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REVIEW OF STRUGGLES

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The two years since the Second Conference of the CITU witnessed a rising curve of working class struggles and growing urge for unity among the rank and file workers. Many big and prolonged strike struggles were fought out in this brief period, the capitalists also retaliated by long drawn lockouts and mass victimisation.

Our unions no doubt are gradually coming to the forefront of these struggles and the increasing role of the CITU is now known to the mass of workers. However, the struggles we conducted form only a part of the new strike wave that is sweeping the country. Some of these unions are not affiliated to any central trade union organisation. A noteworthy feature is that a large number of them had been conducted unitedly despite police repression or gangsterism launched by the hirelings of the employers.

The Railway Strike

The twenty day all India strike of railway workers was the most important struggle since our Ernakulam Conference dwarfing all other struggles in this period. Never before such a mighty industrial action could be organised in the history of the Indian railway workers movement.

The strike was a result of accumulated discontent among 17 lakhs railway workers over a period of years. The class collaborationist policy pursued by the AIRF and NFIR leadership and their opposition to every struggle prevented any industrial action over decades. However, a change in the leadership of the AIRF and initiative taken by the new leaders to bring together more than 110 category-wise organisations in a Convention on 27th February 1974 created unprecedented enthusiasm among the railwaymen throughout the country. The formation of National Co-ordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggles (NCCRS) symbolised the fighting

spirit of railwaymen and its call to commence the strike on 8th May 1974 was enthusiastically welcomed by all railwaymen.

Seeing the mood of the workers the Government decided to use dilatory tactics by making a show of negotiations on the one hand and preparing for all round repression on the other. A secret Circular to prepare a list of active workers and keep them under surveillance was issued even before the farce of negotiations was enacted. Thus, while negotiations were in progress, the Government arrested a large number of leaders and active workers on 1st May 1974 and spontaneous protest strikes were organised all over India. There was no other alternative left for the workers but to stop the wheels of railways on 8th May and the strike began.

The Government virtually declared a war against railway workers. The reign of terror let loose by the police and gangsters on the railwaymen and their families knew no bounds. DIR and MISA were recklessly used. Despite arrest of 50,000 workers and torturing of their family members, the railway workers showed exemplary courage in fighting out the repression. Notwithstanding All India Radio's lying propaganda, the strike affected the entire railway system.

In protest against police repression and terror and in support of railwaymen's struggle, six Central trade unions gave a call for one day all India strike on 15th May which was observed in many States.

It was the first action of its kind which expressed the higher level of consciousness of the workers and salaried employees for solidarity action for other sections of workers. In many States, it was most wide spread and sections which were never drawn in solidarity actions joined this time in good strength. This strike played a big role in boosting the morale of the striking railway workers.

Despite achievement of magnificent unity during the strike the struggle had its inherent weaknesses. Firstly, there was no adequate preparation for conducting a longdrawn strike of such a magnitude. Some of the leaders even thought that by just giving a strike threat, the Government may grant some concessions which would enable them to withdraw the strike.

Secondly, leaders and cadres of the railway movement were not appraised of the possibility of repressive apparatus of the Government pouncing upon the striking workers and their families and organisational preparations were not made to face the repressive measures. Had proper preparation been made in advance to face police attacks the workers would have given a still better account of themselves.

Thirdly, the treacherous role played by the AITUC and other leadership in the railway movement did everything to bring down the morale of the workers.

Fourthly, failure of the railway movement to build a powerful rank and file initiative in conducting the strike of such a magnitude resulted in absence of local initiative to conduct a long drawn struggle.

The AITUC leaders in the NCCRS shamelessly proposed withdrawal of the strike after 15th May. The AITUC issued an open statement to the press on 26th May calling upon the workers to withdraw the strike zone-wise and group-wise. In the prevailing confusion, a proposal came on 27th May from the NCCRS members in jail for unilateral withdrawal of strike.

The class-collaborationist policies of the AITUC leadership and the pressure from Smt. Gandhi's Government led to their abject surrender and taking a position hostile to the mass of railway workers.

The CITU representative Com. Samar Mukherjee and Com. Priya Gupta, General Secretary, AIRF opposed the unilateral withdrawal in the NCCRS meeting. Workers expressed shock at this withdrawal and in many places did not resume duties immediately.

The Government became more vindictive after the withdrawal of the strike though earlier it gave assurance of leniency and agreed to negotiate if the strike was withdrawn. Each officer at the lower level dictated some sort of bond and mercy petition to the victimised railwaymen but overwhelming majority of railwaymen rejected these humiliating terms. The Government further refused to negotiate with the NCCRS and tried to use dissensions within the NCCRS. Over 20,000 workers continue to be victimised in all till the end of January 1975.

In such circumstances, the functioning of NCCRS became extremely difficult and attempts to liquidate. NCCRS were made by a section of leadership. The bureaucrats of the Railway Board only utilised this opportunity to prolong victimisation and sow disruption within the movement.

Yet the Government failed to browbeat the railway workers who understood the real character of the Congress Government more in the twenty days of their strike than in twenty years of past struggles.

The impact of railway strike was so widespread that it evoked solidarity support from various organisations abroad. The SOHYO, strongest TU organisation in Japan not only adopted a resolution of support but sent Rs. 5 lakhs to the movement. Another Cheque of \$ 10,000 dollars was sent by Japanese Railway Union. However, both these contributions were withheld by the Government of India. A delegation of the International Transport Federation (ICFTU) was refused Visa by the India Government when they wanted to send a fact finding mission to see the conditions of railway workers in India.

It must be noted here that the two all India strikes of Loco Running staff have played an important role in paving the way for the militant orientation of the railway workers movement. Their strike led by the All India Loco Running Staff Association in August 1973 gave a big jolt to the professional strike breakers in the railway T. U. movement. The main demand of the strikers was introduction of 8 hour day instead of prevalent 14. They also demanded recognition of their union.

The strike was complete and it paralysed the railway system, which ultimately forced the Government and the bureaucrats of the Railway Board to accept the demand of the workers. The Government agreed to reduce the hours of work from 14 to 10 at first stage which meant a big victory for the workers. It also agreed to withdraw all victimisation measures, release all those arrested under DIR. It agreed to open talks with representatives of the AILRSA for settling the remaining demands. Before this, they had resorted to

severe repression on the running staff but due to the remarkable unity built during the struggle the bureaucracy had to stage a temporary retreat. The agreement signed by the Labour Minister with the All India Loco Running Staff Association, was a direct result of the mass pressure of the loco running staff and for the first time forced the Government to admit that there are representative unions outside the two recognised Federations. These two federations opposed the settlement with the AILRSA though they could not achieve the demands of locomen despite long period of recognition.

The success of the strike created confidence in the ranks of Loco Running staff and other categories of railway workers who began to talk of struggle to achieve sectional demands. However, before the ink of the agreement was dry, the officials of the Railway Board began to invent difficulties to make out a case that it was practically impossible to implement the agreement.

The Loco Running Staff, therefore, gave a warning to the Government by observing all India Protest Day on 26th November 1973, but the Government did not pay any heed to it. They were thus left with no other alternative but to go in for strike from 15th December 1973, which was more widespread than the earlier ones. The authorities without learning from the earlier strike resorted to indiscriminate arrests under DIR, MISA etc., deployment of Territorial Army, retired locomen, diesel drivers etc., but could not run the railways. It however had once again to come down and agree to implement the agreement on 24th December 1973. When attempts were made to dishonour the settlement, the workers of North East Frontier refused to work beyond 10 hours a day and despite arrests, the movement continued to spread.

Having failed to suppress the united struggle of the workers the Railway Board resorted to disruptive tactics and AITUC leadership gave a helping hand to the Board in their nefarious game. It is only due to the urge for unity among the loco running staff that these attempts could be foiled.

During the two strikes of the Loco running staff and All India Railway strike, the CITU unions extended full solidarity

to railway workers. A separate note is given explaining the legal aid organised by the CITU for the victimised railwaymen. These activities have increased the prestige of CITU among the railway workers to a considerable extent. The barrier that divided the railway workers and other organised workers was demolished in these struggles. The CITU should use this opportunity to pay more attention to our work among the railwaymen so that the united struggles of the railway workers are better co-ordinated and guided.

The leadership of the AITUC is quietly having talks with the Government and the Railway Board is stealthily giving recognition to the newly formed Federation formed by them.

The disruptive forces within the railway movement are trying to disrupt the NCCRS and some of its constituent organisations like LRSA etc. at the behest of the Railway Board. Efforts must be made to preserve and strengthen the NCCRS. Attempts to build unity of the All India Confederation of Railway workers and the NCCRS are also important. It is a weakness of the leadership of the Confederation that they do not take into account the valuable help rendered by the other sections of the T. U. Movement. It is important they have been victims of the Railway Board propaganda that outsiders are disrupting the railway movement. It is only through patient argument and persuasion that we can build unity of all sections of railway movement and CITU will have to pay special attention to this task in the forthcoming days.

