status of women under socialism, almost all women are participating in the social production. The children are looked after well by the state. All these changes, have occurred because the ownership of means of production have changed in favour of the exploited people.

Marx and Engels’ Intervention on the Question of Working Women.

Marx and Engels took up the cause of working women nearly hundred and fifty years ago. Engels was the first person to formulate the basic demands for women workers in the labour movement at that time when there used to be heated discussions in the socialist movement. The demands of equal pay for equal work, and special health safeguard for women workers, recognition of motherhood as a social function and measures to enable women to combine motherhood with work etc. were focussed for the first time before the general working class movement. Women workers in textile mills in France demanded equal rights for the first time during the revolutionary period around 1789 and 1848. It was reported, a furious discussion used to take place among the socialists. The general working class in France and elsewhere opposed women joining the factory advocating their real place was in kitchen. The women and children were joining the labour market in a big way and the male workers saw the women workers as their competitors rather than their partners in the common working class movement.

In the Communist Manifesto, the first document of Marxism published in 1848, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels pointed out that the only institution of public ownership of property could free women from their position as mere instrument of production.

Marx and Engels, founders of scientific communism were the first leaders at that time who formulated the basic causes of exploitation of women in the society and declared that the enslavement of women was based on the private ownership of the means of production. This led to the women's economic dependence on her father and later on, on her husband as a slave, serf or a wage slave.

Both leaders discussed the question of women's emancipation as a part of the overall social question, "the solution of which is inextricably bound up with the revolutionary transformation of society.

Marx's Teachings Under Present Conditions

In today's economic and political conditions in our country, the teaching of Marx and Engels remain valid, more so, because of the permanent nature of the economic crisis that has engulfed all spheres of the economy, increasing inflation throwing lakhs of men and women out of jobs, women becoming the first victims of retrenchment. The present working conditions of women workers in our country ruled by the bourgeois-landlord Government under a woman Prime Minister though no comparison whatever could be made about the worse conditions of women workers in the beginning of 19th century, do remind us about the same. The rising capitalist system which employed women and children after the introduction of the new machinery, by throwing men having muscular strength in 19th Century, now throws women out because they can not compete with men who have mastered the technical changes in the industry. The system of capitalism creates unemployment resulting thousands of men and women seeking for jobs. The employer tries to employ women as cheap labour, and if they refuse they have to starve. It will be noted that women workers are employed on a big way in Beedi, Cottage Industries, Garment, Electronics, Construction, and so on, where wages are almost meagre, hours of work longer and the work tedious and unskilled with no statutory legislations to protect them. The women workers where they are still employed are deprived of the welfare benefits by the employer. "The recognition of motherhood" as a social function is very far off, right to motherhood is not recognised despite its being included in the chapter 'directive principles of state' in our constitution.

In our country which is not developed

industrially and in which feudal landlord relations still dominates, the position of a woman is worse. She has no equal status and equality of any kind, working women are discriminated in wages and promotion, women are being burnt for not bringing sufficient dowry, sexual harassment continued at working place. Legislations concerning women such as Dowry Prohibition Act or Equal Remuneration Act are just on the paper only. The constitutional rights are not guaranteed.

The reasons for this unequal position of a woman can be seen in the present relations of production which are based on the private property. A Woman Prime Minister or otherwise does not change the position of a woman in our country, as some people think.

Women and Trade Unions

Despite large unemployment of women due to technical changes, meagre wages available in the unorganised industries and under contract labour, trade unions are not yet able to take up their problems. The poor percentage of women in trade union shows the weakness of the trade union movement as a whole, the cause for which Marx fought hundred and fifty years back.

In today's condition, the trade union movement is fighting for the fundamental right to get an employment for a man or a woman. The different demands of the working class including the specific demands of working women are raised on the common platform of the trade union movement. Although, it must be admitted that the fight for the rights of woman as a worker, or working woman still remains to be strengthened and the slogans raised by the trade union movement in the 19th century still remain to be implemented, the problems of working women are being taken up today by the CITU and other unions.

