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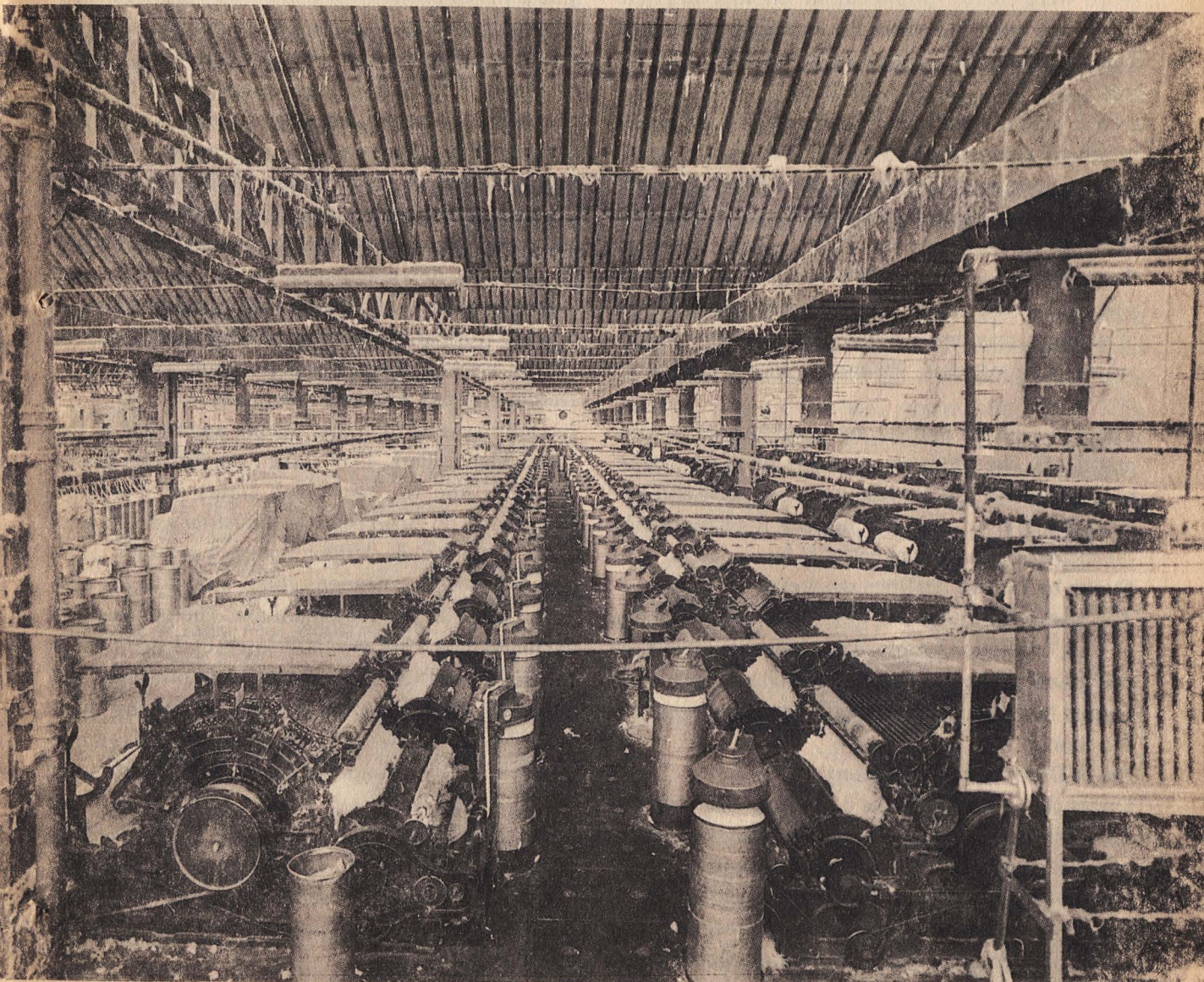
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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

West Bengal Industrial Strike: 3 July 98



FORWARD TO COUNTRYWIDE STRUGGLE

11.8.98 CPSTU Convention ★ 12.8.98 NPMO Convention

Total Industrial Strike in West Bengal

Nation-wide Massive Protest Demonstration

A complete industrial strike was observed in the state of West Bengal on 3rd July, 1998. The major industrial centres in the state wore a deserted look as the workers responded magnificently to the strike call. Road transport came to a complete stand still. Until 12.00 noon no plane landed or took off at the Calcutta airport. The mercantile offices, banks, insurance, central and state govt offices and most shops were closed. In plantation, engineering, jute cotton and other industries the strike was complete. The strike had been called jointly by CITU, AITUC, HMS, UTUC, TUCC, AICCTU, UTUC (LS), INTUC and various industrial federations to protest in general against the anti-people, pro-capital, MNC friendly budget presented by the BJP-led Government and particularly against the decision of the government to wipe out the public sector network through disinvestment of 74% shares and closure of so-called sick units to be preceded by retrenchment of workers, privatisation of insurance sector and investment of workers' PF money in private sector, etc.

The trade unions and the mass organisations congratulated the industrial workers of West Bengal for making the strike a resounding success and expected that it would pave the way for intensifying the movement further at national level.

Strike by Indian Airlines workers

The workers of Indian Airlines under the leadership of Air Corporation Employees' Union have observed one hours' strike as a result of which no flight could land or take off during that time from any airport in the country.

Sit-in Dharna in Parliament

Under the initiative of the MPs from the Left parties, a sizeable number of Members from both houses of Parliament sat in dharna at the main entrance (gate No.1) of Parliament in support of the struggling working class against the budget and in defence of public sector. The dharna continued for more than an hour with MPs holding high the banners and placards of demands and denouncement of the BJP-led government and shouting slogans. The silent but skilfully

organised programme took every one by surprise. It was an unique show of solidarity of the people's representatives inside Parliament with the fighting toiling people.

Nation-wide Massive Demonstration

Responding to the call of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) and endorsed by the National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) thousands of public demonstrations were organised all over the country in protest against the rampant attack on public sector emanating from the budget proposals of the BJP-led government. The CPSTU observed, "The announcement of the government to open up the insurance sector to private capital, disinvest 76% shares of Indian Airlines, Indian Oil Corporation etc shall endanger the national security and economic sovereignty of the country. The budget pronounces death sentence on all sick PSUs and makes provision only for distributing retrenchment doles to workers in the name of safety net by selling out the assets of the public sector units."

Demonstration before Parliament

In Delhi several thousand people assembled at the Jantar Mantar Park. They came from different places of Delhi and the adjoining states of Haryana, Rajasthan, UP. Apart from the industrial workers who came in thousands, large number of peasants, agricultural workers, women, youth and students also participated in the demonstration. The gathering at Jantar Mantar Park was addressed by leaders from the states and the participating organisations and Members of Parliament. Prominent among them were M K Pandhe, S B Bhardwaj (CITU); Gope (AITUC); P K Tandon (Kisan Sabha); Hannan Mullah MP (AIAWU); Brinda Karat (AIDWA), Mahesh (DYFI), Pushpender Tyagi (SFI), Basudev Acharya, Md Salim, Jibon Roy, Ashim Bala, Dipankar Mukherjee, Bratin Sengupta, Sunil Khan all Members of Parliament also participated in the demonstration.

At 1.00 PM a huge, militant procession holding high banners, placards and shouting slogans took to the street from the Park and marched towards Parliament

CPSTU CONVENTION

MAVALANKAR AUDITORIUM
NEW DELHI

11 AM, Tuesday, 11th August 1998

ASSEMBLE IN STRENGTH
TO RESOLUTELY FIGHT AND DEFEAT
MOVE FOR 74% DISINVESTMENT AND
LIQUIDATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR

House. In front of the Parliament Street police station the procession was stopped by the police. There was a fierce tussle between the demonstrators and police as a result of which many of them, including some women, were injured. The demonstrators broke the barricade and surged forward. At that point the police used water cannon on the demonstrators. While addressing the demonstrators M K Pandhe, condemned the policies of the BJP-led Govt and appealed to them to prepare for a bigger nationwide struggle. He announced that a massive convention would be held in the Talkatora Indoor Stadium on 12th August, 1998 from where a date for march to Parliament in November would be announced.

Reports from some States

Kerala

Demonstration and dharna in front of central government offices in all the 14 districts were held. In the districts like Quilon, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Trichur Palghat, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Trivandrum demonstrations were held centrally. In other districts it was organised at area levels. For instance at Idukki 60 demonstration and 12 public meetings were held.

Tripura

Report received that the day was observed throughout the state with processions, demonstrations with massive participation of Central and state government employees, bank, Insurance and public sector workers. Peasants, agricultural workers, youth, student and women also participated in the programmes.

Assam

Demonstrations and meetings were held all over the state. Some of the public sector industries where powerful demonstrations were organised are Fertilizer factory, Namrup, Refineries, Oil & Gas plants at Duliajan, Digboi, Bongaigaon, places and the un-

ions sent telegrams to Union Finance Minister.

Karnataka

Report from Bangalore confirmed that hundreds of public sector workers and officers are continuing in dharna in front of Gandhi Statue. At KGF nearly a thousand workers organised procession and dharna. The report noted that similar programmes have been organised at the districts also.

Madhya Pradesh

In M.P. the day was observed with demonstrations and public meetings at Bhilai Steel Plant, BHEL, Bhopal, different collieries. At Korba the industrial workers jointly organised demonstration.

Andhra Pradesh

In the state of A.P. demonstrations were organised in different places. Notable programmes were held at Hyderabad and Vizag.

Tamil Nadu

The day was observed with demonstrations at Chennai, Trichy, Salem, Coimbatore and other centres in Tamilnadu.

Bihar

In Bihar industrial workers staged demonstration at places like Dhanbad, Bokaro, Ranchi, Jamshedpur etc. A massive rally of 5000 workers marched main streets of the Dhanbad. About 1000 Kam Kaji Mahilla participated in the rally. The rally ended in D.C. office Dhanbad with a massive dharna and public meeting under the presidentship of S K Baksi. At the end of the meeting a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister was handed over to the D.C Dhanbad.

ALL INDIA CONVENTION

AGAINST

* ANTI PEOPLE BUDGET

* PRICE RISE

* UNEMPLOYMENT

* PRIVATISATION

TALKATORA INDOOR STADIUM

NEW DELHI

11 AM, WEDNESDAY, 12TH AUGUST'98

MASSIVELY PARTICIPATE

TO LAUNCH FURTHER INTENSIFIED

AND UNITED COUNTRYWIDE

STRUGGLE

NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS

ORGANISATIONS

On 150th Anniversary of the Communist Manifesto

The working class all over the world is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication of the Communist Manifesto. Celebrations in individual countries apart, an international conference on this occasion was held in Paris at the initiative of some trade union and political activists in France.

