



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## COMRADE VIMAL RANADIVE



**A**s we were in the final stages of releasing this issue of 'The Working Class' for printing, on 24th July '99 late evening, message reached that **Comrade Vimal Ranadive**, our beloved **Vimaldi**, had breathed her last in a Mumbai Hospital.

A poignant mood engulfed the CITU headquarters. The grieving members of the CITU Secretariat and staff stood in silence, as the CITU flag was lowered to half mast.

M K Pandhe., General Secretary, Ahilya Ranganekar, Vice-President, CITU arrived from AKG Bhavan to proceed to Mumbai to participate in the funeral. E Balanandan, President, K Hemalata, Secretary and Ranjit Basu, Treasurer, also proceeded to Mumbai on 25th July to join the thousands of mourners.

A condolence meeting was held at the CITU headquarters on 25th July morning.

Checking our tears, we bid you an eternal farewell **Vimaldi**. We only pledge to rededicate ourselves to carry further the tasks for which you devoted your entire life spanning a near 70 years of revolutionary mass movement.

**RED SALUTE COM. VIMALDI !**

*(Please see back cover)*

Ranjit Basu

Justice N C Kochhar(Retd), appointed by the Delhi High Court to give his decision in the matter of dispute about the date of reckoning for verification of membership of Central Trade Union Organisations has decided 31.12.1997 as the most appropriate date. His decision was given on 2nd July 1999.

At a final meeting of the representatives of Central Trade Union Organisations called by the Ministry of Labour on 28.6.99, before Justice N C Kochhar, no settlement could be arrived at. Hence the Justice observed that he would give his decision and the meeting concluded.

We give below excerpts from the DECISION given by Justice N C Kochhar:

"In the meeting the matter of fixing the date of reckoning was discussed at length and views of the representatives present in the meeting were heard. The representatives of the trade unions having not agreed to a common date of reckoning, I found that it was not possible to settle the dispute between the representatives of various trade unions amicably and, therefore, I am deciding this matter in terms of the orders of the Hon'ble High Court.

It has to be noticed that the dispute was referred to me in terms of the decision taken by the Standing Committee in its meeting dated 28/29.1.1999. It has also to be kept in mind that the Hon'ble High Court in the consent order had directed the CLC(C) to proceed ahead as expeditiously as possible to conclude the process of verification. It will, therefore, be relevant to see as to what was the material available to the CLC(C) on 29.1.99 for proceeding with the process of verification of membership of various trade union organisations.

In the meeting dated 28.6.99, the BMS, UTUC, UTUC(LS), TUCC, NFITU and HMKP wanted the date of reckoning to be fixed at 31.12.98 whereas the INTUC, HMS and CITU were in favour of 31.12.97 and AITUC insisted upon 31.12.96 to be the date of reckoning.

The trade unions, according to the rules, are required to file with the Registrar of Trade Unions their returns of membership of each year by 31st March of succeeding year but in practice they

obtain further time and file the returns even upto August of the succeeding year instead of filing it by 31st March.

In this view of the matter on 28/29.1.99 when the dispute was referred to me there could not be any possibility of any returns having been filed of the membership as existing on 31.12.98; and the same might not have been filed by some of the trade unions even by this date. The records, thus, available to the CLC(C) as on 28/29.1.99 and even till date, for proceeding with the verification of membership is, therefore, the returns filed for the year ending 31st December 1997 and not later. As noted above, according to the consent order passed by the High Court, the CLC(C) has to proceed with the process of verification of membership and conclude it as expeditiously as possible and it will not be possible for him to do so if the date of reckoning is fixed later than 31.12.1997.

I am, therefore, of the view that the date of reckoning should be such which should enable the CLC(C) to proceed with the matter of verification of membership immediately and without any further delay.

In the meeting held by me on 28.6.99, no suggestion came forward for fixing the date of reckoning earlier than 31.12.96 and I feel that the record in the form of returns for the year 1997 being available, 31.12.97 is the most appropriate date of reckoning and on the basis of the same the verification process should be proceeded by the CLC(C). The dispute stands decided accordingly."

With this the stage is set for the Government of India to initiate the process of general verification of membership of Central Trade Unions. The follow up Notification by the Government is expected any time.

**ATTENTION OF ALL STATE COMMITTEES AND AFFILIATE UNIONS IS DRAWN TO THIS DEVELOPMENT AND THEY ARE ADVISED TO COMPLETE ALL PROCESSING TO FACE THE VERIFICATION ON THE BASIS OF FORM 'E' RETURNS FOR THE YEAR 1997.**

**PLEASE GIVE TOP PRIORITY AND UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THIS TASK!**

#### Correction

In Kanai Banerjee's article 'Defeat the BJP & Its Allies' on page 7, last para, 3rd line from below please read: the answer is 'simple: back most effective secular candidates to defeat the' communal forces. The error is regreted.

# THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

AUGUST 1999

Here &amp; Now

Sudhir Tailang



...karela, jamun, baingan —  
all made in USA, ma'am!

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

## EDITORIAL BOARD

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On June 9th this year, Atal Behari Vajpayee "the man India awaits" - effected a minor reshuffle of his Cabinet, even during his present care-taker tenure.

The purpose was to ease out Jagmohan from the Ministry of Telecommunications, a portfolio which was taken over by Vajpayee himself.

Everyone, including the sections of the media, which sing hymns and praises of Vajpayee, noted that this change was effected under pressure from big business. The all-powerful private telecom companies, which owed the Government of India around Rs.4500 crore, towards cellular and phone licence fees and allied payments wanted a bail out. But Jagmohan proved to be a hurdle. He had already commenced the process of encashing bank guarantees executed by these companies, recovering over Rs.1000 crore of these defaulted payments.

Jagmohan could not be prevailed upon to stop getting tough with the defaulters; but the Prime Minister could be prevailed upon by the MNCs lobby to change the Minister at the first instance and the telecom policy itself in the next phase. This is 'value based politics' of the man (Vajpayee) who "did no wrong"!

One thing must be noted here. The huge sums of moneys owed by the cellular companies (mostly multi nationals) were not something arbitrarily decided by the Telecom department or the Government. These were the result of commitments undertaken voluntarily by these companies through a process of competitive bidding. Then what is the case for bail-out.

The big business operators complain that their calculations went wrong and they could not amass as much profit as they expected. Hence they wanted to be relieved of their legal obligations, voluntarily undertaken.

Vajpayee who could comfortably sail along with Sukhram could not have happy company with Jagmohan.

The Cabinet under Vajpayee met on 6th July, 1999 and made a complete about-turn from the earlier telecom policy. It offered a revenue sharing arrangement for the private cellular lobby; it helped them to wriggle out of the obligation to cough up the accumulated dues; it extended the licence period to 20 years.

What transpired behind the curtains, that too at the present run up to the Lok Sabha elections, is anybody's guess!

But the Vajpayee Government has no right to effect any policy-change at this juncture and without obtaining approval of Parliament. President K.R. Narayanan, a stickler for constitutional propriety, had to intervene, not once but twice.

This has stirred up a controversy. If the BJP led caretaker regime under Vajpayee does not stop in its tracks in this affair, telecom is once again a muddle, scam or absolute loot!

It is time for people to wake up and pass their verdict - in September-October-against such treacherous and murky deals of the saffron gang!

# 87TH SESSION OF THE ILO

The Eighty Seventh Session of the ILO held from 1st to 17th June 1999 was marked by several contradictions emerging among the advanced capitalist and the developing countries. Despite opposition by the third world countries to link social clause with the world trade, repeated attempts were made to bring it through the back door.

In this, the trade unions in the advanced capitalist countries were making a common cause with their employers and the Governments.

## **DONOR DRIVEN AGENDA**

For the first time since the foundation of ILO, the Director General has been nominated from a developing country. During the last 80 years of the

existence of the ILO, they were always from the advanced capitalist countries. The new Director General from Chile in his report "Decent work" has criticised the donor driven agenda of the ILO. Most of the ILO funds come from the advanced capitalist countries. Over 75 percent of the ILO's contributions are made by them,

## **SOLUTIONS IMPOSSIBLE UNDER NGO-LIBERAL FRAME WORK**

**ALEXANDER ZHARIKOV, General Secretary, WFTU at the ILO Conference**

As at the present and previous ILO sessions, many delegations - and, in particular, the worker delegates - have sharply pointed out that the policies of "economic liberalisation" have aggravated the global social crisis and do not offer any solution to the problems facing humankind. The rich have become richer and the poor poorer. Therefore, the central point of trade union demands in all countries, today, is to put an end to the policies of "neo-liberal globalisation" imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the global financial cartels. The financial turmoil has resulted in the unemployment of 20 million more in Asia alone. One-third of the world labour force is either unemployed or underemployed. Most seriously affected are the peoples in developing countries crushed by their foreign debt burden and in eastern Europe where poverty has become a crying phenomenon. In such a context, the inhuman practice of mass dismissals from jobs should be denounced as a brutal violation of international labour standards and basic human rights.

Trade Unions believe that solutions to this immense social problem cannot be found in the neo-liberal framework. There is, therefore, an urgent need to look for a democratic, comprehensive, just and human development strategy, based on the full utilization of human resources, as was agreed at the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, which gave the ILO a strong and comprehensive mandate to contribute effectively to economic and social development as a whole.

Despite the fact that a Declaration has been adopted at the last session, the non-implementation of Conventions 87 and 98 on the part of many employers and in particular, the Multinational Enterprises - continues as before. The ILO should urge governments to adopt laws whereby all enterprises, the multinationals included, declare in their annual reports the state of compliance with international labor standards. The widely observed practice of certain big companies to run "union-busting" agencies as an organized industry should be declared illegal and as a violation of ILO conventions.

The ILO must also be concerned with the loss of over 600,000 working places in Yugoslavia caused by the bombing of factories and enterprises by NATO recently as well as the social consequences of economic boycotts and sanctions against Cuba, Iraq, Libya, Iran, DPRK, India, Pakistan Sudan and other countries, since they affect the work and life of the working people of these countries. The ILO must join the efforts to foil all attempts to resolve problems by force, by unilateral power play avoiding international laws and recognized norms of conduct. The trade unions cannot accept a situation in which the United Nations and its agencies are marginalised and peace and stability in the world are endangered.

Given the recent crisis, with all its uncertainties and dangers we are passing through as we approach the next millennium, strengthening social partnership and especially workers' organisations, is an urgent need, if we wish to live in peace, security and stability and achieve prosperity for all.

while several ILO Projects are funded by these countries. Naturally, in the ILO programmes they get a major say. It is to be seen how much the new Director General will be able to ensure implementation of his concept of Decent work in practice.