Marx, Engels and Lenin have enriched the movement of working class by their directions on the specific questions of women workers, and emancipation of women from the bourgeois landlord rule. The women's movement will be always in debt for this valuable contribution of great Marx and Engels. It was really remarkable, when one thinks about it, that Marx did not forget to discuss the issue of female labour and their emancipation despite the political trends, heated discussions on the movement of the working class, the party of

(Contd on p. 22)

Eradication of illiteracy — a firm resolve of the Left Front Government

The Left Front Government is firm in spreading education among the masses and democratisation of the education system.

An all time record amount of Rupees four hundred eighteen crores will be spent this year on education alone.

The Left Front Government has established 4,600 Primary Schools and 1,500 Secondary Schools during its rule of six years. Enrolment in primary schools has touched the figure of seventy two lakhs, representing 93 per cent of the children of the age group of 6-10 years. Non-formal education is being given to a large number of children. In 1982-83, alone, one lakh sixty thousand children were brought under this scheme.

More than twenty six lakhs of Primary Schools children are being supplied with Mid-day Tiffin. More than Four lakh adults are getting the benefits of Adult Education.

Four hundred eighty-five Primary Schools were opened for Scheduled Caste and Tribal children. Three lakh eighty thousand students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools are receiving the benefits of different scholarship schemes. The main thrust of collegiate education however continues to be expansion of education amongst women and in areas predominantly inhabited by the scheduled castes and tribes.

We have made efforts to strengthen the existing libraries by supplying more books and more money.

The Left Front Government is firm in eradicating illiteracy from the state.

Government of West Bengal

Women in Pakistan Fight Against Military Rule

THE women in Pakistan have come out openly now in the streets in demonstrations, courting arrests and so on against the judgement which ordered lashing in public and jail with hard labour to a blind woman, Safia, a victim of rape. The ordinary man and a woman, the democratic press has condemned this atrocious order on a blind woman who is not in a position to know who was the person who raped her. The women lawyers, trade unionists, political and social workers gathered in Lahore under the banner of Women's Action Forum to voice their protest and indignation at the frequent lashing of women. Zarina was another woman who too was sentenced 20 lashes and ordered to be hanged after 7 years. The WAF is collecting signatures and money to fight the case of the blinded girl in court.

It was a welcome feature, that more women's organisations, such as All Pakistan Women's Association, led by Mrs. Liaquat Ali Khan, President, women's wing of left-wing militant Sind Awami Tehric and the democratic Women's Committee allied with the women's wing of the Eight Party Alliance have joined the MRD and taken decision to participate in the civil disobedience movement, started from August.

The recommendations of the constitutional panel on the rights of women have been vehemently attacked by the women's organisations. The panel states that the women above 50 should be allowed to contest elections and that too with the written permission of their husbands, which even "Quran and Islam will not accept" according to these women's organisations. It was an insult to the womanhood of Pakistan and they would challenge it.

Mrs. Liaquat Ali Khan, the President of APWA said that the whole report can be challenged in the court. Another suggestion by the panel was that the President be authorised to nominate women to 5 per cent reserved seats from the panel chosen by a "male dominated undefined" council. She said, that how women can thus chosen represent the women in Pakistan? Women have expressed a serious concern over the panel set up by the President, Zia Ul Huq! The MRD movement is gaining ground

and supported by more and more sections of the people. The recent reports appeared in the press said that women were chained and tortured in jails. Women are now questioning how long should we tolerate the injustice? We must fight once for all!

Women's Camp at Seneca in USA

Once again women gathered at Seneca. They established a peace camp, joining the world-wide struggle to Stop The Arms Race, which lasted from 4 July to 31 August 1983.

Seneca Falls was the site of the birth of the womens movement in the US. It was also the site of a major station on the underground railway. The women's movement had developed in close connection with the abolitionist movement.

Today the Seneca Army Depot is the storage site for the neutron bomb, the pershing-II missile, and other tools of war. It is also the main departure point of weapons to be deployed in Europe.