Meeting at Chennai from 22nd to 25th April, 1998 the General Council of CITU decided to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Manifesto, an immortal classic by Marx and Engels, throughout the year. The first seminar in this regard was organised on June 26, 1998 in Delhi. Chaired by E Balanandan, Præsident of CITU, the seminar had three presentations, by Sukomal Sen, General Secretary, All India State Govt Employees Federation, Prakash Karat, Member, Polit Bureau of CPI(M) and M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, dealing with different aspects of the teachings of the manifesto.

150 Years of the Manifesto

Sukomal Sen made a presentation on "150 years of Communist Manifesto". He briefly narrated the development of socialist ideas since the earliest days. It was in the hands of Marx and Engels that socialism became a science and the Manifesto was the first comprehensive statement of scientific socialism. The vibrant significance and importance of the Manifesto lies in the value of its analysis of the process of social development, especially its emphasis on class struggle. Its excellence also lies in evaluating the role of class forces, the importance of their ideology, their rise and fall, their opportunities and destiny. He pointed to the waves of revolutionary struggles of the working class over the long period following the publication of the Manifesto. In its wake the world witnessed, among other things, the short lived working class seizure of power in the Paris Commune and later the establishment of the first socialist state in Russia. These confirmed the teachings of the manifesto.

The collapse of socialism in erstwhile Soviet Union by no means signified the failure of Marx-Engels' teachings. On the contrary it was the violation of the conditions stipulated in the manifesto regarding pro-

letariat revolution, seizure of control by anti-proletariat-privileged elite and simultaneous lack of proletarian democracy, that paved the way for collapse of socialism.

World capitalism has moved over to the concept of capitalist global market and constantly revolutionises the instruments of production. The ongoing scientific and technological revolution is now being applied as productive forces by world capitalism to intensify exploitation. Going beyond the stage envisaged in the Manifesto, world capitalism has further globalised their capital flow. It has started a process of relocating its industries in search of cheap labour thus affecting workers of both the 3rd and 1st world. The net effect of this neo-liberal globalisation is more and more unemployment and more misery of the masses. And this substantiates Marx-Engels' analysis.

Presently a change in the composition of the working class is witnessed: expansion of the service sector compared to production sector in the context of technological changes. But the workers in service sector also are coming forward in a big way in the struggle against these policies.

Capitalism is incapable of solving vast problems of poverty etc confronting overwhelming majority of humanity. Recent *economic earthquake* in East Asian countries show the futility of neo-liberal solutions. On the other hand working class struggle is on the rise everywhere.

Future of Socialism

Prakash Karat began his presentation on the "The Future of Socialism" by stating that the Manifesto is the first document that states the centrality of the role of the working class. Today 150 years later, when capitalism and imperialism still exist, the role of the working class has to be located in the same place that Marx and Engels placed it, in the Communist Manifesto. The fundamental proposition of Marxism, that class struggle will lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and that in doing so the working class acts not for itself alone but for the whole of society, still holds true.

During the post World War II years we mistakenly thought that Socialism was on the ascendance. We ignored the teaching of the Manifesto that the bourgeoisie continues to revolutionise the means of production. It continued to do this from 1945 to 1970 and was thus able to garner the scientific and technological revolution while the socialist countries fell behind.

The tremendous growth of the Soviet Union in the face of all odds, led us to a mistaken assessment. We did not absorb properly the warning Lenin had given about the many stages of transition to socialism, especially in backward countries, and about the protracted nature of the building of socialism. The Communist Party, which is the most advanced section of the working class, helps the working class to become the ruling class and to win the battle of democracy. Socialist democracy, however, could not flower in the Soviet Union because of encirclement, attack, etc. The CPSU had to monopolise power in order to defend Socialism but this brought about distortions. You cannot develop the revolutionary impulse of the working class without Socialist democracy. If the Party and the State get identified completely, Socialist democracy cannot flower.

If there is a protracted process of building socialism, there will be multiple and diverse forms. To think that public ownership means only state ownership is a type of exclusivity which leads to bureaucratism. When in the USSR socialism collapsed in 1991, the capitalist world also went into recession, which became worse after the collapse of the Asian tigers.

It should be noted, however, that any resistance to globalisation today is headed by the working class: therefore, the role of working class is still crucial. It is, therefore, imperative for the working class to struggle for working class unity, to have trade union democracy, update our own theoretical work and analysis of our own concrete situation in India.

World TU Movement Today

Making a presentation on the relevance of the Manifesto for the contemporary world trade union movement. M K Pandhe, said that the Manifesto gave a great fillip to the trade union movement, the world over. It gave the working class the scientific outlook. The clarion call of the manifesto to working men of all countries to unite has been adopted by all trade

unions in the world.

The setbacks in the socialist camp, the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the developments in the Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and the globalisation offensive of the imperialist dominated international financial institutions, had caused frustration and demoralisation among the working class. The World Federation of Trade Unions is now a considerably weakened body. The ICFTU accepted globalisation stating that the workers will have to work along with their own capitalist class to solve the problems of the present day world. The reformist world view against class struggle is set to dominate. This situation has aptly been summed up by Fiedel Castro that 'the capitalist class today is much more class conscious than the working class.' The task of the trade union movement today, is to reassert the validity of socialism and the role of trade unions and the working class, as outlined in the Communist Manifesto. The international encounter held in Paris during May 1998 was a sign of emergence of renewal of world trade union movement on the basis of the Manifesto.

With the international finance capital set on investing more and more on speculative areas rather than for industrial production, in what was known as 'casino capitalism,' development of productive forces was not taking place. This confirms the assertion in the Communist Manifesto that productive forces can develop only under socialism.

The need to develop the consciousness of the workers along the line charted by the Communist Manifesto is being increasingly felt by the world wide trade union movement. Various working class struggles taking place in several parts of the globe, defying the collaborationist leadership, in some instances, against the offensives of globalisation. But failure to develop socialist consciousness amongst the working class still continued to be an area of weakness for the trade union movement. As a result, workers continue to be predominantly under bourgeois influence. Concerted efforts to educate the working class on the revolutionary significance of the Communist Manifesto are required. The CITU has pledged to carry out this task duly, as a part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto.

CURTAINS DOWN: 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

M K PANDHE

On 15th August 1998 celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of India's independence will draw to a close. The celebrations were an occasion to remember the sacrifices of those valiant fighters against the British imperialism and take a pledge to carry forward the unfinished task left over by them to its logical conclusions.

The common people of India, however, were not inspired by the official attempts to celebrate the historic occasion in a bureaucratic manner such as issuing full page advertisements in daily newspapers; routine official functions with stereo type speeches by discredited politicians. Though crores of rupees were spent for these festivities, the real message of fiftieth anniversary celebrations never reached the common man.

DREAMS SHATTERED

The greed of garnering more money by the ruling classes in India has shattered the dreams of martyrs who laid down their lives so that their sons and daughters would have better life and working conditions. Just to give one example, the Tata whose assets were Rs 45 crores at the time of independence have accumulated assets of over Rs 9000/- crores today. Similar is the story of other big business houses. The rural landlords, in absence of genuine land reforms, continue their feudal exploitation with impunity with the help of their private gangster armies and most of the state governments refuse to take action

against these depredators. The atrocities against Harijans and tribal people continue unabated while women continue to be the special target of attacks.

Whatever money has been pumped during the last 5 decades in the rural sectors, no benefits were received by the down trodden strata, while the entire funds were pocketed by the rural rich and unscrupulous politicians parading as social workers.

People who thought that independence would give them more bread, clothing, housing, education. Medical facilities and cultural development have come to grief. The Congress party in power for most of the period of 5 decades has shamelessly given up the policy of self reliance in national economy. The slogan of economic growth with social justice remained on paper and toiling masses received only "injustice" in the entire period after independence.

Promises given from time to time during several elections by bourgeois-landlord parties were only meant to be breached afterwards. Public opinion was sought to be swayed on some issues to gain support of the voters, but no serious attempt was made to tackle the problems of the people. Huge funds were deployed, most of which came from the black money, by these bourgeois-landlord parties to hoodwink the public opinion. People felt cheated later on but the opinion swayed

from one set of bourgeois-landlord parties to another, with the result that anti-people thrust in the government policies continued all through the 50 years.

CHINA-THE CONTRAST

The term largest democracy in the world, was a devise to denigrate China the most populated socialist country of the world. The self-proclaimed human rights activist have been attacking China for its stern action against criminals and preachers of overthrowing the socialist system. China made remarkable advance during the last 50 years while India failed to register significant economic growth. With \$140 billion foreign exchange reserve, China is marching ahead faster, while India is having a deficit balance of trade. This speaks volumes of the malaise that prevails in the Indian economy.

WORKERS' PLIGHT

The working class in both organised and unorganised sectors have yet to achieve need based minimum wages while the unorganised sector is still languishing below the poverty line. India is celebrating 50th anniversary of its independence with the world wide notoriety of employing the largest number of child labour. Even now the system of bonded labour is widely prevalent which has become a slur on India, a leading non-aligned country. Women workers continue to get discriminatory treatment in terms of working and living conditions. The ag-

agricultural workers continue to remain as most exploited strata with no legal protection or job security. With industrial sickness reaching alarming levels, the unemployment is looming large all over the country. The public sector which developed during fifties and sixties is being dismantled brick by brick with the result that vultures of capitalism are out to grab valuable public sector undertakings at throw away prices.

The implementation machinery of all the labour laws has either collapsed or is on the verge of collapse. The Industrial Relations Bill is unable to see the light of the day due to employers' recalcitrant attitude to make the machinery meaningless for the workers. Even after 50 years after achieving independence, the working class has not yet achieved the right to decide the bargaining agent. The ILO Convention relating to Freedom of Association and Right to collective bargaining have not been ratified by the Government of India. The Central and State Government employees continue to be dismissed from service under Article 311 (2)(c) of the Indian constitution.

The peasantry continues to suffer under the yoke of landlordism. There has been considerable deterioration in their living conditions due to rise in prices and lack of any protection from the price rise. Irrigation potential of the land has only marginally gone up since independence with the result that scarcity of food prevails in a big measure. The productive forces in the agricultural sector have not been fully developed in the rural

side due to the dominance of landlordism. The poor and marginal peasants continue to be crushed by the growing burden of indebtedness. There is no wonder the people below the poverty line are swelling day by day all over India.

PEOPLE'S MISERIES

Price of essential commodities have grown during the anniversary celebrations making the elementary needs of human existence itself a luxury. With high rate of inflation in the economy the essential commodities have gone beyond the reach of common man. The prevailing acute discontent among the people is reflected through several agitations being organised all over India.