Struggles of State Government Employees

Forty lakhs State Government employees have been unitedly fighting for their demands for need based minimum wages, cent per cent DA etc. Though they drew the attention of the State Govts. repeatedly through demonstrations and meetings the Government refused to move in the matter. State-wide strikes also were organised but their demands continued to remain unsettled. This raised the question of all India concerted action and the All India State Government Employees Federation gave a call for one day strike on 9th

April 1974. It was the first country-wide action for basic and common demands organised by this section of employees. On the eve of the strike, State Government threatened with pay cut, break in service, forfeiture of pension and gratuity and other penal measures. The Achutha Menon Government surpassed all the State Governments by arresting 2000 employees and involving thousands of others in false cases. Yet the strike was a complete success which paralysed the work in all the States. The Maharashtra Government alone imposed break in service on over one lakh employees. This was repeated in other States but the State Government employees have fought these measures effectively. In U. P., Punjab, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and other States, the employees had to face large scale repressive measures but the employees carried forward their struggles undeterred by these repressive measures. The recent struggle of State Government employees which rocked the State Governments was a shining example of the dogged resistance of this section of employees. The indefinite State wide strike of Kerala State Government employees in Kerala in February 1975 showed a new awareness of unity among them. The State Government employees have been increasingly participating in solidarity actions with the other sections of workers and employees.

A New Strike Wave

In the early part of 1974, the country was swept with 3 big strikes involving lakhs of workers. They were the strikes of two lakhs cotton textile workers of Maharashtra, one and a half lakh textile workers in Tamilnadu and 3 lakhs jute textile workers in West Bengal, Andhra, U. P., Bihar, M. P. and Assam.

The 33 day strike of jute textile workers was the first all India Industry wise strike on common Charter of Demands of jute workers which included fixation of grades and scales for all categories, nationalisation of industry and foreign trade without compensation, payment of Rs. 100.00 per maund as price of raw jute, 20 per cent bonus and relief to badli

workers. Though the strike notices were served by all the central trade unions, the INTUC, a section of HMS and NFITU signed an agreement on 13th January 1974 midnight, literally at the zero hour when the strike was to begin. The CITU, AITUC, UTUC, UFUC (Lenin Sarani), TUCC and a section of HMS stuck to their decision and the strike was complete success. The INTUC workers also joined the strike defying the leadership. Earlier, on 5th November 1973, one day strike had been unitedly observed in West Bengal in support of the demand. On 31st January 1974, a successful industrial General strike was observed in West Bengal in support of jute workers.

Despite open support given by the Government of West Bengal to the jute barons, ultimately it had to offer ex-gratia payment in addition to the settlement that had been made with INTUC and others. The six trade unions refused to sign the agreement but on 15th February, the strike was withdrawn in view of the rebuff to INTUC after the additional concessions. The workers resumed their duties with a sense of victory and readiness to fight back if the need arises.

The strike of cotton textile workers in Bombay commenced on 30th December and was fought unitedly by CITU, AITUC and Lal Nishan unions though the INTUC had signed a treacherous agreement accepting only a rise of Rs. 25.00 in wages while the workers demanded fixation of Rs. 425.00 as the minimum wage. The unions also opposed 7 day week and demanded annual increment, full neutralisation, an end to the index fraud and higher bonus. Despite a clear cut verdict of the workers against the INTUC treachery, the Government continued to boost INTUC union and instigated Shiv Sena hoodlums to attack the workers. The Dalit Panthers, a militant group of scheduled caste youths were especially made the target of attack. When they resisted, Naik's police pounced upon them killing one worker in firing.

When repression failed to suppress the strike, Dange came to the rescue of the Government. A secret deal was struck between him and the millowners by which an additional rise of Rs. 4.00 would be paid to the workers. Dange unilaterally withdrew

the strike without even consulting the trade unions jointly conducting the strike. The workers in the Government owned mills were given a raw deal by granting them only half of the benefits and in some mills the strike continued for more days even after his betrayal.

The strike of over a lakh textile workers in 180 mills in Tamilnadu was sponsored by the Action Committee of CITU AITUC and HMS from 1st February 1974 in support of 10 point Charter of Demands of a similar type. The INTUC joined 11 days later.

However, the AITUC and HMS leadership showed vacillations at early stage, and they continued negotiations with the State Government secretly. When they conspired to exclude the CITU from the Action Committee to prove their bona fide to the Tamilnadu Labour Minister, the CITU had to single handedly continue the strike. The workers understood the treachery and remained on strike till 5th March when some more concessions were offered by the millowners by way of settlement.

The Port and Dock Strike

Over two lakhs workers in Ports and Docks all over the country went on indefinite strike from 16th January 1975 demanding Rs. 100 as interim relief, merger of DA with basic wages and in protest against the formation of Wage Committee without the representatives of the trade unions. The strike call was given by all unions and was a complete success. The Government banned the strike under DIR to break it.

At this stage, Shri Rajni Patel, President BPCC and Shri G. Ramanujam, INTUC General Secretary intervened and persuaded the leadership of INTUC and HMS federations to withdraw the strike on the terms offered by the Government before the strike began. A hurriedly called meeting in Delhi resulted in a settlement which provided Rs. 50.00 as additional DA half of which would be impounded and Rs. 300 towards arrear payment for 1974. The leadership virtually agreed to accept the Wage Committee constituted by the Government

which they boycotted earlier. The AITUC leadership later on signed this surrender. The leadership of the INTUC, HMS and AITUC Federations have left all the unsettled problems of port and dock workers at the mercy of the Transport Ministry. The leadership of the three Federations had wilfully given up democratic procedure of obtaining the views of the mass of workers before withdrawal of the strike.

The remarkable unity achieved in the strike could not win the demands in full due to the surrender of the leadership. The unsettled issues will continue to keep discontent of the workers brewing and another round of struggle of port and dock workers should not be ruled out in the forthcoming days.

Successful Strike of LIC Employees

Among the most tenaciously fought struggles in this period, was the struggle of the 40,000 LIC employees under the leadership of all India Insurance Employees Association (AIIEA). The management was purposefully delaying negotiations on the Charter of Demands and over 1000 leading activists were either suspended or charge sheeted for carrying agitation. The AIIEA had to give a call for indefinite strike on 28th December 1973 to protest against the vindictive policy. The management declared lockout in 6 divisions which was replied with strike by the employees in these divisions.

The INTUC and AITUC leadership tried their utmost to disrupt the struggle but could not do so. Thanks to the unity of the LIC employees. Ultimately, the LIC authorities were forced to relent and finally an agreement was signed on 24th January 1974 which provided for about 15 per cent wage rise excluding bonus. The management was also forced to withdraw all victimisation measures. The struggle thus resulted in further strengthening of unity of LIC employees and violating the disruptive forces within the movement.

Struggle of Air Transport Employees

The struggle of the Indian Airlines Corporation (IAC) employees against the introduction of new shift system involving

additional workload without even properly discussing with the Air Corporation Employees Union was extremely protracted. The employees started their agitation from 12th November 1973 and decided to go on strike from 25th November if the new shift system was not withdrawn. The Indian Airlines authorities headed by notorious Air Marshal P. C. Lal (Retd.) declared lockout on 24th November and took the strange and unprecedented step of lifting the lockout for individuals who would agree to accept insulting terms. IA employees resisted firmly despite betrayal of some of their leaders at early stage. The draft agreement proposed by the authorities sought to suppress all T.U. rights of employees and introduce regimentation in operation of I.A. Concessions available to the workers were stopped on the plea of curbing "wasteful expenditure." Ultimately the management did succeed in using the weakness of the T. U. movement of IA employees and impose arbitrary terms on them. The CITU supported the IA employees struggle and condemned all the draconian methods. Technically the lockout had not yet been lifted and recently the union was compelled to accept the industrial truce proposed by the Government.

The Air India authorities in a similar fashion imposed a slip system on Pilots which led to stoppage of most of the international services in November 1974. Here also iron hand methods were used to cow down the pilots who had to withdraw their struggle in face of highhandedness of the authorities. The lockout was imposed during this struggle and it was withdrawn for those who accepted the "Slip System."

These two struggles saw an authoritarian trend in dealing with disputes with the employees. It constitutes a new danger to the trade union movement and must be fought unitedly if the trade union movement has to continue its advance. It should also be noted that the struggles of the air transport employees are being suppressed as their unions are on craft basis and solidarity action is totally absent among the employees of different crafts. Moreover when the IA employees were being attacked some Air India employees were working on IA planes. There was total absences of solidarity from Air India employees to IA employees.

Struggle of Central Government Employees

The publication of the recommendations of the Third Pay Commission created deep resentment to the Central Government employees. They expressed it through several demonstrations and Conventions organised at local and regional levels. The nominal improvements made by the Government failed to satisfy them and their agitations continued to spread in all directions. The magnificent response to the UCTU Convention Against Recommendations of the Third Pay Commission and for Bonus for All held in July 1973 only expressed their desire for a concerted struggle.