Women from New York State, from all over the US and from Europe are committed to bringing this site to public consciousness. "We cannot live, nor can future generations possibly live, with these bombs and their deadly wastes in our backyard. Nor can we in good conscience let these burdens of death be shipped to our European sisters' and brothers' backyards, to be pointed at our sisters and brothers in the Soviet Union and other countries", says the statement of the peace and women's groups who are working to establish this first women's peace encampment in the US.

Convention of Working Women

A Convention of Working Women in Bihar is being held on 27th of September in Patna by the Bihar State Committee of CITU. Women workers in Construction, Beedi, tiles etc. will participate in the Convention. Com. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary AICCW is invited to attend. The Conference of 'Gram Sevikas' also is being organised on 26th of August.

Working Women Will March to Parliament

THE All-India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) met on 22 August at New Delhi to review its activities and chalk out the future programme of action. The representatives from Kerala, West Bengal, Tamilnadu, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Delhi participated in the meeting. The report of the various struggles launched during last two years by women workers and the middle class employees was submitted by Vimala Ranadive, the Secretary of AICCWW. In the discussion on the future programme of action, Sushila Gopalan, M.P., Vice President of CITU suggested that a well prepared demonstration of working women should be held in front of the Parliament preceded by the 2nd All India Conference of Working Women. Prior to this programme the state wise Conventions of Working Women should be held on the charter of demands specified in the last Convention of working women at Madras. The following comrades participated in the discussion: Mythily Shivaraman, Arati Dasgupta, Shubhasini Ali, Ranjana, Sharada, Damayanti Parikh, Jaswant Kaur and Soni Kamath. It was decided to give stress on working among the women workers in industry under CITU and also in the unorganised industries where women have no equal wage, no statutory legislation of any kind and their working conditions are very poor.

An extended meeting of the Co-ordination Committee was held at the Constitution Club at 1 P.M. with about 50 working women attending. The women working in Reserve Bank, the State Government employees, Nurses, primary and nursery teachers as well women in industries like Phillips, hotels, India Meters, etc. narrated their experiences while fighting for jobs, against unequal wages and sexual harassment, for permanency, bonus and other matters. The lockout in Kanak Industries in Bombay continued for months. Women in the garment industries in Delhi decided to go on strike for securing minimum wages. Working women in State Government employees in Kerala and West Bengal narrated how they participated in all the struggles waged for their democratic rights and against the rule of the Congress (I).

In the report submitted, it was noted that 50 women delegates attended the 5th Conference of CITU which was a definite step forward. There was a large scale participation of women in the struggles in all the states under CITU or independently. In West Bengal, Bihar and other places women workers participated in thousands when the call was given for the strike in Coal Mines in November, 1982 and January 1983. The participation of women in Kerala, Bengal, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat on 19th January Strike of 1982 was also on a very large scale. The women workers in plantations in Kerala and Assam faced unprecedented repression by anti-socials and goondas of the Management supported by the Congress (I). Special mention was made about the heroic fight of women plantation workers in Kokrazar in Assam and Cardamom women workers in Iddikki in Kerala. Women contract workers in Bhilai are still continuing their fight against abolition of contract labour and for minimum wages. The women are gradually developing class consciousness and are conscious about their role in CITU. They protected their leaders and fought against the INTUC who wanted to establish their leadership as it was shown in Rajpura Textile Mills in Punjab, Jharsuguda Textile Mill in Orissa. Women textile workers in Bombay fought side by side with the male workers who stood all the repression by INTUC and police demanding regularisation of the 'Badli' workers and for the recognition of their union. The participation in the rally held on 23rd November 1981 of working women who came in hundreds from different states was notable no doubt.

The concern expressed about the atrocities on women and for equality mentioned in the resolution passed in the 2nd Convention of Trade Unions on 21st August 1983 and the call for the Conference of working women was welcomed by the extended meeting of Co-ordination Committee. The enthusiasm of the working women showed that the programme of March to Parliament at the time of the Budget session next year followed by the All India Conference of Working Women should be a success no doubt.