The rural and urban unemployment has reached 12 crores according to official estimates, while the so called job creation measures of the government is virtually collapsing. On the one hand the existing jobs are getting reduced. On the other, new entrants in employment market find it difficult to get any job opportunity.

The younger generation in utter frustration is being led astray to various criminal activities. They are also misguided by communal and divisive forces in the country taking advantage of the growing unemployment in the country.

The elitist ideas of education has thrown into the background the concept of "education for all". Commercialisation and privatisation of education has made it a preserve of the handful rich, while vast majority of younger generation has no access to higher edu-

cation. The capitation fees continue to play havoc, despite official disapproval on paper. The standard of education has come down drastically and educational institutions have been riddled with scams of every type.

The cultural offensive of the western media is shamelessly preaching violence, sex, and crime, adversely affecting our younger generation putting the future of India at stake.

When Atal Bihari Vajpayee will address the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, he may gloat over the Atom Bomb acquisition by India. But in this poverty stricken country, it will not inspire anyone. They will worry more about the disastrous nuclear armament race in the region which would divert more funds from developmental activities.

The festivities of 50th Anniversary will be over soon, but the people of the country must unitedly express their determination to fight against the path which has brought miseries on the people. This is the only way to create the basis for fulfilment of the dream of all martyrs and freedom fighters.

The convention of the National Platform of Mass Organisations being held in New Delhi on 12.7.1998 will provide an opportunity for all the mass organisations in the country to prepare for a powerful movement that which challenge all the forces inimical to the people of India. Let all the toiling people of India rise to the occasion and build a broad based and powerful movement all over India.

NATIONAL SEMINAR ON STEEL INDUSTRY

TAPAN SEN

Calcutta, 20-21 July 1998. At the initiative of Steel Workers' Federation of India, a two days national seminar on "Impact of New Economic Policy on Indian Steel Industry" was held in the prestigious Science City Auditorium.

The much touted economic policy of liberalisation was claimed to and take the country to the faster track of industrial and economic growth generating massive employment. But the last seven years' pursuit of Fund/Bank design of reform has brought only decline in all the facets of Indian economy. And, perhaps, the Indian Steel industry have become the hardest hit. Not only the giant SAIL in public sector with its eight steel plants, but also the private sector steel producers starting from Tatas to Lloyds have been complaining of declining profitability in spite of increase in productivity and sales and also of the onslaught dumping from foreign producers. Despite the exfactory cost of Indian steel being cheapest in the world, the Indian product is becoming costlier than the imported one, thanks to the discriminatory taxation/duty structure of the Govt of India favouring the MNCs. While Indian steel is facing anti-dumping duty imposed by American and European Govts, the Govt of India is demonstrating their global (?) mindset remaining a silent spectator to indiscriminate dumping of steel in Indian soil by CIS countries. As a result capacity utilisation and economic health of Indian steel industry are getting affected and the mini steel plants are facing closures, almost *enmasse*.

Precisely in this background, the National Seminar on Steel Industry participated by the trade unions, steel producers, senior directors and managers of steel plants both in private and public sector, technocrats, and economists representing all shades of opinion sought to deal with the vexed question.

The seminar was inaugurated by Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal. Jyoti Basu observed commented "There is a serious crisis in the economic sphere and there has also been a genuine threat to the secular fabric of our society and further an assault on our sovereign power of decision making in several important spheres...The problems confront

ing the steel industry in our economy are a part of this crisis..... Then it will be important to suggest an alternative approach to resolve this crisis in general and as a part of this approach, also a way out for the steel industry in particular...In this alternative approach, the main emphasis should be placed on efficient self-reliance." He criticised the central budget, and the related steps taken by the BJP led Central Govt which have unmasked their *pseudo* Swadeshi stance and aggravated the crisis putting the Indian steel industry into more difficulty.

Dr M K Pandhe, President, Steel Workers' Federation of India and Chairman of the Reception Committee, welcoming the participants.

Dr Pandhe dealt in detail on the global steel scenario which reveals a prolonged recessionary situation. The advanced industrialised countries have been trying to push through their exportable steel to third world market including the Indian market augmenting stiff competition. Liberalisation of import and drastic reduction of customs duty made the situation worst for the Indian steel industry. Furthermore, consequent of delicensing, new private sector companies entered steel production leading to a glut domestic supply. And indiscriminate dumping of steel by the foreign companies at lower price have resulted in depressed price, declining profitability and under utilisation of capacity, severely affecting the health of the domestic steel industry.

Per capita steel consumption is abysmally low at only 22 kg per annum compared to 126 kg world average, is indicative of the low level of economic development in the country perpetuated by the faulty economic policy of the Govt resulting in aggravation of poverty, unemployment shrinking domestic market ultimately affecting capacity utilisation of the industrial units, and their economic health. Such a situation in turn is affecting steel consumption in the country. Without a thorough change in the economic policy towards distributional equity, radical land reform and self-reliant development, the problems of the steel industry could not be removed from the root. Pandhe reiterated.

Improper management of the modernisation project

of the public sector steel plant leading to drain of specious resources. Development of indigenous technology in steel which is of vital importance. Faulty approach towards utilisation of the immense potential and natural resources for steel making, the negative attitude of the government towards modernisation of IISCO, point to the need of coming together of all in the steel industry both in public and private sector right from workers, engineers, managers and employers.

The inaugural session was also addressed by Mrinal Banerjee, Minister of Industrial Reconstruction and Public Undertakings, Govt of West Bengal, Arvind Pande, Chairman, SAIL, F Vandrevala, Vice Chairman (Marketing), Tata Iron & Steel Co Ltd (TISCO), M N Dastur, Chairman, Ms/Dastur Co. Although there was perceptual difference among the speakers on the character and efficacy of the policy of liberalisation and globalisation, all of them admitted that the domestic steel industry is in severe crisis in the face of onslaught of dumping of foreign steel and economic slow down. Arvind Pande stressed the need for an alternative approach of economic reform to ensure survival and progress of domestic steel industry and mentioned about the severe problem of dumping from CIS countries.

F Vandrevala, while insisting for a changed mindset for the managers, workers, engineers and all concerned in the steel industry to confront the challenge of globalisation, expressed anguish over indiscriminate dumping and huge rise in import of certain steel items under 'defective or waste category during the post liberalisation scenario.

M N Dastur, associated with designing and construction of many steel plants in the country, stressed the importance of expansion of domestic steel industry in the overall interest of development, generation of employment and economic growth through its multiplier and spread, because of the 'backward and forward linkage' of the steel industry with the rest of the economy. Hence overcoming the adverse impact of the economic reforms is of vital importance. abysmally low. Dastur, in his written presentation for the seminar also called for expeditious modernisation of IISCO.

Mrinal Banerjee, reiterated the need for basic change in the economic policy and duty structure. He also

criticised the discrimination meted out to IISCO by the Central Govt.

The seminar dealt with four vital aspects in separate sessions on 20th and 21st July 1998. The subjects were (1) Impact of globalisation on Indian steel industry (2) Increasing steel consumption—Impediments and prospects (3) Indigenous R&D—problems and prospects (4) Mini Steel Plants in the wake of NEP. The Four sessions were chaired respectively by Ashoke Mitra MP, Tushar Roy, M K Maitra, and Manoj Chatterjee. Eminent persons in the steel industry N K Mitra, former M D, Bhilai Plant, P K Paul, M D, Durgapur Plant, V KGupta R&D Centre, SAIL, PK Sen, MECON, Basudev Chakraborty, Neo Pipe & Tube Company, R P Jha, Somani Ferro Alloys Ltd, Renowned Economists Prof Shyamal Banerjee, Chairman, Meharia Centre for Applied Research, A B Bardhan, AITUC, R K Samantrai, HMS, Jibon Roy MP Secretary CITU and Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, West Bengal CITU, among others took part in the deliberations. The deliberations reflected the worry and anxiety at the critical situation of the domestic steel industry. The speakers, while suggesting the need for change in the policy, put forward concrete suggestions and measures also for improvement in the input management, energy conservation, reduction in coke rate, quality management and reoriented approach on human resource development. The need for proper integration and coordination of industry level R&D activities with that in the national and academic levels was also reiterated. Modernising the work force with proper training along with the modernisation of plants was also been stressed.

On the whole, the seminar demonstrated the concern of not only of the workers but also the senior level management technicians, engineers (both in public and private sector), research scholars and the trade unions (cutting across affiliation) from the entire steel industry on the dwindling economic health of the domestic steel industry, arising out of the liberalisation and onslaught of dumped import, and all concerned urged for urgent corrective and remedial measures.

M K Pandhe, in his valedictory address, exposed the real face of globalisation, which over the years, has

(Cont. on page 17)

DUNLOP: GOVT CORNERED IN RAJYA SABHA

Dipankar Mukherjee and Nilotpal Basu, CPI(M) MPs, raised the Dunlop issue in Rajya Sabha on 21.7.98, by shooting off a question to the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs. The Minister, Thambi Durai, in his reply, affirmed that the Government attention was drawn to the news item in an economic daily that the help of Company Law Board was sought for appointment of nine additional directors (nominees of the Government) on the Board of Dunlop India Ltd.

But what the Minister said of the role of the present LIC nominee in the Board over the alleged financial irregularities in the company is revealing. He said: "There is no Government Director on the Board of the Company. However, Shri R N Tripathi, LIC nominee inducted on the Board of the Company w.e.f 22.11.1997 has reported after attending the Board of Directors' meeting held on 17.3.1998 as under:

(i) The company has liability of Rs 7.40 crores on account of fixed deposits which have matured upto February 1998. These have become overdue and overdue interest has accumulated to the extent of Rs 79 lakhs. The company has no funds to pay out these liabilities;

ii) The company is facing certain legal cases from creditors who have applied for the winding up proceedings of the company for realisation of their dues; and

iii) LIC has exposure in the company in the form of debentures (Rs 294.25 lakhs) along with other investment institutions like UTI (Rs 174.81 lakhs) and GIC (Rs 89.91 lakhs). Since the company was not repaying principal amount of debentures due on 15.11.1996 and is defaulting in payment of interest, reminders were sent to the company at regular intervals. The company's request for deferment of debentures was not acceded to by Institutions as it was defaulting in payment of institutional dues. The institutions have not agreed to release charge on company's properties since it is defaulting in payment of dues to the debenture holders. The institutions have addressed letters to debenture trustee ANZ Grindlays Bank not to release charge on the properties without obtaining prior consent of debenture-holders." Supplementaries raised by the members brought more facts to light.

