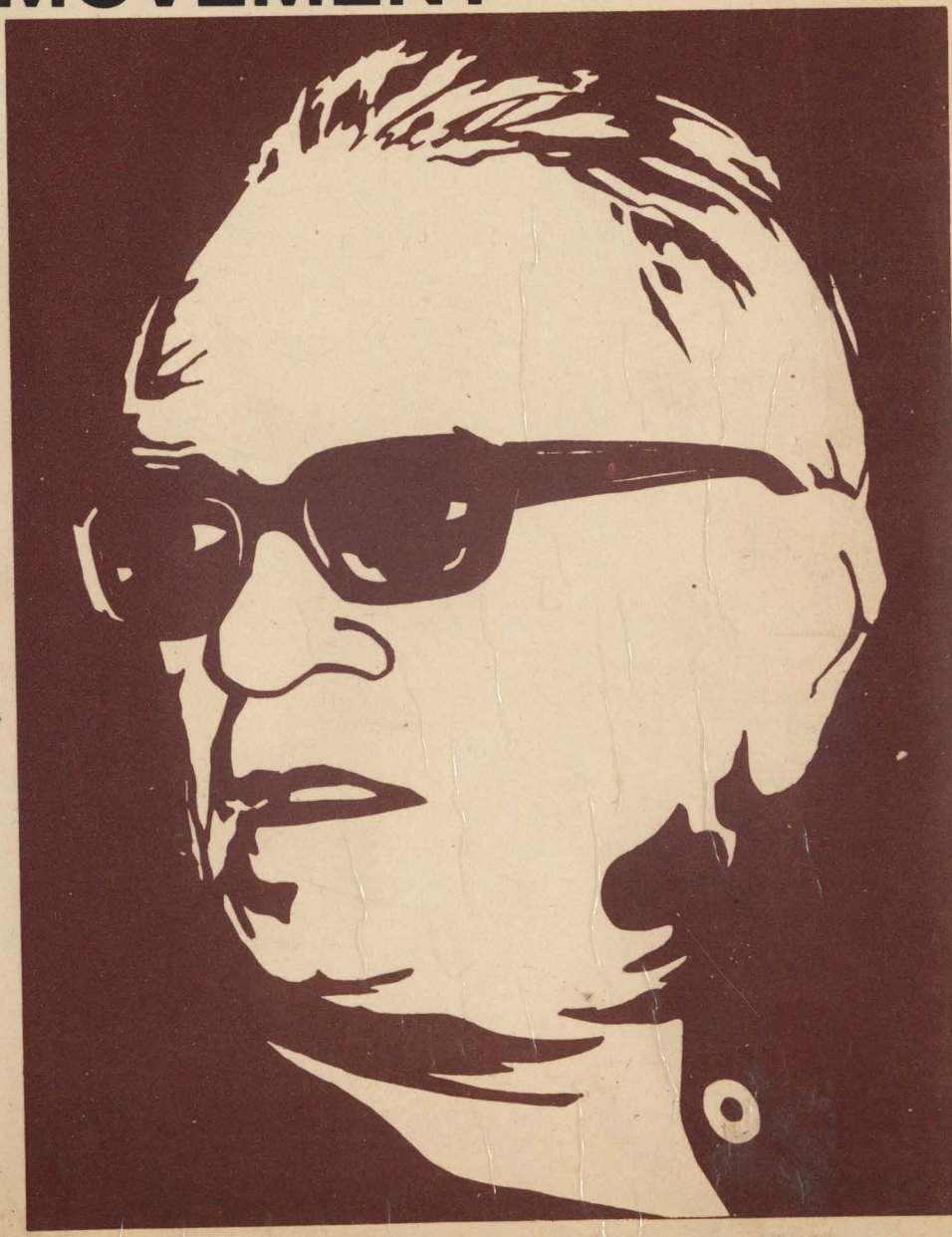
BT Ranadive

ON

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT



B. T. Ranadive
on
Trade Union Movement

A CITU PUBLICATION

December 1990

Price : Rs. 60.00 (Paper back)
Rs. 100.00 (Hard bound)

Editorial Board :
M.K.Pandhe, Vimal Ranadive, Kanai Bannerjee
P.K.Ganguly, Jibon Roy, Ranjit Basu

Cover design :
Indranath Bandopadhayay

Printed at :
Progressive Printers, A-21, Jhilmil Industrial Area,
G.T.Road, Shahdara, Delhi-110032.

FOREWORD

The sudden passing away of Com. B.T. Ranadive on 6th April 1990 was a big loss to the working class and the trade union movement in India. For the CITU and thousands of its activists who received sustained guidance from him for two decades since its inception, the loss is particularly very difficult to bear. The rich heritage left behind by him, however, will continue to guide us in our future activities.