Meeting of AIDWA

THE CEC of AIDWA was held on 26-27 August in New Delhi, under the chairmanship of Kanak Mukherjee. From the reports from the states, it was heartening to note that the programmes taken by the last CEC meeting were carried by most of states. The 1st June, Children's Day was observed by deputations, demonstrations, programmes of children demanding the abolition of child labour and better living and working conditions until it is abolished. The committees conducted prolonged propaganda, for communal harmony and national unity. The comrades from all the states reported the dowry deaths and harassment of women which was increasing day by day, the State Committees are taking up the cases and fighting against the dowry evils. They expressed the inefficient machinery of the Government which does not help the victims of dowry. The need for the passing of the Dowry Prevention Act and the amendments to the criminal procedure code concerning rape and dowry killings was felt by all the committees. The comrades expressed the need for a comprehensive legislation for women of all communities with regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance and adoption. The meeting expressed its concern at the reported move from certain quarters to bring a sikh personal law. After a prolonged discussion it was decided that a demand for a common law for the women of all communities should be made and a campaign should be immediately taken up in all the states culminating in a Demands Day on November 23, 1983.

The committee discussed about the drought and flood situation and felt that the Government of India is not giving enough aid to the states to meet the drought and flood situation. The Executive Committee decided to donate three thousand rupees to Relief fund, West Bengal, five thousand and Kerala one thousand.

The C.E.C., passed resolutions on the prevailing situation in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. It expressed solidarity with fighting women of Pakistan and demanded the restoration of democracy.