The session adopted a new convention and Recommendation concerning worst forms of Child Labour. According to a study, conducted by the ILO in developing countries, 25 crore children between the age of 5 and 14 are engaged in work while half of them are doing full time job. Though much is talked about child labour in developing countries, the advanced capitalist countries are not free from exploitation of child labour. In U.K. and USA children below the age of 18 are compulsory recruited for their use in armed conflict.

The representatives of the Government and employees of advanced capitalist countries tried to argue that this type of use of children below the age of 18 is justified but ultimately they had to agree to prohibit it.

#### **WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR**

The ILO had to agree that all forms of slavery such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, forced labour, compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, procuring or offering children for prostitution, for the production of pornography or on pornographic performance, for drug trafficking, jobs involving high risk for health of children should be prohibited. The convention also provides for rehabilitation of children who are withdrawn from such worst

forms of child labour. The Recommendation adopted by the convention provides some specific cases of jobs where children should not be allowed to work. Though the ILO had earlier adopted in 1973 Minimum Age convention which provides for not permitting children to work below a specific age and it stipulates fixation of different minimum age for different countries. But, upto now only 73 countries have ratified this convention and India is among those which has not ratified it.

Government of India may ratify the convention by making necessary changes in the present legal frame work concerning child labour; it may not automatically abolish worst forms of child labour since it is closely linked with poverty and may continue to remain illegally in various clandestine forms.

#### **MATERNITY PROTECTION**

Another convention discussed in the ILO was concerning maternity protection. Though it was only a first reading, several employers' and government representatives opposed extending additional maternity leave.

In Europe, the government of advanced capitalist countries like Germany and France have curtailed social security benefits also. In Switzerland, where the ILO was meeting, the government recently announced measures reducing maternity benefits and working women are fighting against it. The draft of the convention will be discussed further in the next year and new convention is likely to be adopted. The final shape of the convention can be seen in reality only next year. Incidentally, India

has not ratified the earlier convention regarding maternity protection, since it covers all women workers. In India no such protection is available to women working in the unorganised sector including in agriculture.

#### **ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION**

The ILO session discussed at length the question of technical co-operation and ILO programmes concerning such co-operation. The advanced capitalist countries tried to link up such co-operation with social standards which was opposed by the trade unions and other representatives of the third world countries. Though ultimately they had to withdraw several conditionalities mentioned in the earlier draft, the final declaration did state in the circumlocutory matter the social clause and the WTO. Moreover, since the technical co-operation is largely dependent on the funding by the advanced capitalist countries, trade unions in the developing countries must remain vigilant and fight against any attempt to use any conditionality during the technical collaboration programmes of the ILO. Moreover, the technical collaboration programmes are symbolic in nature taking into consideration the requirements of the developing countries who do not have enough say in determining the technology they should get from advanced countries.

#### **DISCUSSION ON EUROPE AVOIDED**

The committee on application of Labour Standards considered at length the violation of the ILO convention by several countries. Though a short list of 30 countries was prepared, it was

surprising that not a single European country was included; the committee of experts, in its exhaustive reports did mention glaring cases of violation of the ILO convention by several European countries. M.K. Pandhe who was a member of this committee demanded that some countries from Europe should be included for discussion in the committee. Since it could not be done in the committee, he raised the question in the meeting of the Workers group in the ILO. Still the matter neither came up or taken up for consideration, which only highlights the doubt these countries enjoy in the ILO.

### **IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION**

While speaking on the general debate in the committee, the CITU representative pointed out how the structural adjustment programme and concept of globalisation of the World Bank and the IMF, have played havoc in developing countries. The floodgates opened for MNCs have enabled them to capture the market in those countries making domestic industries sick and uneconomic. It, naturally, is affecting the application of labour standards, since MNCs openly violate the ILO standards, including those concerning freedom of association and collective bargaining. The governments in these countries are refusing to protect the interest of workers for fear of MNCs not investing more capital. ILO is watching these developments as a silent spectator. The poverty in the developing countries has been increasing phenomenally, while un-employment and price rise of essential commodities have added to the miseries of the

people. The MNCs are nonchalantly bringing pressure on the governments of developing countries to change the labour laws, which are based on ILO conventions.

Pandhe referred to the question of child labour and stated that so long poverty remained, child labour will continue to prevail, despite passing of restrictive legislations. Tourists from the advanced capitalist countries are responsible for child prostitution and spreading of AIDS in developing countries. He pointed out the growing inequity at the global level and unequal trade relations have been responsible for this phenomenon. He demanded that the ILO activities should be more oriented towards developing countries so that the problems of these countries are given due importance and international action against MNCs who hit the self reliant development of the third world countries must be organised and co-ordinated.

Several speakers from developing countries criticised the role of IMF and World Bank for creating problems for these countries. Even the U.S. Labour representative criticised the role of the IMF at a global level which go against the interests of the working class. He condemned the role of the U.S. government in encouraging private prisons and indulging in prison labour violating ILO convention.

### **CLINTON'S DEMOCRACY**

President Clinton of USA who addressed a special session of the ILO paid glowing tributes to the role of the ILO and the international labour standards but failed to mention that U.S. has ratified only 12 of the 180

conventions. Two of the U.S. ratified conventions are not operative, while out of 7 core convention U.S. ratified only one, which also is violated with impunity by engaging prison labour to produce 119 billion US\$ worth products. The use of child labour in armed conflict was another example of U.S. concern of these labour standards.

### **DEVELOPING COUNTRIES MUST ASSERT**

The ILO session once again underlined the need for developing countries asserting more in the ILO so that issues of development in these countries are properly focussed in the ILO platform. Though the fact the majority of the ILO membership is from developing countries, their role in the ILO is not prominently seen. It is due to this that the advanced capitalist countries are repeatedly raising the question of linking social standards with world trade. The World Bank and the WTO chief openly advocated co-operation between ILO and these agencies. Many representatives of the developing countries privately admit the dangerous consequences of IMF and World Bank depredations; but they do not speak out openly in the meeting for obvious reasons. The co-ordination between the developing countries in the ILO, if properly organised, will definitely make an impact in the ILO. India and China alone comprise 40 per cent of the world population. Moreover, Asian countries alone have two third of the global population. Lack of assertion by the developing countries is exploited

*Cont. on Page 7*

# DEFEAT THE BJP & ITS ALLIES

Kanai Banerjee

The fall of the BJP-led coalition was no surprise. Even the most optimistic among its supporters did not expect it would last for the full term. Rather the rapidity of alignment changed and realignment took place with the consequence that the coalition ultimately lost only by a single vote was somewhat surprising.

Many of course have been sorry. Many others found no reason to regret. What most people regret is that another mid term poll has been thrust on the nation.

The coalition was ditched not by its opposition but by one of its valued partners. The major left parties tried hard to avoid a fresh election. But in spite of their best efforts, an alternative did not crystallise. Election became inevitable. Once again the working class along with the people at large is faced with a difficult choice.

At one end of the spectrum there are the major left parties, who have always stood by the working class through all trials and tribulations, who are in fact their own men and their democratic allies. The enlightened worker has no difficulty in making his choice so far as the left and democratic parties are concerned. But they are still a small force. Out of a total of 532 constituencies in how many will the enlightened worker have the easy choice of voting a left and democratic candidate? A hundred or so. Whom will he vote in the other constituencies?

At the other end of the spectrum stand the BJP and its cohorts whose real face has been thoroughly exposed during their 13 months in office. The BJP-led Govt has been executing the disastrous Fund-Bank policy of liberalisation and globalisation more zealously than its predecessors. It has taken more effective steps for privatisation, it has opened the economy of the country more widely than what the others

succeeded in doing. No wonder they enjoy the support of the big business in the country and the blessings of the imperialists abroad. Their campaign of communal hatred has with the encouragement of their govts acquired a new dimension as they chose the Christian community as their new target. At the behest of the RSS, this govt has been engineering infiltration of RSS cadre in all strategic positions of the administration both civil and military, in the same manner as the European fascism used to do. Its nuclear explosion was countered by similar explosion of equal magnitude. Its Bus diplomacy ended with Kargil which has belied the theory of nuclear deterrence. And its criminal lack of vigilance on the LoC has cost India several hundred precious lives of officers and jawans. The BJP, with all these "achievements" to its credit, poses by any standard the greatest danger to the country.

The enlightened worker has absolutely no difficulty in making his choice also as far as BJP is concerned. To preserve the unity of the working class and the integrity of the nation, to save the country from the disastrous liberalisation and globalisation policies, to stall a full fledged fascist take over, it is not difficult for him to understand that all efforts must be made by the working class to stall the BJP from coming back to power with an absolute majority. This is the central task of the working class in the coming Lok Sabha election.

The formidable question, however, is: whom to vote where the left is not in the field? It is a difficult question and yet it is easiest to answer. If one's conviction is firm that at the moment BJP poses the greatest danger to the country, the answer is simple: back secular candidates to defeat the communal forces. In the face of a great danger, no consideration is weightier than this.

*Cont. from page 6.*

by the advanced capitalist countries, who by their financial power are in a position create more impact in the ILO.

## INDIA LOST MEMBERSHIP ON GOVERNING BODY

India was regularly having a

titular member of workers on the Governing Body of the ILO. However due to India's reduced role, India lost this position and it has to be satisfied with only an alternate member. The membership, this time has gone to Malaysia. Since ICFTU is

having a predominant role in deciding the composition of the Governing body and INTUC was always given this post, it is for the INTUC to ponder over this setback and draw appropriate lessons.

## 22 YEARS OF LEFT FRONT GOVT. &amp; WORKING CLASS

Chittabrata Majumdar

The Left Front Government in West Bengal has just completed 22 years in office. This is an event, quite unprecedented in the history that within a bourgeois-landlord system, a left coalition government has ruled a State continuously for 22 years. This coalition has convincingly won all the elections held in this state during this period - seven parliamentary elections, five assembly elections, five panchayat elections and four municipal elections - all held throughout the State. At a time when an anti-establishment trend among the people is predominant in the country and elsewhere, this clearly indicates a sustained popular support behind Left Front, because of its pro-people policies.

The genesis of Left Front is responsible for this phenomenal success. The Left Front is not an opportunistic coalition. Leftists have the heritage of struggles for independence and after independence, through the process of uninterrupted struggles against imperialism and the oppressions of the ruling class, unity among lefts had emerged. The present Left Front has come out of the massive struggles of the working class, peasants, students, youth and movements of the democratic people. In West Bengal, through their experience of struggles, the people have perceived the Left Front as the real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord rule.