BTR, as he was affectionately called by all who knew him, wrote extensively on the problems faced by the working class and the trade union movement. Since 1970 he wrote almost on every contemporary problem with great passion and clarity of understanding. He dealt with every issue from the class point of view. He never minced words when he attacked the erroneous ideas within the trade union movement. The under-current of the struggle against alien class ideology among the working class is apparent in all his writings. Throughout his writings he always linked the day to day struggle of the Working Class with the final objective of Social transformation. In this process he used to give special emphasis on the leading role of the Working Class.

As an ideologue, BTR contributed a great deal on the development of Marxist thinking in the context of Indian trade union movement. Its deep analysis & simple expression on problems of International T.U. movement and the developments in revolutionary struggles all over the world is another facet of all his writings. In every speech he emphasised the need to carry forward the struggle against imperialist machinations with more vigour. His

writings exhibit him as a crystal clear proletarian internationalist in every aspect.

BTR's writings form a running commentary on the contemporary events in India and abroad. They are, even, more than that. All of them put together converge into an encyclopaedia of the trade union movement.

He was regularly writing in the CITU monthly journal *"The Working Class"* since its inception. His written speeches during the CITU Conferences, and its meetings of the Working Committee and the General Council will always be a source of inspiration and guidance to the Working Class. His writings & speeches in many other T.U. journals and souvenirs published by the trade unions enriched them also. He wrote a number of booklets on topical T.U. problems. They continue to remain thought provoking even to day. This rich treasure is our heritage. To preserve it is the task bestowed upon us. The Secretariat of the CITU therefore has decided to publish two volumes of his writings on T.U. movement. The first volume contains the writings since the foundation of CITU till the year 1980 while the second volume bring out his writings during eighties.

The Editorial Board has made sincere efforts to collect his writings. There is no doubt that the collections in this volume form only a portion of what all Com. BTR wrote for the working class and the trade union movement during the period. The efforts to collect more of his writings would continue. The Editorial Board would welcome information in this regard from one & all.

The Editorial Board also intends to collect BTR's writings prior to 1970 and bring out a seperate volume of those writings so that his complete works would be made available to the readers. Any assistance from the senior associates of Com. BTR in this regard will be highly appreciated.

The material in this volume is arranged chronologically as far as possible. A seperate index is appended in the end to facilitate the readers to find out the relevant material according to major classification of topics.

There have been several references to the trade union problems in Com. BTR's other writings. They could not be incorporated in this volume.

Inspite of high rise in cost of printing material the Editorial Board has made attempts to keep the price of the volume as low as

possible.

The Editorial Board thanks all those who have helped us in collection of the articles and other materials for this volume. It specially thanks Indranath Bandyopadhyay for preparing design for the cover and acknowledges the valuable assistance of S. Dev Roye and Tapan Sen in bringing out this volume. Special acknowledgements are also due to Ajay Kumar and all his colleagues in the Progressive Printers who worked hard so that the volume is brought out in time despite other pressure of work.

The vast treasure which we have inherited through Com. BTR's writings will continue to guide us. This volume is our humble tribute to the lasting memory of an outstanding leader.

19 December 1990

Editorial Board

B.T. RANADIVE

—A Biographical Sketch

Bhalchandra Trimbak Ranadive was born at Dagdi Building, Dhuruwadi, Dadar in Bombay on 19th December 1904 in a middle class family. His father Trimbak Moreshwar Ranadive was an income-tax officer and a Prarthana Samajist by conviction.

Young Ranadive spent his childhood in Pune and studied in Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya. After passing Matriculation examination, he joined Fergusson college in Pune in 1921. Later he studied in Wilson college at Bombay with History, Politics and Economics as subjects. He passed B.A. with flying colours in 1925 and joined Bombay School of Economics for his post graduate studies. In 1927 he stood first class first in M.A. examination and won the Gold medal. The University of Bombay published his thesis "Population Problem in India". His conclusions were based on Malthusian theory of Population and the author himself differed with the conclusions later when he became a Marxist.

Ranadive plunged into T.U. activities immediately after completion of his education and joined Bombay Girni Kamgar Union and was attracted towards Marxism through his cousin Dr. G. Adhikari who had returned from Germany. He joined the "illegal" Communist Party of India in 1928. After the arrest of several T.U. leaders in Meerut Conspiracy Case in March 1929 Ranadive alongwith S.V. Deshpande took over the leadership of textile workers in Bombay and conducted the long drawn strike against mass retrenchment. Alongwith his T.U. activities he actively participated in all anti-imperialist movements.