The AITUC leadership refused to join the united struggle and tried to hobnob with the Government to get paltry concessions. They actively disrupted the movement and helped the Government in going ahead with its pernicious game.

The movement of the Central Government got a new fillip after the formation of NCCRS and its decision to organise an indefinite strike if the negotiations with the Railway Board prove fruitless. The National Convention called by the AIRF in New Delhi on 15th March 1974 was attended by all groups working in the Central Government employees movement and it was decided to be prepared for a countrywide mass action if the railwaymen decided to go in for a strike action. Com. B. T. Ranadive, who spoke in the Convention on behalf of CITU expressed our firm support to whatever action the Government employees take to protect their interests.

Following the decision of the Convention the Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers Unions gave a call for non-co-operation movement on 8th and 9th May and general strike on 10th May 1974. However, a section of the Central Government employees movement led by Shri Madhusudhan and O. P. Gupta backed out from the commitment and opposed the call for industrial action. This led to widespread disruption among the Central Government employees movement. The strike had to be withdrawn in two days causing temporary demoralisation among the employees.

The Confederation took initiative in unifying the ranks of the Central Government employees movement and particularly of the P & T employees. The dialogue continued for some months and chances of unity appeared to be bright. However, in the month of January when the Government announced its decision of DA by which out of 5 instalments of DA due at that time, it decided to pay only 3 instalments and that too would either be impounded or deposited in workers PF account. Out of Rs. 98 crores due on account of DA, the employees were to get only Rs. 12 Crores. The Madhusudan-O. P. Gupta group gave their consent to the official proposals and accepted wage and DA freeze. A wave of resentment was generated among the Central Government employees and under these circumstances unity talks proved to be meaningless.

While we wish every success to the effort to build unity of the Central Government employees, it should be on the basis of struggle for the rights of the Central Government employees and not by surrendering their rights.

Campaign Against Wage Freeze

The promulgation of Presidential Ordinance of 6th July 1974, later on replaced by an Act of Parliament providing freezing all wage rise and half of DA rise was the most ferocious onslaught on the wages and living conditions of workers and employees. It naturally evoked country-wide angry protests from all section of workers and Central trade unions except the INTUC. Spontaneous outbursts in various forms came from all corners of the country. The first blood in the battle against wage freeze was drawn in Bharatpur (Rajasthan) where 3 CITU workers were killed in Birla's SIMMCO wagon building factory when the workers were resisting the compulsory cut in wages.

The representatives of Central trade unions and national federations who met in New Delhi on 20th-21st July 1974 decided to organise a national campaign against wage freeze. They called for the observance of Anti-Wage Freeze Week from 9th to 15th August and called upon the workers to

demonstrate in protest before every factory, office and other establishment.

This was followed by the National Convention of working people against wage freeze held in New Delhi on 28th August in which participated over 1400 delegates representing all the trade unions and several federations except the AITUC and INTUC. It was a unique manifestation of a new urge of unity among the working class to resist and fight back the wage freeze offensive of the Congress Government. It called upon the trade unions to forge broadest possible unity to carry on a sustained struggle. It decided that in the first phase of the struggle, the trade unions should hold united regional, local and State level Conventions, organise demonstrations and strikes at various levels.

Since the National Convention, over 200 local, regional and State level Conventions were held throughout the country. These Conventions had helped immensely in making all sections of the working class conscious of the danger posed by the wage freeze Act and the need for achieving unity for a long-drawn and grim battle looming ahead. They had drawn even the most backward sections of the working class to join the united platform in a way never witnessed before.

In these Conventions apart from CITU many other organisations of employees of LIC, Central and State Government, Railway, Bank and Commercial establishments took active interest. Though the AITUC did not Join the National Convention the local units of AITUC participated in some local as well as State level Convention.

Kerala took the initiative in organising the State-wide strike on 18th September 1974 against wage freeze in which all the trade unions except the INTUC participated. The strike was complete and even the AIR went off the air as a result of the strike.

The second strike was organised in Maharashtra on 30th October 1974 at the call of the Trade Union Joint Action Committee of all trade unions except the INTUC. A massive procession of 40,000 workers was organised in the evening.

which culminated in a big rally which was addressed among others by Com. B. T. Ranadive, President CITU.

In Rajasthan, a State-wide Bandh was observed on 21st November 1974 in protest against wage freeze and other anti-people policies of the Government. The call was jointly given by the CITU, AITUC, HMP, AIIEA and unions in railways, Central and State Government employees, defence and bank employees.

In Delhi, Bundh was observed on 15th January 1975. The AITUC which earlier agreed to join the action backed out at eleventh hour on frivolous ground yet other trade unions went ahead with the programme and made it partially successful.

A new atmosphere of unity has been created all over the country by the Anti Wagei Freeze campaign. Workers have shown awareness of the need for an all India movement and struggle on common issues facing the working class. All efforts should be made to preserve and strengthen this unity so that struggles of the workers are better co-ordinated and guided in future.

There have been many united struggles on the State level and local levels. Let us review them State by State so as to enable us to assess the extent of advance of the movement in respective States.

WEST BENGAL

The continued reign of terror in West Bengal has been overshadowing industrial relations during the last 2 years. Nearly 300 unions of CITU are still under occupation of Congress-goondas and normal trade union activity is impossible in the area. The terror was most pronounced in the Barrackpore industrial belt, Assansol-Raniganj-Durgapur complex and Tea gardens in North Bengal.

The two State-wide Bundhs that were organised since Ernakulam Conference, included "end of terror and gangsterism" as one of the demands. These bundhs had impact even in the terror stricken areas.

The first General strike was organised on 27th July 1973 in support of the demands for reduction in prices of essential

commodities, restoration of the cut made in ration, withdrawal of DIR and MISA, release of political prisoners etc. Earlier, the CITU State Committee appealed for one day general strike on these issues. But the AITUC leadership instead of jointly announcing the strike unilaterally gave a call for strike on 27th July. The CITU supported the date but UTUC, UTUC (Lenin Sarani) and TUCC did not participate in the strike. The strike created a confidence in the minds of workers that they could fight back terror if they are united and resisted.

The next general strike and hartal on 17th November 1973 was more widespread. The call was jointly given by CITU, UTUC, UTUC (Lenin Sarani), TUCC and HMS and got support by 9 left parties in protest against anti-people policies of the Congress Government resulting in food crisis, abnormal rise in price of essential commodities, ration cut etc. The leadership of AITUC, INTUC and HMS which earlier gave a call for "cease work" on 17th November, advanced the date by 2 days to disrupt the action. The West Bengal Government while proclaiming its intention of fighting the Bundh politically, made elaborate arrangements to suppress the action while the Congress goondas were given free rights to intimidate the workers.

The working class of West Bengal also observed one-day strike in support of striking jute workers on 31st January 1974 and in solidarity with railway workers on 15th May 1974.

We have already referred to the all India strike of jute workers which lasted for 33 days. The Government and the IJMA were not serious about implementing the assurances given by them to the workers. The award given by the Union Labour Minister on relief to Badli workers was not implemented by the IJMA and some millowners went to the court to scuttle it. The West Bengal Government was openly siding with the IJMA. The unions in jute industry, therefore, organised a one day protest strike on 24th September 1974.

Meanwhile the West Bengal Govt. appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. S. Bhattacharyya to suggest rectification in Consumer Price Index Number. The Committee recommended a new conversion factor between 1960 and 1939 series as a result of which workers would have received additi-

onal DA varying from Rs. 60 to 100 per month. However, the West Bengal Government reduced it to Rs. 16 to 18 under DIR notifications which created a deep resentment among the workers.

The jute workers in West Bengal had to organise another indefinite strike from 6th January 1975 in which all unions participated. The obdurate attitude of the IJMA bosses made the strike longdrawn but the unity of the workers was remarkable who were prepared for a long drawn battle.

The West Bengal Government instead of putting pressure on jute barons shamelessly supported them and acted openly against the interests of the workers. And for this, more than 100 hours of protracted negotiations bore no fruit and in fact, no demand of the workers was conceded. A mass squatting for 12 hours was organised in front of IJMA office from 18th February where thousands of jute workers and other workers and employees participated. Solidarity campaign was organised by Central, State Government, Mercantile, LIC employees and many CITU unions while more than ten thousand rupees were collected in support of the striking jute workers. Though INTUC was a partner of the strike, the congress goondas prevented holding of a meeting of jute workers at Kamarhati to be addressed by Jyoti Basu. The Congress students assaulted SFI workers when they organised a strike on 19th February in support of jute workers.

Though the workers were prepared to continue the battle, the INTUC, HMS and NFTU treacherously called off the strike from 21st February which brought disruption in the ranks of the jute workers. The CITU and five other trade unions decided to continue the strike for two more days and called it off on 23rd February 1975 after reviewing the situation. Thus the jute workers fought a heroic battle for 48 days which was the longest strike battle so far in the history of jute workers movements.