With the limited power and scope, the Left Front Government, soon after assuming office in 1977, to fulfil the aspirations of the people, took several pro-people measures, notable amongst them being land reform, decentralisation of power to the elected bodies through panchayat upto the village level and municipalities, free education upto Class XII etc.

The fundamental difference between the Left Front Government and any other government, be at the Centre or the State, ruled by the bourgeois parties has been its role vis-a-vis working class. It has been working as the facilitator of the working class movement in the State rather than becoming a patron of the vested interests in the industry. A review of the working class movement in West

Bengal during this period indicates that:

\* Not a single trade union movement has been suppressed by the Government. This has encouraged the working class to be organised and participate in struggles. This in turn has developed their consciousness to a higher level. This is needed today to understand the real nature of attack they are facing from the policy of globalisation and liberalisation pursued by the Government of India.

\* Government took active role to resolve many major industrial disputes through the tripartite machinery.

\* The system of industrywise tripartite agreement for engineering, jute, cotton, and tea industries have been in vogue in West Bengal for over two decades. This system of tripartite settlement has enabled the industries to avoid dispute over wages etc., leading to generally good industrial relations.

\* The Government has always taken the initiative for revamping the sick CPSUs within the State, which have been referred to BIFR. Though the Central Government has been keen to close these units, frequent intervention from the State Government played a supplementary role to the struggles of the working class against the move of the Central Government and helped the working class to stall the process giving some breathing space to the workers.

\* The State Government is implementing the legislation on Recognition of Trade Unions through secret ballot of the workers.

\* Amendment of Payment of Gratuity Act amending the definition of "employee", "continuous service", "eligibility condition" and making the Act applicable in all establishments employing 10 or more employees.

\* Amendment of various provisions of Industrial Disputes Act. Special mention may be made about amendment of provision of permission for lay off, retrenchment and closure, which provides that before seeking permission for closure/retrenchment, the employer is to submit bank guarantee about the payment of statutory dues of the workmen.

\* Amendment of State House Rent Allowance Act, which provides 5%, House Rent Allowance on total wages to workers, engaged in industrial units employing 20 or more.

\* No sick State Government Undertaking has been closed or referred to BIFR. On the other hand, despite limited financial resources, the State Government is extending budgetary support to revive the sick units. With the co-operation of the workers, some of the chronically sick units have been made viable and even profit earning through this process.

\* There is fundamental difference in the industrial policy of the State Government from that of the Central Government. There has been due recognition of the role and rights of the working class.

\* The State Government has started a relief scheme for the workers of closed industries. Now the workers of closed industries (Except CPSUs) are getting a relief of Rs. 500.00p per month per head as relief from the Government.

In the present scenario of the country, the Left Front Government in the State is a watershed. Within the bourgeois-landlord framework, where most of the constitutional powers have been concentrated at the Centre, a State government can hardly do anything except giving some temporary relief to the people. The Left Front Government has tried its best to do the same.

The working class today, is fighting against the policy of globalisation and liberalisation, pursued

by the Government of India since 1991. The Left Front Government moved an all-party resolution against the draconian GATT Accord, which would destroy the indigenous pharmaceutical and agro-chemical industry. Although there has been uninterrupted deprivation by the Centre on West Bengal in regard to industrialisation over the last 30 years, the State Government never resorted to any shallow populist stand and has been trying to provide employment within its limited means.

The working class of this State realises that the Left Front Government is the result of class struggle and it must be protected against all odds for the furtherance of class struggle. It goes to the credit of the working class that secessionism or communalism or casteism has not found much response in this State. The long tradition of social and democratic movement of Bengal is manifested in the matured working class movement of the State. In their interest they need to be united and secular. They have seen Left Front Government as a defender of secularism and national integration.

In order to combat the imminent danger of globalisation and liberalisation on the one hand and communalism on the other, the lesson from the experience of the Left Front Government must be spread across the country. It is the historic duty of the organised working class, being the most advanced section of the society to do this and the future of the country depends on this.

### COM SAROJ VASHIST

Com.Saroj Vashist, one of the most militant women activist and State Committee member of Haryana CITU along with her 6 year old daughter died in the early hours of 22nd July at Rohtak. The death is shrouded with mystery. Camouflaged as an accidental death—a ceiling fan falling on them while they were asleep—it appears to be a murder. The husband has been taken into custody.

On receiving the shocking news P K Ganguly, Ranjit Basu, Hemalata, Ranjana Nirula and Sindhu from CITU Centre rushed to rohtak and were present at the funeral.

Com.Saroj was one of the most militant popular and most beloved women activists in the State of Haryana. She was a textile mill worker and waged a militant struggle of the textile workers. Subsequently she became a wholotimer and was given the responsibility of organising the women workers in the state. Braving severe repression let loose by the management and the administration and fighting against the reformist trade unions in the State she was instrumental in organising the Anganwadi workers into CITU union. In every struggle launched by CITU in the State she always took a leading role in mobilising women workers and bring them in the struggle. Any programme be it a state or a central programme requiring a women activist Saroj's name was automatically suggested and she never failed to attend. Despite trouble and opposition in her family to her social and TU activities, Com.Saroj was all along active in the movement. Such a comrade is an asset to an organisation. Haryana State CITU will definitely feel the void.

CITU and 'The Working Class' pay homage to Com.Saroj Vashist and her daughter.

# ON TO LOK SABHA ELECTIONS: POINTS TO PONDER

The Vajpayee Govt after having lost the confidence vote in the Parliament has shed gallons of tears in the print and electronic media saying that - 'when the economy is being brought to rail of growth and improvement by the Govt, they have been betrayed by the opposition'. How the BJP led combine despite being legpulled by their own allies can blame the opposition for betrayal may be talked about separately and can attract some enthusiasts, but the loud claim of the caretaker Govt regarding bringing the economy on rails is nothing but a crude joke on the crores of the impoverished people of the country.

The deceitful gesture of the BJP combine stands exposed by the observations by their own masters in World Bank and their friendly print media. Her are some examples :

## **GROWTH - OF ECONOMY OR POVERTY !**

"India is in the paradoxical situation of being on an adequate(?) growth path to meet the international target of halving the proportion of people in absolute poverty but it is not happening because the poor, specially the rural poor are not participants in development".

*Michael Walton, World Bank Director on Poverty & Economic Management(Economic Times/4.6.99)*

"...according to World Bank poverty update analysing trends in poverty, the numbers of both rural and urban poor in India have increased in the post reform era.....of the total poor in

south Asia counted on purchasing power parity measure, India have the credit of more than 50%".

*(Business Standard/4.6.99)*

"The recently released tenth Human Development Report(HDR) has been highlighted by the media in India because for the first time the Report puts India in the medium development category (from the low development one in the previous reports).....A closer scrutiny reveals that it's only change of formula that did the trick.....

The Report ranks nations according to the extent of "human poverty" using the human poverty index(HPI). The HPI for India is 59. This accrues among others from the following: 16.1% of its people cannot expect to survive till the age of 40; an adult literacy rate of 46.5%;

19% people lack access to safe water; 25% people lack access to health services; 71% people lack access to sanitation; 53% Indian children aged five or below are underweight.....52.5% Indian live below the poverty line.....

.....(Far from any improvement) there has been no appreciable change in index parameters.

The country's position improved due to changes(worsening) of position of other countries."

*(The Financial Express/18.7.99)*

## **LEAVE THE POOR ! WHAT ABOUT GROWTH ? LAST 13 MONTH'S BALANCE SHEET**

"The latest estimate of Industrial production for the full year 1998-

99 released by Central Statistical Organisation(CSO) only confirms the worst fears-the year was indeed a truly bad one-the worst in this front of last six(years).

Clearly whatever hopes might have been entertained about a pick up in the last quarter of the year have been belied.In fact estimate of industrial output growth for March itself indicates that it was worse than even the average of the year. The net result -a growth rate of 2.5% for march itself and just 3.8% for the full year...The decline in growth rate compared to previous year is consistent across all sectors....." (Editorial/Economic Times/13.5.99)

## **TRADE DEFICIT REGISTERS 30% INCREASE**

Despite third consecutive year of subdued oil prices and subsequently low POL import.... Non oil import also has not risen much...during 1998-99 non oil import increased only by 5.68%....Real culprit was export. Export grew only by 3.7% in 98-99.(Financial Express/3.5.99)

"IN 1998-99, GROSS CAPITAL FORMATION FELL BY 62.6% compared to 97-98 as per estimate of Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy(CMIE). From a high of 23% in 1994-95, Real capital formation fell to 3%.....during 1998-99, CSO study finds that the investment intensive industries such as steel, cement and capital goods have recorded declining investment rates. Overall investment in Equipment and Machinery declined by 3.4%...Also when it comes to

# ECONOMY ON RAILS! HEADING WHERE ?

import of capital goods, the growth during the year was in the negative.....As per CMIE, the year to year growth in Bank credit to industries has turned negative....." (Economic Times/ 11.5.99)

## THE FALL IN INFLATION RATE-ILLUSION AND REALITY

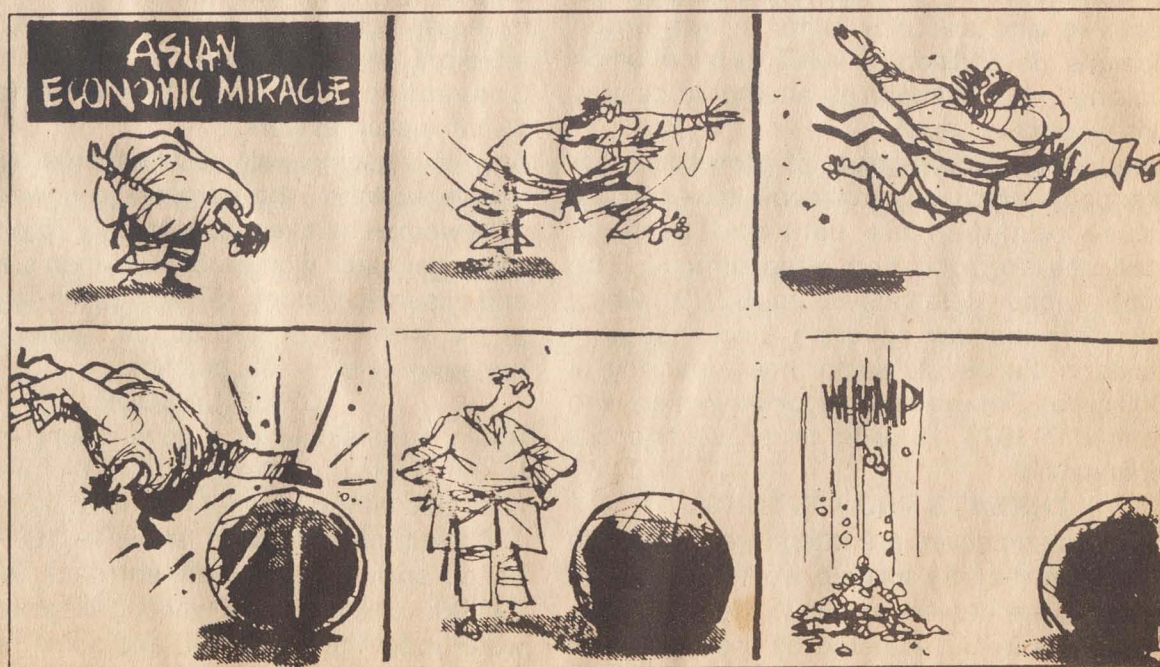
The caretaker BJP Govt and their economic managers in particulars have become vocal. In claiming credit on the falling inflation rate during last few weeks. But these inflation rates reveal almost nothing about the real situation in the price front and living standard of the common people. The price collection methodology and machinery on the basis of which the price indices are calculated are so much defective and unrepresentative that it

becomes a gross underestimation of the price situation. But even with such defects the recent phenomenon of falling point to point inflation rate does no way mean any relief to common people neither any sign of turning around of the economy to health. Even one of the Employers' organisation, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry(ASSOCHAM) having bonhomie with the present ruling combine had to admit the same. The Observer in its 20th July issue noted :

