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Women in Nicaragua Up in Arms Against American Imperialism



8th March Greetings to fighting Women All Over the World

Clara Zetkin—Initiator of International Women's Day

CLARA ZETKIN has gone down in the annals of history as a passionate pioneer in the struggle for peace and women's rights and as the initiator of international Women's Day.

She was born on the 5 July, 1857 in the village of Wiederau in Saxany. Social perceptiveness and on inquisitive mind, willpower and sincerity of character were encouraged in her from early youth which no doubt influenced her final decision to become a teacher. And a teacher she did become—a teacher and shining example to millions of women then and now, who appreciate her as a wise, highly-educated and open-minded women, a tireless fighter for women's equality.

Clara Zetkin was an outstanding educationalist whose work is of immense value to us. She dealt with questions of culture in an extremely competent way, holding that art and literature were powerful weapons in the struggle for a better world. She was also a generous, warm-hearted and motherly woman who always understood women's feelings, alleviated their sorrow and pain and expressed in word and deed what women wished and hoped for.

She had the knack of talking to women of all social backgrounds, to impart her knowledge to them and encourage them to become socially active. Women and girls and whole groups of women turned to her for help and advice, confiding their problems to her. Her answers often sparked off concrete action such as in the case of her proposal to the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen in 1910, that an annual women's day should be observed as an international day of women's action for equality and peace.

The whole of Clara Zetkin's life, which ended on 20 June 1933, was dedicated to the struggle for peace and women's rights.

She taught women to take the struggle

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Edited and published by Vimal Ranadive on behalf of the All-India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU), from 6, Talkatora Road, N. Delhi-110001. Tele : 384071 and printed by her at Progressive Printers, C-52.53, DDA Sheds Industrials Estate, Okhla Phase-I, New Delhi-20.

"We Are Defending our country" Nicaragua Fighters

ELIZABETH Gutierrez Alvarez is one of the hundreds of women who got injured during the attacks by counter-revolutionary Contras on the border of Nicaragua in 1984. She never dreamt that she would be a fighter. In fact she was a teacher a few years back. In one of the lectures, a subject was chosen for discussion in the class as "Defence of our country". There was a discussion why the people were forced to arm themselves against the intervention by "Contras" and who are being openly supported by United States.

Elizabeth, joined the militia along with others realising that Nicaragua needed her to defend her country. On 13 Dec. 1984 she got seriously injured in the hip by the enemy and was admitted in the hospital in Managua. She was taken to GDR for further treatment. After she returned, she said "Even if she cannot fight on the front because of her serious injuries, she will work as a nurse in the hospital!"

This is the spirit and the conviction of the people in Nicargua today while fighting for years for thelr country liberated in July 1979, after overthrowing the tyrant Somoza. Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) marched into Managua in the popular revolution against the US backed right wing regime in Latin America. This revolution brought many social changes in the system of education, health care and women's rights. But today, even these gains are under attack, destroying schools, day care centres, and killing ordinary people. Already 18 thousand Nicaraguans have died in this war since 6-7 years.

Nicaragua is a very small country with population not more than 3.5 millions. But this small country with its patriotic population has been fighting against a strong imperialist country like USA who has decided to encroach upon their sovereignty through their neighbour Govt. like Hondurus by hook or crook. The recent 'Irangate Scandal' has exposed US conspiracies as to how the money went to help the Contras. It has organised a blocade of Nicaragua on the sea. As a result, the help coming from outside has become difficult. After the revolution the Govt. built its economy, smashed by the previous Govt., with the co-operation of people.

The facts stated by some important reporters in USA like Fotheringham and McCarthy are revealing. They say, "the health improvements in Nicaragua are 'unprecedented'. Eye clinics have been established, seventeen new hospitals have been opened, the number of medical students has tripled, infant mortality has dropped from 120 deaths per 1000 births under Somoza to 58 per 1000. The rate of illiteracy has fallen from 60 to 10 per cent. It is to be noted that the WHO and United Nation Children's Fund gave their award in 1982 to Nicaragua for the best health achievements in a third world nation. They also state that the Congress is more aware of the facts and has so far been unwilling to release additional millions to aid the 'Contras' in their attempts to overthrow the Nicaragua Govt. Alan Fotheringham calls the 'Contras' as "out of control thugs". The American watch committee has issued a report accusing the 'Contras' of selectively murdering civilians, kidnapping women and children and killing unarmed soldiers.

Women in Nicaragua are fighting with arms in their hands in the struggle against US as they fought against the Somoza tyranny. As Elizabeth told, for women it was hard in the beginning to climb up and down the mountains. They did not get enough food. "But enthusiasm and revolutionary ardour were stronger than the difficulties", she said. When she was asked what were her plans now that she was back in Nicaragua, she said, "When Nicaragua would be free of threats and the people could build their own destiny, she would like to work again as teacher." For all this she said, "peace is required". She told the GDR friends while returning, "The United States forces a war upon us, and we must fight to defend our country. But the day will come when we will have achieved the right to live in peace". The firm determination of the people including militant women explains why they are sure to say, "Granada will not be repeated in Nicaragua".

2nd Convention of Working Women in Kerala

A. Nazimuneeza, Kerala

THE 2nd State Convention of Working Women's Co-Ordination Committee was held on 26th January 1987 at Lenin Centre, Ernakulam.

The participation of women in the struggles of all sections of workers and employees, for better wages, service conditions, bonus etc, is on the increase. Similarly the participation of working women in the struggles against atrocities on women, including the recent Muslim Womens' Bill is also not bad. Struggles on the problems of working women were organised in some sections like NGOs, teachers etc. But the State Co-Ordination Committee could not organise any statewide agitation on the problems of working women after the observance of Demands Day on August 6th 1985. The Sub Committee, which includes, besides working women the leaders of CITU and Service organisations discussed the functioning of Co-ordination Committee and with a view to remove the weaknesses of Working Womens' movement in the State planned to hold a convention.

The State Co-Ordination Committee met on December 30th 1986 and decided to hold the State Convention on 26th January and requested all trade unions and service organisations to send delegates.

The Convention was attended by about 200 delegates, NGOs, teachers, amployees from P&T, AG's Office, Bank, LIC, Government Secretariat, University, Workers from Beedi, Plantation, Construction, Coir, Cashew, Transport, Electricity, Water authority. Cochin Shipyard and port trust, Artisans, Anganvadi and Municipal and Corporation workers attended. Nine representatives of AIDWA were also present.

Com. E. Balanandan inaugurated the Convention which was presided over by State President Com. M. Sarada. Explaining the Political and Economical problems of our country, Com. Balanandan called upon the delegates to fight with more strength and courage against the anti-worker, anti-people policies of the Government. He said "Working Women have to play an important role in the Working Class struggle for the emancipation of our society. CITU is trying to organise working women with the view to prepare them for that struggle. Women should also fight against the feudal tendencies prevailing in the trade unions. They should take responsibility and come to the leadership".

General Secretary, Comrade Suseela Gopalan placed the report before the Convention. The report mentioned the present situation of women working in almost all sections. The NGOs, teachers and other middle class employees have no creche for their children, no adequate quarters or hostel facilities and conveyance facilities. They are transferred to distant and remote places without any concern over the facilities there. The field workers have to face harassment from anti-social elements. There is discrimination in promotion training etc. In many private schools, hospitals and factories the management denies maternity leave and other benefits. Many are working as casual and temporary workers in different sectors.

Nurses in the Government hospitals have to work 12-14 hours in the night shift, even pregnant women are not exempted from night duties, no break to feed their children, no protection from health hazards. Worse are the condition of women working in private hospitals.

In agricultural sector and in traditional industries work is always seasonal, wage low and unequal. Plantation workers have no creche, no hospital facilities etc. They have not given transport facilities to reach the distant hospitals even in case of casuality. Maternity benefits are denied to casual labourers.

The women in fishing line are in a pathetic condition. They have no job security, even drinking water and other civic facilities are denied to them. In fish processing, girls work

on ice for hours with no gloves or shoes and get only meager wages. Women workers in construction and many other unorganised sectors are not given minimum wages and have no welfare measures.