Dipankar Mukherjee: *We discussed about this Dunlop issue on the 1st of June in detail. There was a unanimity that there had been financial diversion and financial irregularities. The Department of Company Affairs, on getting the complaint, had investigated the matter and prima facie they have found a case of financial irregularity and they have also approached the Company Law Board for inclusion of nine Government directors. I am thankful to the Ministry.*

Today, my question relates to the role of the minority shareholder. LIC has an equity of 19.64% in Dunlop. GIC has 6.07%. UTI has 3.70%. The total comes to about 29% equity. They have only one nominee on the Board, that is, the LIC nominee. I wanted to know about his role. Now, in your reply something about the presence of the Board nominee has been said. But for your information, I have this letter which I got from the Chairman of LIC. I quote from this letter.

"The LIC nominee, who was inducted in the Board in December, 1997, he was not present in the first meeting on 25.12.97. He was not present in the next meeting on 12th January, 1998."

And that is the day on which the Company decided that this should be referred to BIFR. He was not present only 12.1.1998. He was not present on 27.2.1998. He was not present on 17.2.98. Then, I had written three letters, and thanks to Mr Kumar, who was the Minister at that time, he had intervened and got a reply to my letter. After that on 17th March, he had been present there.

So my first supplementary is this. Now that the Department of Company Affairs has gone to the Company Law Board, I would like to know whether any information is available with him that LIC as a 30% shareholder had approached the company Law Board either under Section 388 or under Section 235 of the Companies Act to

either change the managerial personnel or appoint inspectors for looking into charges of financial irregularities, which were known to the unions and all others, including the banking institutions. I would like to know whether there was any such communication from LIC to the Company Law Board for enquiring into the affairs before you went or after you went and whether they have done anything regarding financial irregularities.

M Thambi Durai: *As far as our Ministry is concerned, we have given a reply regarding the actions that we have taken. Now, LIC has not approached the Company Law Board on this matter. Based on a complaint, our Ministry went to find out the irregularities of Dunlop India. Afterwards, we filed our petition before CLB. We have received a reply from the Company that they have also filed their reply. Then the Government has also given its rejoinder. In fact, the directors of the company, including the LIC nominee, have not yet replied.*

That is why when the hearing came on 9.7.98, at that time because we could not get a reply from other directors of the Board, the hearing got further postponed to 17.9.98.

There was a side-light, which cornered the Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha.

Dipankar Mukherjee arguing that the Govt was an indivisible entity, quoted just three sentences of Yashwant Sinha, from what he spoke on 11.6.98 in Rajya Sabha. He (Sinha) had said, "I would only recommend that my learned col-

leagues on the Left should go and study the Companies Act. It clearly lays down the rights of anyone who owns 26% shares in a company. Anyone who is familiar with the Companies Act would say that 26% shares give you the kind of role which, I again say with all sense of responsibility, this Government wants to have." This the Finance Minister had said to justify his proposal to offload 74% of shares in Public Sector Companies.

Dipankar Mukherjee pointed out that in this case LIC and other Financial Institutions had 29 odd per cent shares and queried: "Would the Hon. Minister kindly assure that an inquiry would be immediately made to see whether the hon. Finance Minister's assertion that this active role with 26 per cent shareholders has been discharged by the LIC's nominee on the Board or by the LIC as a whole? Would he assure us of an inquiry into the whole thing?"

Thambi Durai meekly said: "If some further information is sought a separate question may be put to the Finance Ministry." When another member pointed to the presence of the Finance Minister, who can reply to the question, **Yashwant Sinha** sat silent over the matter.

This prompted **Nilotpal Basu** to dig out yet another vital development. He said, "It is precisely for this reason that the notice was addressed, in fact, to the Finance Ministry. But, we have been informed by the Secretariat that when this question was referred to the Finance Ministry, the Finance Ministry took this position that

this question does not concern them, and it should be referred to the Department of Company Affairs. A letter from the Ministry of Finance to the Department of Company Affairs, makes it very clear: "Since the subject matter of the question pertains to the Department of Company Affairs, we would request you to kindly accept the transfer of the question under intimation to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Question Branch and this Department." So, with full knowledge that these have implications for the Finance Ministry, the Finance Ministry has resorted to an evading game." Finding the Finance Minister cooling off his heels, despite this revelation **Nilotpal Basu** remarked:

"There has been a major negligence of responsibilities so far as the nominated Director of the LIC is concerned. This kind of evading of the responsibilities by the Finance Minister is not understandable to us."

At last, **Dipankar Mukherjee's** remark that "Yashwant Sinha is an honest man, he will not mind giving an assurance." provoked the Finance Minister to his feet. He tried to harp on procedural issues to suggest that he was not expected to answer. But unwittingly, he himself revealed that he got a letter from the Secretary General of Rajya Sabha "last night saying that I must be ready to answer a supplementary on this question." Finally the Finance Minister ended up giving an assurance, though grudgingly. He said: "I would like to come to the substantive part of the issue raised

here. The substantive part is in regard to the role of the LIC Director on the Board of Dunlop. Let me say that this Government has absolutely nothing to hide in this regard. When the LIC Director was on the Board and on all those days to which you are referring that he did not attend the meeting, not one of them was when we came into power. It was all before and, therefore, I have no hesitation whatsoever **in assuring this House that we shall enquire into the role of the LIC Director on the Dunlop Board and see whether he functioned according to the guidelines or not.** Then the discussions spilled over to the issue of West Bengal Government's proposal seeking Government of India help in taking over the management of the company.

Another member, Gurudas Das Gupta queried:

"Why are you faltering in taking over the management downright as a temporary measure? We do not ask the Government to take over permanently. But, as a temporary measure, why should not the Government take-over the management and why is the law not applied?"

Thambi Durai, this time again, passed on the back to the Ministry of Industry as "it is they who have to decide." But his additional remark that "the policy of the Government is not to take over any sick unit, triggered off further exchanges. At the end, **Sikander Bakht**, the Industries Minister, had to budge in. He stated:

"This question had come up while I was answering the questions

here, in this House. I had agreed with whatever was the grievance and complaint of the hon. Members that it was absolutely right. But, they are forgetting that I told them that Mr Chhabria and his team of directors in Dunlop Company had not only diverted the funds but also played the trick of referring the case to the BIFR. Now it is under the BIFR. It is true that it is not sick and they had tried their best to make it sick because of their irregularities. The Government recognised it and right now, there are legal constraints for the Government taking over the company. **We are totally aware of the fact and we are going to save the company.** Do not bother."

But the million dollar question yet remains to be answered is: "How this Government proposes to "save" Dunlop Company?"

LOK SABHA

REVIVE SICK PSUs IN NATIONAL INTEREST

In 1954, Parliament accepted the socialistic pattern of society as the national objective and the industrial policy was revised in 1956.

The concept of the public sector as envisaged by our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was that the public investment should be made in the core sector where the infrastructure has to be built, and because of its long gestation period and low profitability, private investment would not be possible.

STATUS OF OUR PSUs

Out of the 242 Central public sector units, 130 made profits and nearly 112 units are in the red dur

"This House urges upon the Government to take concrete and effective steps to rehabilitate the sick PSUs under the control of the Central Government and formulate a comprehensive policy to improve the functioning of the public sector undertakings."

Private Member's resolution in the Lok Sabha, moved by the CPI(M) MP, Dr Asim Bala, on 17th July, 1998.

ing the last few years. Over 80 public sector units have transit facility. Only ten companies including the Navratnas, have been contributing over two-third of the

profit. Some of the companies originally set up by the Government have become sick over a period of time and they are registered with the BIFR. They are about sixty. Besides about forty and odd public sector units are making losses for various reasons.

The public sector units employed totally about three million workers. After the reform process was set in 1991 only about twenty lakh workers are working. The composition of the loss making and sick public sector units reveals that they constitute the vital sector of the industrial economy, comprising fertiliser, steel, coal, heavy electrical, engineering, textile,

construction, wagon building, besides consumer goods. The products of most of the sick and loss making public sector units are having active demand in the market. Many of them relate to food security of the country and input availability in the industrial sector. The Central public sector contributes 100% of the products like coal, petroleum, copper, primary lead and lignite, and more than 60% of steel, aluminum and zinc. This clearly indicates that a key position is occupied by the public sector in the nation's economy.

THE MALADY OF SICKNESS

Once a sick public sector undertaking is referred to the BIFR, the main hurdle is the negative stance of the Government, when it comes to acting as a promoter. There are many such cases. For example, Haldia Fertilizers and the IDPL. In Maharashtra, the National Textiles Corporation has about 606 hectares of surplus land valued by the Central Board of Direct Taxes at Rs. 2,389 crores. Of this, over Rs. 1,900 crores worth of land is located in Mumbai. Private sector is interested in the land of the sick units and not in the company itself, which is the sad story of our country.

The plea taken by the Government and the anti-public sector lobby in the polity is that spending for revival of sick public sector undertakings is unproductive. It is totally unfounded. While considering the cases for revival of sick public sector undertakings, only their losses and liabilities are taken into account but not the opportunity cost and the replacement cost

of the sick public sector undertakings.

In most of the cases, sickness results because of the Government's failure to ensure timely modernization. As on date, the Government wants to wash their hands off the sick public sector undertakings by denying them support in a most unfair manner.

The Reserve Bank had studied the reasons for sickness, about ten years ago and found that 52% of sickness was due to bad management of the company and the embezzlement by the management such as diversion of funds, conflict within the management etc. Only 2% of the sickness was due to the workers and employees. This is the picture in most of the cases.

In many cases, restructuring by infusion of finances would help the sick public sector undertakings to come out of the BIFR and tide over the problem. But in most of such cases, the Government assumes a negative attitude. The current Budget has demonstrated the totally negative attitude of the Government towards revival of sick public sector undertakings. The sick public sector undertakings were referred to in the Budget only while stating the provisions relating to closure, payments to be made on retrenchment and on voluntary retirement. Such an approach is injurious to the interest of the national economy. When the budgetary proposals indicate the path of abolition of the public sector undertakings, it is very dangerous for the nation.

'CLOSE PSUs, OPEN UP FOR IMPORT'

If a public sector undertaking is referred to the BIFR, the banks and financial institutions stop giving advances even for the working capital. As a result, productive work suffers and loss gets multiplied, complicating the prospect of revival. It is a matter of record that while many of the sick and loss making public sector undertakings have to suspend production owing to non-availability of working capital and various other reasons, the same products are being imported in increasing quantities, spending precious foreign exchange. In case of raw jute, in 1995-96, 42,000 tonnes of raw jute was imported at the cost of Rs.48 crores. In 1996-97, 48,000 tonnes of raw jute were imported at the cost of Rs.76 crore.

As far as fertilizer is concerned, the quantity imported was 10,585 tonnes at the cost of Rs.5,626 crores. During 1996-97 the quantity imported was 7,045 tonnes at the cost of Rs.3,235.