In Engineering, after a notice was served for Indefinite general strike, a settlement was reached on 25th June 1973, providing increases varying Rs. 25 to 50. Majority of the management did not implement the agreement and the Govt.

invoked DIR to fix Rs. 200 as the minimum wage. Even that was not implemented. No industry-wise action could be organised due to opposition of the AITUC and the INTUC leadership. However, several unit-wise struggles were organised. Notable among them was the struggle of Jay Engineering workers who fought for six months since 23 April '73 against the arbitrary imposition of additional workload in violation of the earlier agreement. The strike of 3500 workers in G.E.C. which began on 29th May 1973 in support of their Charter of Demands and against large scale victimisation was also long-drawn. The workers had to fight police repression and solidarity campaign was launched in the entire Garden Reach area. The struggle of the Bengal Lamp workers since 5th November 1973 against non-implementation of the agreement and victimisation was also protracted. They also fought against lockout. The struggles of workers in J. K. Aluminium of Raniganj, Shalimar Works, Britannia Engineering, Guest Keen Williams, Hind Motors were longdrawn in a similar manner. The engineering workers in small units of Howrah also had to fight several struggles against lay off, closures etc.

The Co-ordination Committee of all Tea plantation unions decided to organise indefinite strike from 6th August but it was withdrawn after the appointment of the Wage Committee by West Bengal Government. This was later on criticised by the West Bengal State Committee of CITU. However, all the plantations in North Bengal were closed down on 14th January demanding nationalisation of tea plantations and re-opening of closed gardens. The tea gardens in hill regions went on strike on 21st February 1974 demanding autonomy and recognition of Nepali language.

The Steel workers had to go on strike several times during this period. The work in alloy steel was paralysed from 23rd March to 25th April 1974 demanding improved bonus scheme for steel melting shop workers. Again on 27th August 1974, the workers of Alloy Steel downed their tools condemning the murder of leading worker Com. Susanta Chakravarty on 30th September. The workers of Dugrapur steel plant and Alloy Steel Plant went on strike in protest against wage freeze Act and

in support of the demand of reinstatement of evicted contract workers. The 7000 contract workers under Steel Plant fought for wage rise and got increase of Re. 1 in daily wages. They also struggled against reinstatement of gangsters by the contractors. It was also possible to compel the AITUC and INTUC unions to join some of these struggles.

In road transport industry, our unions were hit by the gangsterism severely. The State Government illegally withdrew recognition to Calcutta State Transport Employees Union and accorded recognition to Congress Union. The authorities issued charge sheets and instituted false cases against our organisers and workers. Yet the Union could organise a big mass deputation to Writers' Buildings on 26th March and 23rd September 1974 defying all obstacles put forward by the authorities. The carrier transport workers under CITU's leadership went on strike on 10th January 1974 in support of their long-standing demands. The North Bengal Transport workers won some concessions after several struggles.

The workers of National Rubber Manufacturing Company fought a six month long struggle against lockout declared by the management. A long drawn struggle was also conducted by the workers of Inchek Tyre. Solidarity was expressed by workers of Dunlop rubber.

The strength of CITU has increased considerably in Ports and Docks due to the struggles organised by our unions. The workers of Chipping and Painting department, fought a strike struggle for their demands like wages, D. A. etc. for 70 days and ultimately won some concessions. The emergence of Port Dock Seamen's Sangrami Morcha - a united front of 11 unions was an important event in the struggle of Port and Dock workers. Though the HMS unions did not join the front it could organise a successful strike of port and dock workers on 10th May 1974 for need based minimum wage, security of service, merger of DA with basic pay etc. The dock workers successfully organised work-to rule movement demanding higher bonus. The clerical staff and watchman also participated in struggles for their job security and against the recommendations for one-man Committee appointed by the Government.

At the initiative of the State Committee, a Convention of Beedi workers was organised on 27th and 28th April 1974 in Mursidabad district where a Charter of Demand was adopted. A ten thousand strong demonstration was organised in Calcutta on 10th November 1974. A successful one day strike was also organised by the West Bengal Beedi Workers Federation throughout the State on 29th January 1975.

Besides these, industry-wise struggles, certain unit-wise struggles were also conducted by the workers and some of them were unitedly fought. The workers of Bengal Paper Mills, Raniganj, participated in a 6 month long struggle against lock-out. During the struggle, three of our workers were brutally murdered inside the factory.

During 1973, the workers of Birla's Kessoram Rayon Factory at Hooghly after 7 months of struggle against lockout realised Rs. 69 as wage rise. The management however launched vindictive measures against the workers who were fighting courageously despite heavy odds. Two years bonus has not been paid to the workers and mass victimisation have been resorted to. The workers are preparing for another round of struggle.

The workers of Bharat Ophthalmic Glass, Durgapur, went on strike for higher wages when the management retrenched 18 workers including CITU union General Secretary. The workers forced the management to withdraw some of the victimisation measures. 8 workers are still out of jobs, the union is fighting hard for their reinstatement.

About 30 thousand workers of 92 Municipalities organised strike from 18th July to 23rd July 1973 for wage rise. 33 thousand employees of Calcutta Corporation also struck work from 1st October 1974. The CITU unions participated in all the strike actions though in many places, we were weak. However, the Congress leadership betrayed the workers by unilaterally withdrawing the strike after 10 hours without getting any concession. Due to disruption, other unions could not carry forward the struggle.

The 13000 workers of Bata Shoe Factory struck work for 18 days for their 33 point Charter of Demands. The foreign

management was ultimately forced by the remarkable unity of the workers to accept a wage rise of Rs. 73 to the workers.

The workers in the Rope industry also gained a wage rise of Rs. 15 to 36 per month through united struggle led by the Joint Action Committee of the unions belonging to CITU and other trade union centres.

The State Committee took initiative in building a united movement against the fraudulent price index and against power crisis. The State Committee submitted an exhaustive memorandum along with other Central trade unions to the Expert Committee exposing the fraudulent character of the price index. The West Bengal Government however resorted to the use of DIR to waterdown the recommendations of the Committee and the Director of Labour Bureau, Simla came forward as shameless spokesman of the IJMA bosses in covering up the fraud.

The workers in West Bengal became the worst victims of power crisis during 1973 and 1974. During 1973, 6,45,324 workers of 1553 units were laid off due to power cut. During 1974, the production declined by 60 per cent in some industries for the same reason. Within first 5 months of that year, alone 2,70,000 workers were laid off due to power crisis. The State Committee demanded that the workers should be paid full compensation for the power cut. It also pointed out how the power rationing would not solve the problem of power shortage. At the initiative of the State Committee, other trade union centres were also brought together in order to build a common front of the working class in the State.

Kerala

The Kerala CITU organised two massive Bundhs during the middle of 1973. On 10th July, the working class and other sections of the toiling masses unitedly responded to the Bundh call given by the Kerala State CITU to protest against the acute food crisis resulting in starvation deaths and demanding a daily ration of 12 ounces. Over 5 lakh workers participated in the call. Within 3 weeks, on 2nd August, another successful Bundh was organised at the call of CPI(M) and other opposition parties, the CITU and other mass organisa-

tions in protest against rising prices and for realising the demand for 12 ounces of ration per day. The Achutha Menon Ministry did its best to suppress the strike. 2 workers were killed and 2 others injured in police firing while indiscriminate lathi charges were order of the day. Over 5000 persons were arrested prior to the Bundh day while thousands more were arrested on the Bundh day. However, despite all these repressive measures, the Bundh was a grand success reflecting people's verdict against the anti-people policies of the Achutha Menon Government.

The entire Kerala State Transport was paralysed when the road transport workers went on strike on the mid-night of September 3-4. The call of the strike was given by CITU, AITUC, INTUC and 4 other unions. The workers representatives demanded 14.5 per cent bonus as against 11.5 offered by the Government. As reported in the press, Chief Minister Achutha Menon declared in the liason Committee meeting of the ruling parties that if the transport were paid a bonus higher than 11.5 per cent or if the transport buses did not start operation not later than on 13th September, he would resign. The AITUC and INTUC leadership was pressurised and they withdrew the strike. However, workers refused to join duties and the complete strike continued for 20 days. Ultimately the Government had to come down and grant higher bonus quantum and in addition an advance of 12 days wages.

Along with these strike struggles there were many more struggles of all sections of workers. Before the end of 1973, protest strikes and indefinite strikes were organised by State Electricity Board workers, Gwalior Rayon workers, Travancore Electrical Chemical workers, Rubber Tappers, Wynad Coffee Plantation workers, Boat Building workers, workers of spinning mills, ministerial employees of private colleges, Stevdore labour, Lorry drivers and cleaners, Coir workers—in short almost all sections were drawn in the arena of strike struggles. A large number of these struggles were led by the CITU, while many were jointly conducted by several unions along with the CITU.

Continued deterioration of food situation in the State forced the working class to come once again on streets. At the call of the five opposition parties, CITU and other mass organisations, a successful general strike and hartal was organised on 21st December demanding 12 ounces of ration per day and in protest against price and police repression. On the eve of the strike, the Govt. arrested over 500 CITU workers and police resorted to lathi charge in several places. This only resulted in ranks of INTUC and AITUC also joining the strike in many industrial centres despite the opposition of their leadership. Earlier on 9th November, at the call of CITU State Committee demonstrations were held all over the State in protest against police intervention in TU disputes and against price rise.