He was elected as General Secretary of GIP Railwaymen's

Union and edited its weekly. He was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a speech in Railway Workers agitation. On his release he again led the textile workers struggle. He had to fight a hard battle against reformist leader Kandalkar who openly advocated class collaboration. Ranadive led 26 out of 35 partial strikes in Bombay textile industry. As a result of the powerful campaign launched under his leadership the reformist leadership of the union was defeated and a historic strike of Bombay textile workers was conducted in 1934 against cut in DA. He was so much engrossed in his revolutionary activities that he could not attend his ailing father and be at his bedside when he passed away.

When Subhash Chandra Bose was presiding over the AITUC conference in 1931 there was a split in the organisation. Ranadive, S.V. Deshpande and others walked out of it and formed Red Trade Union Congress. It was dissolved in 1934 and merged with the AITUC.

Ranadive edited Marathi weekly Kranti (Revolution) in 1928-29. During 1931-32 he edited Workers Weekly (English). He was elected to the Central Committee of the CPI when an all India Party Centre was established in 1934.

Ranadive was sentenced to 2 years RI in 1934 and detained at Karachi jail. After his release he edited Mumbai Kamgar (Bombay Worker) in 1937 for 2 years. He was also on the Editorial Board of National Front, till 1939-40 when it had to be closed down.

In 1938, Ranadive led a united struggle against Bombay Industrial Disputes Act passed by the Congress Govt since it hit at the right to strike. Dr. Ambedkar joined the struggle to oppose the Bill.

In 1939 he led the general strike in Bombay against the outbreak of Second World War—a unique political action by the working class.

In 1939 he married Vimal Sardesai.

Ranadive led another general strike of textile workers in Bombay in 1940 and was detained first at Yerwada and later at Deoli in Rajasthan where several communist leaders were kept in a special camp. It was from this detention camp that he wrote his famous "Deoli Thesis" noting change in the character of the war after Hitler attacked Soviet Union and calling upon the working class and the people to support the anti-fascist war faught heroically by the Soviet Union.

After he was released from jail in 1942 he joined the Centre of

the Communist Party of India in Bombay. He played a notable role in the First Congress of the CPI held in 1943, submitted a report on the trade union movement and was elected on the Polit Bureau by the Congress.

During the strike of Indian Navy in 1946 Ranadive roused the anti-imperialist consciousness of the working class and a historic solidarity strike of Bombay workers was organised. Pitched battle were faught by the workers and the people of Bombay on the streets and several workers gave their blood for the freedom of the country. BTR guided several anti-imperialist struggles conducted during the postwar period.

In 1948 at the Second Congress of the CPI he was elected as a General Secretary. Immediately following the Congress, the Party was banned and he had to go underground to carry on the activities of the Party. He held the post till 1950.

He wrote 2 important books entitled "India's Five Year Plan—What it offers?" and the Crisis of Indian Economy in 1953 which were extremely popular not only among the communists but other intellectuals too. He was elected as the Secretary of the Maharashtra State Committee of the CPI for sometime.

Ranadive came to the forefront in the Party again in 1956 at Fourth Congress of the CPI. He placed a document advocating the People's Democratic Front as against the line of National Democratic Front advocated by the then dominant party leadership. He was elected to the Central leadership of the party once again. In the Sixth Congress of the CPI in 1961 he again placed an alternate document on behalf of 21 members of the National Council opposing policies of class collaboration and revisionism.

During the India-China border conflict Ranadive advocated the line of peaceful settlement of dispute with China. He was arrested in 1962 and kept in jail till early 1966. Meanwhile the Communist movement split in 1964 and the Seventh Congress of the Party held in Calcutta decided to form the CPI(M). He was elected a member of the CC and PB in the Congress.

Ranadive advocated the line of TU unity and called for working within the AITUC. He was elected as a member of the General Council of AITUC in 1966 and in every meeting he pressed the need for working class unity. Dange leadership however was not keen to preserve the unity of the AITUC.

In 1967 Ranadive's draft on Tasks on the Trade Union Front

which give a comprehensive perspective and tactical line for the trade union movement was finalised and approved by the Central Committee of the CPI(M). The document was further updated and enriched in 1983 by the CC of the Party. He faught against Naxalite deviation in the party and wrote a number of articles on their erroneous policies.

When it was clear that Dange leadership of AITUC was determined to disrupt the TU unity the CPI(M) and their allies within AITUC found it impossible to work within AITUC. A T.U. convention was held at Goa in March 1970 which was guided by Ranadive. The Goa convention decided to call an All India convention at Calcutta which laid the foundation of CITU. Ranadive was elected as President of the organisation, a position he held till his death.