Anganvadi teachers and helpers who were paid Rs. 175/— and Rs. 50/— respectively, fought for better wages and service conditions. Now they are getting Rs. 250/— and Rs. 90/— as honorarium and allowed three months maternity leave for only one occasion. Thousands of women in Khadi and village Industries work hard to get Rs. 4 or 5 as wages. The work of these rural women is not even considered as 'work' but as 'service'. Women are exploited cruelly in all fields wherever they work.

The report said that Co-Ordination Committee had given memorandum, held dharnas and demonstrations, observed demands days raising all these problems and demanding equal wages, maternity benefits creche etc. But the attitude of the Government towards the problems of working women is not at all satisfactory. Com. Suseela Gopalan ended her speech telling that working women, the victims of all sorts of exploitation on women as well as worker should strengthen their organisation and fight to achieve their demands. They should join in large numbers in the democratic movements and working class struggles.

Representatives from all the 14 districts of Kerala participated in the discussion. They narrated their experiences. All of them wanted the CITU to help and lead the functioning of the district Co-Ordination Committees. The delegates criticized the feudal tendencies among the trade union leadership and appealed to the trade unions to assist and co-operate to organise women in unorganised sectors. With much confidence they said that they will unite and fight against the inequalities.

Resolutions against atrocities on women; computerisation ond mechanisation; privatisation of Educational Institutions; on demands of working women, an problems of traditional industries and Anganvadi and Khadi Workers and demanding amicable solution for the Babri Masjid issue, were moved. The report and resolutions were passed unanimously.

Com. K.N. Ravindranath, General Secretary of CITU State Committee addressed the delegates and assured them all help and Co-operation from CITU. He also said that the struggle of women working in various sectors should be co-ordinated. The united struggles of the women in organised sectors and their enthusiasm will give confidence to the women in unorganised sectors and help them to come to the fore-front of the movement. Dr. Sujatha Dhawle, President, Maharashtra Medical Officers Association also greeted the delegates.

A new committee of 51, including 15 office bearers was formed with Com. K.R. Bhanumathi as President and Com. A. Nazimuneeza as General Secretary. The conference decided to reconstitute the district committees and observe demands day in April 1987. The convention came to an end with women shouting slogans.

(Contd. from page 18)

themes, solidarity meetings, meetings of Czechoslovak women with women of the fighting nations, different forms of collections for the women and children of the developing countries, friendship events with women of the socialist countries, the making of small gifts for Congress delegates, and othrs.

A tree may symbolize a lot of things ... It is an eternal symbol of the continuation of life, or peace... Its branches reach to the sky which should remain clean, without nuclear cloulds. Such as it has been painted in blue by Czech and Austrian children together on one autumn week-end in Jindrichuv Hradec. Hundreds of peace trees are now growing in all parts of czechoslovakia. They are small stones which Czechoslovak women have contributed to the mosaic of the International peace movement, a mosaic picture of the peaceful future of the planet Earth.

Women in West Bengal 1971-1986

Mrinalini Dasgupta, West Bengal

LEFT Front Government has created a new horizon for women in West Bengal. In the field of education and employment — Women of West Bengal are marching forward since last ten years under Left Front regime. The following statistical data will reveal the increasing literacy rate among girls:

	1961	*1971*	*1981*
Literacy rate of girls	16.98	22.08	30.33
Increased per cent	N.A.	+3%	+8%

Enrolment percentage	*56-57*	*68-69*	*77-78*	*83-84*	*85-86*
Primary 1-V	50.8	57.0	57.97	78.50	80.00

Middle VI—VIII	*56-57*	*68-69*	*85-86*	
	22.6	48.8	60%	N.A.

Total No. of girls in secondary schools is 15,42,000 and No. of higher Secondary schools for girls is 166. To spread the education among women the number of high school has been set up in the remotest part of the country, lady teachers have been appointed, free distribution of text books upto class V for both boys and girls has been introduced. The girls of the Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe receive school uniform at free of cost. Above all tution free school education upto class XII has proved to be most effective for spread of girls education.

Spread of education among girls is creating a socio-political consciousness among girls. They are becoming conscious about the election and their responsibility as citizens of the country. They know that 50 per cent of total voters are women and they equally share the responsibility of electing suitable candidate and the women of the distant villages even in Purulia or Sunderban area, tea gardens in North Bengal and mining area of western part of West Bengal can identify who is their friend or who is their foe.

Work participation rate of the female has increased, it shows that the rate of growth is double in West Bengal whereas it is only 50 per cent all over in India.

Work participation rates of females

		1971	*1981*
1. All India:	Total	14.22	20.85
	Rural	15.92	23.89
	Urban	7.18	10.64
2. West Bengal:	Total	4.52	8.87
	Rural	4.69	9.38
	Urban	3.95	7.33

As it appears from the statistical data, the women of West Bengal have been doubly benefited in the Left Front regime. Not only the number of girls educational institution has been increased or the enrolment has been doubled, the employment of women folk both in rural and urban areas has been generated, the data below will speak for itself.

In educational field emphasis is given on the appointment of female teacher. According to Fourth All India Education Survey, the percentage of female teachers in West Bengal on 30.9.78 was 21 and now it has gone over to 30.

(From census report on West Bengal)

	1971	*1981*
No. of total women workers	9,24,833	15,11,365
Cultivators	1,12,117	2,21,723
Agriculture labourers	4,11,569	5,95,930
Manufacturing, processing, servicing etc.	88,126	1,13,397
Non-workers	1,99,51,191	2,39,20,730

The ratio between workers and non-worker women was 1:2 in 1971 and that ratio in 1981 is 1:6, which is a glaring proof of the increased ratio of work participation. Still it is far below our expectation, no doubt.

Regarding status of women it may be noticed that today women are not only working in the field of education, law and medicine and in the administration, but they

are sharing responsibility with men in the field of Panchayet and other people's representative body as Municipality and Corporation. Not a single committee is functioning in West Bengal for any project or scheme, where there is not a woman representative. All the available figures, present a better picture of women's participation in the field of production and also as a labour force. Though we cannot claim that we are sharing 50 per cent of work load of the society, which we should have done, but we are marching forward. The table below will throw light on this.

Percentage distribution of working force by main activity in West Bengal (1981 Census)

	Male	*Female*
1. Cultivators	31.00	14.69
2. Agricultural labourers	23.69	39.44
3. Plantation forestry etc	2.65	9.20
4. Mining & Quarrying	0.97	0.73
5. (a) Household manufacturing	3.09	7.48
(b) Non-household manufacturing	13.53	7.81
6. Construction	1.54	0.46
7. Trade & Commerce	9.01	2.52
8. Transport, storage & communication	4.41	0.79
9. Other services	9.71	16.88
	100	100

To conclude it may be noted Women folks in West Bengal are happier, and living more honourable life both in rural and urban area. It is true for the labourers and peasantry, students and youth, housewives and service holders. The working force of West Bengal is fighting, both men and women are taking part in the struggle sharing equal responsibility, in support of the Left Front Government.

Role of Women Employees in the 8th State Convention West Bengal

THE participation of women employees in the 8th Convention of the State Co-ordination Committee, West Bengal was remarkable this time. For the first time, women delegates and observers were present in the conference on a large scale. They spoke, participated in the procession, and shouted slogans. Their role as volunteers who worked day and night for the success of the conference was praiseworthy. Smt. Anima Ghosh, wife of the Vetaran leader of the State Government employees, Com. Arbinda Ghosh, recited a poem, written by her. There were discussions in the panels before the Conference began where women participated. There were 10 women members of the Reception Committee and sub-committees and 62 women volunteers. There were 40 women delegates and 47 women observers. Kumari Shukla Bhattachrya was the youngest observer who was only 26 and was the member of West Bengal Nurses Association. Out of 40 women delegates, 10 spoke on the General secretary's report. 10 women participated in blood domation programme organised in connection with the conference.

It must be noted however, that, for the first time, one woman was 'elected' as one of the Vice-presidents and one as a member of the secretariat. The discussion and participation of women in all the programmes, including the cultural one, shows their march forward and also taking bigger responsibility of organising women employees on their shoulders.

Sarees for Lady Ground Staff!