" The rate of inflation has hit a 17- year low primarily due to the slow rise in prices of manufactured goods(by 0.4%) while prices of primary food articles increased by 3% up to June 5, 1999 as per a study by ASSOCHAM..... The study

revealed that the decline in inflation level of manufactured products was also inspite of the higher increase in prices of some major industrial inputs like fuel and power.....The demand recession...has forced down prices of manufactured products( despite rise in prices of inputs).....The point to point growth rates of prices over last 12 months upto June 19, show that prices of cement has gone down by 4.6%, non metal mineral by 1.8% and similarly.....the prices of motor vehicles, tyres, rubber and plastics, inorganic chemicals and non-electrical machinery etc have also declined in absolute terms. For other industrial products the situation is almost stagnant or reveals minimal increase..."

(The Observer/ 20.7.99)



Courtesy The Asian Age

# USA's "APPALLING" RECORD ON WORKERS' RIGHTS

Violations in the USA of the right to freedom of association and the right to organise, are massive, ongoing, and appalling.

The USA has ratified only one of the seven core labour standards, which cover the right to organise a trade union, to bargain, the prohibition of discrimination and child labour, as specified by the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO). This is one of the worst ratification records in the world.

## DENIAL OF RIGHTS

Forty percent of American public service workers - nearly seven million - are denied the right to collective bargaining. Over two million federal government employees are denied the right to strike and to bargain over hours, wages, or economic benefits, a fact which has been criticised by the ILO.

In the private sector, workers are not adequately protected from employer interference in the fundamental right of workers to organise a union. Where limited protections exist, penalties for this form of corporate lawlessness are often weak and ineffective. At least one in ten union supporters campaigning to form a union is sacked illegally each year. Employees who support trade unions are often harassed, intimidated, and isolated from other workers. Many employers use consultants, detectives and security firms in anti-union campaigns. In addition to trying to block union organising, many companies attempt to destroy unions where they exist.

Unfortunately, enforcement of protections for worker rights which exist in the law is weak, both because penalties are light and because procedures are long and often difficult. The National Labour Relations Board (NLRB), which administers the law covering most industrial relations in the private sector has a backlog of 25,000 cases. For example, it took 62 workers who were fired in 1979, 19 years to receive financial compensation.

## THREATS AND ATTACKS

Union representatives are often threatened with arrest when they try to help workers organise unions and are denied access to the workplace. Union solidarity is restricted by the law which makes secondary boycotts and sympathy strikes illegal.

When workers vote to have a union, employers regularly challenge the results. For example, 5,000 workers at the Avondale Shipyard in New Orleans are still being denied the right to form a union, although they voted for one in 1993.

An increasing number of employers deliberately provoke strikes to get rid of trade unions. In 1995, Detroit News and Knight Ridder unlawfully provoked a strike involving 2,600 employees. The newspapers were ordered to reinstate the striking workers by the NLRB, but have appealed against the decision and are still refusing to rehire most of them. Other companies have locked out workers as part of a strategy to destroy unions.

Multinational companies refuse to bargain in good faith or drag out and delay the process. For example, the German multinational Continental Tire, after not seriously engaging in bargaining, hired permanent replacements for striking workers at its facility in Charlotte, North Carolina. This practice of permanently replacing strikers has a devastating effect on industrial relations. The threat of permanent replacement is used to scare workers during organising campaigns, to intimidate them at the bargaining table, and as a tool to eliminate union representation altogether.

## DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

Surprisingly, for a country where the law provides for equal rights regardless of race, sex, age or religion, the USA has ratified neither ILO Conventions 100 nor 111 which deal with discrimination at work.

Also, in a country with such a high proportion of female workers - the percentage now stands at 45% women on average earn only 75% of men's earnings, black women 65% of men's earnings, and Hispanic women, 57%. Sexual harassment at the workplace is common, although legal remedies exist for this practice.

## CHILD LABOUR

Again, surprisingly for a government which has taken a strong stand against child labour internationally, it has not ratified ILO Convention 138 itself, banning child labour. A 1997 survey, based on federal government data, found that 290,000 children were working illegally. 14,000 were under the age of 14, and some nine-year-olds were working in garment sweatshops.

There are also a large number of children of

migrant workers, the majority of whom work in the agricultural and horticultural sectors. This sector is one of the most dangerous, and between 400 and 600 children working in agriculture suffer work-related injuries, and many are killed in accidents each year.

### FORCED LABOUR

The USA has ratified one out of the two ILO Conventions dealing with forced labour (No. 105). However, there is evidence of a considerable amount of prison labour being carried out for profit by the prison authorities, which prisoners are penalised for refusing.

Prisoners work for between \$0.23 and \$1.15 a day in sectors including telemarketing and telephone reservation systems for hotels and airlines

(including Trans World Airlines, which uses prison labour extensively). They also work in computer circuit board assembly, clothing, and food. At least three states are exporting prison-made goods. Prisoners who refuse to work lose their chance of early release, are deprived of privileges or sent to high-security prisons and may be locked up in their cells as a punishment.

It is this USA that operates a system of recognising labour standards in the developing countries it trades with, through its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). Countries which engage in forced or child labour or fail to provide workers with adequate union rights are liable to lose their preferential access to the US market.

*(courtesy: ICFTU online)*

## WITHOUT COMMENTS

### AMARTYA SEN AT ILO

**G**lobalisation needs social and political support if it is to appear other than as a terrorising prospect for precariously placed individuals and communities.

If globalisation is to fulfil its potential, it has to be accompanied by well-deliberated action in support of social and political as well as economic changes to the conditions that govern our lives and work.

Given the massive levels of unemployment that exist in many countries today, it is right that policy attention be focused on expanding jobs and working opportunities. And yet the conditions of work are important too.

### BILL CLINTON AT ILO

**G**lobalisation is not a proposal or a policy choice, it is a fact. But how we respond to it will make all the difference. We must find a new way, a new and democratic way, to maximise market potential and social justice, competition and

community. We must put a human face on the global economy, giving working people everywhere a stake in its success, equipping them all to reap its rewards, providing for their families the basic conditions of a just society. All nations must embrace this vision, and all the great economic institutions of the world must devote their creativity and energy to this end.

Open trade is not contrary to the interest of working people and we need more trade, not less. Unfortunately, working people the world over do not believe this. Even in the United States, with the lowest unemployment rate in a generation, where exports accounted for 30 per cent of our growth until the financial crisis hit Asia, working people strongly resist new market-opening measures.

As we press for more open trade, we must do more to ensure that all our people are lifted by the global economy. As we prepare to launch a new global round of trade talks in Seattle in November, it is vital that the WTO and the ILO work together to advance that common goal.

*We have come across the Kerala High Court judgement banning bandhs and the Supreme Court order upholding the ruling. In these days of increasing judicial activism, there have been several instances where judicial fora had actively intervened to deny or take away the trade union rights enjoyed by the working class. Of course, there are a few exceptional cases where, like in the matter of sexual harassment, contract workers etc. some positive rulings have come out from the apex court. The Maharashtra State Consumer Forum, on a complaint filed by the Tata Iron & Steel Co. Ltd., had awarded a huge sum of Rs.9,96,000 to be paid by the Maharashtra Mathadi & unprotected Labour Board, Nagpur and others, to compensate the loss caused due to strike by workers.*

*This is not the first of its kind.*

*Consumer Fora had acted similarly in other instances too. This raises the question whether the Trade union Act and its provisions can be subordinated to the Consumer Protection Act?*

*We give the extracts from the order of the Maharashtra State Consumer Forum in the above-mentioned case, which is a matter of concern for the trade unions. - (Editor)*

## CONSUMER FORUM OVER RULES TU ACT

"The claim is against the Maharashtra Mathadi & Unprotected Labour Board, Nagpur, which is a registered body representing Mathadi workers. The complainant, The Tata Iron & Steel Co. Ltd. has been manufacturing and selling Iron & Steel products throughout India. Here, we are concerned with this Branch Office at Nagpur, which is a sales office and not a manufacturing unit. One rake of 33 wagons containing steel materials was despatched from Tatanagar by the applicant company on 14.10.91 for the destination at Itwari, Nagpur. The said Wagons were placed at Itwari (South Eastern Railway) on 20.10.91 at 2.40 hours. The Wagons so received at Itwari Rly. Station and goods shed were placed in the siding and in the Yard. The materials in none of the Wagons could be unloaded by the applicant company because of illegal strike by labourers of the Mathadi Board. This strike had commenced by the day on which the wagons were received and the complainant felt that there were no indications of the strike being called off by the labourers. The complainant could not, therefore, keep the rake of 33 wagons at the place because that would involve payment of heavy demurrage charges to the Railways and loss of business to the Company. The goods could not be sold and hence the only way left to the company was to despatch those goods to other places. After lot of efforts, the complainant succeeded in getting rebooking from the South Eastern Railway from Itwari, Nagpur to Laxmibai Nagar, Indore. The rake of 32 wagons could be re-booked on 25.10.91. It is contended that because of the illegal strike of the opposite party workers, the complainant was

required to pay the demurrage charges, of Rs.49527/-. It has been stated that because of the rebate given by the Railways, the demurrage scale down to the tune of Rs.49527/-. However, rebooking involved the payment of freight to the tune of Rs.9,47,384/- for which, Railway booking receipts are on record. The complainant has, therefore, claimed an amount of Rs.9,47,384/- being re-booking charges and Rs.49,527/- being the demurrage charges, totalling to the tune of Rs.9,96,911/-. The complainant has also claimed interest at the rate of 24% plus cost of Rs.15000/-.