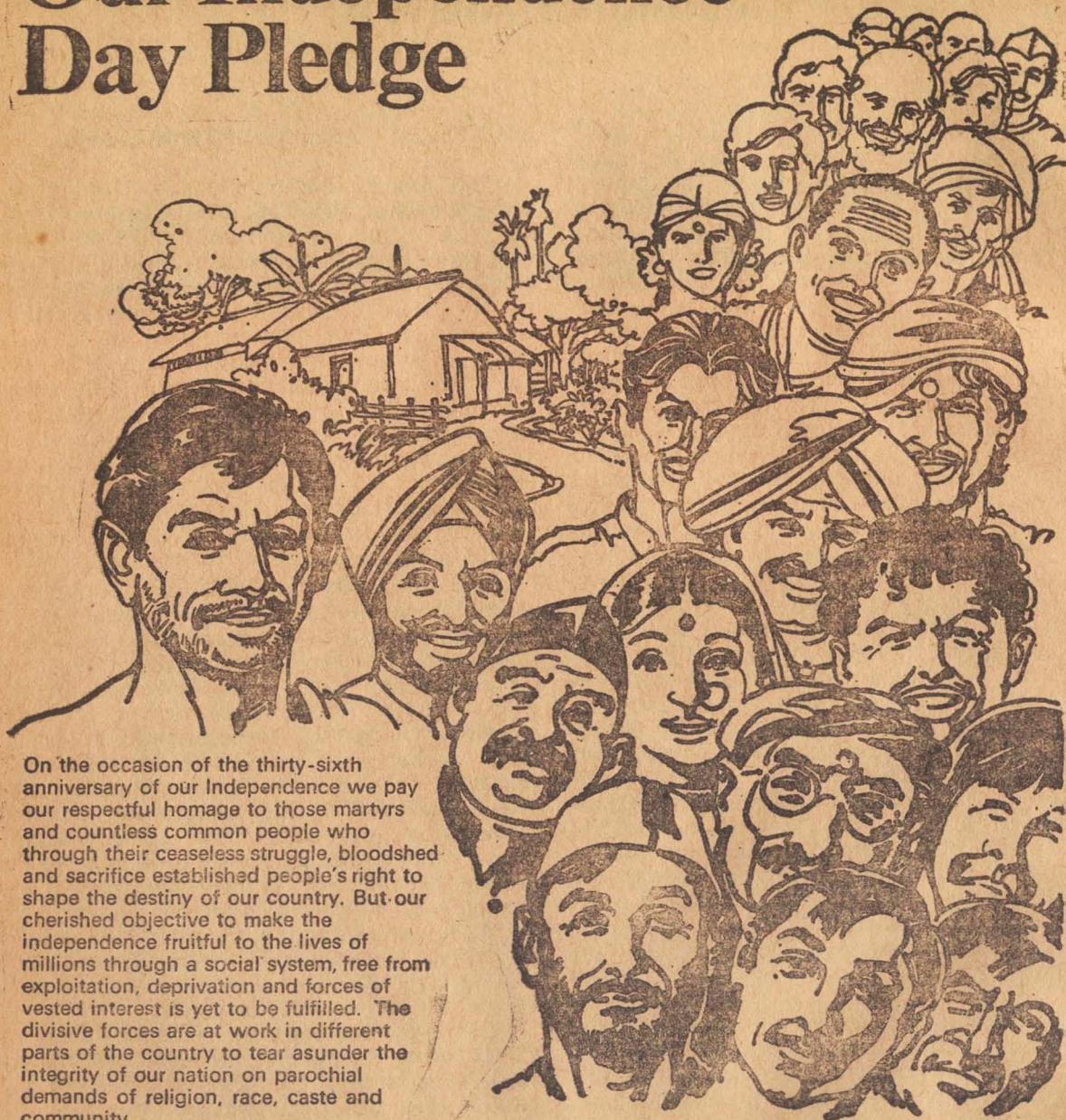
2nd National Convention of Trade Unions

The Second National Trade Union Convention held at the Talkatora Stadium Delhi on August 21 was attended by 6250 delegates with more than 57 national federations participating. Within the last 2 years, the number of struggles, attacks by the managements, closures and lock-outs increased on a large scale. The notorious ESMA and NSA, the anti-trade union legislation measures, the offensive due to IMF loan conditionalities, the barbarous physical attacks on the working class, and the peasantry, with communal and separatist forces to disrupt and divert the united trade union movement was the scenario all over the country, the result of the policies led by the bourgeois landlord Government.

The resolution moved in the convention rightly pointed out the rising struggles of all sections of the working people to protect their interests. The January 19th strike of 1982 was a red-letter day in the united movement of the working class. The strike action by coal workers, struggles of the peasants and agricultural workers, the struggle against the notorious Bihar Press Bill, the Bombay Textile Strike—all these added a new chapter in the united trade union movements of the Indian working class. The resolution rightly took note of the growing attacks on women and the dowry deaths, and expressed its serious concern. In the future plan of action, the resolution gave a call for the conference of working women, thus joining the struggles launched by working women for their specific demands.

Com. P. Ramamurti, Vice-President of CITU while supporting the resolution elaborated the advance of the struggles guided by the NCC. He, however, warned the working class of the grim future, the growing attacks on the working people depriving them of their basic rights of trade unions, including the right to strike. He said the Government wants to graft its stooge unions belonging to the INTUC on the workers. The adoption of draconian laws by the Government was the result of the crisis of the capitalist world to which our economy is linked.

Our Independence Day Pledge



On the occasion of the thirty-sixth anniversary of our Independence we pay our respectful homage to those martyrs and countless common people who through their ceaseless struggle, bloodshed and sacrifice established people's right to shape the destiny of our country. But our cherished objective to make the independence fruitful to the lives of millions through a social system, free from exploitation, deprivation and forces of vested interest is yet to be fulfilled. The divisive forces are at work in different parts of the country to tear asunder the integrity of our nation on parochial demands of religion, race, caste and community.

In West Bengal, the Left Front Government always strove to uphold the democratic rights of the people and stood by the masses in the struggle against exploiters in their bid for a better living. As a result of our determination to observe the tenets of national integration, West Bengal is free from the stresses of any

regional, communal and caste conflicts.

We believe continuous vigil and concerted efforts by our people will safeguard the integrity, unity and solidarity of the nation.