This time the lady ground staff's sarees were selected and approved not by the management or it's Uniform Committee, but by the lady members of the V.I.P. category. The net saving in the new sarees is around Rs. 100/- per saree as compared to the ones purchased in 1984. As per this calculation the I.A. saved an amount of Rs. 600/- approximately out of the new purchase per head. There are nearly 1000 lady staff entitled for sarees in Indian Airlines and the total saving come to around Rs. 6 lakhs. The Secretary of the ACEU, Bombay in a communication to the management stated that in fact the price of sarees have gone up by more than 30 per cent in the last two years and there is no justification for purchasing sarees of lesser price this year which in fact amount to lowering standard. The Regional Director had now replied that the allegation of lower standard is not true as the sarees have been purchased from Government Mills. Poor R.D.! He forget that last year's purchase was also from the government mills.

The AIR WORKER

Kendriya Vidyalaya's Reputation in Gwalior in Question

ALL the institutions of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan have the honour of providing best education both — moral and academic. But now it seems that even Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan has changed its definition of morality as most of the high Sangathan officials are out to shield the principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya Gwalior No. 1 Mr. Chandra Pal Singh, the most corrupt and immoral person the institution has ever seen.

Mr. Chandra Pal Singh, despite most serious charges regarding his behaviour with the opposite sex was sent to Kendriya Vidyalaya Gwalior No. 1 as principal, an institution with a highly reputated and glorious past. Here it is worth mentioning that the founder principal of this institution Mr. P.S. Chowdhury was once upon a time honoured with President's award for being the best principal of the year in whole of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan's institutions.

Mr. Chandra Pal Singh undertook the charge of Kendriya Vidyalaya Gwalior No. 1 in the beginning of October 1985. On Nov. 19, 1985 Mr. Singh tried to rape a Harijan woman Mrs. Bhooribai Mayaram 23 yrs. who was a daily wage employee in the mess of Kendriya Vidyalaya's sports Hostel at his own residence inside the school campus. In response to Bhooribai's cries seeking help, Mrs. Gangabai, wife of a class IV employee Udailal came for her rescue and the poor woman's chastity could be saved. Bhooribai reported the whole matter to police as well as send a representation to the Commissioner of K.V. Sangathan, but till now no action has been taken from either side. This obviously shows how very powerful are the links between Mr. G.P. Singh and the high officials of K.V. Sangathan. Later on Mrs. Bhooribai filed a case against Mr. C.P. Singh in the Court of Special Judicial Lady Magistrate 1st class, Gwalior for which a bailable warrent for Rs. 1000/- has been issued. It is interesting to find that Assistant Commissioner Mr. D.P. Kharb was present in Gwalior on the day on which the warrent was issued and he was heard saying "now we have got to arrange somebody to pay the amount." According to the Education Code of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan Chapter VII Article No. 82 (page 53) this particular incident asks for immediate termination of Mr. C.P. Singh especially when his services as a Principal are not confirmed. As principal Mr. C.P. Singh is under probation.

On 19th and 25th of October 86. The Principal tried to molest two school girls studying in class 9th and 10th in K.V.G. No. 1. Janawadi Mahila Samiti Gwalior took up all these issues and submitted a memorandum to Superintendent of Police, Gwalior, Mr. Asif Ibrahim, Collector Shivraj Singh and also to Commissioner Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan as well as Minister for Development of human resources Mr. P.V. Narsimha Rao, but no concrete action has been taken from either side. When a movement was launched against this injustice by Janawadi Mahila Samiti, Gwalior, the Sangathan played a farce in the name of enquiry. Dr. N.N. Mull, Dean Lakshmibai National College of Physical Education who is also Chairman of K.V. Gwalior was appointed to go into the matter. Accord-to Secretary Janawadi Mahila Samiti, Gwalior Mrs. Afroz Sheikh and President Mrs. Gayatri Saroj, "No declaration or notice was issued regarding the enquiry which obviously means that it was not at all intended to be an impartial enquiry. Even the parents of the girls were not informed. Recently the parents of the two girls have written a letter to Commissioner K.V. Sangathan expressing their disbelief regarding the enquiry. When our correspondent spoke to the two girls, he was informed that the enquiring authority did not ask them anything about the particular incident. What sort of enquiry was that, in which the statements of the victims were not recorded is a question Commissionor, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan has to answer who always comes out with one sterotyped reply "when all the enquiries have exonerated him, what can we do". None of the parties, including the parents of the Two girls who have raised this issue written to the Sangathan, have received any reply from the Sangathan till now.

Regarding Bhooribai's case, the Sangathan claims to have appointed two enquiry commit-

(*Contd. on page 13*)

FOR DISCUSSION

National Workshop on Problems of Women Construction Workers

JUSTICE V.R. Krishana Iyer, former judge of the Supreme Court and the Chairman of the National Campaign Committee for Central legislation on construction labour, while inaugurating in New Delhi on the 12th November ,1986 a three-day workshop on the Problems of women construction workers organised by the National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development, called for the liberation of women construction workers from their wretched working and living conditions. He added that women workers suffered from privation and adversities beyound description and were grossly neglected by the society. He further, described them as the most victimised section of the society and added that the children of these women workers were in a far worst state. He also said that the laws enacted recently had legitimised the child labour. To obviatte any failure at the implementation stage, he suggested a tripartite arrangement or Board with government, employers and workers representation to provide health, sanitation, compensation and drinking water to the workers. The Board should have statutory powers and mobile tribunals should be formed to see that wages were paid to the workers. Though the construction industry employees the second largest mumber of workers in its ranks, after agriculture, this section of labour is still unorganised, lacking representative groups to fight for certain rights that are basic to the organised sector. Though Women's problems were central to the National Workshop on problems of Women Construction Workers, a lot of emphasis was given to the demand for a draft Bill on construction workers, which aims at improving their wages and working conditions. The Union Minister of State for Labour Shri P.A. Sangma, who addressed the workshop on the 13th November, 1986 admitted that so far 90 per cent of the time of the Labour Ministry had been spent on discussing the problems of only the organised sector which makes up just ten per cent of the total labour force. He added that now his priorities would be child labour, beedi workers and construction workers. There were detailed reports on the 12 million construction labourers who were actually displaced farmers looking for seasional jobs in towns and cities. Owing to the high number and mobile nature of the industry, these people were usually underpriorities, would be child labour, beedi workers and usually under-paid lacked civic amenities, possessed no safeguards against accidents or sickness and did not enjoy the protection of statutory laws governing their hours of work. As not being represented by unions or representative bodies they were subject to a exploitation by employers. Mereover the women workers were further discriminated against by being paid less wages than man, performing all the unskilled work; including brick-making, stone quarrying, assembling construction materials and carrying stones, bricks and cement without compensation during pregnancy or sickness. Under these circumstances their children grew up in unstable conditions, dirt and filth never receiving any education or care they deserved. The issue that received maximum attention was that of formulating a draft bill seeking to organise a tripartite Board which would represent workers, contractors and the Government. Through this Board, the workers registering themselves would be able to avail themselves of medical compensation, gratuity health and accident insurance, places to reside, the means to educate their children and themselves and more importantly, have regulated hours of work as well as decent salaries. The Construction Workers' Board would seek to create happy industrial relations that have so far been denied to workers because of the subcontracting in the building business. At present the labourers mostly return to their village periodically for lack of work but the Board would try to ensure permanent employment for them.

Indian Labour Journal, Issue December. 1986

Panel for self-employed Women Appointed by Union Govt.

THE Union Government has constituted a commission under the chairmanship of Mrs Ela Bhatt, M.P., to examine and study the problems of self-employed women, reports UNI.

The commission, which has been asked to submit its report within a year, will study the difficulties experienced by these women in getting credit, marketing, health care, social security and other facilities, official sources said in New Deihi on Monday.

The commission, constituted by the Department of Women and Child Development will examine the present status of women in this sector with special reference to employment, health and education.

It will also assess the impact of various labour legislations on these women, especially in respect of maternity benefits and health insurance.

Other members of the commission are Mrs. Amaiti Desai, Dr. Thamarajakshi, Mrs. Mrinal Pandhe. Mrs. Jaya Arunachalam and Mrs. Veena Mazumdar.

The constraints on the increase in productivity of self-employed women and the gaps in training, credit, upgradation of skills and marketing shall be identified by the commission which will make a survey of the employment patterns, including production relations, and assess their impact on wages.

The constitution of the commission has become imperative in view of the fact that despite various constitutional and legal provisions to safeguard women's employment, a large number of women workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector, suffer various disadvantages in their working life as well as at home.

The labour laws too have not benefited them in many crucial areas, especially health, maternity and social security, the sources said.