The Maharashtra Mathadi & Unprotected Labour Board is looking after the welfare of the manual workers, doing the work of loading and un-loading and for that purpose 25% levy is taken from the labourers. The Board is working on no loss no profit basis and therefore, it cannot be said that the Board is connected in any profit making activity. Attention is also drawn to section 27 of the Maharashtra Mathadi Hamal & other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act 1969. According to which "no suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against the State Government or the Board or the Chairman, Secretary, or any Member of the Board or Advisory Committee, or any Inspector or any Officers of the Board for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of this Act or any scheme or any Rule or Order made thereunder". It is, therefore, stated that the present claim is not maintainable. It is also contended that the complainant did not approach any officer of the Board and nor engaged the services of the

labourers of the Mathadi Board. The complainant never wrote any letter to the Mathadi Board to supply workers and hence the claim is not maintainable.

It was matter of legal controversy as to whether the trade unions or other registered labour bodies can claim exemption on the ground of strike under section 18 of Trade Unions Act 1926 when the interest of the consumer was involved. The National Commission was seized of this question in Original Petition No.153/93, (Common Cause v. Union of India), decided on 9.5.96. The National Commission held that when strikes are launched by the Trade Unions, the interest of the consumers must be kept in mind both by the Management and the labourers. The case was in respect of the strike launched by the Indian Flight Engineers Association for Indian Airlines. The National Commission found that section 18 of the Trade Unions Act 1926 cannot be put forth by way of defence by the opposite party looking to the ratio laid down in the case of (N.K. Modi v. Fair Air Engineers Pvt. Ltd), by the National Commission reported in 1 (1993) C.P.J.5 No.7. Foras are not Civil Courts. Hence, the bar is not available against the above Act. It is also observed that claims barred against the Trade Union under section 18 do not cover claims arising out of deficiency in service to the consumers. Relying on the case of (Indian Medical Association v. V.P. Santha), reported in iii (1995) C.P.J. 1 decided by the Supreme Court, the National Commission has observed that the ratio in the said case conclusively lay down that persons employed on salary in an organisation which is rendering service for consideration are equally amenable to the provisions of Consumer Protection Act alongwith the Management even though there may not be any privity of contract as between the persons hiring the service and the concerned employees. The following observations in our view appear to be extremely relevant.

**“In above, we also think it necessary to administer a strong word of caution that in case of similar instances of disruption of services by illegal strikes or agitations come to the notice of the Commission in future, on the part of the employees in an organisation rendering service to the public for consideration or any association or any union of employees, we will be dealing with the matter in a very strict manner and we will have**

**no hesitation to award proper compensation to the consumers, who are thereby affected and aggrieved”.**

Here the illegality of the strike is not in doubt. The company had to spend for rebooking and also pay demurrage. The above amounts which are required to be paid by the company are solely on account of the strike of the Mathadi workers, the company could not keep silent and allow the demurrage to rise from day to day and further suffer loss of business, on account of its inability to sell the articles. We feel that this is a claim which should be allowed.

Now regarding interest, we feel that the claim of interest of 24% is higher side. We would award the interest at the rate of 15%. We find that Mathadi workers were at fault but interest at 24% is on a higher side looking to the composition of the Mathadi Board. We round up the claim to Rs.9,96,000/- and give 8 weeks to the opposite party No.1 & 2 to pay the same within 8 weeks. The opposite party No.1 & 2 shall pay cost of Rs.5,000/- to the complainant.

*(Order passed by A.A. HALBE President of the Forum, with G.R. Bedge and Mrs.Rajyalakshmi Rao as members. Reported in Bom.C.R.(Cons) 1998 (1)).*

#### **KARGIL FUND: CITU APPEAL**

The meeting of the CITU General Council held in May-end at Ghaziabad had unanimously adopted a resolution fully supporting our armed forces in their valiant efforts to throw out the Pakistan sponsored infiltrators and Pak army, who had crossed the line of control in the Kargil Sector of the Indo-Pak border.

While the operations to eject the infiltrators are continuing with a large measure of success,\* the whole nation is concerned at the martyrdom of hundreds of our young jawans. Several hundreds of them are also wounded. It is incumbent on the part of every citizen to extend solidarity and material support to the martyrs' families.

The CITU appeals to the working class to come forward to contribute liberally to this patriotic cause. Besides the National Defence Fund operated by the Government of India, most of the State Governments have also constituted Chief Minister's special funds for extending aid to the families of Kargil martyrs. The CITU unions organising collections from the workers may remit the sums so collected to either of these funds, in consultation with the state committees of CITU.

*\* (Note: This appeal was issued on 3.7.1999. Despite subsequent developments resulting in near-cessation of conflict, the need to extend material support to martyrs' families is still there.)*

## VICTORIOUS STRIKE BY TEA GARDEN WORKERS

Three lakhs tea plantation workers of West Bengal went on indefinite strike since 12th July, 99. The strike was called by the coordination committee of 14 central trade unions including CITU, AITUC, INTUC and others after all persuasive efforts by the unions failed to bring the Tea barons to terms on the long pending just demands of the workers.

Tea industry in the country has been making huge profits over the years being virtually unaffected by current recession. Being one of the major exporter industries, the tea-planters enjoy a lot of benefits and concessions directly or indirectly. The industry is carrying on quite well its business in more than one sense.

But, same is not the condition of the workers on whose blood and sweat the industry has been thriving well. Workers have been getting a raw deal in real terms. There is no security of employment, no social security benefits, grossly inadequate housing, no piped drinking water, no electricity, not even fuel-woods. Workers are made to live an inhuman living, while the employers live like Maharajas.

In the post liberalisation period, courtesy World Bank and IMF, the employers have become more desperate. They have gone for widespread casualisation of workforce. In order to avoid payment of any social security benefit, tea garden owners started employing on day to day basis,

sometimes even changing the names of the workers. All the reasonable proposals by the trade unions have been rejected by the employers, or if agreed to, not implemented. In 1993-94, a tripartite committee was formed to go into the issue of regularisation of workers on a normative basis. The Planters deliberately sabotaged the working of that Committee. Even after five years there was no consensus on any of the points, only due to unreasonable, utterly negative and adamant attitude of the employers.

That was the end of patience of the workers. They had been forced to go on indefinite strike from 12th July. The major demands of the striking workers were: 1) Regular employment and decasualisation 2) Re-categorisation and upgradation 3) Establishing Group Hospitals as per provisions of Rule 23 of West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules.

The strike call by the trade unions was responded to by massive participation of the tea garden workers in almost all the plantation areas. The working class and democratic people of the entire State expressed solidarity with the striking workers. In the two districts of the tea garden area, in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, massive bandh for 12 hours was observed on 19th July in support of the striking workers.

Ultimately, owing to the pressure of united strike by the workers, and initiative taken by the Left

Front Govt. employers could be brought to terms with the striking workers. The continuous strike ended on 21st July, 99 after a settlement was arrived at in the tripartite meeting in presence of Jyoti Basu, Chief minister of West Bengal at Calcutta. The agreement is a victory for the workers which provides for, inter alia, the following:

10,000 more workers will be made permanent in a time frame and an Employment policy would also be worked out by an Expert Committee in 6 months' time. There should be medical units or hospitals in every tea estate before 31st December, 99. There will be a Group Hospital covering a number of tea gardens. The financial and administrative modalities for the same will be worked out before 30th November, 99. Adequate drinking water and electricity facilities will be provided in workers' colony/quarters and the quarters will be repaired within the current year. Fuel-wood and liveries will be supplied to workers. A suitable promotion/ upgradation policy will be drawn and implemented and workers' payment will made on monthly basis etc. The employers have also agreed to set up ancillary industries in North Bengal to cater to the needs of tea industry. It was also decided in the tripartite meeting that the state Govt will send inspectors on a regular basis to oversee the welfare measures.

## FISH WORKERS: CITU & KISAN SABHA JOINT MEETING

The CITU and the All India Kisan Sabha have discussed the problem of fish workers in different States and decided to jointly convene a meeting of organisations working among the fish workers.

Accordingly, a meeting was held on 17.7.1999, at Chilka, near Puri, in Orissa, to discuss the problems of fish workers and coordinate the actions.

The meeting was attended by 35 delegates from West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil

Nadu. M K Pandhe inaugurated the meeting. Pitabasan Das, General Secretary of the Paschim Banga Rajya Matasyajibi Samiti presented a draft discussion paper. Ten comrades from various States participated in the discussion and elaborated the harrowing conditions of the fishermen in their States. The meeting adopted following decisions unanimously. As many States could not attend the convention, a national convention of fishermen will be organised after the Lok Sabha

elections. For this, a 15 member Preparatory Committee with Pitabasan Das as convener was formed. Two representatives each from West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala and one representative each from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Karnataka will form the Preparatory Committee.

The CITU and Kisan Sabha will hold State level meetings and seminars on the problems of the fishermen so that these are properly highlighted.

## CITU BIHAR STATE COUNCIL MEETS

A meeting of the CITU, Bihar State Council was held at Ranchi from 4.7.99 to 6.7.99 which was attended by M K Pandhe and Samar Mukherjee.

The council adopted resolution paying respectful homage to the Jawans who laid down their lives in Kargil and gave a call to workers and people in general, for financial and material help.

The CITU's Bihar State Council called upon the public sector workers to prepare for struggle

against privatisation for viability and for wage negotiation and prepare to make the All India agitation, including strike, successful in Bihar.

The State Council also decided to launch a struggle in pursuance of 14 points demands of all sections of workers of Bihar. The council demanded of State Govt for effective implementation of minimum wages, notification on VDA, including 11 industries which were not included in earlier

notification with arrears payment, of unorganised workers.

Pandhe also addressed a coal workers' meeting at Darbhanga House and called upon the workers to unitedly fight against privatisation of coal industry and against import of coal. The meeting demanded immediate wage revision in parity with officers and other public sector industries, for formation of single coal company and for removing deprivation and discrimination.

## PROTEST DAY BY STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The National Executive of the All India State Government Employees' Federation meeting in New Delhi on 30th June & 1st July '99, called upon 8 million State Employees' and Teachers to massively join an "All India Protest Day" on 11th August '99.