Another anti-working class step of the Kerala Govt. was the non-implementation of minimum wages of coir workers in the State and introduction of husking machines in the industry causing a serious threat to job security of thousands of workers. In protest against these policies, one lakh Coir workers in Trivandrum District went on strike on 1st November 1973. The 1.25 lakh coir workers in Quilon District resorted to one day strike on 15th November and 5000 workers picketed before the District Collectorate. The CITU took initiative in bringing together the INTUC and UTUC and a state-wide united strike of 5 lakh Coir workers was organised on 15th January, 1974.

The plantation workers in the State also became victims when the State Government refused to implement the recommendations of the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee for Plantation industry. At the call of CITU and HMS, one lakh plantation workers throughout the State went on strike on 8th February, 1974 to protest against it. Workers of Rubber, Tea, Coffee and Cardamom Plantations in Kottayam, Iddikki District picketed the village offices. Similar pickettings were organised in Erumala, Mundakkayam, Hosdurg, Taliparamata and Telli-chery. Plantation workers also struck work to protest against repression. On 23rd January 1974, over 10,000 workers of Kodumen and Chandanpalli estates went on strike in protest

against lathi charge on them. On 1st February 1974 plantation and agricultural workers of Kondazhi struck work to condemn the gruesome murder of Com. M. N. Bhaskaran, CITU leader in the area.

The depressing living standard of tile workers forced them to take the path of struggle. The CITU and INTUC unions jointly organised a successful strike on 2nd November 1973 demanding wage rise of Rs. 2 per day. The struggle of Commonwealth Tile Company of Olavakkode was longdrawn and all the tile workers of Palghat District went on strike on 10th February in support of these workers.

The CITU conducted struggles of agricultural workers. Notable among them was the strike of Agricultural and Animal Husbandary Department of Agricultural University, Palghat. 10,000 farm workers under the State Government went on strike from 15th November 1973 demanding confirmation of temporary employees, interim relief, PF etc. The agricultural workers of Allepyey District struck work on 8th December 1973 protesting against the attacks by youth Congress gangsters and arrest of T. U. leaders.

In June and August 1974, three lakh plantation workers had to organise 2 strikes for implementation of minimum wage notification of the Kerala Government. The managements filed a write petition against the Minimum Wage Ordinance issued by Kerala Government. In June, a successful one-day strike was jointly organised by all the Central Trade unions in protest against the writ petition. Seeing that the planters continue their opposition to implement the meagre rise offered by the Ordinance ; the workers went on indefinite strike in August 1974 which continued for 38 days. The managements were ultimately forced to come down for a settlement agreeing to pay additional daily wages of Rs. 1.20 in Tea, Rs. 1.68 in Rubber. Rs. 1.34 in Cardamom and Rs. 1.32 in Coffee plantations.

The Coir and handloom workers waged a number of important united struggles during 1974. 75,000 Coir workers of Quilon District under CITU leadership went on indefinite strike in August for higher wages and bonous. In the same

month, 75000 handloom workers of Cannanore zone went on indefinite strike in support of the demand for bonus. Coir workers of Alleppey and Trivandrum and handloom workers of Calicut zone also waged several struggles besides the workers of textile, engineering, cashew, beedi, tile and other industries. 4500 workers of Idikki project went on united strike to protest against retrenchment of 1200 workers by Hindustan Construction Ltd.

Another notable strike was by the workers of FACT, Cochin Division which ended in a victory and the management had to give a wage rise of Rs. 100 per month along with an assurance of no victimisation for participation in the strike.

Road transport workers of Trichur District, workers of Maunam Sagar Mills in Panthalam, Corporation employees of Calicut, construction workers in Shipyard also went on strike on their pressing demands.

The people of Kerala observed another Kerala Bundh on 10th December 1974 in protest against the anti-people policies of the Central and State Government which led to the breakdown of rationing in Kerala. Though police repression and gangsterism was intensified the strike paralysed industrial and civic life throughout the State. The call for the Bundh was given by Action Committee of opposition parties.

Among the most doggedly fought strikes mention must be made of 125 day long strike of Indian Rare Earths Workers at Kalamassery (Cochin) who went on strike on the issue of wages and DA. The management wanted a ceiling on DA at Rs. 275 but all the unions refused to agree to that proposal. Ultimately, seeing the unity of the workers, the management had to agree to 12% per cent increase in basic wages and the ceiling of DA was withdrawn. The strike ended on 20th January 1975 when a joint general body meeting of the workers unanimously agreed to the proposals. Earlier a General strike on 24th January in Alwaye-Eloor-Kalamassery area had been planned by all the trade unions in support of the Rare Earth workers.

The workers in the Rigwork who went on strike on 21st December demanding reinstatement of some retrenched workers

were brutally lathi charged by the CISF at the instance of the management. The entire Cochin Shipyard came to a standstill when the workers heard the news of the lathi charge as a result of which 22 workers including women were admitted in the hospital.

All the 2000 workers of Travancore Rayons, Perambavoor stopped work indefinitely from 4th January 1975 demanding bonus for 1973. The Coconut Fibre workers of Thalikkulam, Anthikkad and Manalur Panchayats began an indefinite strike from 15th December demanding implementation of Minimum wage notification.

Tamilnadu

The State-wide Bandh on 13th September 1973 was the most wide spread action of the working class and the people in Tamilnadu after the Second Conference of the CITU. The call for Bandh was given by the CPI (M), Right CP, ADMK, CITU and other mass organisations which was a complete success. The Bandh was in protest against the anti-people policies of the State and the Central Govts. which were responsible for price rise, unemployment, power cut and other hardships faced by the people. The ADMK and the Right CP however planned action against only the State Government, then giving a clean chit to the Central Government. Though the DMK Government arrested 8000 leaders and workers and gangsterism was let loose against the people the Bandh could not be prevented throughout the State.

We have already referred to the struggle of textile workers all over the State during 1974. There were other struggles in textile industry. This State-wide strike was preceded by several local and mill-wise strikes many of which were jointly conducted by all the trade unions. It is through these local struggles that the workers got the conviction that a concerted State-wide action would alone bring sufficient pressure on the milliowners to accept their demands. 7500 workers of Madurai Mills went on strike on 3rd June 1973 in protest against the assault on workers by mill officials.

Deteriorating conditions of handloom and powerloom workers brought them to general struggles. The strike of 7000 handloom workers of Nagarcoil demanding 5 per cent wage rise and lifting of lockout declared from 30th November 1973 was also a long drawn struggle and to express solidarity with the striking workers local unions of CITU formed a Joint Action Committee. Two thousand workers of South Madurai went on strike from 11th January 1974 under CITU banner demanding wage rise. The strike was withdrawn on 24th January when the owners granted some wage rise. Earlier handloom workers of Vellore struck work from 15th December 1973 demanding 50 per cent wage rise and 15 per cent bonus. The DMK Government arrested 500 workers during the strike but ultimately seeing the unity of the workers the management accepted major demands and the strike was withdrawn on 1st January 1974. Powerloom workers in Madras and other centres struck work for more than 2 months since January 1974 demanding DA of 15 paise per point rise in index. More than 300 workers were arrested during the strike.

Through repeated struggles Beedi workers won some of their demands. In 1973 Beedi workers of Salem got bonus of 20 paise per 1000 Beedis. Thousands of Beedi workers in Madras observed one-day strike on 18th June 1973 in support of their demands of minimum wage of Rs. 5.50 per thousand beedis, one paise DA per point rise in index and a guaranteed daily wage of Rs. 7 per worker. Over one lakh Beedi workers throughout the State went on indefinite strike from 9th April demanding implementation of Beedi and Cigar Act, minimum wage of Rs. 5.75, DA linked with price index and bonus. Though a Joint Action Committee of CITU, AITUC and DMK unions was formed the AITUC backed out from the struggle yet the struggle continued till the employers accepted some demands.

The sugar workers were also not lagging behind in conducting struggles. On 31st December 1973 all the workers in sugar mills went on strike demanding 50 per cent bonus. The strike was complete which forced the management to agree to pay 43 per cent of the wages as bonus on 2nd January 1974 and the CITU leaders signed the agreement on behalf of workers. The

workers of Kothari Sugar Mills resorted to strike action from 1st February 1974 demanding increased wages and end of victimisation. The workers of Madurai Sugar Mills strongly protested when the INTUC and HMS signed a treacherous agreement. The management then issued show cause notice to 13 workers which forced the workers to resort to stay-in-strike. The management then declared lockout but workers carried forward the struggle. 2300 sugar workers of Nellikupam began a stay-in-strike from 22nd June 1973 in protest against the managements attempt to foist a stooge DMK Union on the workers. The goondas raided the CITU Union Office. The police instead of taking action against gangsters sealed the CITU Office and prevented the Union from functioning it.