The commission will undertake a survey of the effects of the macro policies relating to investment, production and technology on the status of self-employed women.

Women's Organisation On Nurses Demands

A delegation from the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, All India Democratic Womens Association and National Federation of Indian Women met the Union Minister for Human Resources Development, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao on 24th January, 1987 and submitted a memorandum to him urging the Government to begin negotiations with the nurses who have been on strike since 19th January.

The Minister began by raising the question of whether it was ever correct for doctors and nurses to go on strike, under any conditions to which the delegation responded with its unequivocal support for the right to strike of doctors and nurses. The main demands of the nurses were raised by the delegation, stressing especially on the basic demand regarding revision of grades and pay-scales. Shri Rao was urged to begin negotiations forthwith, with the elected Joint Action Committee of the nurses under the leadership of the Convenor Smt. Saraswati. The Minister said that his information was that negotiations were already in progress between the nurses and the Minister of State and Additional Secretary, Shri Uma Shankar. However he assured the delegation that if this was not the case, he would take the necessary action to ensure commencement of the negotiations at the earliest possible time. (The strike was withdrawn).

Tripura Staff Nurses Association Greets Delhi Nurses in support

"Nursing Staff Local Committee under Tripura, Govt. Employees Association express solidarity towards the struggle launched by Delhi Nursing Organisation. Adopted resolution condemning apathetic attitude of the Central Govt. Urge upon the Central Govt. for conceeding their legitimate demands immediately."

The WFTU Greets the Working Women of the World on International Women's Day

ON the occasion of 8 March ..... International Women's Day ..... the WFTU sends its warmest greetings of international solidarity to working women throughout the world fighting in united trade union actions for their rights and demands, against all forms of discrimination, for social progress and peace.

The WFTU greets the millions of women who are in the forefront of the growing anti-war movement and pays tribute to their tireless and devoted struggle to avert the danger of a nuclear catastrophe, to halt the escalation of the arms race and the US administration's dangerous "Star Wars" plans.

The WFTU assures working women in capitalist countries of its full solidarity and support in their struggle against unemployment, under-employment, for equal pay and conditions, against cuts in social services, the decline of living standards, against the policies of monopolies and their inreasing attacks on the rights of workers, including working women.

The WFTU reiterates its solidarity with women fighters for national independence against neo-colonialism apartheid, dictatorship and all forms of repression and exploitation.

The WFTU conveys its greetings to women in socialist countries who, enjoying full equality of rights, are actively involved in the building and development of a new society. Their achievements and successes provide encouragement to women workers in other countries in their struggle for the right to work and for progressive policies of economic and social development.

This year, observance of March 8 takes place against the background of preparations for the World Congress of Women, to be held in June in Moscow. The WFTU calls on working women and trade unions all over the world to support this international forum which, without doubt, will be an important step in the development of united actions of women's rights—for complete equality and an end to all forms of discrimination at work—in the spirit of the Forward—Looking Strategies for the Advancment of Women adopted by the Nairobi Conference. Let this March 8th be the day of redoubled efforts for the just demands of working women, a day of action for PEACE, EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT, towards a year 2000 without nuclear weapons and for the advancement of international trade union co-operation, in accordance with the decisions of the 11th World Trade Union Congress.

FORM IV

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Sd/-
Vimal Ranadive, Publisher.

Dated: 1st March, 1987

Women Supporters of the Organisation of Irarian People Feedaian Greet Women in India On 8th March 1987.

AIDWA Campaign On National Integration

Ila Bhattacharya : Tripura

The National Integration month was observed by Ganatantrik Nari Samit in the state of Tripura from 26th December to 26th January '87. All the divisional committees observed it during the whole month in various forms. Local committees used postering, held inumerable Women's meetings and conventions, Padayatras. On 26th January women's demonstrations were held in which thousands of women of all sections and communities participated.

Movement on unity and integrity will not be discontinued in the state. Ganatantrik Nari Samity has decided to launch continuous movement on National integration, because our country is passing through a very critical situation, like Khalisthan movement in Punjab and deportation of foreign nationals in Assam, the TNV extremists are also creating troubles in Tripura. They are brutally killing workers of democratic organisations and non tribal children, women and innocent people. The only motive of such type of murders and arson is to create communal riot in Tripura. Samithi will continue the movement against the secessionist and extremist activities.

Orissa : *R. Chakrabarty*

On behalf of All India Democratic Women's Association Sundargarh Dist Com mittee, a convention was held on 8.2.87 at Rourkela on National Integration. More than 100 women delegates from different parts of the District participated. Mrs. Kalyani Das, State President, Miss. Tapasi Praharaj, State Organising Secretary, Mrs. Janki Mudali and other Speakers participated in deliberation. Miss Binapani Das presented a paper on National Integration. The speakers called upon the Democratic masses to fight against devisive and communal forces and come forward to preserve the National Unity. Later on Rourkela local committee of AIDWA was formed under the joint convenorship of Binapani Das and Reba Chakravorty consisting 11 members.

Haryana : *Jagmani*

The state level convention of women in Hissar was held on 26th of January '87 at the call of AIDWA with more than 500 women attending. About 150 women workers, working in thread mills in Indo-Australian farm or Sheep Breeding farm who get only Rs: 8-10 daily, also participated in the convention and the rally. A resolution on National Integration was placed for discussion when 20 women participated. Com. Jagmani placed her views on the present political situation. A number of meetings were held before the convention for mobilising women. Considering the importance of the convention, the local press too gave good coverage for the programme. Dr. Grewal, the head of English Deptt. K.U.K. was the main speaker in the convention. Haryana Committee of AIDWA is planning to hold a political school for women cadres and also decided to organise the working women on their problems.

Maharashtra

At the call given by AIDWA the various units in the states observed a day for National Integration and communal harmony by taking out processions, holding seminars and meetings. In Bombay and Icchal-Karanji in Maharashtra women took out torch-light processions in the night which was a novel way for women and onlookers, together with DYFI and SFI on 25th of January 1987 and held a meeting at Nardullaha Tank Maidan. On the refusal to take out a "Mashal Procession" women held torches attached with red colour papers and marched from Dadar at 9.30 in the night shouting slogans on Unity and National Integration watched by thousands of people from the balonies of the houses. Women came from Wadala, Sion, Mahim, Worli, Niagaon, Sahar Andheri and other places. Prabha Savant, President of SMS in her speech

spoke on the heritage of our people in our country, to fight for national unity and National integration. Many people became martyrs in the freedom struggle. The women in Punjab are fighting against the extremists, while facing the danger to their lives. Ahilya Rangnekar, the acting Chairman of AIDWA while summing up at the end congratulated the women and the young members of SFI and DYFI for their participation. She appealed to keep the unity of the country, and fight against the communal forces helped by imperialism. The meeting ended at 11 PM addressed by Ashoka Dhavale and Singh of SFI and DYFI among others.

Ichalkaranji

About 200 women from the district marched with torches in their hands led Jainabi Nudap, Shevanta, Hirabati, Rukmini, Shalan and others at 7.30 in the evening, while shouting slogans on National unity and for communal harmony. Women went on beating on the thalies which attracted the crowd while passing through the streets, the status of Mahatma Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar were garlanded who gave their lives for freedom struggle. The meeting was addressed by Parvati Jadhav and Ratnaprabha Bhagwat.

Subashini — One More Victim On Dowry

G. Raja Kumari, Hyderabad

Subashini (18), resident of Pathikonda, Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh was married to R. Naresh Singh (25), a Bank employee in Raichur (Karnataka), last year. He was paid an amount of Rs. 20,000/- as dowry by Sree Ram Singh, father of Subashini. She was tortured by her husband and in laws, for not satisfying the whims of her in laws. Subashini was harrassed time and again for her failure to extract additional 'gifts' from her parents. She had been apprising of her agonies to her parents. But, Sree Ram Singh used to console her every time. However Subashini faced the sufferings and attacks of her in laws. She was compelled to lead an inhuman life.

Subashini was mentally depressed and humiliated because of her husband's illicit relationship with other woman who had a son. Subashini told her father about this and her father prayed before her in-laws not to harrass her. But after this she was brutally manhandled and was set on fire on 12.1.1987 by her in-laws, because she had narrated all the facts to her father.