When the INTUC, AITUC and HMS constituted National Council of Trade Unions with the blessing of Union Labour Minister, Ranadive took initiative in calling a meeting of other trade unions and in 1972 under his Presidentship United Council of Trade Unions was formed.

Despite his pressing political activities Ranadive extensively toured the country to build the CITU. The motto "unity and struggle" was always emphasised by him in his speeches.

He went underground during emergency in 1975 and guided the Party and CITU activities in resisting authoritarian repression. He was personally directing the united campaign of the working class against wage freeze, against Industrial Relations Bill. His contribution in the formation of the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions and the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions are known to all. Ranadive personallyparticipated in the foundation of all the industry wise federationof CITU. Even the credit for formation of co-ordination committee of Public Sector Unions and of working women goes to his untiring efforts.

Inspite of advancing age and growing responsibilities of CPI(M) work BTR could find time for day today work of the CITU.

He was the Editor of "The Marxist" the theoretical journal of the CPI(M). His earlier writings, "India's Sterling Balance", 'Caste, Class and Property Relations", "The Working Class and National Defence", "Euro-Communism", "On Contradictions", "On Two programme", will continue to enrich Marxist-Leninist understanding of these problems. His last writing was a detailed guideline on the movement for Right to Work which he prepared for Durgapur

Convention.

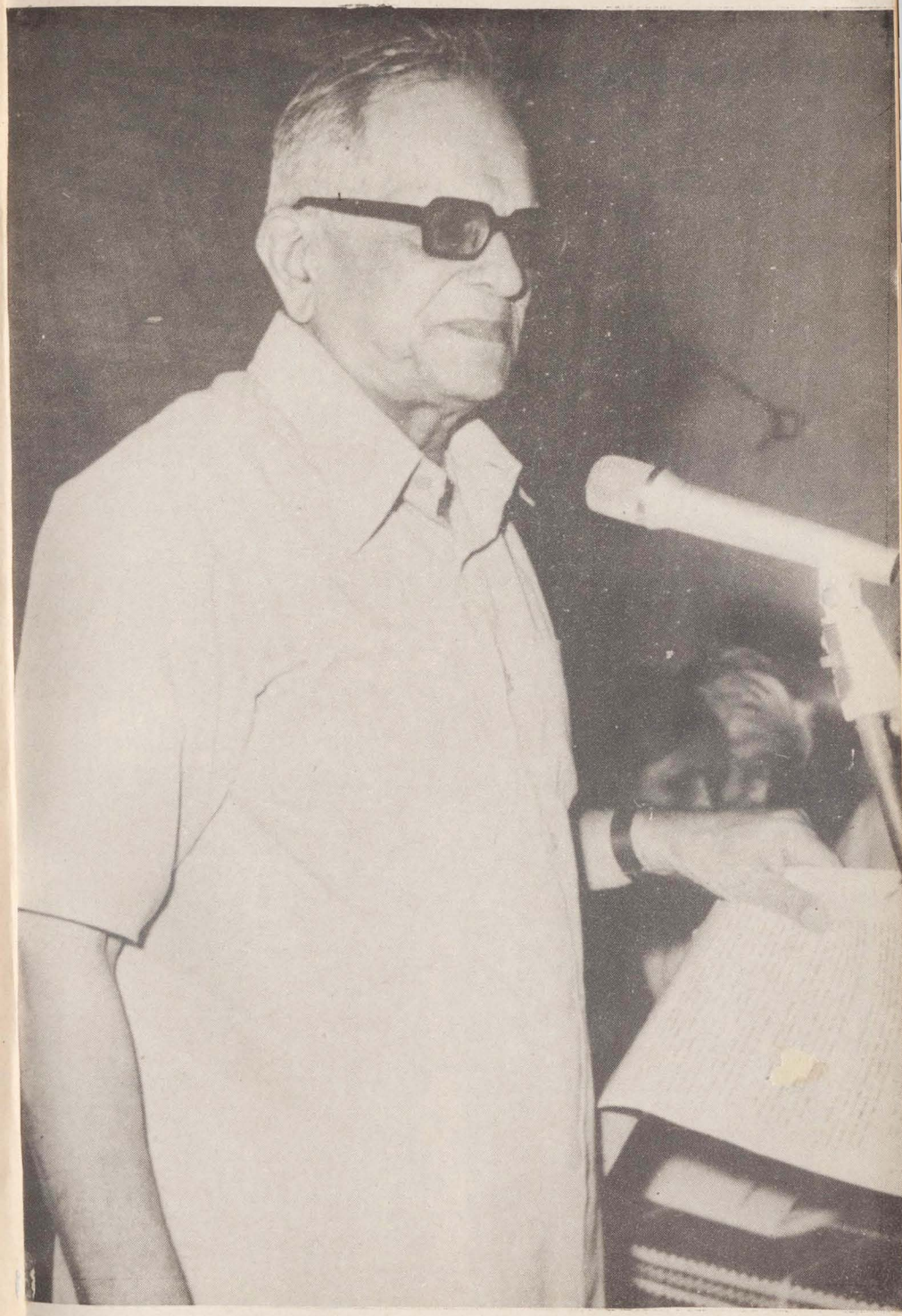
Throughout his life he thought of nothing else except the revolutionary movement of the working class and the people. His loyalty to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism was unquestionable. His simple style of living and easy accessibility endeared him to all his colleagues.