It called for demonstrations and rallies against the surge of privatisation of the Government Departments, public sector undertakings in most of the States, huge reduction of staff, unprecedented victimisation in Haryana, atrocities on the striking

employees in Tamilnadu & betrayal of the Bihar Government in refusing to implement the written agreements on strike period pay and the demands. The National Executive decided to collect funds for solidarity with the victimised employees of

# REPORTS & EVENTS

Haryana where 750 Union activists stand dismissed.

According to Sukomal Sen, General Secretary, there was a spate of privatisation of the Government Departments and State Public Sector Undertakings

and reduction and retrenchment of huge number of employees in deferent States, particularly where World Bank loans have recently been received by the State Governments, in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana,

Rajasthan etc.

The 10th National Conference of the All India State Government Employees' Federation will be held at Mumbai, on 27-30, Dec. '99. The Maharashtra State Employees' Confederation will host the conference.

## TAMIL NADU: LOADMEN COURT ARREST

Thousands of head load workers courted arrest in various centres all over the State on 22nd June, demanding social security, formation of Welfare Board and other statutory benefits. Another important demand was that of implementation of 50 Kg. bags, instead of the present 100 and 200 Kg. bags of loads. The call for a day's strike and

picketing was given by the Co-ordination Committee of head load workers. Extensive campaigns was conducted by the unions. A booklet, detailing the demands and the benefits being given to the head-load workers in Kerala were brought out for the campaign.

In Chennai, more than 500 workers including 20 women were

arrested. T. Narayanan, Sundara Rajan, S. Venkatraman and others led the picketeers.

Loading and unloading work in various commercial centres came to a halt as the workers went on strike in all the major centres including Coimbatore, Tirupur, Salem, Erode and Villupuram.

*(Report from A.K. Padmanabhan)*

## CEL PRIVATISATION MOVE OPPOSED

Six hundred workers and officers of the public sector Central Electronics Ltd (CEL) staged a militant demonstration at Patel Chowk, Parliament Street on 16.7.99 to protest against the decision of the Govt of India to privatise CEL.

Central Electronics Ltd established in 1974 is pioneer in the field of manufacturing Solar Photovoltaic Cell (SPV) for transforming solar power into energy. It is the 5th largest manufacturer of solar cells/modules in the world. The other operations of the company are centred in the field of Railway Electronics, Cathodic Protection Systems for Oil and Natural Gas Pipelines, communication switching systems, professional

ferrite's and piezo ceramics. All the manufacturing items of the company related with Defence, Telecommunication, Railways and other specific engineering sectors. CEL's manufacturing activities are largely based on indigenous technologies.

CEL has got excellent performance rating from Department of Public Enterprises. In such a situation, Govt's active move to sell out CEL to foreign companies, is financially imprudent.

The CEL Employees Union (CITU) and CEL Executive Association jointly organised the demonstration which was addressed by Jibon Roy, MP, Tapan Sen (CITU), I

Deenabandhu, Rakesh Tyagi (CEL Employees Union), Arun Kashyap and Madanjit Roy (CEL Executive Association):

### PROTEST DAY IN FCI

On the issue of 7 point demands against privatisation of all undertakings including Food Corporation of India, no wage settlement beyond 5 years, restrictions on giving employment and bonus ceilings, etc., the FCI Employees Union, Calcutta observed a protest day on 13.7.99. Demonstrations were held in each depot/office located in West Bengal. *(Report from N K Das)*

## ASSAM TEA GARDEN STRUGGLE FUND

The West Bengal State Committee of CITU has sent in a contribution of Rs 75,000 towards the Assam Tea Gardens Struggle Fund, where three

women martyrs laid down their lives recently.

This is the single largest contribution in response to the call given by the Ghaziabad meeting

of the CITU General Council held in May 1999.

We record our appreciation of the CITU West Bengal State Committee.

## ROBBERY GOES ON

Croman Research Inc, an American Company has obtained "Patent" from Govt of America to develop and sell anti-diabetes medicines prepared from Jamun, the popular Indian fruit and two other vegetables, brinjal and bittergourd (karela). They have obtained monopoly right over these extract-products and anybody wanting to produce those derivatives will have to pay royalty to the US based company. So, after Neem, Haldi and Basmati, this is another robbery on the natural wealth of the poor third world country by powerful multinational companies. Next may be Tulsi, and a host of many other herbs known and being used from time immemorial in India for having medicinal qualities.

This is robbery, because this violates the spirit and resolutions of Rio Conference in 1983 on bio-diversity. The US Company does not mention that Jamun, Karela and Brinjal are parts of the common heritage of Indian people. The report on "Wealth of India" includes a huge list of medicinal plants in its well documented treatise. The patent holders do not bother to acknowledge it nor they are required to do so under the new

patent regime. They will reap enormous profits after having absolute rights to market these products.

This is an unequal fight. Third world countries cannot attempt or sustain a legal fight because the cost will run into millions of dollars. So the US or G-7 companies have unchallenged rights to do whatever they like with the natural resources of the third world countries. Conversely, if any company in the third world countries manages to develop or derive any such medicine, it will face numerous hurdles on one pretext or the other if it goes to market it in the developed countries. It would have to prove that the product does not disturb ecological or environmental balance, or, does conform to the American health standards, or, so on and so forth. The cost of legal battle will drain the company out in no time. Moreover, the product patent regime would, in every possibility, forfeit the right and illegitimise hundreds of such herbal products developed by Ayurveda or other indigenous schools of medicines, made available to people at cheaper rates but not patented.

This is why we opposed the GATT

Agreement, it being disastrous to the people of the developing countries and legitimising the loot, by the cash-rich multinational companies, of the natural resource-rich but economically poor countries of the world. It would turn every thing in nature, even those which have been available free to mankind so long, a commodity by the patent instrument in the hands of Multinational "banias". BJP made a drama of opposing it once, but when in power, they surrendered headlong and got the Patent Act passed with meteoric haste.

So Indians will buy sugar coated medicines made from the vegetables, fruits and leaves and herbs grown in our own backyards at high prices and the MNCs will reap huge profits. The system is called "Robbery", the name is "Patent" under the new regime.

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PETROL

An international conference on Petrol is being held at Paris from 18th to 20th October 1999. CITU is participating in the conference.

# REPORTS & EVENTS

## ACTIONS TO SAVE ROURKELA STEEL PLANT

A state level convention of various political parties, trade unions and associations and intellectuals were held here today gave a clarion call to intensify mass actions and mass mobilisation all over Orissa to save Rourkela Steel Plant, (RSP) the premier public sector unit under SAIL. It was decided by the convention to observe Save Rourkela Day on 29th July, to hold district/local conventions all over the state and to ask all state political parties to pass an unanimous resolution in Orissa Assembly in the forthcoming session, opposing the move to sell out captive power plants and privatise Rourkela Steel Plant based on the recommendation of Mc. Kinsey's report.

The convention organised by CITU was addressed among other by former Speaker of State Assembly, Yuthistir Das (Janata Dal), Abani Baral (CPI), Economist Dr. Basudeb Sahu, Journalist Barendra Dhal, Shibaji Patnaik (CITU), S. Kar (AITUC), Narendra Swain (HMS), R.N Mallick (Sramik Ekta Manch) and Bishnu Mohanti (Steel Employees Trade Union). The convention also addressed by Dipankar Mukherjee MP and Chittabrata Majumdar (All India Secretary of CITU).

The resolution unanimously adopted in the convention scathingly criticised the decision of the SAIL at the behest of BJP Government to break-up SAIL, which would destroy RSP that

provides livelihood to over 10 lakh families directly and indirectly.

The convention was presided over by Lambodar Nayak, General Secretary, Orissa State CITU.

On the basis of the resolutions adopted Lambodar Nayak has written to all political parties on 8th July '99 requesting them to pass a unanimous resolution in Orissa Assembly against closing down of some units and privatisation of RSP.

On 13th July thousands of workers in Rourkela demonstrated against privatisation and in support of the demands adopted in CPSTU convention in Delhi.

Earlier on 24th June workers in Rourkela organised demonstration in support of the strike by workers of Salem Steel Plant.

## ENRON-THE GREAT TREACHERY EXPOSED

All our predictions about the unscrupulous ENRON Power Project at Dabhol, Maharashtra, are coming true.

ENRON power project got the final clearance with unimaginable haste during the thirteen day regime of the BJP Govt in 1997. After making swadeshi-brand drama during the opposition days in opposing the then PAWAR sponsored power project of ENRON, the Vajpayee Govt and the BJP-Shivsena combine finally cleared the Dabhol power project after being properly "educated" by the ENRON (Rs 60 crore was earmarked for educating Indians

by ENRON as part of the project cost!). Rs 1.89 was decided to be the per unit cost of power in the first stage.

CITU and many others claimed that all those figures were bogus and manipulated ones and the MSEB (Maharashtra State Electricity Board) would have to pay much more for the power from ENRON project and ultimately common people have to bear the brunt. CITU had to approach Mumbai High Court to oppose the nefarious design and the case is still pending in the Supreme Court.

The Economic Times in its 20th

July issue reported that the ENRON has charged MSEB at the rate of Rs 4.95 per unit and has sent a bill of Rs 117 crore. As per contractual obligation MSEB is bound to purchase power from the Dabhol power project of ENRON. It was also apprehended that MSEB power plants might be required to be closed down to buy power from ENRON. The apprehension came true when, as reported by Economic Times in many words, MSEB and NTPC have reportedly closed down some of their units for "annual overhaul" (that too in the height of summer!) to help buy ENRON

power in coming months. It is a story of treachery, bribe, kickback, corruption and fraud on common people and country's

interest by BJP-Shivsena combine. A permanent knife at the throats of Indian consumers by the most

fearsome multinational company called ENRON, of course, with sponsorship of pseudo-swadeshiwalas!

## TELECOM PACKAGE CONDEMNED

The Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions met at the CITU Central Office on 9th July under the presidentship of K L Mahendra, General Secretary, AITUC.

The meeting paid homage to the martyrs of Kargil, who laid down their lives in defence of the country.

The meeting took a serious note of the recent decisions of the Government regarding the telecom policy, disinvestment in nine public sector undertakings, privatisation of the FM Channel in radio, etc and condemned the decisions taken as totally unwarranted for any Government. This is particularly unwarranted for a care taker Govt which cannot take such important policy decisions, which require approval of Parliament.

Despite continuous opposition from all sections of workers and the trade union movement in the country, the Government has gone

ahead to disinvest nine of the best performing and most prestigious Nava Ratna public sectors in the country like IOC, GAIL, ITDC, MTNL, etc. The Govt have already disinvested Rs 10,000 crore this year. The decision to privatise Indian Airlines was taken earlier.