This cold blooded murder has been shown as suicide by the police and officials. Even the postmortem report was fabricated, which indicates that it was a case of suicide not murder. But her father who reached the spot after the murder, found pieces of bangles and mangalsutra of his daughter scattered in the room. This fact indicates that there was a resistance by Subashini with her in-law's when they manhandled her. After seeing the room, her father suspected that his daughter was murdered and he urges the government to order a public enquiry to inquire into his daughter's death so as to book the culprits and punish them.

(*Contd. from page 8*)

tees but neither Bhooribai received any notice of the enquiries nor any of the Sangathan officials had ever spoken to her.

Mr. C.P. Singh has also been misusing his powers in matters of appointing adhoc teachers and in his behaviour with them. In the schools of K.V. Sangathan, adhoc teachers are appointed for six months but Mr. C.P. Singh reappoints adhoc teachers every month. It is reported by the adhoc teachers that Mr. C.P. Singh often asks them very vulgar and indecent questions.

All these matters have been reported to the Sangathan officials but it seems that whole of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan is out to shield this corrupt and imoral principal.

Mrs. Gayatri Saroj, President, All India Democratic Women's Association Madhya Pradesh State Committee said that since no action is being taken against the Principal they are going to launch a strong movement against such an enemy of women folk.

THE PANCHAYAT RAJ
has brought new light of hope to the poor and distressed in rural West Bengal



Nine years of Left-Front rule generated progress and new awakening in villages

Everybody could realise the potential possibilities of the Panchayat system in West Bengal only after the Left-Front Government took over in 1977. In 1978, a new 3 tier system—Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad was introduced with a massive support and participation of the people.

It is remarkable that during the last nine years 26.79 crores of mandays were created under Food for Work and the National Rural Employment programme by the Panchayat bodies, which in turn created many permanent assets in rural areas. More than 63,000 houses have been built by the Panchayats for landless cultivators. Today 2,944 Panchayat Bhavans and 421 Homeopathy Centres, Marketing and distribution centres, adult education and training centres have been set up. Irrigation facilities have been provided to 1,34,248 hectares of land. Grants and loans for different development activities are also being sanctioned.

The Panchayats, inspired and supported by the State Government, have spearheaded such rural development programmes as Land Reform measures, recording of 13.39 lakh sharecroppers (Upto December, 1985) under 'Operation Barga', acquisition of surplus land and distribution among the landless, homestead land for bargadars and pattadars, agricultural inputs and bank loans, social forestry covering 10,060 hectares, sinking and repairing of tube-wells, building of community huts, repair of 8,50,480 kms of village roads, 9,353 culverts, construction and repair of 14,170 school buildings, granaries, rural godowns and bus-shelters etc.

The functioning of Panchayat system has been strengthened and extended by the Left-Front Government to ensure a better life to the rural people of West Bengal.

Government of West Bengal

Condemn Botha Government for Jailing and Torturing Kids

CAN there be any Government afraid of overthrowing it by the teenaged children below 10 years or so? Yes, it is the Pretoria Government of South Africa. See the following figure of arrested children. More than 2000 black children under the age of 3 were in prison with their mothers between January and December 1985. Gilly Nyathela is only 12 years old detained four times in 1986. He was subjected to electric torture to his hands, feet and genetials. An 8 year old boy, Amos Khubeka was refused bail on a charge of intimidation in the Magistrate court. An 11 year old handicapped child, Isaac was arrested. About 150 toddlers from six months old were knocked unconscious at one of the Centres after the racist police fired teargas into the building. Prescilla is just 14 years old and taken away from her house in an early morning. Hundreds of such instances can be quoted which one can hardly believe. The UNCEF, UNO WIDF and other influential institutions brought out these facts so that the outside world should know what barbaric kind of Government of South Africa maintains. Even children aged of 14, 15. 17 were sentenced to seven and eight years jail terms. A father committed sucicide when his eight children were detained by the police.

South African Government is afraid of the small black Kids! Yes, and why not? Children do learn from the daily happenings in their country and are very intelligent to act too. More than 300,000 black pupils from 200 schools participated in the boycot in 1986. Reason? Blabk pupils refused to accept the Bantu Education policy of Botha. Violation of this discriminatery policy means imprisonment of black pupils. The army occupy the school and children are harrassed. Another punishment for these kids is to send them to "youth training centres" which means their "brain washing" compelling them to accept whatever the White Government orders. They have to choose between indefinite detention or going to the centres. They are taught here that ANC is bad and they should support the racist Government.

The declaration on the Right of the child adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20th November 1959 is daily trampled underfoot in South Africa. Can we imagine that since the state of emergency was proclaimed on 12 June 1986, more than 22,000 opponents of Apartheid have been imprisoned without trail, 40 per cent of these being children under the age of 18! Thousands or black children are deprived of elementary rights, such as right to education and development. Instead they are languishing in dungeons. To fight against this exploitation of children, an organisation White South African women has come forth and is launching campaigns. Prominent persons like Archibishop Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Perez de Cuellar, the Secretary General of United Nations have joined in the Campaign. They are demanding immediate release of such children. The UNICEF director described the plight of these children as unbearable, and no longer be tolerated by international community.

Mothers do feel their children are their future and most precious in the world. They should be protected from war, terror and violence, guaranteed a happy and peaceful life. Black or White they are children and must be protected. The inhuman policy of Botha Government towards the children must be put to stop. The demand should be raised everywhere, all children be released from the dungeons of South Afriea, forthwith.

(*from page 17*)

womens Committee is holding the world congress of women in June 1987 in Moscow. This is surely going to be the "congress of peace", to save the world humanity from the holocaust of war.

On March 8th, our women too will join in voicing the demand for "No war" and for 'Peace' along with all others. They will demand "No more Hiroshima" and "have negotiations between USSR and USA" support the peace proposals made by Soviet leaders, and Non-aligned movement.

March 8, International Women's Day — A Day For Peace

THE 8th of March 1987, a historical International Women's Day is being observed by women all over the world today mainly as an Anti-war and for peace day with all the seriousness as the present political situation demands. Under the Nuclear and space war hysteria created by American imperialism, the women in the peace movement will raise the slogans "No More Hiroshima" "We want peace and "No war or star wars" ! From America, to Japan, Latin America and Europe including West Germany, women are in the forefront, of the demonstrations in thousands chaining the hands to stop the movement of cruise missiles.

The AICCWW and AIDWA sends their warm and fraternal greetings to women in Soviet Union who are in the forefront and to all others, fighting for peace and against US imperialism, while fully supporting the peace proposals by M. Gorbachev to stop the Nuclear test and space war. Nobody can forget the great sacrifices made by Soviet people, including women in the 2nd world war while defeating the Hitlers Rule as well as the great victory of Stalingrad and Moscow from which the soliders of Hitler were driven back to Berlin which changed the map of Europe, the Eastern Europe coming under socialist system.

We warmly greet the women in China, Vietnam and Kampuchia, a part of the Socialist world who are taking big strides in the construction of their countries. The progress of women in every field can be noted in these countries who were kept backward by various imperialist countries for many years.

We are very proud to send our greetings to fighting women in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Namibia and other countries in Latin America who are challenging the American imperialists and their stooges in their countries with arms in their hands to defend their independence, and gains. The great progress made by women in Cuba after the revolution can be noted by anybody.

Not a day passes without alarming reports of severe repression and atrocities on the black people of South Africa supported by USA. More than 22,000 men and women are languishing in jail without trial today, out of which 40 per cent are children below 10 years old! The system of Apartheid in the 20th century is a shame for all the "so called developed countries, and is violation of all the principles of International laws. Women and children are fighting against the Racial Govt., giving their lives! The leader Nelson Mandela in Jail is an inspiration to all the people. We salute those brave sisters in South Africa and assure all our support to the movement and ANC. Despite the declaration of Martial law, tortures, firing and imprisonment of men and women in Pakistan by Zia Military regime, women have started organising themselves to face the reactionary policies of the Government. Women's Action Committee has been formed and processions taken out for their rights disregarding the curfew and 144. The Muslim Fundamentalist Khomeni of Iran, completely surrendering the interests of common men and women to U.S. just to save his skin and Islamic rule has again put women in 'Burqua', compelled them to go back to Kitchen to look after home and children! But progressive women are organising themselves against these fundamentalist Islamic Govt to face the difficult challenge. In spite of the instigation by Pakistan, USA and others, to intervene in their country, women in Afghanistan have progressed considerably in the field of education, employment under their Govt. We send our sisterly greetings to all and will continue to support their cause.