More than 2500 civic and sanitary workers of the State went on a token strike on July 11, 1973 in support of their demands. A Co-ordination Committee of CITU and AITUC unions was formed to lead the workers. Work in Madras Corporation and in some other major municipalities came to a standstill and in the end the workers secured a 12% increase in allowance as a result of strike.

The strike of Neyveli Lignite Mine from 16th April 1974 was ultimately betrayed by AITUC and other leaders. Though a joint Committee of 6 unions was formed to demand Rs. 338 as wage with the understanding that no union should sign an agreement below that. However, the AITUC and DMK unions accepted Rs. 312 on the eve of strike and withdrew their strike notice. The other unions continued their strike. The Madras Police resorted to brutal repression but AITUC did not utter a single word against it. The struggle continued despite this repression and disruption but the INTUC and ADMK unions showed vacillations and backed out of struggle. The CITU union could not continue the struggle on its own strength and the strike had to be called off ultimately.

The strike of Kanyakumari district State Transport workers which began on 15th October 1973 was a longdrawn one. The State Government went back on the assurances for reinstatement of 225 retrenched workers and other issues. The CITU State Committee gave a call for solidarity fund collections and several unions contributed to the fund.

The Electricity workers organised a State-wide Dharna before the Board Offices in 50 centres on 15th June 1973 in support of their 5 point demand. Workers of Transport and bottling section of the Madurai Coca Cola factory (owned by daughter of former President V. V. Giri) went on indefinite strike on 12th June 1973 to protest against dismissal and arrests of workers.

With growing influence of CITU the DMK Government got panicky and resorted to gangster attacks against leaders and activists of CITU. Com. V. P. Chintan Member of our General Council was seriously attacked by DMK gangsters. It was only the exemplary courage and presence of mind of Com. Chintan that could save his life. This heinous crime roused a wave of indignation among mass of workers and over a lakh workers of the Madras industrial establishments struck work in protest against the attack. Workers of AITUC and ADMK also joined in protest in several centres like Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichi etc.

The CITU actively participated and emerged as the builder of unity in all these struggles. The isolation of AITUC leadership due to their class collaborationist role was more pronounced in this period.

Maharashtra

Since Ernakulam Session six General strikes and Bandhs were organised in Bombay and Maharashtra, which is indicative of the fighting mood of the workers in the State.

Immediately after the CITU Session the CITU State Committee took initiative in launching a campaign against the Govts. policy towards famine stricken peasantry and against rising prices. At the call of the CITU, AITUC and Sarva Shramik Sangh (Lal Nishan Group) more than 5 lakh workers in the Bomby-Thana-Ambarnath belt came on a protest strike on the 15th May 1973. A huge demonstration of 25,000 was taken out after successful strike which was lathi charged by the Police,

The HMS and HMP unions did not join the strike and they gave a separate call of Bandh on 25th May. The CITU did not oppose the strike since it was organised in support of similar issues.

A complete Maharashtra Bandh was observed on 2nd January 1974 by more than 2 million workers at the call of the left parties and the CITU, AITUC, HMS, HMP, Sarva Shramik Sangh and other T. U. organisations as well as Anti-Price Rise Women's Committee in protest against spiralling prices of essential commodities and demanding 12 kg. of ration per head per month. The Maharashtra Govt. tried to divert the attention of the people by organising an officially sponsored Bundh with the help of Shiv Sena gangsters but failed in its game.

Maharashtra observed National Protest Day on 3rd May 1974 by observing complete Bundh. Again on 15th May 1974 there was another successful Bundh throughout Maharashtra in support of striking railway employees.

We have already referred to the Maharashtra Bundh against wage freeze on 30th October 1974. The action was united and completely paralysed all public life throughout the State.

In addition to these Bundhs a successful Bundh was organised on 25th December 1973 in Nagpur demanding 12 kg. of ration per month. The call of the Bundh was jointly given by CITU, AITUC, HMS and other trade unions and it was so complete that not a single train could pass through the town on that day.

Many long drawn struggles were fought under the leadership of CITU in this period. Notable among them was the strike of Calico Chemicals which began on 10th August 1973 continued for months without intervention of the State Labour Minister. What was strange in the dispute was that the management blatantly refused to implement the 1971 award of the Tribunal, which itself took 6 years to give the award. The immediate cause of the strike was the summary dismissal of the President of the Union Staff Committee. Instead of taking action against the management, the Government let loose repression and arrested scores of workers who were refused bail and tortured in police lock-up. Even Com. S.F.X. Pereira,

Member of the General Council of CITU was arrested and implicated in false murder case. Several workers are still in prison and involved in murder cases.

The struggle of workers of Bardai Pvt. Ltd. which lasted for 503 days was also fought under CITU banner. The management was ultimately forced to accept continuity of service of all the workers, reinstatement of 99 retrenched workers and 25 per cent wages of the strike period.

At the call of the CITU 45000 Engineering workers of 200 factories downed their tools on 9th November 1973 in support of the Calico and Bardai workers and 400 workers of Sun-N-Sand Hotel who were also on prolonged strike.

The strike of 1200 CEAT tyre workers which commenced on 12th November 1973 in protest against suspension of their union leader and charge sheets against 20 workers. The compromise proposal suggested by the State Labour Minister were also not accepted by the management which only made the strike long-drawn. The strike was withdrawn on 11th March 1974 only when the management agreed to accept some demands of the workers.

The textile workers of Bombay fought a successful struggle against imposition of seven day week. The INTUC Union signed an agreement with the management but to assert the workers right to a common weekly holiday two lakh textile workers observed successful strikes on 15th and 2nd July 1973. So successful was the struggle that the Government had to withdraw the proposal. The workers' unity showed that treacherous agreement can be squarely defeated.

The Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions which includes all the trade union centres except the INTUC organised a massive Gherao of the Manarashtra Assembly on 25th February 1974 to protest against rising prices, scarcity of commodities, growing unemployment police repression and anti-people policies of the Govt.

In Thana Industrial area the J. K. Chemicals workers were agitating against the betrayal of the INTUC leadership. Enraged by the agitation the INTUC boss Datta Samant gave a fake call for strike demanding dismissal of CITU workers on the false charge that they burnt the INTUC flag. When the

workers failed to respond to the "Strike call" the INTUC hoodlums were let loose against workers. The residence of two CITU workers were attacked and Com. Tilakdhari was brutally murdered. Govt. of Maharashtra instead of taking action against the culprits declared a lockout. The CITU organised solidarity actions of other industrial workers and protected workers under attack.

Among other struggles mention must be made of strikes of Hasharwala Engineering Works, Gandhi Engineering Works, Alcott foundry and Precision Dye Cast in which workers fought for 3 months and won the demands. Struggles were also conducted by powerloom workers and Hotel workers which achieved some concession.

The 4000 workers of Times of India in Bombay, Delhi and Ahmedabad under the leadership of CITU went on strike on 22nd August 1974 demanding increase in DA. The Bombay workers gheraoed the Manager on 29th September 1974 and continued the cease work movement for one hour every day. Ultimately the management was forced to grant a rise of Rs, 50 per worker per month. The workers of Free Press Journal had to go on strike twice during this period. Once they struck work when the management declared a lockout. It was settled through negotiations. There was another strike on 23rd December 1974 when the President of Indian Federation of Working Journalists and Assistant Editor Com. S. B, Kolpe was suspended by the management. The strike evoked protest throughout the country. Ultimately the management was forced to withdraw the suspension of Com. Kolpe and grant Rs. 40 as additional DA per month to all the workers.

Two and a half lakhs powerloom workers in Maharashtra conducted several local struggles for higher wages, introduction of 8 hours work and reopening of closed factories. At the initiative of CITU a Statewide Convention was held in 1973 and an action committee was formed. A State-wide strike call was given from 23rd November 1973 which lasted for several days in most of the powerloom centres. In Sholapur 50 CITU activists were arrested. Ultimately the management were forced to accept wage rise and 8 hours day was introduced in some

centres. A special feature of this strike was that though it was unitedly fought by all sections of the workers it was led by the CITU.

RAJASTHAN

The CITU in Rajasthan has made considerable advance since Ernakulam Conference. Even the bourgeois press admitted CITU as a major force in the State. Under our leadership a number of strike struggles were organised in the later half of 1973. Prominent among them were struggles of Beawar Textiles workers and of the Multi Metal Mozdoor Sangh, Kota. However the most important campaign and struggle waged by the CITU was the solidarity action in support of the State Government employees struggle was most bitter and longdrawn in character while it paralysed the entire administration for more than a month. The strike began on 15th August 1973. The employees had to undergo most severe repression, mass arrests, firing and raids by police and gangsters on residential quarters of employees. Even those who expressed solidarity with the strikers were not spared. Com. Mohan Punamia and Com. D. D. Shirali President and General Secretary of the State Committee of CITU were arrested during the strike. CITU jointly with AITUC, HMP and other trade unions organised a total bundh on 24th July 1973 in support of the demands of the State Government employees. Earlier on 17th July 1973 Jaipur Bundh was unitedly organised on the call of the Co-ordination Committee of the trade unions to protest against the killing of a driver of the State Electricity Board in Police firing.