In the case of medicines and pharmaceutical products also Rs.1,350 crore worth of goods were imported during the year 1995-96 and during 1996-97 the value was Rs.1,089 crore. In the case of iron and steel also, the import has been increasing day by day. When the demand is growing, instead of reviving our public sector to meet the demand, we are importing these goods. This in turn liquidates the public sector units.

Eight fertilizer plants are languishing in sickness. One fertilizer plant at Durgapur could be revived by investment of a few hundred crores of rupees while to have a

(Cont. on page 15)

PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS - ASSET OR BURDEN OF THE COUNTRY?

Chittabrata Majumdar

A concerted propaganda is being carried on for more than a decade that because of a poor work culture in public sector undertakings they have become burdens on the country on account of sustained losses suffered by them. It is also being propagated day in and day out that if the CPSUs are handed over to private owners, they will be profitable as the workers will be compelled to give their best output.

It is in the above context of propaganda and dis-information campaign, that the economic reforms of 1991 onwards by World Bank, IMF lobby backed by imperialist countries are to be viewed. This "hate public sector" campaign has helped the so-called economic reformers to go to the extent of total privatisation of public sector in the country. The present BJP-led Govt. have made it a point to implement the directives from IMF and World Bank lobby to the conclusive phase of total privatisation.

In the history of the industrial development of our country after independence, the public sector has played a major key role. Apart from the CPSUs formed under Companies Act, Public Sector has also played a tremendous role in creating the public sector infrastructures through banking, insurance and services through rail, defence, telecommunications, etc. As a matter of fact, in the national economy, no sector had been left

untouched by the public sector and, its impact was all pervasive.

A FACTUAL ASSESSMENT

It is, therefore, imperative that this charge of inefficiency in terms of profitability is factually assessed. As per the Public Enterprises Survey published by Govt. of India in 1996-97, there are 236 CPSUs registered under the Companies Act. As per the Survey (1996-97), 129 of these companies have earned profit, 104 companies have incurred losses and 3 companies are running on "no profit - no loss" basis. The gross profit of the companies taken together is Rs 30,574 crores. After deduction of taxes etc., 129 profit-making companies have earned a net profit of Rs 16,120 crores and the 104 companies have incurred loss of Rs 5,862 crores. This means that net profit earned by 236 CPSUs is Rs 10,254 crores. This apart, during this period these CPSUs have exported goods worth Rs 16,359 crores. Is it, therefore, correct to say that the CPSUs are running into losses?

Out of the 104 loss-making CPSUs most of them were earlier private companies which became sick under private ownership and had to be taken over by the Govt. of India in national interest. However, the required capital infusion to modernise these sick units were not made. They were allowed to run in the same condition with the result that there was no question of earning profit.

One such example is that of M/s. Braithwaite Co. Ltd. The revival scheme was sanctioned by the BIFR as a result of which the Company earned a profit of Rs. 82.26 crores in 1996-97 as compared to the loss of Rs. 31.27 crores in 1995-96. A little initiative from the Govt. of India could have made many such CPSUs profitable ones.

Apart from the above, it can also be seen from the Public Enterprises Survey that in 1996-97, 236 CPSUs had contributed the following to the exchequer:

Dividend	Rs. 3,080 Crores
Corporate Tax	Rs. 4,908 Crores
Excise Duty	Rs. 13,854 Crores
Customs & others Duties	Rs. 15,605 Crores
Total Contribution	Rs. 37,497 Crores

It is clear that the Public Sector, which is being dismantled by the Govt. of India, is contributing the above colossal amount to the Govt. treasury. Can they, therefore, be treated as a burden rather than capital forming assets?

SELF RELIANCE SHATTERED

In the Budget, Govt. has proposed to bring down the share of Govt. equity in CPSUs to 26% thus disinvesting 74% of the shares to the private owners. The total investment in CPSUs is Rs. 2,02,027 crores. This is public money invested for the purpose of industrial development and employment generation. The money gen-

erated out of this disinvestment would be used for the revenue expenses of the Govt, which is nothing short of running a household by selling the house. This would totally destroy the industrial base of the country, shattering in the process, the self-reliant concept of Indian Economy.

The private capital, both national and multinational, is keen to take over profit-making CPSUs. In 1996-97, net profit earned by certain CPSUs are as follows:

ONGC	Rs. 2,033.65 Crores
NTPC	Rs. 1,679.43 Crores
IOC	Rs. 1,408.22 Crores
MTNL	Rs. 932.75 Crores
GAI	Rs. 616.55 Crores
HPCL	Rs. 612.22 Crores
VSNL	Rs. 504.74 Crores
BHEL	Rs. 463.15 Crores
BPCL	Rs. 385.77 Crores

There is no necessity of any external financial assistance in these Companies. Then under what pretext their shares are being sold to the private capital?

None of the private owners are interested in the shares of sick units. Through this year's budget, sick units are being forced to be closed after thrusting VRS on workers. This would only aggravate the present industrial recession in the country. There will be tremendous loss of jobs increasing the unemployment problem further. When the country is being flooded with imported items, country's indigenous industries are being closed down to help the multinationals to capture our market.

The people in India can never accept such scenario in spite of the

campaign of dis-information against CPSUs. The working class and the people of this country have to stand against this sinister design to lead the country to a state of deindustrialisation and save the country from an economic subjugation.

(Parliament from page 13)

new fertilizer plant like Durgapur, it would cost more than Rs.4,000 crore.

Bharat Ophthalmic Glass Limited, the only producer of flint button in the country could be revived by an investment of only few crores. But the Government prefers to close it down to indulge in imports. Government may argue that import is cheaper. But what about the social cost due to loss of productive employment. Unemployment not only affects the workers but also their families. Closures vitiate the socio-economic aspects also.

The Government is denying support to even wagon-building industry in public sector, although the country is suffering from shortage of wagons affecting the goods traffic. Cost of closure and non-revival of wagon-building units would be much higher than the investment cost for revival which is not being taken into account. Many more similar examples can be cited to expose the ill-conceived idea of doing away with the Central Public Sector Units.

The Railway's share in the freight traffic has come down from eighty per cent to twenty per cent. We are not using wagons and we are importing containers. If we want containers, we can use these companies for manufacturing contain-

ers instead of wagons. In that way we can revive the wagon industry.

REVIVE PSUs OR PERISH

To summarise, the Government policies towards sick public sector undertakings are not only permanently blocking the prospect of their revival but also severely damaging the industrial economy of the country. The production capacity lying with the sick public sector undertakings and the employment therein, could in no way be recreated or compensated once they are closed down; and the market would be usurped by the foreign companies. Will it serve the national interest?

Certainly, the PSUs require changes in their *modus operandi* but the causes of welfare, regional and sectoral balances, are rather important. This demands economic and fiscal development of the PSUs. But the political will needed for this is lacking in our government.

We have to detect irregularities and signs of sickness in the PSU's early to take remedial measures. Early detection and quick action are paramount in combating the problem of industrial sickness. Regular review and follow up measures are also essential for saving these industries. Technological upgradation, modernisation, renovation, diversification, etc, on a continuous basis will prevent industrial sickness.

favour.”
The minimum commitment to national interest warrants positive steps for revival of sick PSUs.

(Text of speech in Lok Sabha moving the resolution on 17.7.97)

ALL ARE EQUAL, BUT ARE SOME, MORE EQUAL?

K P Rao

The Delhi University teachers took to struggle to achieve their long standing demands including the revised wage scales as recommended by the UGC, better promotion policy and better service conditions. Their demands are not new and they have been agitating to realise them for the last few months. The university and college teachers of other states have also been demanding the same and joined the struggle. The adamancy from the politicians and mandarins of Shastri Bhawan pushed the teaching community to boycott the examination work and also post-examination paper evaluation process. The main political party in the ruling coalition, BJP, instead of conceding the just demands of the teachers, has instigated its student organisation ABVP, to scuttle and subvert the agitational programmes of the teachers. ABVP, as if it were the sole protector of the students' interest, filed a writ petition in the High Court of Delhi against Delhi University Teachers Association with a prayer to stop the agitational programme of the teachers. The self-same saffron party (BJP) is on the other side (i.e. of the teachers as well is another matter!)

Delhi hospitals are showing further colours. Nurses have been on relay hunger strike in the last week of April, demanding better pay scales, time bound promotions, a non-practicing allowance similar to that of doctors, the construction of a nurses colony and filling up of vacancies. Their demands are also long outstanding. They went on a strike recently and stood their ground despite threats, ESMA and an over-enthusiastic *suo moto* magisterial order to arrest.

The doctors' associations have also raised several demands—from residential quarters to implementation of fifth pay commission recommendations. They struck work on several occasions for provision of proper security in Government hospitals, as they felt threat of physical safety by the belligerent wards of the patients.

Delhi Vidyut Board employees went on lightning strike last year for implementation of fifth pay Commission report. On the very day, the State moved the Delhi High Court. The Court responded with light-

ning alacrity and ordered the employees union to call off strike immediately and restore power supply to Delhi citizens. The court also directed the Delhi Vidyut Board to consider the demands of the employees sympathetically. The first part of the order was immediately implemented and the rest of the order was conveniently forgotten.

Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, an institution constituted by the funds donated by the Parliament, was reluctant to implement the Fifth Pay Commission wages till the employees came to streets and threatened to go for indefinite strike.

Above all, in the Supreme Court, where the final justice is disposed, the employees working within have been struggling to get justice for pay revision. About 2,000 Supreme Court employees resolved to demonstrate outside Prime Minister's residence as despite the Chief Justice of India recommending revision in their pay scales six months ago, the Central Government did not move a bit.

In Delhi, near about 80% of the workers in unorganised sector are deprived of their minimum wages. Whenever any worker or union, if there is any, demands for statutory enforceable minimum wages, the recalcitrant management terminates the services of the workmen without notice. The wretched life of these workmen and their family members at work places and in residential jhuggies is horrifying. Successive attempts to get attention of the State administration and judiciary for their pitiable condition received rebuff.

This picture is only one side of the coin. Whenever, the teachers, doctors, nurses and all other toiling workers and employees raise the demands for better wages, for better living standards, the Central and State Governments either ignore or neglect the demands. If the demands get agitational shape, the Governments instigate the citizens, who face inconvenience due to agitations, against the workers and also use police force and also bring into effect the archaic and reprehensive legislations like ESMA. The ever abiding Indian judiciary, which lost its social consciousness along with liberalisation policies

takes a "principled" anti-worker stand.