The present political situation all over the world today calls all women to fight for peace as one of the major tasks, to save the world from Nuclear holocaust, to expose the conspiracies of American imperialism to divide the world, to destroy the Soviet Union, and the Socialist system. The people in the world have come to realise now, that despite the peace proposals made by M. Gorbachev on many occasion, including the latest one in

Reykiavik in October 86, Reagan rejected them outright, exploded the Nuclear tests in Nevada with least concern of the public opinion. He also threatened to continue with the experiment for space war.

Women in our country, not having much experience of war of any kind, will have to be educated raising their consciousness, on the actual horrors of war and its effects. They have to be also educated on the Star wars and its implications on the whole world. What is being built in United States is a nuclear war fighting capacity, a strategy of a first attack against the Soviet Union. It is, therefore, our uppermost duty to educate our women on the strategy of Nuclear war initiated by U.S. Already women have suffered and are suffering the effects of war and the arms race. The attacks on their employment, livelihood, social benefits are already there. They know, unless the war is prevented, there will be no economic or social development. Whatever rights are existing today, those too will have to be given up.

Women and children are the most who suffer in any war launched by imperialism or reactionery Government. Fully aware of these issues, women are launching huge struggles in Europe, West Germany, Japan, USA and other countries, collecting thousands and lakh of signatures against the Nuclear tests, sending telegrams, to Reagan, UNO and other organisations. In Washington DC thousands of people greeted the Peace March in November 1986.

While turning to the present position of women in our country on the occasion of March 8th, we have to say that we are to go a long way to achieve our objective in every respect. The present position of women, economically or socially has gone bad to worse. Employment of women has gone down, filling up the ranks of unemployed and home based industries. More than 30 lakhs women are registered as jobseekers in 1982 in urban areas, and many more in 1986. Equal Remuneration is just on the paper. Maternity benefit is discontinued after 2 children in the name of controlling population. Jobs are curtailed while self-employment, ICDS and Nutrition Schemes are promissed in the 7th Five Year Plan. Introduction of computerisation in the offices will throw women out. Contract and casual women workers have no legal protection. The 20 point programme introduced on 15th August last year gave slogan of two child "Norm Family" and "responsible parenthood". Under such circumstances, there is no wonder if women are launching struggles on a large scale in every state for their demands.

Despite the Dowry Prohibition Act, dowry deaths continue in all the states. Atrocities on Harijan and Tribal women are on the increase, the main culprits are not punished. The daily press is publishing harrowing tales of women sexually har assed by police, political influential personalities, goondas etc. No punishment is given by the legal machinery. March 8th reminds us, unless a united struggle is launched against the divisive forces all over India, our independence is in danger. The imperialist hand in Punjab and elsewhere is to be exposed. It is to be noted that our sisters in Punjab are fighting bravely against the extremist forces. The AIDWA called upon women to fight for communal harmony and national unity. The Left Front Govts of West Bengal and Tripura are in the forefront fighting for communal harmony.

While we greet our sisters in Soviet Union, we recall, that the 1917 proletarian revolution in Russia, brokeout on the 8th March (12nd February). Women in textile in Petrograd led a strike of over 90,000 workers while downed their tools and joined the demonstrations in the streets. This strike signalled the end of the 300 year old Romanav dynasty and the beginning of the Russian Revolution. 'Pravada' Praised women with the following words:

"All honour to the International Women's Day ... The women were the first to tread the street of Petrograd on their day ..." Krupskaya, wrote an editorial in "Rabotritsa" (Working woman). Clara Zetkin sent a message of greetings to Russian women on behalf of International Secretariat of women for their couragus action in defence of their rights.

After 70 years, one recalls these incidents with pride, those women who gave their lives for the revolution are rememberd. The Soviet

(*Contd. on page 15*)

Czechoslovak Women In The International Year Of Peace

By Jana Jensikova

"AFTER we return home, we shall tell others about your efforts for life in peace and for a peaceful future for your children", Doris Stadelmeyar from the FRG told her new Czechoslovak friends. "It is for the first time that we have come to your country and we see that you too, are striving for life in peace, a life without wars. If such people got to know each other, they would certainly not shoot at each other..."

One autumn week-end was drawing to an end and so was the visit of the Stadelmeyers: Doris, her husband, Jurgen, their ten-year old son Mathias and nine-year old daughter Anna, in Domazlice. The week end ended but friendship between two common families, one from Nuremberg in the FRG and the other from Domezlice in Czechoslovakia, has only just begun.

Friendships like that, between Czechoslovak families and families from the neighbouring states—the FRG, GDR, Poland, the Soviet Union, Hungary and Austria— have been established on the eve of the Copenhagen World Peace Congress in five other Czechoslovak border district towns—Decin, Frydak-Mistek, Humenne, Velky Krtis and Jindrichuv Hradec. That was one of the largest peace activities of the Czechoslovak Women's Union — the Family Peace Tree Relay. Under the slogan of "Family Friendships for Peace and the Happiness of Nations", the families from seven European countries expressed their aspirations for life in peace and mutual understanding. They were written down, signed and placed, in metal containers, under trees which the families planted together as symbols of peace.

The Family Peace Tree Relay has been only one of hundreds of other activities which Czechoslovak women organized in the International Year of Peace: peace meetings discussions, friendships evenings, resolutions, peace marches of women and entire families, relay races, peace rides, exhibitions on peace themes, the planting of peace alleys, activities for children, and others...

On the international level, the Czechoslovak women's Union also oriented itself at a dialogue on the individual aspects of peace—on the cosequences of disarmament for the individual economic systems, the ecological consequences of the stockpiling, testing and development of weapons of mass destruction, on the problems of respect for fundamental human rights and their relation to international peace, on new approaches to the question of the security of an individual, of nations, states, and whole of mankind. Let us only recall the active participation of the Czechoslovak Women's delegation in the work of the women's Centre at the Copenhagen World Peace Congress in October 1986.

Czechoslovak women are aware that the current and the forthcoming period is and will continue to be characterized by a complex and contradictory international situation. That is why they want to step up their struggle for disarmament, and for the preservation of a peaceful life on Earth.

The attention of progressive women's orgauizations of the world will focus, in June 1987, on Moscow, where the World Congress of women and the 9th Congress of Women's International Democratic Federation will meet under the slogan "For the Year 2000 without Nuclear Weapons, for Peace, Equality and Development." In tribute to both Congresses, the Czechoslovak Women's Union has launched an initiative entitled "Nine flowers for peace and solidarity", which has been joined by hundreds of grass-roots branches of the Unions.

The bouquet of nine flowers will be composed of the most varied peace activities, initiatives and pledges of Czechoslovak women. They are preparing peace marches, meetings, discussions and lectures, arts competitions for children and youths on peace

(Contd. on page 5)

News from Pakistan

13 Held for Backing Women's Cause In Pakistan

THIRTEEN opposition leaders in the Sind provincial Assembly in Karachi were arrested in the Assembly building on Thursday along with 20 Pakistan People's Party women workers when the leaders lent support to the women demonstrating outside, report agencies. All those arrested were freed later in the night. The Co-chairperson of the PPP, Ms Benazir Bhutto, has condemned the 'unprecedented arrests'. The women were protesting against the police inability to arrest the killers of two sisters and their father in Karachi earlier this month.

In a daring demonstration the women defied the security cordon by scaling the gate of the Assembly. Once inside, they banged the door of the Governor's gallery and shouted slogans, which were heard inside the House.

Preparatory Committee Formed

The All Pakistan Preparatory Committee for the Congress of Women was convened by the Democratic Women's Association of Pakistan. The Preparatory Committee is to consist of more than 100 women from all over Pakistan, representing all walks of life. The Preparatory Committee will plan the activities leading up to the Congress and will organise the delegation representing Pakistan women.

It was agreed that work should begin at once throughout Pakistan, working through small committees and groups, planning seminars, discussions, exhibitions, craft displays and cultural programmes. Emphasis was laid on the fact that peace must be an imperative component in all preparatory work.

The President of the Preparatory Committee is Begum Zari Sae fraz, a personality who concerns herself with women's problems in Pakistan. The Secretary of the Committee is Tahira Mazhar, the President of the Democratic Women's Association.