On 14th August 1973 a joint call to organise mass satyagraha against imposition of Section 144 was given by the CITU AITUC and HMP. 1500 volunteers led by the CITU, HMP and others were arrested in Jaipur alone. Batches after batches violated the Section 144 in other parts of Rajasthan.

The strike of over 15000 engineering workers all over the State was organised on 14th February 1974 in support of the demand for Rs. 100 increase in wages and other demands. The AITUC, INTUC, HMS and others joined hands to oppose the

strike while the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary was posted in all the factories to intimidate the workers. The goondas were also used to terrorise the workers. Yet the strike was a complete success. This was possible because CITU could form united Action Committees at factory and local levels which did not allow disruptors to play any role during the strike.

Rajasthan has the honour of giving the first blood in the battle against wage freeze. On 11th August 1974 the workers of Birla's SIMMCO factory at Bharatpur were protesting against the wage cut imposed by the Wage Freeze Ordinance. The Rajasthan police brutally killed 3 workers and injured several others in firing. This evoked spontaneous protests from all parts of the country and strengthened their resolve to fight the wage freeze offensive with more firmness and determination.

The struggles of workers of Kota Atomic power Project for higher wages and against suppression of trade union and democratic rights, workers of soap stone quarries for better wages and terms of service conditions have evoked solidarity support from workers in adjoining areas.

The management of J. K. Synthetics through its hirelings organised murderous attacks on 4th March 1974 against the prominent leaders of CITU affiliate J. K. Synthetics Mazdoor Union. It is only due to the vigilance of the workers that the lives of the leaders were saved. However the Rajasthan police arrested 50 union leaders and implicated them in criminal cases and management tried to victimise them on account of these cooked up charges. The State Committee campaigned among the workers against the joint conspiracy to suppress the CITU Union.

ANDHRA PRADESH

A successful Andhra Bandh was observed on 24th August 1973 to protest against spiralling prices and rampant black-marketing etc. The call for the bandh was given jointly by the State units of CITU, AITUC, HMP, Bank Employees Federation and Andhra Pradesh Shop Employees Federation and supported by CPI(M), Right CP and the Socialist Party.

The 3000 workers of HMT went on spontaneous strike on 2nd August when the management vindictively dismissed three leaders of the Union. They gheraoed the General Manager and carried on stay-in at the factory until at the intervention of the District Collector a settlement was reached and lockout lifted on 3rd August.

The workers of Coromandel Fertilisers Ltd. went on indefinite strike from 20th August 1973 to protest against stoppage of all promotion and refusal to pay bonus despite huge profits. The management refused the advice of the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) and did not participate in conciliation proceedings. The Government of Andhra fully sided with the U. S. collaboration management to defeat the workers. Yet the strike continued for 34 days.

All the workers of Gammon (India) Ltd. , contractors of the Naval Dry Dock Construction in Visakhapatnam struck work from 6th August demanding reinstatement of 6 discharged workers demanding implementation of the 1971 agreement.

The 40 day strike of 2000 workers in 60 rice mills in West Godavari district resulted in workers winning on an average 30 per cent wage rise. The State Government arrested 300 workers in Akiveedu Taluka but ultimately had to relent before the united strength of workers. Under CITU leadership successful strikes were organised by wood-cutters of Khammam district, Rikshaw workers of Warangal and Guntur and workers of Khandsari sugar mills of Krishna district. Struggles were also conducted under CITU leadership for higher wages and better service conditions by workers in ECIE, Canteen workers of Hindusthan Shipyard, workers of Kamal Industries Visakhapatnam, Aluminium workers Vijayawada, Laxmi Nivas Hotel workers Kurnool, Enamel factory workers Nellore, Beedi workers, Warangal and Mutha workers Vijayawada.

Agricultural workers in 240 villages went on strike under the leadership of Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Labour Union and won higher wages despite police repression and gangster attacks of the hirelings of landlords.

KARNATAKA

40,000 plantation workers in Chikmagalur, Hassan and S. Kanara districts went on strike from 27th December 1973 demanding rise in wages and DA, 20 per cent bonus and implementation of the Plantation Labour Act. The strike call was jointly given by CITU, HMS and INTUC unions but the AITUC leadership signed a treacherous agreement with the management virtually accepting wage freeze. However the workers rejected the agreement and the strike continued with success. The strike was withdrawn only when the Labour Commissioner intervened and agreed to start fresh negotiations on all the issues involved in the strike ignoring the AITUC'S treacherous agreement.

The strike of 3500 workers of West Coast Paper Mills of Dandeli in Karnataka was one of the most bitterly fought strikes in Karnataka during the last 2 years. The demands of the strikers were : higher DA, recognition of CITU union, regularisation of 600 casual and 1200 contractor workers and abolition of contract system. The strike led to demonstration of solidarity of other sections of workers in the region and culminated in Dandeli Bundh for which joint appeal was issued by all mass organisations including a section of INTUC union.

South Canara District observed complete Bundh on 29th August 1973 at the call of CITU, AITUC, P & T unions, Mysore State Electricity Board, LIC, AIBEA to protest against price rise. The transport was paralysed while tile, cashew, coffee-processing and beedi industries and engineering units were completely closed. On the same day plantation workers in Chikmagalur, Hasan and South Canara District observed strike on similar demands,

GOA

The longdrawn struggle of the Coca Cola workers in Goa since 23rd November 1973 brought together trade unions of various affiliations in solidarity action. The arbitrary lockout declared by the management on the day was a vindictive action following the diamissal of 3 leading workers without charge

sheets soon after the workers joined the CITU affiliated All Goa General Employees union. The management even refused to attend the conciliation proceedings and on 18th January 1974 when the workers assembled at the factory gate two MLAS of the United Goan Party along with gangsters resorted to firing injuring 11 workers. All Trade Unions protested against this crime and an Action Committee of Trade Unions and Mass Organisations was formed to organise solidarity action in support of the Coca Cola workers. On behalf of Action Committee a successful Goa Bandh was organised on 18th February 1974. The management however refused to take back the workers and the issue was referred to tribunal.

There had been series of strike struggles of mining and engineering workers throughout the State. The workers of an Italian Contractor firm went on strike demanding reinstatement of retrenched workers, wage rise etc. Workers of Agrawal Mines in South Goa and of Dempo Mining Corporation and Bhandarkar Mines in Bicholim had longdrawn agitations for their demands. The engineering workers of Jain Shipping and Shipbuilding yard at Dabolim recently gained a wage rise of Rs. 50 to 75 per month after a successful struggle. The mining and engineering workers of Chowgule and other companies also have fought several struggles for bonus and against victimisation.

In 1974 the Marmagoa Port Trust workers went on a 4 day strike at the joint call of the CITU and HMS unions demanding removal of the INTUC representative in the Port Trust, thus completely isolating the INTUC leadership and exposing its treacherous role against the interest of the workers.

The leading role played by the CITU unions in Goa in mobilising united struggles of workers and their steadfast championing of the workers' cause and the treacherous role of the INTUC and other reformist unions have thrown up a new challenge and opened up new possibilities before the CITU in Goa.

BIHAR

A complete Bihar Bandh was observed on 7th June 1973 at the call of opposition parties in the State in protest against the

rise in prices of essential commodities and murder of Com. Suraj Narain Singh MLA while on hunger strike. The strike was a complete success.

The Colliery workers under the banner of Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India observed a successful strike in 6 collieries in 1974 and organised a massive demonstration in front of the Custodians Office Barorra. When they were dispersing after the demonstration the policemen suddenly swooped down on them inside the premises of the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha Office at the Central Kenduadih Colliery Office and began a wild lathi charge. The police later fired nearly 150 rounds injuring a number of workers, 19 workers were arrested and many residential quarters were looted.

A complete 4-day strike by the power plant operators from 3rd June 1973 and one-day strike of other operation departments against the new shift system by which the workers would have to work double shift—once in a week. The management had to climb down on 6th June and the new shift rotation system was withdrawn.

In Adityapur the workers of Zenith Dratt Forging Company conducted a 63-day strike under the CITU union. Workers of Bihar Insecticide, Pioneer Engineering, Mining Equipment Minerals India etc. have won some of their demands through struggles.