It is to be noted that the new telecom policy has not yet been approved by the Parliament. There is a big scam involved in allowing private operators, including MNCs, to move from the license regime to the revenue sharing formula. No wonder that the big business has hailed the decisions. As demanded by them, the government may further go ahead to corporatise the Department of Telecommunication, i.e. a step forward for its privatisation.

Such brazen surrender of the Government to the demands of the private sector and the MNCs has again exposed the hoax of its "Swadeshi" and emboldened the

big business to make further demand for disinvestment beyond 50 per cent, so that the overall control over these PSUs is vested with them. This will further enable them to come out of the Article 12 of the Constitution and the ambit of compulsory audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General, as well as the Central Vigilance Commissioner.

The Sponsoring Committee called upon all trade unions to launch protest actions demanding withdrawal of the measures by the Govt. by organising demonstrations, rallies, etc immediately in all industrial centres and adopting resolutions. The copies of the resolutions should be sent to the Prime Minister.

The joint statement issued by M K Pandhe (CITU), K L Mahendra (AITUC), R A Mittal (HMS), R K Shastri, (TUCC) Rama Nand (AIBEA) and N P Upadhyay (GIEAIA).

## KEDIA DISTILLERY ACCUSED OF 'FRAUD' HOW BIFR WAS TAKEN FOR A RIDE

The Appellate Authority for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (AAFIR) has declared that Kedia Distilleries Ltd (KDL) is not a sick company as it has indulged in

"extraordinary deception, fraud and siphoning away of funds".

Summarily throwing KDL out of the purview of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985, the AAFIR said, "We

have no doubt that if the monies released by the financiers for fictitious hire purchase and lease transactions and bill discounting had actually been brought into and utilised for the genuine purpose of

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KDL, there would have been no sickness at all."

The list of misdeeds pointed out by AAFIR is indeed long.

The Appellate authority concluded that "KDL has continuously practised deception, made fraudulent transactions, prepared falsified accounts, created bogus debtors to square up the lease and hire purchase finances received by dummy companies without creating any assets, made payments to finance companies against lease and hire purchase finances provided to dummy companies, charged depreciation on non-existent assets, wrote-off or made adjustments of huge sums of money, thereby depleting the assets shown as realisable in the notes on accounts without inducing corresponding cash from dummy companies...And thereby presented a manipulated

picture of sickness in its reference to BIFR."

Further, the AAFIR observed that there is no doubt whatsoever that if the lease and hire purchase finances released by the lease finance companies to the dummy companies of KDL had actually been brought into KDL by creating genuine assets or even for operations, KDL would have been a highly profit making company. The AAFIR noted that the false assets created in KDL's accounts for squaring up the lease and hire purchase finances released by the lease finance companies to dummy companies have been reversed or written off without substituting these by alternative assets in the form of cash induction or recoverable inter-corporate advances, whereas a liability has been created by way of loan from the lease and hire purchase financiers.

The company had made "so-called accommodation bills" to the tune of Rs.100 crore - Rs.41 crore as leased assets adjustments, Rs.42.32 crore as write-offs of sundry debtors and bill discounting debtors and Rs.6.78 crore as hire purchase assets adjustment in its financial year 1997-98.

In August 1998, the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) had accepted KDL as a sick company after accepting three items of losses amounting to Rs.46.34 crore (operational losses of 1997-98, unprovided interest, write-off of unrecoverable debts of more than three years old).

"BIFR should have made an analysis of the financial data before accepting the figures of losses on the three items at their face value," the AAFIR commented. (*A. Prashanth in The Times of India*)

## CENTRAL SCHOOL FOR ANGANWADI WORKERS

A central school was organised by the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers for its activists in the Hindi states, from 10-12 July 1999 at Delhi. 33 comrades from six states—Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Bihar participated in the school. Almost all the participants were state or district level committee members and office bearers of the union and followed the lectures attentively and participated in the discussions very actively.

Ranjana from CITU Centre

explained the role of women in Indian society and the trade unions and W R Varada Rajan took the class on "Contemporary Indian Trade Union Movement and CITU." Economics for Trade Unionists and Challenges to working class unity from casteist and communal forces" were taught by Indrani Mazumdar and Indu Agnihotri respectively. Each session was followed by group discussions and a question and answer session. On the last day a workshop was conducted on organisation by Hemalata, General Secretary, AIFAWH. The

workshop was aimed at identifying the weaknesses of the movement in the Hindi states and to find out methods to overcome them. It was decided to take up the following tasks immediately to strengthen the organisation in the states. 1) Representations will be given to the CDPOs on the local problems, in the month of August. 2. Efforts will be made to increase the membership and to expand the union to newer projects and districts. 3. A leaflet, exposing the disastrous effects of the policies of the BJP government will be printed and circulated. The model

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will be sent from the Centre. 4. State level classes for activists will be conducted in all the States.

Competitions on leaflet writing and singing of progressive songs were also conducted in which most of the students participated enthusiastically. Delegates from

Punjab performed 'giddu' a traditional dance performed by women in Punjab.

Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU distributed the prizes for the winners in the competitions and in his concluding speech called upon the anganwadi employees

to strengthen the union, educate the ordinary employees and participate in the struggles of CITU and exploitation and change the society. Hemalata proposed the vote of thanks. The classes ended with all the women singing 'we shall overcome.'

## HINDI PATRIKA FOR WORKING WOMEN

In view of the demand for a Hindi journal for working women in Hindi states, the CITU has started publishing a newsletter in Hindi. The news letter will carry news about the struggles and condition of working women in various industries with particular

attention to the anganwadi employees in different states and will try to fill the gap created by the stoppage of Kamkaji Mahila a few years back. The cost of the newsletter has been kept very low at Re 1/- per copy so that it can reach the vast sections of working

women in the Hindi states. Efforts are also being made to bring it on a regular basis. We request the readers of working class to help in taking the Hindi Patrika to all the Hindi speaking literate working women including those in the unorganised sector.

## INDIAN BANK: ATTACK ON TU LEADERS

Indian Bank, a public sector bank, is one of three so-called weak banks. It is deemed weak because of its huge burden of Non Performing Assets (NPAs) on which no income can be recognised and against which very high percentage of provisions are to be made in terms of recommendations made by the Narasimham Committee.

The Committee recommended downsizing of the banks deemed weak and their reference to restructuring commission for considering other options including restructuring, merger/amalgamation or failing these, closure. With this prescription in view, the Reserve Bank has appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri M.S. Verma, which is now considering

the various options before it, in respect of the so-called weak banks. For creation of the huge NPA burden on Indian Bank, policies of the Government, sanction of loans and advances of huge amounts on political and non-commercial considerations to non-deserving borrowers by, corrupt executives, the toothless laws of the land and the inertia of the Management in the matter of recovery are squarely responsible. The employees of the bank have extended their whole-hearted cooperation for the revival of the bank, but the bank failed to show much improvement.

In this background, the Indian Bank Employees Federation (BEFI), decided to bring to the attention of the people, the reasons behind the Banks's downward

journey, its potential strength for turnaround and the lapses on the part of the Management. It aimed to create a feeling of compulsion in the mind of the Verma Committee and the other Authorities to give up negative thinking and take positive measures for revival. As a part of the programme, IBEF released a Press statement on 15.6.99. Surprisingly, the management of the bank, though inert in the area of recovery of bad advances, exhibited their activism against the union and asked its President, Tapan Das, and General Secretary, K. Krishnan, to send "detailed reasoning" behind their disclosing the bank's affairs to the Press.

This action of the Management is not only unwarranted but also a condemnable onslaught on the trade union.

## NATHPA-JHAKRI: LIMITLESS REPRESSION

**N**athpa-Jhakri is a 1500 Megawatt capacity giant hydroelectric project in Himachal Pradesh being erected by Nathpa-Jhakri Power Corporation (NJPC), a public sector unit. Waters from river Sutlej (Shatadru) will be led through a 28km long tunnel to Jhakri where again through 6 divided tunnels it will be allowed to drop 1000 feet on 6 turbines to produce 225 Megawatt each. This is one of the biggest hydel projects in the world.

NJPC is executing the work through 3 major contractors. The contractors have taken liberty and advantage of the anti-worker BJP govt and remote location and are exploiting the workers, and the displaced persons at will. The INTUC and BJP unions are supporting them blindly. So the workers have formed a CITU union holding the red flag aloft. The results, reactions came up quickly.

Continental Foundation Joint Venture (CFJV) one of the contractors, sensed the situation and signed an agreement with CITU union. Workers have gained substantially, some issues have been sent to tribunal. Work is going on peacefully there.

But the trouble started in Manglad site of Nathpa-Jhakri Joint Venture (NJJV), an Italian collaboration where the

management flouted all laws of the land. They don't pay minimum wage, PF, workmens compensation, gratuity, other legal benefits and worst, they refuse to recognise CITU union. All the workers went on strike in February and repressions followed. There were arrests, threats, closure of camps and mess but they could not break the strike. The management agreed to negotiate the workers also reciprocated by starting work. But soon the management retrenched 600 workers without notice and norms. The workers had no other alternative but to go on strike again. The strike is continuing for last 2 months.

Failing to break the strike by all other means the BJP govt., the local administration the contractor, the INTUC and BMS unions conspired to break the strike by force. They organised a gang of goondas, gave them guns which were loaded in the police station itself and were escorted to the Manglad site by 5.30 PM. They chose the time because as a routine the workers shouted slogan from 5 to 5.30 PM everyday.

As soon as the gang reached there, the attending policemen stood aside and the goondas opened fire and showered bullets on the workers Com Dev Dutt, and ex-armyman and presently a worker

was killed on the spot and 12 others were injured. The goondas ran out of bullets and ran away helter and skelter. Unknown to the place, one of them fell in a deep gorge while fleeing and was dead. His body was retrieved after 3 days from the water.

Even then they could not break the strike. Then the new phase of attack started. In the wake of discovery of the body, the entire leadership of CITU has been booked by police. Even Rakesh Singha, President of Himachal Pradesh CITU was arrested though on that day he had attended a court case and was very much in Shimla, more than 120 kilometers away from the site. Though he is on bail now, the case is now going on.

The conflict is not confined to the workers only. Thousands of peasants and cattle breeders have been displaced or deprived of grazing fields because of this project. They have got no compensation so far. Some money was sanctioned but that money did not reach the sufferers. These village people are on warpath and their movement is also obstructing the progress of work.

The BJP Govt. has resorted the old tactics of terrorising the workers to surrender. But the workers also have vowed-not to surrender until their just demands are realised.