Such a fine revolutionary life came to an end on 6th April 1990 at Bombay. But the memorable events and achievements in his life can never be forgotten.

CONTENTS

1. Resolution of the Goa Convention 1
2. Foundation Conference of CITU, Concluding Speech 6
3. On United action of the Working Class. 24
4. Let everyone help 'The Working Class'. 29
5. Indian Working Class & Bangladesh. 32
6. The Govt. Employees & the people 37
7. Bangladesh is born — what next? 41
8. Resist the New offensive 46
9. A new blue print for Class Collaboration 50
10. Let the Indian Working Class unitedly defeat rising fascism in West Bengal 55
11. May Day Manifesto of CITU, 1972 60
12. The National Council of Trade Unions — what it means to the Working Class 67
13. On unemployment 69
14. Minimum Bonus Achieved — Struggle for Bonus to all 123
15. Let Workers and Peasants Rise in Defence 128
16. Unitedly Fight and Defeat the Government's Wages & Income Policy 132
17. Presidential Address, General Council Meeting of CITU, Bombay, January 1973 138
18. May Day Manifesto of CITU, 1973 155
19. Presidential Address, 2nd Conference of CITU, Kerala May 1973 161
20. Right to Work must be a Fundamental Right 180
21. Tasks before the Convention of Central and State Government Employees 184

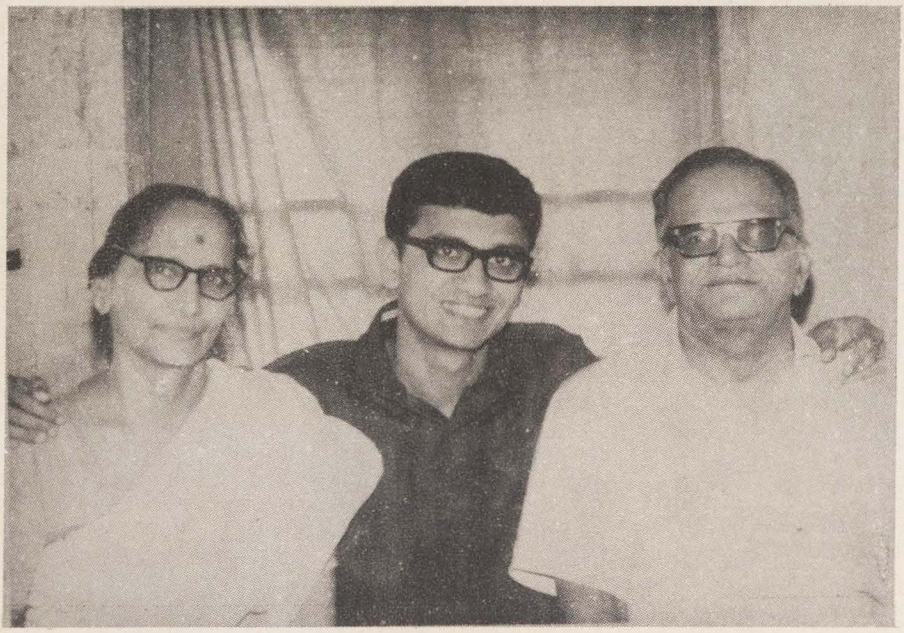
22. A Great and Victorious Strike 188
23. Prevent Sabotage of Railway Agreement 192
24. Presidential Address, W.C. Meeting of CITU, New Delhi October 1973 196
25. All Support to Loco Workers 209
26. Let All TU's unitedly Fight attack on IA Employees 212
27. Address to the 3rd National Congress of the Vietnamese Trade Unions 215
28. Presidential Address, G.C. Meeting of CITU, Vishakapatnam , April 1974 228
29. Notes on Visit to Hanoi 246
30. All Help to the Valliant Railway Workers 258
31. Fight the Wage Freeze 262
32. A menacing Situation 266
33. Presidential Address, W.C. Meeting, Howrah, January 1975 269
34. Against Crisis Burden 283
35. Presidential Address, 3rd Conference of CITU, Bombay, May 1975 287
36. Concluding Speech of the 3rd Conference 324
37. Presidential Address, G.C. Meeting, Calcutta, August 1977 338
38. New Industrial Relations Bill 362
39. The West Bengal Elections and the Working Class 373
40. The Problem of One Union in One Industry 377
41. Wages and Income Policy 383
42. Wage and Income Policy 401
43. All Hands For West Bengal 406
44. Presidential Address, W.C. Meeting, June 1978 409
45. Presidential Address, 4th Conference of CITU, Madras, April 1979 436
46. The Working Class and the Governmental Crisis 474
47. The People Must decide 478
48. United we go into the Battle 482
49. Face the Elections single mindedly 489
50. What the Parliamentary Elections will decide 494
51. What next? 499
52. Venkat Raman's Budget 503