On this auspicious day we reaffirm our faith in the people.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

TCP/ICA 819/83

Plug the Loopholes in the Existing Laws : Illa Bhattacharya in Rajya Sabha (27.7.1983)

THE Hon. Minister today has made a statement regarding various remedial measures that the Govt. propose to take to reduce the number of dowry deaths and suicides committed by women. I do not find any difference between the Statement made on the last year and today's Statement. The Govt. has said that State Govts., Union Territories and State Social Welfare Boards have been instructed to take certain measures to create public opinion against dowry deaths. It is also said in the statement that Central Social Welfare Board has instructed various registered women organisation in the country to rouse the consciousness of people against this evil practice of dowry in our society. Women's organisations have also been asked to create public opinion for the abolition dowry here.

On the 14 and 15 July this year Central Social Welfare Board organised the Eighteenth Conference of the Chairman of the State Social Welfare, Boards. It was attended by the Hon. President. Shri Zail Singh and the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi. Both of them expressed the opinion there that serious atrocities were being committed on women. They have admitted that mere legislations cannot solve this problem. Only strong public opinion can fight this evil. But who will create public opinion?

This public opinion can be created by those who are sympathetic to the cause of women. Such persons will organise meetings in towns and villages to create public opinion in favour of protecting the rights of women. But mere public opinion will not do unless provision is made for stringent punishments in the existing laws. Criminals can never be brought to book without severe punishments in the present laws.

The Govt. was compelled to introduce Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill in Parliament due to strong agitations launched by women's organisations. That Bill was referred to Joint Committee of the Houses and that Committee submitted its Report in the month of August last year. The Committee made certain recommendations.

I would like to know from the Hon.

Minister why he has not taken steps to save our women from atrocities even after those recommendations of the Joint Committee? I would like to know further from the Minister how nine women were burnt alive in the month of May in Delhi? Again, in the month of June, ten women were burnt alive in Delhi. These incidents took place despite the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee....

The Press is also playing its role in this regard. Editorials are being published for the abolition of dowry. Statesman has given the following figures of deaths by burning as follows:

In 1979 — 327; 1980 — 339; 1981 — 450; 1982 — 465; and in 1983 — 192.

Unfortunately, the police have dismissed five per cent of above cases as suicide cases. They have treated another five per cent of above cases as cases of accidents.

In this manner, during the past four and half years, the burning cases have increased by 53 per cent. So the situation is very serious in the country. The Parliament must give serious thought to this problem...

Since our society is a male-dominated one, women are subject to more exploitation than men. It is also a fact a certain section of our people have lost the values in life. They have lost all respect for women.

I would like to know from the Hon. Minister why dowry deaths in Delhi, which took place in the months of May-June, could not be prevented, particularly after the Joint Select Committee submitted its recommendations to the Govt.?

We take pride in the fact that ours is a socialist State. But socialism cannot be established in the country through mere slogans. I must say that the Govt. is not implementing those principles which establish true socialism in the country.

It is true that all should make sincere efforts to create public opinion against dowry system. But mere public opinion will not do. We must plug the loopholes in the existing laws. I request the Govt. to bring forward strict laws to prevent dowry deaths, rape and bigamy...."

Is the Government Serious About the Appointment of Women Labour Inspectors?

IT was reported in the press that the State Labour Secretaries favoured appointment of women social workers as honorary labour inspectors to attend the complaints from women employees. It was further reported that complaints received from women employees could be referred to various advisory board set up at the Centre and in States. The reasons for such steps were felt because according to the State Labour Secretaries "in most cases, women do not find the proper authority to approach for the purpose". It appears from the reports the meeting also discussed the problems confronting women and child labour. The report says further that "the usual enforcement machinery must continue to carry on inspections as provided in the rules". The secretaries do not say what would be the powers of these honorary Labour Inspectors about enforcement. In fact the secretaries present in the meeting know quite well how the enforcement machinery of the Government enforce rules and regulations concerning equal remuneration Act and child labour. In spite of bringing to their notice cases of violation of different legislations concerning working women, officers of the enforcement machinery do not take any action but continue to sit on these reports.