### AGAINST GLOBALISATION

The second international meeting against globalisation will be held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from 1st to 3rd September, 1999. The first meeting was held in Havana (Cuba) in 1997. The meeting in Brazil will further reinforce the united actions and struggles of workers the world over.

## CHANGES IN OIL SECTOR IN OFFING?

The Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals (1998-99) in its Tenth Report presented to the Parliament on 22.4.99, had recommended the following:

"2.20 From various Press Reports, the committee find that the Government is in process of examining the Nitish Sengupta Report regarding restructuring of some of the oil sector PSUs viz. MRL, CRL, IBP, BRPL etc. The Committee are dismayed to note that Government have initiated the process of implementing major changes in the oil sector without in any way, keeping them abreast of it. The Committee accordingly recommend that before taking any such major decision the matter

should be placed before them for consideration."

Reports have appeared in the Press recently that the Petroleum Minister intends to take the proposals of Sengupta Committee to the Cabinet for approval inspite of objections from the Finance Ministry.

Petroleum Ministry has formed a consortium of public sector Oil & Gas companies to import and distribute LNG. From a series of reports in the Press, it appears that Power Ministry and Petroleum Ministry have decided to bring in National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) into this consortium of Petronet LNG. It is also reported that Power Ministry is advising NTPC to join an LNG

Consortium promoted by British Gas in Gujrat. This simultaneous participation of NTPC with British gas and Petronet LNG is aimed at allowing British Gas the access through NTPC to Petronet LNG. This can only serve the commercial interest of multinational at the cost of public sector companies. Here also, there are reports that Petroleum Ministry is trying to seek Cabinet approval.

Drawing attention to these reports, Dipankar Mukherjee, M.P and Working Committee Member CITU, has appealed to the President, K.R.Narayanan, to restrain the caretaker Vajpayee Govt. from rushing through such controversial policy decisions.

## GEFONT: 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) celebrated its 10th anniversary at Kathmandu on 20th July 1999. W R Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU attended the celebrations on invitation from GEFONT and extended fraternal greetings from the CITU on the occasion. Other international participants at the celebrations included (Ms) Xia Xiaomei, ACFTU-China, and (Ms) Mitsuko Horiuchi, ILO. Mukunda Neupane, chairman, GEFONT, presided. Madhav Kumar, Nepal General Secretary, CPN(UML) was the guest of honour. Binod

Bhadur Shrestha of FNCCI and Rajendra Raut of DECONT (two



other national trade unions), greeted.

In connection with the 10th anniversary, the GEFONT also

organised a three days international seminar on contemporary trade union issue at Kathmandu from the 15th to 17th July, 1999. The topics covered were: Globalisation and Nepal; Organising unorganised sector; Unfair labour practices in Nepal; TU Movement-Changing Scenario; Existing & forthcoming challenges; and Trade Union and Politics. Besides, the CITU, representatives from FES (Germany), ILO-SAAT, and SAC (Sweden) participated in the seminar. Bishnu Rimal, General Secretary, GEFONT, coordinated the programmes.

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

Sr. No	Centre	Mar 99	Apr 99	May 99	Sr. No.	Centre	Mar 99	Apr 99	May 99
1	Gudur	416	422	430	45	Amritsar	372	377	375
2	Guntur	403	406	414	46	Ludhiana	375	379	377
3	Hyderabad	386	391	396	47	Ajmer	397	396	408
4	Visakhapatnam	399	400	407	48	Jaipur	386	388	384
5	Warangal	401	408	409	49	Chennai	438	440	445
6	D D Tinsukia	365	387	388	50	Coimbatore	388	386	390
7	Guwahati	423	423	432	51	Coonoor	400	405	412
8	Labac-Silchar	361	363	378	52	Madurai	410	410	416
9	Mariani Jorhat	405	412	410	53	Salem	404	403	402
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	391	400	400	54	Tiruchirapally	449	450	463
11	Jamshedpur	387	385	385	55	Agra	392	388	388
12	Jharia	355	352	354	56	Ghaziabad	434	431	436
13	Kodarma	368	365	368	57	Kanpur	417	418	418
14	Monghyr Jamalpur	411	392	392	58	Saharanpur	383	381	384
15	Noamundi	370	368	369	59	Varanasi	457	464	468
16	Ranchi-Hatia	402	399	399	60	Asansol	385	387	392
17	Ahmedabad	405	406	416	61	Calcutta	421	422	427
18	Bhavnagar	430	434	442	62	Darjeeling	369	375	376
19	Rajkot	397	402	405	63	Durgapur	426	426	426
20	Surat	418	422	424	64	Haldia	445	450	452
21	Vadodra	394	400	402	65	Howrah	457	462	470
22	Faridabad	427	426	426	66	Jalpaiguri	382	384	391
23	Yamunanagar	381	385	386	67	Raniganj	363	369	369
24	Srinagar	495	483	462	68	Chandigarh	435	440	449
25	Bangalore	398	400	403	69	Delhi	471	471	471
26	Belgaum	452	450	455	70	Pondicherry	459	454	461
27	Hubli-Dharwar	427	425	430					
28	Mercara	440	443	441		<b>All India</b>	414	415	419
29	Alwaye	415	421	426		<b>Additional Series of Labour Bureau</b>			
30	Mundakayam	433	433	437					
31	Quilon	421	425	424	1	Kothagudem	414	415	422
32	Thiruvananthapuram	463	468	467	2	Himachal Pradesh	402	404	400
33	Balaghat	373	374	378	3	Bhilwara	419	414	414
34	Bhilai	361	362	367	4	Chhindwara	415	417	404
35	Bhopal	441	437	440	5	Tripura	391	404	412
36	Indore	424	420	420	6	Goa	474	475	479
37	Jabalpur	427	424	426					
38	Mumbai	461	464	470					
39	Nagpur	431	432	432					
40	Nasik	429	420	424					
41	Pune	459	460	469					
42	Solapur	440	439	436					
43	Barbil	374	378	384					
44	Rourkela	386	387	390					

Government of India  
Ministry of Labour  
Labour Bureau  
Shimla - 171 004

# SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE PUBLIC SECTOR

The extended session of Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions(CPSTU) held on 15th and 16th June,99 at New Delhi decided, among other things, for a mass signature campaign addressed to President of India in defence of the public sector and to assert the public opinion against the disastrous and anti national policy of the Govt of India on public sector. The text of the proforma for the mass signature campaign is produced below. All the public sector unions and democratic organisations are requested to launch immediately the mass signature collection drive on the proforma, both from the public sector employees as well as common people in full swing. Please ensure mobilisation of the total organisational strength in the said campaign so that the same can reach the widest possible sections of the common people and the workers. Efforts should be made to collect maximum possible signatures by end - August. The signatures so collected on the proforma may be sent to CITU centre.

To  
The Hon'ble President of India,  
Rashtrapati Bhawan,  
New Delhi.

Respected Sir,

We, the citizens of India are greatly concerned at the Government of India's dangerous move to dismantle the public sector network in the country in the name of so called economic reforms.

The cause of sickness in PSUs is the negligence of the authorities, which is rooted in the disastrous economic policies pursued by Government. Instead of taking steps to revive the sick units, the Government of the day has decided to close down eight sick PSUs ignoring the fact that the cost of closure is much more than the cost of revival.

Under the scheme of drive for privatisation, the profit making PSUs, which are major contributors to our national exchequer, are being sought to be handed over to the Indian and foreign private companies through steps like disinvestment and strategic sale of shares, restructuring and Joint Ventures. The Government is extending undue financial and administrative support to the private capital at the cost of the public sector and for that matter at the expense of the economic sovereignty of the nation.

The public sector industries still hold the foundation of the industrial base and have been steering the wheel of self-reliant economic growth of the country. The negative impact of the anti-PSU policy being pursued by the Government is clearly reflecting in the consistent slow down of the economy, loss of employment, poor revenue collection, sharp decline in industrial growth rate etc.

In view of the foregoing, we urge upon you to kindly exercise your esteemed offices, prevail upon the Government to retrace the retrograde anti-PSU measures and extend all support to the public sector enterprises which are the real engine of our economy.

Thanking you,

Yours truly,

Sl.No.

Full Signature

State

# COM. VIMAL RANADIYE

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions mourns with profound grief the demise of Com.Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of CITU and Convener of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICCCWW), today at a hospital in Mumbai. She was 84 and ailing for the last one year, having suffered multiple fractures from successive falling down due to ill health.

Com.Vimal Ranadive was born in 1915 in Maharashtra, participated in the freedom struggle from an early age. As a young student of 16 years she joined the civil disobedience movement and hoisted the tri-colour flag defying the British regime and suffered severe repression. She was jailed several times during the freedom movement and later after independence in 1948 also. Along with Com.Ahilya Rangenekar, Com.Vimal Ranadive led popular struggles in Bombay and in the state of Maharashtra, mobilising mass of women as well. She took an active part in the general strike of Bombay textile workers in 1939 and from then on dedicatedly served the trade union movement.

She also took active part in the historic and militant working class movement in Bombay in solidarity with the historic Naval Mutiny in 1946.

Com.Vimaldi, as she is affectionately called by comrades and friends, was married in 1939 to late Com.B T Ranadive, a stalwart of the Communist movement in India. Together they worked for over 50 years in the revolutionary movement. She shared all the difficulties of underground life and imprisonment. She spent altogether over five years in jail.

During 1970 Com.Vimaldi became the General Secretary of the All India Plantation Workers'

Federation. She became a member of the CITU General Council in 1973. She was elected as Secretary of CITU in 1987. When the CITU took the initiative in organising the working women Com.Vimaldi took up the responsibility of steering the All India Working Women's Coordination Committee as its Convener. Due to her persevering efforts, the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers had been built as the leading organisation of ICDS work-force. She was the founder General Secretary and later President of the Anganwadi Federation till last conference.

She joined the undivided Communist Party of India in 1942 and later the Communist Party of India(Marxist). She was elected to the Central Committee of the CPI(M) in 1988, in which capacity she served until death and set a shining example of a foremost communist woman leader of the country.

Com.Vimal Ranadive was later the President of the All India Plantation Workers' Federation. She was the editor of The Voice of the Working Woman and also the Kamkaji Mahila, the Hindi bi-monthly. She also served the All India Democratic Women's Association as its Vice-President till recently.

Com.Vimaldi had visited the People's Republic of China as a part of the CITU delegation to the All China Trade Union Federation.

Com.Vimal Ranadive is survived by her son Uday Ranadive.

The CITU dips its banner in homage to Com.Vimal Ranadive and pledges to carry forward the tasks for which she dedicated her entire life. The CITU Secretariat and the staff at the CITU Centre convey their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members.

24-7-1999.