The picture is not that much gloomy. There are some people who required to be well fed and attended by our socialist, secular and democratic Governments. When these citizens moan, Government groans. The Government is neither callous, nor lethargic nor recalcitrant when the necessities of these classes come to its notice. On one fine morning, Government observed that the Indian judiciary is tiring itself much enough to deliver the justice in corruption cases like Hawala, Telecom, Urea, Lakhubhai Pathak cheating, etc. and is also showing extra-enthusiasm in public interest litigations. Indian judiciary required to be awarded (or restrained). As a result, now there is a steep pay hike for Indian judges. The judges were getting Rs 10,000 (it comes to near about Rs 20,000/- inclusive of DA), free petrol for their cars, free telephone calls, free fine accommodation, free state guest house access and three free trips a year. The Government enhanced the salary substantially from

(Steel Seminar from page 9)

not globalised prosperity but cornered it in fewer hands/agencies; has increased the inequality and disparity among the countries and among the people; and became instrumental for garnering fortune for only the developed and advanced countries at the cost of developing countries. Only through collective efforts to change the direction of the economic policy, remedies can be brought about. And the whole steel collective must put their efforts together to improve upon the efficiency of the industry on the one hand and strive for a policy change on the other.

Total 321 delegates from all the steel plants and from all the fronts of steel industry attended the two day seminar and actively interacted. A Dakshi, General Secretary and Dilip Majumdar, Working President Steel Workers Federation of India, proposed vote of thanks at the valedictory and inaugural sessions respectively.

The Steel Workers' Federation of India, a CITU affiliate, by organising the seminar, had made a fine imprint on all concerned with the domestic steel industry, as a socially conscious and responsible trade union organisation.

Rs 10,000/- to Rs 30,000(DA is not included), luxurious accommodation, unlimited telephone calls, free car with 200 litres of petrol, sumptuary allowance, etc, etc. The Government of the day could not restrain to extend its good gesture towards the judiciary till the Parliament passed this pay hike; instead it passed an ordinance so that it comes into effect immediately.

When the pay and perks of our members of Parliament is concerned, similar enthusiasm and zeal crops up and in a single sitting of 15 minutes duration, all the political parties' representatives, barring one or two left parties, self-help their salaries, perks and pensions. What an irony it is that on one hand millions of workers either in industries or agricultural fields or service sector are struggling to get minimum wages and on the other hand the judiciary, the people's representatives either at the Centre or in the State's get hefty pay hikes without a hitch. Is it true that money is the natural ally of the power?

(K P Rao is an advocate based at Delhi)

COMRADE MADHU GUHA

General Council member of CITU and the frontline leader and organiser of the jute workers movement in West Bengal, Com. Madhu Guha breathed his last on 22nd July 1998 due to heart attack at Nilraban Sarkar Hospital, Calcutta. He was only 55.

Com. Guha had been in the trade union movement for more than three decades. He was dismissed by his employer in Birla Group for taking active part in trade union movement in 1971 and since then he had been an wholtime organiser of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor union of which he was vice president till his death.

Despite ill health and having undergone bypass surgery, Com. Guha has been actively taking part in all the programmes. He was admitted to hospital after addressing a gate meeting on 13th July in front of Head Office of closed Ladlo Jute Mill at Little Russel Street in the midst of heavy rain on 13th July and died on 22nd July at 2.20 pm due to heart failure.

Com. Guha's contribution in organising the jute workers movement in Bengal was immense, and his death has created irreparable void.

CITU Secretariat deeply mourns his death and conveys condolence to his family members.

TAMIL NADU WORKERS FACE SERIOUS CRISIS

While the Ministers and officials of both the Central and State Governments are boasting of new investments and MOUs being signed, working people in various sectors are facing a severe situation of lay offs, forced leave, closures and sickness.

In Chennai city, in addition to the already closed large scale establishments like Metal Box, Standard Motors and B&C Mills, Dunlop India has stopped production. The automobile giant, Ashok Leyland has declared an "agreed lay off" of 2 weeks. Ennore Foundries of the same group has also cut production to a large extent by reducing working days. As a result of the crisis in the automobile sector, a large number of small and medium units in the industrial estates around Chennai has also stopped production. In Ambathur industrial estate alone, more than 500 establishments are closed.

The situation in the Madras Export Promotion Zone (MEPZ) is also very critical with many units becoming sick and some are forced to sickness.

In the Tiny Sector also, thousands of units are facing a severe threat to their existence.

The Govt of Tamil Nadu has also made a contribution to this long list, with an order dated 16.6.1998, directing the closure of the fully State-owned Tamil Nadu Steels at Arkonam in Vellore district. This unit with nearly 1000 workers had stopped production before 10 months due to 'heavy losses.'

Reports coming from the industrial centre of Hosur also show the severity of the crisis in industrial sector. 34 units employing 2800 regular workers have been closed. These units had another 5000 workers as casuals, trainees, apprentices and contract workers. Another 23 establishments have sought permission for lay off. In some of the major units, a large number of trainees, casuals and contract workers have been sent out during the last few months.

The situation in the Textile sector is the worst. Many mills have not been paying wages for months. A number of mills are closed and many are threatening the workers with closure etc. Employers' As

sociations are demanding 'further sacrifices' from the workers. The Joint Action Council of Textile Unions have already given a call for a statewide strike in textile industry on 21.7.98. Statewide campaigns have been planned. Engineering industry in Coimbatore is also hit by the crisis.

Coimbatore district committee of CITU recently organised a seminar on industrial sickness, which was attended by leaders of various employers' organisations also. Traditional industries like Handlooms and the Powerloom sectors are also in difficulties. Added to this, is the court interventions on dyeing units on the question of environment.

Industrial sector as a whole is in deep crisis, on which not much is being said by the Government representatives. Thousands of workers are thrown to the streets. State level united movements have been planned to fight the economic and industrial policies of the Governments at the centre and in the State.

(Report from AK Padmanabhan)

TAMILNADU: CITU VICTORIES

CITU Union in the Tuticorin Port has retained its recognition in the verification process this month. CITU Union is one of the two recognised unions, HMS being the first.

In another election for recognition in Tamilnadu News Print Limited, a State Government owned undertaking, the Union led by CITU leaders won recognition in secret ballot. This Union won the first

position polling 25% votes. Other recognised unions are those of LPF (DMK) and ATP (ADMK).

(Report from AK Padmanabhan)

REPORTS & EVENTS

COM. A NALLASIVAN NINAIVAGAM DECLARED OPEN

Amidst thunderous cheers from the huge gathering of men and women assembled despite a heavy rain, R Umanath, Vice President, CITU, declared open Com.A NALLASIVAN NINAIVAGAM, on 5.7.1998 at Chennai. The new building named after Com.Nallasivan, founder secretary of CITU, Tamil Nadu, will house the State Committee of CITU. The three storeyed building will also comprise the offices of the Central Organisation of Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees and Dakshin Railway Employees' Union. The CITU has also

allotted office accommodation in this building to the Tamil Nadu State Committee of All India Democratic Women's Association.

The inaugural function was presided by J Hemachandran, President, CITU-TN. K Ramani hoisted the flag. N Sankaraih, Secretary, CPI(M)-TN and a contemporary of Com.A Nallasivan, unveiled the portrait of Com.Nallasivan. 13 other portraits of the founder-fathers of the trade union movement of the State, as also of departed CITU leaders, were unveiled on the oc-

casion. These included those of M Singaravelu, V Chidambaram, Thiru V Kelyanasundaram, Mahakavi Bharathi, B T Ranadive and P Ramamurthi.

A public meeting was also held, which was addressed by R Umanath, N Sankaraiah, T K Rangarajan, A K Padmanabhan, P M Kumar, A Soundarajan, D Janakiraman and others.

Leaders of AITUC, INTUC, AICCTU, UTUC-LS, MLF Kisan Sabha, AIDWA and other fraternal trade unions participated in the function.

(Report from A K Padmanabhan)

MARTYR'S WIDOW CONTRIBUTES RS 5000 TO BTR MEMORIAL

Six coal workers were brutally killed by the hirelings of Dugda Coal Washery during the All India strike of coal workers in 1994. A loaded truck was deliberately driven into the dharna site of coal miners in front of coal washery killing the workers. The management and administration connived at to term it an accident and no punishment was given to the killers.

The CIL management gave jobs

to the dependents of 5 coal miners since they were regular workers. The sixth worker Budhan Majhi was working under contractors and management refused to give a job to his wife despite several efforts.

However, due to concerted attempts by the CITU and Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union, the BCCL management agreed to give job to Sukkarmani Mejhain, widow of Budhan Majhi.

After she got the job Sukkarmani on her own donated Rs 5,000 to BTR Memorial Fund and showed her affection for the CITU for which her husband laid down his life.

The money was handed over to M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU by S K Baksi, General Secretary, Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union on 30.6.98 during the Bihar State Committee meeting of CITU.

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

M K Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU, was elected as a Vice-Chairman of the Na-

tional Safety Council of India, on 9.7.1998. The election took place at a meeting of the Board of Gov-

ernors of the Council held at Mumbai. The term of office is two years.

SEVERAL THOUSANDS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST ANTI-PEOPLE CENTRAL BUDGET

National protest day has been observed through massive demonstration of several thousands workers, peasants, students, youth, women etc. before the parliament against the anti people policies of Govt. of India as reflected by the Central Budget and

its severe impact on the people of all walks of life. National Platform of Mass Organisations comprising of major Central Trade Unions, and mass organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth & women sponsored the programme.

Those who addressed the rally included M K Pandhe (CITU), Umraomal Purohit (HMS), K L Mahendra (AITUC), K Neogi (AICCTU), Sankar Saha (UTUC-LS), Brinda Karat (AIDWA), Md. Salim, MP (DYFI), N K Shukla (AIKS) and others.

MINIMUM WAGES ACT: NOTIFICATION

Employments in

- i) Lignite Mines
- ii) Gravel Mines and
- iii) Laying of underground

cables, electric lines, water supply lines and sewerage pipe lines have since been added to Part I of the Schedule to the Minimum

Wages Act, 1948.

The Government of India, Ministry of Labour, have issued a notification to this effect.

STRIKE BY POSTAL EMPLOYEES

The massive participation of the postal employees in the nine-day strike in July 1998 is a solid proof of the genuineness of the demands for the which the employees have been compelled to resort to strike action. The strike completely paralysed the postal services.

The ten demands of the striking employees included implementation of the recommendations of then Talwar Committee on ED, issues related to pay scales of the employees in certain grades on the basis of their nature of jobs and qualifications of the employees in those grades and finalisation of bonus formula. It is worthwhile to note that the Extra Departmental employees are the most exploited section of the postal employees who have been working for dec-

ades with pittance to run the 80% of the post office network in the country and contribute the major part of the postal revenue. It is deplorable that those ED employees who are the lifeline of the postal services in the country are treated with casual service conditions and inhuman wage.

Several newspapers editorially criticised the government for their casual way of dealing with the situation and callous attitude towards the just demands raised by the postal employees.

CITU extended full support to the striking postal employees and urged the Government of India to concede the just demands to restore normalcy in the postal service.