Will the Space Weapons Industry Bring More Jobs and Prosperity to People

IT is a complete myth that the Star Wars project will increase jobs and prosperity. On the contrary, the Star Wars project means more unemployment, more cuts in social spending and a decrease in people's living standards in the countries who will participate in the programme. Already women have suffered the effects of the arms race on their livelihood, being the first victims of mass unemployment, and of cuts in the social services. Spending on armaments is a major obstacle to the struggle of women to achieve their rights in the advanced capitalist countries and throughout the world.

The huge increase in the United States military budget, which is envisaged as the Star Wars project develops, will mean that programmes for education, nutrition, housing, health care and social security will face extinction. A similar prospect will face those other countries who agree to participate in the Star Wars project. Already in the United States, infant mortality rates have soared. Do we really want to condemn ourselves and future generations to a society where poverty, unemployment, disease and illiteracy are the norm? Do we women really want to see the gains we have made swept away?

Against those who say that the Star Wars project will create jobs, we have to remember that for every one billion dollars spent, we could create 71,000 jobs in education, or 57,000 jobs in industries producing consumer goods and services, as opposed to 28,000 military related jobs. In recognition of these facts, many workers and trade unionists have opposed the Star Wars project, for example workers and engineers in the Siemens plants in the Federal Republic of Germany have declared that they would rather give up their jobs than work for the Star Wars project.

Women are at a crossroads, where we have to make the choice between meeting our needs, or participating in creating weapons of mass destruction. The Star Wars project means hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and death on a global scale. Is this the future we want to see? Or isn't a world freed from these evils worth struggling for?

The Supreme Court Sets the Stage for a Heated Debate on Maternity Leave

A heated debate on the question of whether protection of motherhood and social benefit be granted to women employees, is on in America, in an advanced capitalist country! Many will be surprised to learn that women employees there are retrenched or demoted when they return to jobs after the delivery of a child. We are publishing the following news letter or our readers which will be interesting to read,

Editor

THEY are the Twin Commandments of many working women: be fruitful and multiply, and keep your job. In practice, though, obeying both the biological drive and the economic imperative can often prove too much for any one family to handle. In most of the Western world, government has stepped in, mandating paid leaves for birth and infant care and in some cases even granting benefits to new fathers. But in the United States government policymakers have largely ignored pregnant women in the workplace. Now that may change. Last week the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states may order private firms to grant short, unpaid disability leaves to new mothers. That narrow decision will renew the push for parental benefits in Congress and many state legislatures, a true motherhood issue that some Democrats hope might become an element in the political calculus of 1988.

Last week's decision promises to be the first in a services from the high court that will define the rules for women in the workplace and elsewhere. By July the justices will likely to answer all of the following questions: in the name of affirmative action, may a country promote a qualified woman over a more qualified man to fill a job no woman has ever held? Is a woman who leaves work because of a pregnancy entitled to unemployment-insurance payments when other disabled workers are not?

Stingy benefits: While the court labours through its Year of the Woman, politicians will focus on parental leave, as issue whose time may have come. According to federal statistics, 48 per cent of all mothers with children less than one year old now work, and 67 per cent of mothers with children under three work full time. Yet according to a survey by the Catalyst Career and Family Center in New York, barely half of the nation's firms offer even unpaid maternity leaves.

Next month both the Senate and the House will hold hearings on a bill that would require 18 weeks of unpaid parental leave for both mothers and fathers, which could be used any time during the first two years of a child's life. "Employers have generally failed to adapt their family and medical-leave policies to the needs of workers," says Democratic Rep. Patricia Schroeder, one of the principal sponsors. "A minimum federal standard is needed if families are to continue playing their traditional role". Schroeder and other Democrats find maternity leaves their kind of "family issue" — and with it they hope to outflank conservative Republicans. In the Reagan years the GOP captured the debate on the family by emphasising a return to "traditional values" rather than actual government policies to aid families.

In the battle over leaves, cost is a key question. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and others in the business community argue that there is no such thing as a "free leave." In one example chamber staff counsel Virginia Lamp estimated that a business in the District of Columbia would have to spend $ 5,700 to hire a temporary worker for 18 weeks while an employee was on leave. Companies say they can't adjust their prices to absorb those costs and that the only recourse might be to slash other benefits. Of course Washington and the tax-payers could underwrite this effort in the name of family values. But the proposed bills do not call for federal funding.

Proponents see the money issue differently. Some larger employers have found that granting unpaid leaves costs less than hiring and training replacement workers. And much of the rest of the world manages to bear the costs of leaves. According to Meryl Frank of the Yale Bush Centre on Child Development, the United States and South Africa are

the only developed countries in the West without a nrtional-level policy. In Japan women employees are granted six weeks' paid leave after the child is born.

The question of cost aside, there is growing support in the medical profession for leaves. Many pediatricians believe a new mother needs six to eight weeks to recover from childbirth and at least four months to establish solid, supportive relationship with her baby. But many mothers must return to work much sooner because they cannot afford an extended unpaid leave.

Caesarean delivery: If Congress resists a national policy, then the battle will be fought state by state. Currently only nine have laws or regulations that insist employees hold jobs for women recovering from childbirth. California's was the subject of last week's Supreme Court decision. That case began when Lillian Garland, a receptionist at the California Federal Savings and Loan Association, tried to return to work two months after her Caesarean delivery. The bank, which had filled her job, refused to reinstate her in her former position and went to federal court seeking to void the state law.

Cal Fed makes the economic argument that the need to hire temporary replacements for pregnant women imposes an unfair burden. But the case turned on an interpretation of the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978. That law out-lawed discrimination against pregnat women and required that pregnant workers "be treated the same" as other workers. California's statet went further by guaranteeing a job to disabled new mothers, a privilege not extended to any other disability. Was the state law valid despite the apparent federal restriction? Writing for a 6-3 majority, Justice Thurgood Marshall said yes, holding that Congress had not "intended to prohibit (such) preferential treatment". Instead he concluded that according new mothers extra protection "promotes equal employment opportunity" because "it allows women, as well as men, to have families without losing their jobs."

In his dissent Justice Byron White scoffed at the majority view, stating instead that the language simply "leaves no room for preferential treatment of pregnant workers." It was a familiar argument in affirmative action cases: the words used in a statute mean just what they say and not what the court would prefer them to mean. In a separate opinion Justice John Paul Stevenas dismissed White's argument by saying that the court must sometimes look beyond the language of the law to fulfil the true purposes Congress intended.

The California case suggests one issue likely to surface in the national debate over leaves. "If I am an employer and I have weighed all the candidates, I am going to hire either a male or an older woman," says Don Butler, president of California's Merchants and Manufacturers Assn. "And that is discrimination we don't want, but it will happen because business people are practical".

The other women's issues before the court could have a profound effect on both working women and men. The most watched case comes from Santa Clara Country, Calif., where Paul Johnson has charged that he was deprived of a job in 1979 solely because he is a man. The facts are not in dispute: the country promoted Diane Joyce as the first female road dispatcher in the transportation department. Both candidates were deemed qualified, but Johnson had scored 2.5 points higher on the agency evaluation. Nonetheless, Joyce won the job, partly because the country was eager to meet an affirmative action goal.

Tough test: Now, eight years later, the case is awaiting a decision by the Supreme Court. The Reagan administration has sided with Johnson, arguing that he is a victim of "casual social engineering, needless of individual rights", and insists that affirmative action plans should only be triggered by explicit evidence of past discrimination committed by the agency involved. That would be a stiff test to meet, argues Marsha Levick, legal director of the National Organisation for Women. Instead, she said, the "conspicuous imbalance" in the work force should be reason enough to use hiring goals.

Feminists have fared well in the Supreme Court for more than a decade. The maternity leave case suggests that the streak may continue. But as the issues grow more complicated, it is difficult to categorise them. Protective or not, there is little doubt that many of those charged with raising children were relieved to find they have a friend at court.

From Newsweek, January 26, 1987

Solidarity with Chilean Women in their Struggle!

THE Chilean peasant woman has long borne the yoke of submission, with exhausting work and the position of a slave. Today, she is speaking out more and more and demanding a fair position in society.