Com. B. T. Ranadive

Born
December 19, 1904

Died
April 6, 1990

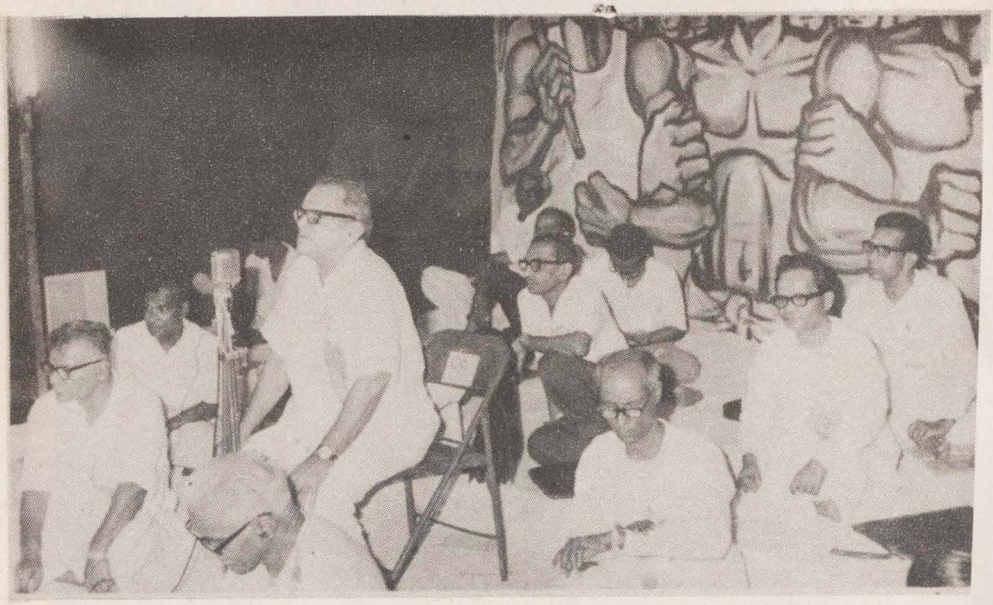


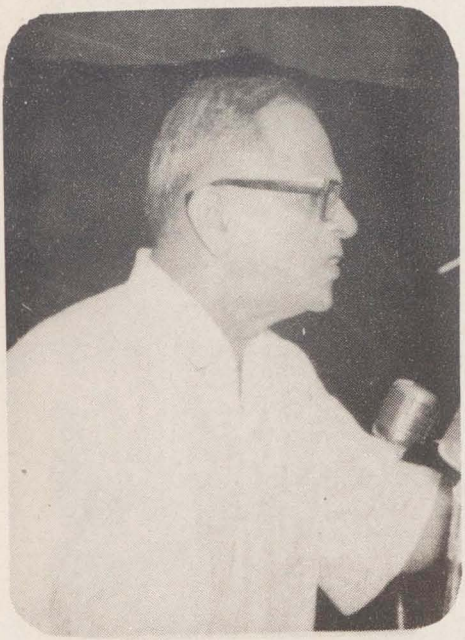
With wife Vimal & Son Uday

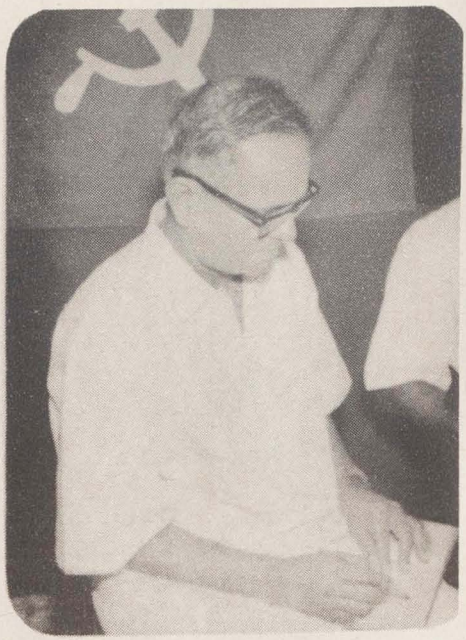