After a meeting with the Communications Minister, Sushma

Swaraj, the employees have reported back for duty after 9 days of a very successful strike.

It is hoped that the Government would reciprocate the gesture of the employees in restoring normalcy, and settle all the demands without any further procrastination.

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TEXTILE WORKERS DEMONSTRATE

Thousands of NTC and BIC mill workers including large number of women and private sector mill workers came from different parts of the country, demonstrated before Parliament on 15.7.98, demanding immediate revival of the NTC mills and disbursement of salaries.

The Prime Minister gave an appointment to meet the leaders of

the Joint Action Committee, at 12.30 pm on 15.7.98 but suddenly cancelled the appointment. This is the second time that the present Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee cancelled appointment with the trade union leaders. Earlier he did the same thing on the issue of IDPL. The news of cancellation of appointment had its immediate reaction from the

workers. They broke the barricades shouting slogans against the BJP Government and the Prime Minister. In the scuffle several workers including women were injured. Later all the workers were arrested and released in the evening.

The rally was staged at the call of the JAC of Textile Workers comprising CITU, AITUC, HMS, INTUC, UTUC and HMKP.

Haryana Nurses on Strike

Over 3500 nurses working in government hospitals, dispensaries and health centres in Haryana have been on the path of struggle for the past several months, seeking fulfilment of their just and long standing demands, similar to those raised by the Delhi nurses and nurses all over the country. Considering the arduous nature of their work and the fact that they form a vital and essential component of the health services, it is shocking that their conditions of work have deteriorated sadly in the past few years. This is primarily due to the callous neglect of the health sector by the government, and its indifference to the health care needs of the majority of the working people. Such indifference has increased with the pursuit of the policies of privatisation.

In this situation the nurses were forced to organise themselves and start a struggle for their demands.

The staff nurses formed an association and affiliated it to the Sarv Karmachari Sangh, which is the organisation of state government employees in Haryana.

Demands

In October 1997, the nurses adopted a demand charter in a state level convention and submitted it to the government. Their demands included the removal of anomalies arising out of the implementation of the scales under the Fifth Pay Commission - they were placed below those categories they had earlier been above due to their qualifications and other criteria. They demanded a decrease in the patient-nurse ratio according to the recommendations of various professional bodies, for which it is necessary to fill vacant posts and create new ones. At present in Haryana a single nurse sometimes has to look after as many as 50 patients. In view of the steep increase in prices, the

nurses asked for an increase in their allowances, and for a substantial increase in the allowance of the student nurses (who are now given a pittance, but made to attend to all kinds of nursing jobs, including doing night duties, along with their studies). Demands for increments on their acquiring higher qualifications, for a proper promotion policy, for security at the workplace and for creche and toilet facilities were also raised, among others.

It is shocking that even these basic, elementary demands were not met by the Government of Haryana, in spite of their being conceded in the neighbouring states of Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

Repression Unleashed

The current phase of the nurses agitation started with a state level convention on the 12th of May followed by a huge rally of over 3000 nurses at Rohtak on the 30th

REPORTS & EVENTS

of May, which gave the strike call. On the 31st of May, 1998 started the indefinite strike of the Haryana nurses. The strike which included the student nurses was 100% successful. Instead of negotiating with the nurses and settling their demands, the government invoked ESMA and unleashed repression on the striking nurses. Charge sheets were issued and over 100 nurses given termination orders. The hostels were locked and the police resorted to lathi charges and arrests. The strike of more than 500 nurses at the PGI Medical college at Rohtak was crushed with ruthless repression. After ESMA was invoked, arrest warrants were issued against the leadership. Three hunger strikers were segregated, kept in solitary confinement and terrorised by the Superintendent of Police, the Deputy Commissioner and the PGI administrators. The HVP-BJP government stood exposed by its utter disregard for the democratic and trade union rights of the employees. Its only response to the problems and protests of the people is an attempt to terrorise them into silence and submission.

Undaunted, with their spirit unbroken, over 2000 nurses demonstrated in Delhi on the 1st of July, to bring their demands to the notice of the BJP - led government at the Centre and to seek its intervention. This government, which never tires of proclaiming its concern for women, proved that it is oblivious to the nurses problems and deaf to their demands. Kamala

Verma, the woman minister of the BJP, made disparaging remarks about the "character" of the nurses, which were no different from the Haryana Chief Minister Bansi Lal's reference to them as "useless women". When the nurses had met the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani and the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Sushma Swaraj, both had given a categorical assurance that they would intervene on the nurses behalf, but they did nothing. So, after sitting on dharna in Delhi for ten days, on the 10th of July, the nurses, along with thousands of employees who had come from Haryana, under the banner of the Sarv Karmachari Sangh, to express their solidarity with the nurses, started to march towards Parliament. They crossed three police barricades, braving the fury of two water cannons until these were emptied of their water supply, facing the burning, acrid smoke from 86 tear gas shells but still moving forward. Finally, they confronted the most brutal lathi charge by the police in which hundreds were injured, some so seriously that they had to be hospitalised, and many suffered head injuries apart from fractured bones. Many women were beaten brutally, kicked and abused by the police, CRPF and commandos. Such was the intervention by the BJP led government in the capital city, in the nurses struggle.

Solidarity

All the democratic organisations in Delhi, who had supported the

nurses in their struggle have condemned in the strongest terms, this brutal attack on the peaceful nurses and employees. The CITU, AIDWA, AISGEF, AICCWW, have all demanded that the demands of the nurses be settled forthwith so that they can resume work and health services can be restored to normalcy in Haryana. On Monday, the 13th of July, the city of Delhi witnessed a procession of Haryana nurses, with their babies in their arms and their children beside them, and the student nurses, marching to the Prime Minister's residence, protesting against police brutality and asking for justice. Once again, the police prevented them from proceeding further. They squatted on Parliament street for over two hours, were arrested and taken to the police station.

The arena of struggle of the nurses has now shifted to Chandigarh, where they are courting arrest. As per latest reports over 250 nurses have been arrested so far and are in jail, in Haryana. The Sarv Karmachari Sangh has also started courting arrest, in solidarity with the nurses.

The CITU congratulates the fighting nurses of Haryana and calls upon all trade unions to mobilise in support of the heroic struggle of the Haryana nurses. It is this united strength of the nurses combined with the support from the employees and democratic sections that will surely lead to the victory of their struggle.

REPORTS & EVENTS

MAHARASHTRA STATE CITU MEETS

A meeting of the Maharashtra State Committee of CITU was held in New Mumbai at BTR Bhawan on 8-9, July, 1998. Prabhakar Sanzagiri, President, Maharashtra State Committee of CITU presided over the meeting which was attended by 30 members from all over Maharashtra. E. Balanandan, President and M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU attended the meeting as per decision of the CITU Secretariat. Both of them emphasised the need to strengthen the CITU and its activities in the state, since Maharashtra has the largest industrial base in the country. Despite

difficulties posed by the rule of the BJP-Shiv Sena Government, there was need to develop more united mass struggles to resist the communal and divisive policies of the State Government. They explained the present economic and political situation in the country and pointed out how the CITU is planning to organise countrywide resistance in defence of working class interests.

K L Bajaj, State General Secretary, in his report analysed the functioning of the State Committee and suggested steps to improve the functioning of the State Committee.

During discussions, comrades pointed to the possibility of developing activities in the State, due to deteriorating economic situation. They also proposed some steps to improve the functioning of the State Committee.

Sanzagiri noted the problems faced by the TU movement in Mumbai and Maharashtra and suggested that CITU should strive to take up the challenges of the situation so that the interests of the workers are fully protected.

The Report of the General Secretary was adopted in the light of the general discussion.

WORKERS LAY SIEGE ON CM'S RESIDENCE

More than 2,000 workers belonging to CITU unions besieged the residence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh. Police arrested all of them including the Secretary of CITU, P K Ganguly, State CITU leaders Shailander Shaily, S Kumar,

Badal Saroj and Sharma MLA. These workers belonged to unorganised sector, including beedi industry, anganwadi, daily wage earners, contract workers, etc.

They demanded minimum wage of Rs 2,250/-, a regularisation of all jobs, abolition of contract la-

bour system, provident fund and pension benefits to all the workers in the unorganised sector, and a central legislation for them. Earlier a mass rally was held in polytechnic choraha.

(Report from Vinay Divedi)

CEMENT WORKERS STAGE DHARNA IN FRONT OF UP ASSEMBLY

About 3,000 workers belonging to the State Cement Corporation of UP started indefinite dharna in front of Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, Lucknow on 9.7.98. They came from Dala, Chur and Chunar, demanding revival of the Cement Corporation and payment of wages. They were protesting against non-

payment of their wages since 10 months, and demanded immediate payment.

On the third day, one of the workers died at the dharna place. The State leaders of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, BMS and HMKP met at the State CITU office and decided to intensify the agitation. The dharna which was going on round

the clock entered the fourth day on 12th July.

The CITU Centre condemned the anti-labour attitude of the State BJP Government and demanded immediate release of salaries and compensation to the deceased. The CITU Centre also decided to depute two MPs to meet the Chief Minister.

REPORTS & EVENTS

Ultimately the Chief Minister met a joint delegation in the evening of 12th July and made an official announcement to release salaries

for four and half months and also pay a compensation of Rs 1 lakh to the family of the deceased. He also assured to take up the issue

of revival of the Cement Corporation expeditiously. The dharna was withdrawn thereafter.

(Report from Daulat Ram)

Himachal Pradesh CITU Plans Campaign

Himachal Pradesh State Committee of CITU will launch a *Jan Jagran* campaign in August 1998. This was decided by the State Committee in its meeting held on 27-28 June, 1998 at Shimla. W R Varada Rajan, Secretary CITU also attended the meeting. The meeting noted with concern that after the installation of the BJP ministry in the State, chauvinistic feelings based on re-

ligion, region etc. are aroused. The main political parties like BJP, Congress and Himachal Vikas Congress are trying to make narrow political gains from such divisive campaign.

CITU decided to work for the all round development of the State besides intensifying the struggle on the immediate demands of the workers in the State. Accordingly, a charter of demands was placed

before the Chief Minister of the State and the same will form part of a massive campaign among the people and workers in the State. Street corner meetings, dharnas, public meetings etc will be held during the campaign. Mass rallies will be held at the district headquarters between 21st September and the first week of October 1998.

(Report from Kashmir Singh)

The Striking Hospital Workers Lathicharged

The Group C&D employees of Govt Hospitals at Delhi had to go in for continuous strike after prolonged pursuit of their long pending demands received only negligence from the Govt and authority concerned.

On 23.7.1998, police lathicharged brutally on the peaceful demonstration of the striking hospital workers at Patel Chowk, New Delhi when they wanted to submit a memorandum to the Speaker

of Lok Sabha, seeking the intervention of Parliament.