What happened in the case of 100 women mazdoors in Railway in Vijayawada who were denied the benefit of equal wages and ultimately were retrenched after 10-12 years of their services? What about the women workers in plantations in Karnataka, Assam and other places where the unequal wages still continue? There is a vast difference in wages in Beedi. Even after 10-12 years women working in offices do not get promotion. The nurses and welfare officers are suddenly transferred to remote places where they are harassed by anti-socials and also by the police and village Pramukh. A woman doctor under the Delhi Administration alleged in the month of July that in less than two years she had been transferred as many as 16 times to different dispensaries situated in far-flung areas of the city. The Executive Councillor for Health had admitted that several verbal complaints had

been made. Council members unanimously were of the opinion that the "honour of women doctors and nurses" should be protected and that action should be taken on the basis of the inquiry. There were so many complaints of the sexual harassment from different quarters. A number of instances can be cited when the working women in offices, and at their work place are getting unequal treatment, not getting promotions. Can it be said that the Government is not aware about this?

Now, the Labour Secretaries of the Central Government would like the women to be encouraged to take up the jobs in enforcement machinery and work as employment officers. They state that more institutes would be set up to provide technical training for women, and that best course was to start separate classes for women.

The plans for upgrading women by giving more training, encouraging them to take up the enforcement jobs and so on are welcome steps no doubt. But they are always likely to remain on paper so far as the implementation part is concerned. The working women will surely realise from their experience that the pressure of the women's movement and social awareness among the common people have compelled the State Secretaries to take up these steps in favour of working women! If only $\frac{1}{4}$ th of what they have decided is implemented in practice, women may take them seriously! Otherwise this is one more empty promise amongst so many promised by the Government — but never fulfilled.

(Contd. from p. 15)

the proletariat etc. among the different groups at that time. Marx had to lead a life of utter poverty alongwith Jenny his wife. But it was true, it was Marx and Marx alone, who could not forget the cause of women, who are the equal partners in the fight for revolution which also was the road for their emancipation. Working women, and women in general pay a magnificent tribute to the great man and vow to carry forward the cause of women for which Marx fought.

Government's Apathy Towards Women's Employment

THE Central Advisory Committee on Employment of Women met on 18th August 1983 with the representatives of women's organisations such as AIWC, SEWA, trade unions etc. was called to consider the steps to be taken against the retrenchment of women workers due to technical changes, to consider the decreasing trend of employment among women from the organised to unorganised sector and to check the harassment of women at their work places etc. It is true, the question of unemployment of women has taken a serious turn and it is being discussed in the trade unions in our country as well as in the International Trade Union movement such as ILO, WFTU and TUI. Mr. Virendra Patil, the Union Labour Minister recommended in the meeting of appointment of prominent women social workers as inspectors to help enforce the Equal Remuneration Act. The suggestion if implemented will surely help the working women. But how far the Government is serious about it, can be judged afterwards.

Mr. Virendra Patil further reported to have said at the opening speech "Women workers should associate themselves actively in constructive trade unionism, to protect their interest. Holding responsible positions in trade unions, they could go a long way in sustaining class consciousness as women workers particularly, in the unorganised sector where the bulk of women labour force is engaged" (Statesman 19.8.83) One wonders since when the Union Labour Minister is concerned about women becoming trade unionists, about their working among women workers, that too among unorganised. He advised the working women to associate themselves actively in a constructive trade unionism etc. well, working women will seriously think about it?

Whatever it may be, the women trade unionists and representatives of women's organisations are working for taking up the questions of women workers not because the Government feels its necessity but because they are concerned about the present trend of unemployment among women. These women's organisations, trade unions etc. took up the problem of mechanisation in Tobacco Industry

which threw thousands of women out of jobs. The women's organisations together organised 8th March this year as a day of employment for women. They have propagated a number of times to create more jobs for women, not to retrench women from Labour Intensive Industries and so on. Is the Government unaware about this?