At the age of 30

At the age of 23

With P. C. Joshi & G. Adhikari





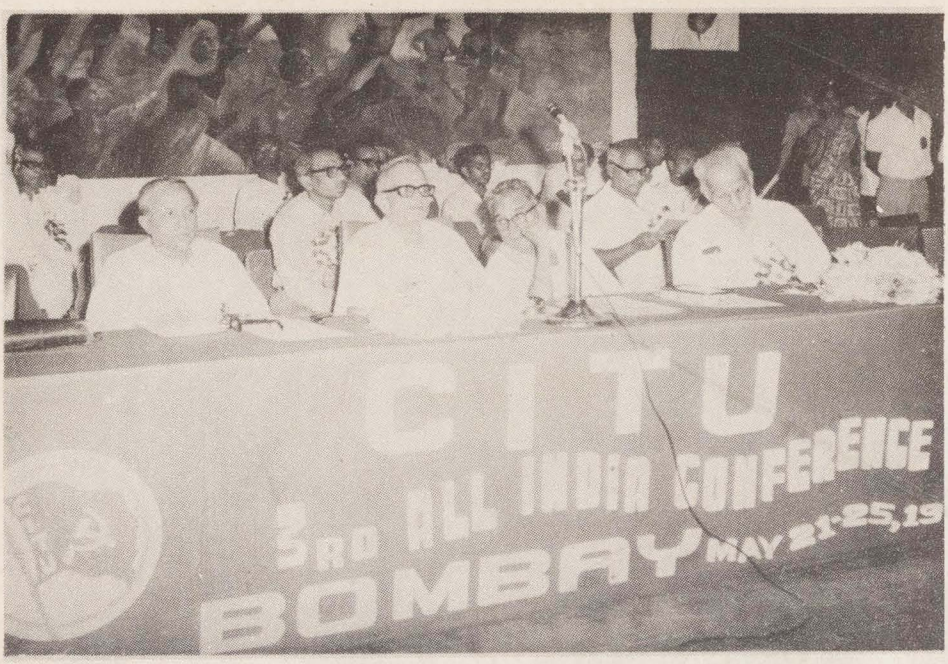


Deeply engrossed in building up the Party

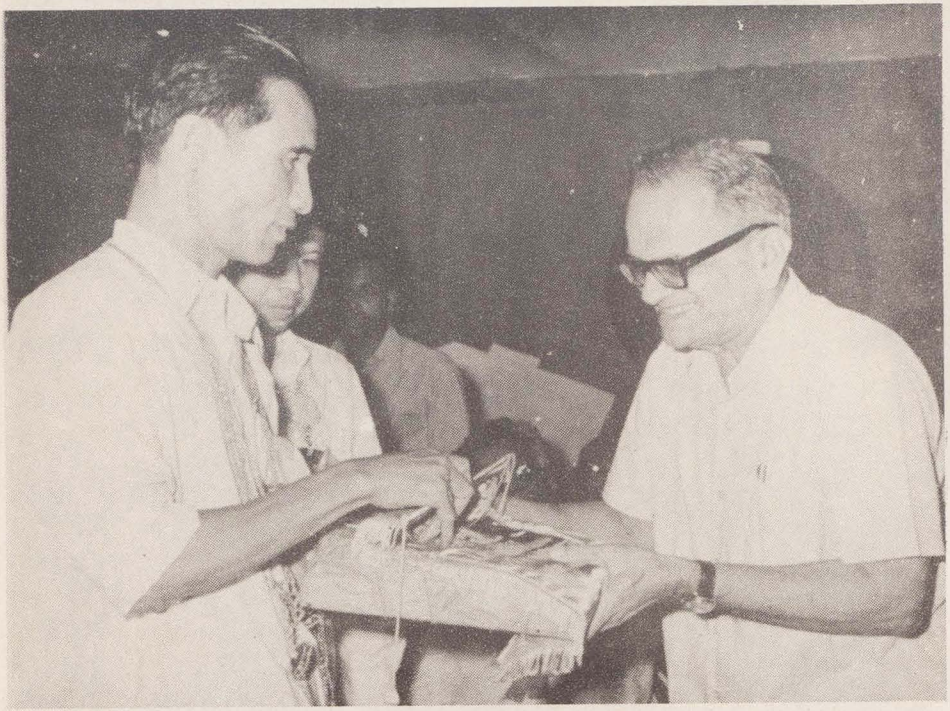