At least 20 workers, including 6 women were severely injured and many hospitalised.

The hospital workers of Delhi have long been pursuing their demands with the BJP Govt at Delhi but in vain. The Govt ignored the just demands of the workmen and behaved irresponsibly by sitting over the issue relating to vital and essential health service of the city.

Even after strike, instead of sorting out the problem through negotiation, the govt preferred to treat the same with arrogance and violence, demonstrating irresponsible indifference to the condition of the thousands of patients flocking in the hospitals.

CITU and the Sponsoring Committee of Indian trade unions condemned the lathi charge by police on the striking workers and demanded the Govt to settle with the striking workers at the earliest.

CUBAN DELEGATES CALL ON CITU

A delegation from Cuban Institute of Friendship among the Peoples (ICAP) visited India in the second week of June 1998. The delegation comprised: Ms Lourdes Urrutia Radriguez,

Political Counsellor. Mr Mackchaser Siveright Roberto F. Specialist for Asia. Ms Corredera Moralies Alicia E, Chief of Asia Division, ICAP. The Cuban delegation called on

CITU leaders on 11.6.1998 at the CITU headquarters in New Delhi. They were received by Sukomal Sen, P K Ganguly, W R Varada Rajan and J Ballabh. Both sides exchanged view on the activities and works in solidarity with Cuba.

VIETNAM DELEGATION VISITS INDIA

At the invitation of CITU, a three member delegation from the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, led by **DO DUC NGO**, Member of the VGCL Presidium and Director Department for Culture and Ideology, was on a visit to India from the 20th to 23th July, 1998. **PHAN DINH KHANG**, Member, Executive Committee and **TRAN VAWLY** of International Department of VGCL were the other two members.

The delegation had a meeting with the CITU Secretariat on 22.7.1998. E Balanandan, M K Pandhe, P K Ganguly, Ranjit Basu, W R Varada Rajan and S B Bhardwaj were present. The two sides had a detailed exchange of views on the present situation and the tasks of the international trade union movement. Both the sides decided to further strengthen mutual relations.

The VIII National Congress of VGCL will be held in Hanoi in

October, 1998, where Parsa Satyanarayana, Vice President, will represent the CITU, as decided by the Secretariat.

The visit of the VGCL delegation also covered visits to factories and meetings with local union leaders in Delhi, Hardwar and Dehradun. They also met the representatives of AITUC, HMS, INTUC and WFTU.

Son, Counsellor, Embassy of Vietnam coordinated the visit.

II International Conference of the Workers Against Globalisation and Neoliberalism, Brazil-August 1999

The First International Conference of the Workers against Neo-Liberal Globalisation was held in Havana, Cuba on August 6-8, 1997.

The Havana conference called for cooperation and solidarity against the big economic and financial capital, as well as the policies both in developed and the Third World Countries.

The Havana Conference also decided to hold the II international conference against neo-liberal

globalisation in Brazil, during August, 1999, with the following agenda:

1. Actions carried out in the frame of the Minimal Program of Actions agreed in Havana in 1997, in a way to consolidate the unity of trade union action.

2. Other actions to strengthen the role of trade union organisations for the defence of:

- The right to work,
- Worthy and fair wages,
- Respectable social welfare,

- Health care and education access for all workers,

- Egalitarianism for women and emigrant workers,

- Prohibition of child labour

- The building of trade unions where they do not exist as well as the enlargement of the right of workers to get organised by themselves.

A Co-sponsorship Committee headed by the Brazilian trade union centrals (CUT), Trade Union Force and CGT has been formed to host the conference.

IRAQ : PAIN OF SANCTIONS

UNDER (5) MORTALITY

PERIOD

	May 1989 NO.OF DEATHS	May 1998 NO.OF DEATHS	INC. RATE
DIARROHEA	133	1448	988.72%
PNEUMONIA	139	15322069	1002.16 %
MALNUTRITION	102	1917	1779.41 %

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982=100)

Sr. No.	Centre	Apr'98	May'98	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Apr'98	May'98
1	Gudur	389	398	PB	45	Amritsar	334	343
2	Guntur	376	385		46	Ludhiana	344	353
3	Hyderabad	360	365	RAJ	47	Ajmer	376	375
4	Visakhapatnam	366	377		48	Jaipur	373	373
5	Warangal	377	390	TN	49	Chennai	401	413
ASM 6	D D Tinsukia	344	345		50	Coimbatore	370	376
7	Guwahati	383	386		51	Coonor	392	400
8	Labac-Silchar	331	341		52	Madurai	381	391
9	Mariani Jorhat	371	367		53	Salem	367	377
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	372	371		54	Tiruchirapally	390	398
BHR 11	Jamshedpur	366	367	UP	55	Agra	360	365
12	Jharia	335	337		56	Ghaziabad	372	377
13	Kodarma	331	339		57	Kanpur	382	395
14	Monghyr	354	354		58	Saharanpur	342	344
15	Noamundi	354	355		59	Varanasi	420	424
16	Ranchi-Hatia	377	382	WB	60	Asansol	353	366
GUJ 17	Ahmedabad	377	382		61	Calcutta	391	395
18	Bhavnagar	393	395		62	Darjeeling	324	331
19	Rajkot	367	374		63	Durgapur	410	421
20	Surat	387	393		64	Haldia	414	415
21	Vadodra	357	366		65	Howrah	404	416
HRY 22	Faridabad	404	405		66	Jalpaiguri	345	352
23	Yamunanagar	358	359		67	Raniganj	340	343
J&K 24	Srinagar	387	400	CHD	68	Chandigarh	366	369
KAR 25	Bangalore	380	385	DEL	69	Delhi	420	429
26	Belgaum	402	409	PON	70	Pondicherry	450	454
27	Hubli-Dharwar	391	395					
28	Mercara	399	415					
KER 29	Alwaye	394	398					
30	Mundakayam	409	413					
31	Quilon	380	390					
32	Thiruvanthapuram	404	411	AP	1	Kothagudem	390	404
MP 33	Balaghat	357	360	HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	363	370
34'	Bhillai	339	343	RAJ	3	Bhilwara	373	376
35	Bhopal	412	416	MP	4	Chhindwara	379	382
36	Indore	381	385	TRI	5	Tripura	368	372
37	Jabalpur	384	388	GOA	6	Goa	431	444
MHR 38	Mumbai	435	444					
39	Nagpur	402	410					
40	Nasik	403	407					
41	Pune	429	432					
42	Solapur	393	407					
ORI 43	Barbil	354	361					
44	Rourkela	370	379					

ALL INDIA 383 389

Additional Serious of Labour Bureau

Government of India
Ministry of Labour
Labour Bureau

[Havana (Cuba) was the venue of a recent international meet of women trade unionists. Ranjana Nirula (AICCWW, CITU), Bharati Som and Banhi Sikha Acharya (Air Corporation Employees Union) represented the CITU thereat. Renee Narah M.P. also attended the meeting. The Indian delegation was the only one from Asia. Ranjana Nirula stretches here her impressions of the event. Editor]

Women and Neo-liberal Globalisation

The growth of the world economy has slowed down in the last two decades. Besides, there is now a sharp imbalance between the productive and speculative sectors: for every \$1 invested in the productive economy, \$ 50 are invested in the speculative sector.

Two years away from the 21st century, 100 million adults in the world are illiterate, many of whom are women. 80 million children are forced to leave school, to work, to support their families. There is only 1 doctor for every 80,000 persons in underdeveloped countries, as compared to 1 doctor for every 344 persons in developed countries. Life expectancy in the Third world is 63 years while in the developed countries it is 77 years.

The maximum impact of neo-liberal globalisation is on women - as workers, as housewives and as mothers. The trade unions are part of the political forces that are trying to save humanity - it is crucial for women also to join these. **Our problems are many, but the need is for indignation, not pity."**

This is how Ada Benitez, Secretariat member of the CTC (Central Trade Union of Cuba), in her Presidential address, dealt with the impact of neo-liberal globalisation on both men and women workers. This impact is seen in the deteriorating conditions of work and the devaluation of trade unions and legal rights. Her address was delivered in the first plenary of an international meeting of women trade unionists held at Havana, Cuba, on 29 and 30 April 1998, as one of the programmes in the month - long May Day celebrations. The meeting was attended by 135 women trade unionists from 13 countries of the Latin American and North American continents, Europe and Asia. After the first plenary, the participants went into 3 working Commissions for in depth discussions on the following subjects;

1. Trade Union strategy in the face of neo-liberal globalisation.
2. Trade Union women and their political and civil

rights.

3. Economic Free Trade Zones.

All the delegates came together in a final plenary, after discussions in the commissions. Here a Declaration was adopted, unanimously, stating the common understanding of all the Commissions.

THE DECLARATION

We denounce the neo-liberal globalisation and its consequences for workers, men and women.

We stress the importance of unity of trade unions and workers' organisations, to meet the challenges ahead

We condemn all diverse forms of exploitation by capitalism and imperialist actions that go against the dignity of the people.

A comprehensive minimum programme of action was included, which started with the task of uniting all progressive forces and oppressed sections in a common fight against neo-liberal policies. It covered all aspects of the role of women trade unionists in the struggle against neo-liberal globalisation, as well as the struggle within the trade unions for women's rights, education, leadership, and for the gender sensitisation of men.

Joint action by women trade unionists and other organisations is needed to make governments enact and implement laws concerning the economic, political and social rights of all women. The amendment, raised from the floor, calling for concrete action in each country in solidarity with Cuba and for an end to the blockade, received the most thunderous applause.

In his hardhitting speech, **Pedro Ross**, General Secretary, CTC,

said **"If we want people to respect women's rights, this must be translated from a slogan into action. This is the real task of the trade unions.**

Trade unions the world over have not explored all possibilities for women's participation, and it is dif-

difficult to find a woman heading a workers trade union. In Cuba we have tried to open up more space for women in our trade unions, as a result of which at some levels more Trade Union cadre are women. These women trade union leaders are elected - not nominated.

Most of the scientific workers, doctors, teachers are women - science, healthcare, education, all are in the hands of women. 32% of the deputies in the country are women - elected by the citizens by direct vote. The revolution could not have withstood all attacks if not for the staunchness of women. **With**

out this component no Trade Union movement worth anything."

He put forward a proposal to convene, by century is out, a meeting of women trade union **The challenge to trade unions by neo globalisation, and on Trade unions, get environment.**

The meeting ended with a commitment by delegates to take the Declaration to their countries to popularise it, to campaign and struggle for demands contained in it, and a resolve to meet in the year 2000, in Havana.



WB: Streets Deserted, Vehicles Idle: 3.7.98

(Cover & Last Page Photos, Courtesy: Amit Kar, C)