In Indian Tube Company, Jamshedpur, the workers fought back victimisation measures and agitated for higher wages. The workers fought 44-days strike in F. M. Mills against dismissal of 3 workers and suspension of 4 others and ultimately the management had to come down and settle the dispute with the Union on 26th October 1973. In March '74 the workers again had fight against the lock-out imposed by the management. At the call of the CITU, AITUC, HMS and a section of INTUC the workers of TELCO observed one day strike on 22nd November 1973 to press the demand for higher wages. Com. Md. Ismail, Vice-President CITU addressed among others a largely attended meeting after the strike. The Tisco Karmachari Union conducted struggles of workers against betrayal by the INTUC bossess. In October

1973 Com. B. T. Ranadive, President CITU addressed a largely attended meeting of the workers.

The reign of terror and gangsterism against trade union functionaries continue even after nationalisation of Coal mines in Dhanbad-Jharia region. When the workers were agitating against the gangster attacks in the Bharat Coking Coal Company the Security force and gangsters employed by the public sector undertaking opened fire on the workers at Sijua on 15th November 1973 killing six workers including a women and seriously injuring several others. Collieries in Dhanbad-Jharia region observed one day protest strike on 20th November 1973 at the joint call of CITU, AITUC and HMS during struggles of colliery workers. In this region the Government arrested Com. A. K. Roy, Member of General Council CITU and many other leading workers of Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union on several occasions and involved in false cases. Despite the repressive measures the influence of CITU has increased in the coal belt.

The Refractory workers, Bauxite workers in Ranchi area, Road Transport workers of Betiah also conducted struggles to achieve their demands.

Com. Chandi Prasad, General Secretary CITU State Committee was arrested on several occasions during workers struggle and on a fictitious charge under the Prevention of Insult of the National flag Act.

The people in Bihar have been fighting a big struggle against corruption, for dissolution of the Bihar Assembly, for release of all arrested persons and for electoral reforms under the leadership of Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan. In this struggle, the working class could not play its due role due to the weakness of the T. U. movement. The CITU being a small force in the State could not mobilise the working class in support of these legitimate demands.

UTTAR PRADESH

After the J. K. Jute Mills prolonged strike in Kanpur, the most prolonged and bitterly fought struggle was that of

the workers of Indian Explosive owned by the foreign monopoly Company ICI. The arrogant management violated the former agreement and tried to impose additional workload. The workers resisted since April 1973 and were locked out. The General Secretary of the Union along with 70 workers was arrested and the CRP was let loose on the workers. After 2½ months the issue was referred to arbitration. The management in the end was forced to arrive at a settlement with the IEL Employees Union on the outstanding issues on 18th July 1973. The strike continued for 123 days.

At the call of CITU, 5000 workers of 12 engineering concerns of Gaziabad observed one day token strike demanding Rs. 70 as interim relief and linking of DA with Consumer Price Index. Despite arrest of CITU leaders and opposition of AITUC leaders the strike was successful.

ASSAM

The indefinite strike of 85 thousand State Government employees began on 18th December 1973 on 20 point Charter of Demands including need based minimum wage, full neutralisation of price rise, 20 percent house rent etc. The strike was longdrawn due to the refusal of the State Govt. of Assam to accept any of the demands. Central trade unions rallied behind the employees and ultimately the Government was forced to grant concessions.

ORISSA

The workers of Barsua Iron Ore Mines had to fight a long-drawn battle against summary dismissal of 26 members of the Executive Committee of the Union. Though the union's membership after verification was found to be the highest, it was not granted recognition. After a long legal battle the management got rebuff and the Court ordered re-instatement of all the leaders. The strike of Balimela Project workers in protest against retrenchment, for implementation of the Trtbunal Award and other demand was also protected. The workers formed

Balimela Workers and Employees Joint Council and conducted the struggle unitedly.

The Rourkela Steel Plant contractors workers, Ferro-Chrome mine workers and transport workers and Municipal workers of Puri also conducted struggles and won some demands.

MADHYA PRADESH

In Bhilai the Hindusthan Steel Employees Union took initiative in launching a campaign demanding 20 per cent bonus for 1972-73. It gained momentum and joint movement became possible. A successful bonus boycott was organised unitedly by the trade unions and a strike notice was also served. However the INTUC leadership betrayed and a settlement was arrived at by accepting a statutory minimum bonus plus Rs. 100 as ex-gratia payment. The CITU explained this betrayal through a campaign.

The workers of Bisrampur Colliery organised one-day strike on 15th November 1973 demanding higher wages under CITU leadership despite betrayal by the INTUC leadership. The coal workers of Surakachar Colliery fought a prolonged struggle against victimisation of their union leaders.

The Grasim workers of Nagda, Textile workers of Indore, Synthetic workers of Ujjain, Bidi workers of Bhopal and Damoh, Slate Pencil workers of Mandsaur, Umbrella workers of Gwalior also conducted struggles under CITU leadership.

DELHI REGION

The 27000 textile workers were carrying on a complete strike when we were meeting at Ernakulam. The strike in support of the demand of higher wages and interim relief. A joint Committee of CITU, HMP and a section of INTUC was formed to conduct the strike but the local leadership of the AITUC opposed it. The strike was ended on 5th May 1973 with the workers securing an interim relief of Rs. 20 per month and an advance of Rs. 200 per worker. The question of revision of DA was referred to an arbitrator. The

CITU put up the case very effectively which was even noted by the arbitrator. The workers had to struggle even to get the arbitrators award implemented. This was the first strike in textile after 2 decades and it created a great impact not only on the textile workers but on the workers in adjoining areas.

On 6th July 1973 Haryana police opened fire on workers demonstrating in solidarity with Goodyear workers who were on strike. One worker was killed and several others injured. The workers belonged to Gedore factory who only recently left the AITUC and joined the CITU. The police lathi charged and teargassed the workers and next day ransacked the office of the Union. The 1600 workers of Usha Spinning Mills, Faridbad went on strike on 12th November 1973 demanding Rs. 50 as interim relief, bonus and reinstatement of victimised workers. Despite arrests of 16 workers and gangsterism by the AITUC leaders the strike continued for several days and the workers won some demands.

The struggle of the employees of Delhi Edition of the Statesman against the management's policy of foisting a stooge union and gangsterism against leaders of CITU union was also prolonged one. In September 1973 the workers had to go on strike demanding action against the gangsters. The management's steps to issue charge-sheets were foiled by the union. However the management later on suspended large number of leaders of the union including Com. Nagrajan, President State Committee of CITU. The struggle still continues inspite of disruptive attempts of the management. In this struggle the Calcutta Union did not express solidarity with the Delhi comrades which only emboldened the management to resort to such vindictive action.

Another important landmark in the united trade union movement in Delhi was the successful Bandh on 6th November 1973 organised jointly by the CITU, AITUC, UTUC and HMP and backed by the left parties and mass organisations demanding statutory rationing, action against hoarders, need-based minimum wages, end to police repression etc. For the first time

in the capital city an action of this magnitude was organised when the entire metropolitan complex came to a standstill.

The workers in Engineering, Hotel, Building and Construction work, employees of National Council of Applied Economic Research, workers of McNeil Barry & Co. also conducted struggles under CITU leadership.

Comrades,

In the Presidential address as well as General Secretary's Report to this Conference, the background of these struggles has been explained in greater detail. It is therefore only proposed to highlight some of the most important aspects of these struggles.

It is observed that wherever the CITU and its allies are working, the organised movement and struggles of the working class are developing rapidly. Even in places where we are weak, the workers look to us for help and guidance. In some places the workers have come over to us seeing the treachery of their leadership.

The urge for unity among all sections of workers is growing very fast. Wherever we have been able to mobilise all sections of workers it becomes very difficult for the reformist and revisionist leaders to keep their followers away from struggles and they are also forced to join the struggle. If the unity of the workers is preserved intact these opportunist leadership is unable to betray the workers, though they find the situation inconvenient to them. They however try to come to terms with the management as soon as they get the first opportunity to do so.

The AITUC and the INTUC leaders have come to the forefront as shameless violaters of trade union democracy who have signed several agreements without consulting the workers. The repeated disruptive role played by the AITUC and INTUC leadership and the efforts made by the CITU to build a broadest possible unity is becoming clearer to the workers and they have begun to see CITU as the unifier of all sections of working class.

The united struggles that were developing at factory or

local level are now gradually assuming the character of Regional and State-wide struggles and even at times they take the form of a country-wide struggle. This heightening of their consciousness should be fully utilised by the CITU in further strengthening of the struggles.

Solidarity actions of one section of working class in support of other sections are continuously on the rise. The offensive against all sections of working class by the Government is thus bringing them closer to each other. The experience of the wage freeze movement and solidarity campaign for railway workers clearly brings to light the new awareness developing among various sections of working class and salaried employees for a concerted struggle against the policies of the Government.

The determination with which the united trade union movement conducted struggles against high prices, food shortages, unemployment and curtailment of trade union and democratic rights has encouraged even the backward sections of the people in urban and rural areas to join the struggle. In many centres, trade unions have been able to take initiative in fighting for alternative policies.

The working class has shown exemplary courage in fighting police repression and gangsterism. All efforts to crush the trade union and democratic movement with the help of repressive apparatus have failed miserably. Such measures have only strengthened the determination of the workers to carry forward their struggle with more firmness.

With the policies of the Government hitting all sections of toiling people, the common struggle against these policies is becoming more widespread with each passing day. The CITU has to play an important role in co-ordinating these struggles and unifying all sections of working class on common issues so that the struggle merges with general democratic struggles in the country.

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