Now it is the responsibility of the Government that they should come forward with proposals how and where women can be employed in industries, how to prevent the management from throwing them out of jobs under the plea that they are not trained and so on. It appeared from the report that the representative of the Labour Ministry in charge of preventing displacement was not present. Com. Susheela Gopalan Member of Parliament raised the question of issuing licences to the Multinational companies for importing new technology which displaced women in Tobacco, Match Coir etc. She met the Labour Ministry for a number of times, gave suggestions as to the recruitment and employment of women. The other women members of Parliament too raised their voice on this issue, but to no avail.

Unless the Labour Ministry is serious about the employment of women, and the implementation of the legislations such as Equal Remuneration Act, the present trend of displacement will continue.

Marx on Working Women

"Joking aside, great progress was evident in the last Congress of the American 'Labour Union' in that among other things it treated working women with complete equality. While in this respect the English and still more the gollent French, are burdened with a spirit of narrow-mindedness. Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without feminine ferment. Social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex"

(Marx & Trade Unions—A. Lozovsky)

Did You Know?

Delhi Doctor Shifted: Issue Sexual Harassment

Dr. G.R. Khatri, Assistant Director in the Health Department of the Delhi Administration has been transferred from his post following complaints by some women doctors and nurses that they were being harassed by him. The inquiry has been ordered and he was transferred to facilitate the inquiry. A women doctor had alleged that in less than two years she had transferred as many as 16 times to dispensaries situated in far off areas of the city. A nurse has complained of sexual harassment.

3.6.83 *Statesman*.

Dowry Loan for UAE Males—Dubai

Male citizens of the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) are likely to get Government loans to help them pay dowries, an important social factor in their eligibility for marriage.

According to the social and Labour Affairs Ministers, the idea was to help the citizens get local Arab spouses rather than look elsewhere due to financial compulsions. A proposal to set up a bank for dowries was being considered and loans given would be charged for only nominal interest rates.

In the Arab Countries, men have to give dowries but due to the sizeable sums involved they often marry women from other countries. A Ministry survey has shown that most of the women spouses have come from India, Pakistan and Egypt, but in some cases European Women have been chosen.

28.3.83, *Times of India*.

No Doctors in 36 Basic Health Centres

Thirty-six primary health centres (PHC) in the country did not have any doctors at all, Minister of State for Health, Moshima Kidwai said in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, report agencies.

Replying to Miss Khaparde, Mrs. Kidwai said each PHC was expected to have three doctors and attempts were being made to ensure that at least one of them was a female.

Mrs. Kidwai assured Miss Khaparde that the Government was considering the possibility of making medical education rural oriented.

25.8.83, *Patriot*.

P.M. Condemns Dowry System

The Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi has condemned the dowry system and said any harassment of a girl on this account must be dealt with sternly. It is indeed tragic that greed seems to have taken precedence over the happenings of young people. Mrs Gandhi said the Government was enacting a law soon to deal with the harassment and deaths due to dowry....

22.7.83, *Times of India*.

Big hike in inflation rate likely

The prices of essential commodities are rising rapidly and have contributed to inflation in the current financial year which as per the present trend might be much higher than last year.

The wholesale price index indicated that prices have risen by 5.5 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year and at that rate the annual rate of inflation might be more than 15 per cent compared to the average annual rate of inflation of 2.5 per cent registered in 1982-83.

Three articles contributed the maximum to the current about of inflation — sugar, pulses and fruits and vegetables.

1.9.83, *Indian Express*.

India tops in population growth

Earth's population swelled by 82 million in the past year and now stands at 4.7 billion, up nearly one billion in a decade for the greatest numerical leap in history, the US Census Bureau reported.

The bureau reported on Tuesday that the annual growth rate remained basically steady at 1.75 per cent for 1982-1983 but said the gain was the largest even recorded in sheer numbers.

India had the largest estimated population growth over the past year ended on June 30. The Bureau noted that there had been very little improvement in India's efforts to limit births in recent years.

Five nations account for just more than half the world's population. About 52 per cent of the people are in China, India, the Soviet Union, the United States and Indonesia in the order.

1.9.83, *Indian Express*.