Under Salvador Allende's popular government, women saw improvements in their living and working conditions. It was at this time that the peasants joined the struggle for a better future. Their will to challenge the political and economic power of the landowners, the unquestionable rulers of the countryside, became more and more ardent.

Later, after 1973, with the agrarian counter-reform which accompanied Pinochet's arrival in power, the landowners took their revenge, destroying the trade unions. Thousands of peasants suffered violence and repression; poverty once again reared its head. Even women have to find a job outside of the home. They are offered piece work or jobs in the government's PEM or POHJ schemes (for political rather than productive ends), because these furnish sophisticated unemployment statistic. Workers on these schemes have a monthly wage of between $ 13.10 and $ 25. This exploitation affects Chilean women particularly, and even children, who are forced to start work at a very young age.

Employed, as they are, in temporary work — cattle breeding, gold panning in the Norte Chico region, broad bean, tomato and beetroot harvesting, or fishing in the south of the country — women do not form any statistic, they are totally anonymous. They are often forced to work far from home, with no social security.

Now, peasant women represent a significant labour force which is prepared for fight for better living and working conditions. This awareness has led the women to demand the right to work, a full guarantee of work, the right to maternity and child benefit, social security, rest and cultural life and equal wages.

Today, bringing peasant women into the organised struggle and the trade unions is an increasingly topical question. The women's sections of the NEHUEN, SURCO and UOC (United Oberro Campesina) federations are setting an example which should be followed. Several rural workers' trade union organisations in the National Peasants' Commission (CNC) have a joint programme of action for the common struggle.

Strengthening grass-root trade unionism is indivisibly linked to the active participation of peasant women in the process.

What is Star Wars?

Star Wars — popular name given to the United States' Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), is a programme for the militarisation of outer space. It is an aggressive and offensive project designed to bring about US military superiority and world domination. Behind the talk of the Star Wars programme being defensive, lies the reality that it is part of a US strategy to be capable of delivering a massive first nuclear strike against any country in the world, and escape the consequences of a retaliatory nuclear blow. This United States' plan to militarise outer space will result in a new and extremely dangerous escalation to the arms race.

The Star Wars Project aims at developing a nuclear umbrella, a so-called 'defensive space shield'. A series of anti-satellite systems based on space and earth, intended to destroy all incoming missiles before they had a chance to reach their targets. These systems would employ the most up to date technology such as laser beams, electro-magnetic guns, x-ray guns, elaborate computerisation and a range of killer satellites.

Women Labourers in Agriculture, Forestry and Plantations!

On the occasion of the International Women's Day the TUIAFPW secretariat sends you our fraternal greetings and again assures you of the continuous support of your struggle for equal rights, against over exploitation, for the world of justice, for the world without nuclear arms, without wars!

Do Nurses Have The Right to Strike ?

AFTER a militant 17 day strike, Delhi nurses have gained a tremendous momentum in their struggle for better service conditions and status. In solidarity with the nurses, womens organisations like AIDWA, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women and NFIW intervened on behalf of the nurses at the level of the Ministry. A delegation of these three organisations met the Union Minister Shri Narasimha Rao. The Minister made a direct attack on the nurses right to strike and made the astounding remark that he could intervene only after taking permission from the Prime Minister.

The next day at a huge meeting of nurses outside the Ministry, when JMS representatives reported this, the nurses reacted with boos against the Minister. The JMS also organised a dharna in support of the nurses and issued 2000 leaflets in their support.

It is to the credit of the unity of the nurses that the settlement begins with a recognition of their right to strike. The first items are:

1. No victimisation.
2. Strike period to be adjusted as leave.
3. The allowances agreed will be effective from 1.10.86 with a recommendation that they should be implemented from 1.1.86.
4. An allowance of Rs. 300/- per month with a recommendation for an increase of Rs. 100/-
5. Extra time allowance granted and operation theatre allowance doubled.
6. House rent allowance for unmarried women living with their parents.

Three committees have been constituted to make recommendations in three crucial areas, within three months:

(a) pay scale anomalies
(b) eadre review
(c) status and working conditions.

What is most heartening is the fact that nurses have realised that it is their militancy and their unity that has won them their demands.

Today they feel that the time given to the government to reasses their problems will lead to a solution, but if it doesn't, then the nurses will be back in the arena of struggle, once again!

Women Teachers on the Path of Struggles

As a result of the teachers agitation in 1979, the Chattopadhyaya Commission was appointed to look into pay structure of teachers. The Commission report was to be submitted in 1980, but so far no report has been announced or published. Yet, the fourth Pay Commission has revised the pay scales of teachers. While evolving the pay scales for all categories of employees with equal or just equal pay-scales, it has discriminated against the Delhi school teachers. This has resulted in lowering of the teachers grades below other categories who were earlier lower at par with the teachers.

The selection grade has been withdrawn after 1.1.86. This has closed nearly all the avenue of promotion. Running pay-scales are also not allowed. This causes stagnation in all categories after pay fixation. However, selection grades are continued in case of junior engineers of C.P.W.D. as promotion grades. The teachers' demand that after 1.1.1986, selection grades be allowed after 8 years of service, i.e., time-bound selection.

Many teachers' organisations have come together to fight the injustices meted out to teachers. And they are sure that many more who have not yet joined will also join.

The struggle of teachers began in January 1987 with a notice and a number of delegations to the Government by several different teachers' organisations. Memorandums were also presented, including one to Minister of Human Resources. They received only assurances without any concrete action being taken. On 12th February 1987, a court-arrest was held and on 19th February, a massive rally of thousands of teachers has been held, and a total strike took place on 23rd February. If the authorities still turn a deaf ear to the united voice of the teachers, they shall not hesitate to undertake a hunger-strike to win their rightful demands.

March 8 — International Womens Day in Delhi

Ranjana Narula, Delhi

ABOUT a thousand women marched through the streets of the walled city on March 8, International Womens Day at the joint call of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti (AIDWA) and the Janwadi Mahila Samaj (NFIW).

The theme for the observance of the day was Women for Peace, National Integration and Equality. Women from the working class bastis of Delhi joined hands with University teachers, Muslim women in burkhas marched shoulder to shoulder with Sikh and Hindu women in a militant show of unity. Some women carried colourful paintings depicting various aspects of womens oppression. As the procession wound its way through the congested areas of the city, crowds of appreciative women and men lined the streets. The procession culminated in a big rally outside the Town Hall where Vimal Ranadive, Vrinda Karat, Sarla Sharma and Kartar Manna addressed the crowd.

The March was the culmination of the 8 day campaign organised by the Delhi State Committee of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti on the same theme.

This message touched the hearts of thousands of women — particularly the poorest, workingclass women living in the capital of India. One day festivals were held in various areas. These festivals attracted large numbers of women as it was not only through speeches that the urge to liberate themselves from bondage was expressed but also through songs, a play, an exhibition and even a game. The campaign was also held in some girls colleges of Delhi University.

Among the songs sung during this campaign one on the experience of Muslim women in relation to the attack on them through the Muslim Womens Bill was especially popular. The play, written and directed by and comprising of a cast of JMS activists recounted the experience of communal violence and sharply attacked communal forces in all religions who ally themselves with our oppressors — who support attacks on women in the name of religion and on the other hand prepare to turn even a small quarrel amongst children into a communal incident. With its strong appeal for unity of all women against these communal forces, this play brought tears to many eyes — especially among those who had actually been victims of communal violence.

A 27 panel exhibition was mounted at all the programmes. It traced the revolutionary history of International Womens Day, linking it to the struggle of women all over the world today ... against War, for national liberation, against communalism and for the struggle for the basic amenities for a human existence. The Exhibition was inaugurated by the AIDWA Vice-President Vimal Ranadive.

The AIDWA Greets Women In Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic on the Occasion of International Women's Day.

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for women's emancipation and equal partnership in the economic, political, social and cultural life of society into their own hands and to unite and work together nationally and internationally for that purpose.

She taught women to penetrate the mystery of how wars come about, to see who is responsible for warmongering and war preparations, and to side with those who have dedicated themselves to the struggle for a lasting peace, against militarism and war.

She taught women to use specific forms of struggle to express their demands for their rights, child welfare and peace and thereby to mobilize and involve more and more women.

Today millions and millions of women throughout the world are carrying on the life work of Clara Zetkin. Let us again recall what she said: "For as long as there is life, I will continue to fight."