Conducting Meetings & Conferences

Conducting Meetings & Conferences

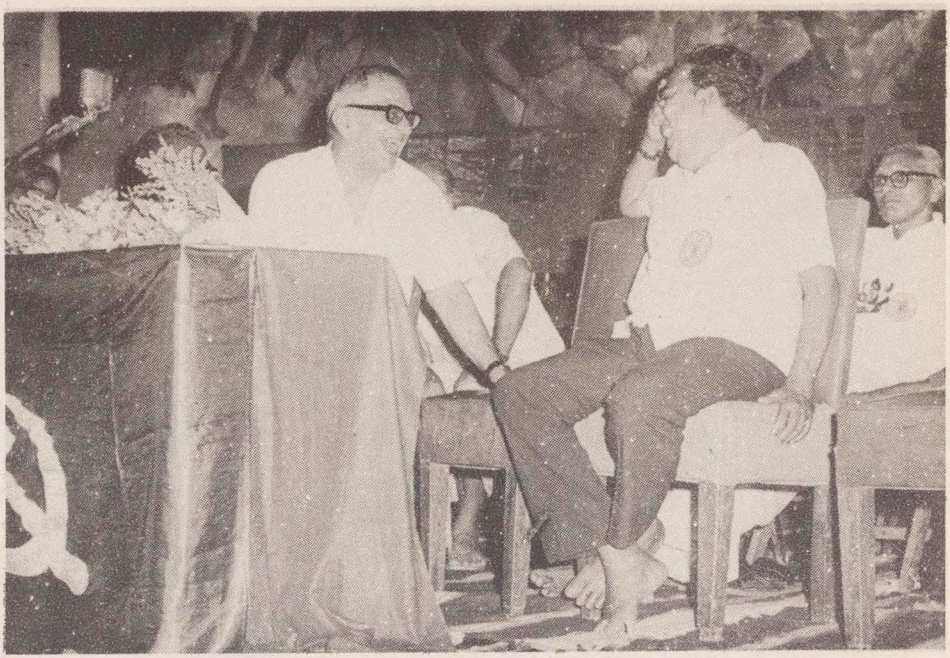
Conducting Meetings & Conferences



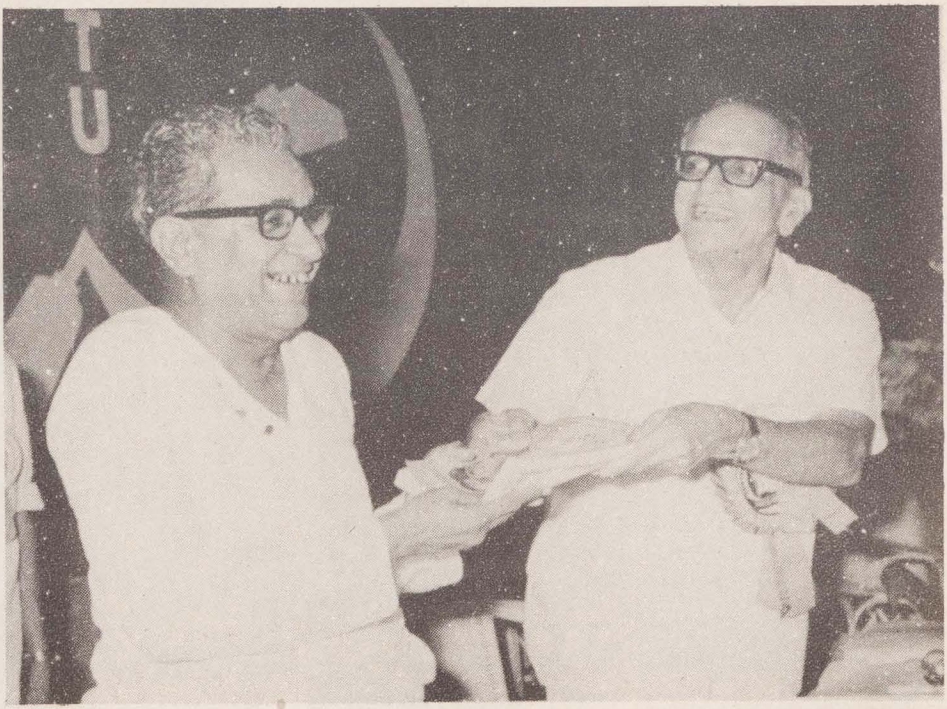
During 3rd CITU Conference, Bombay



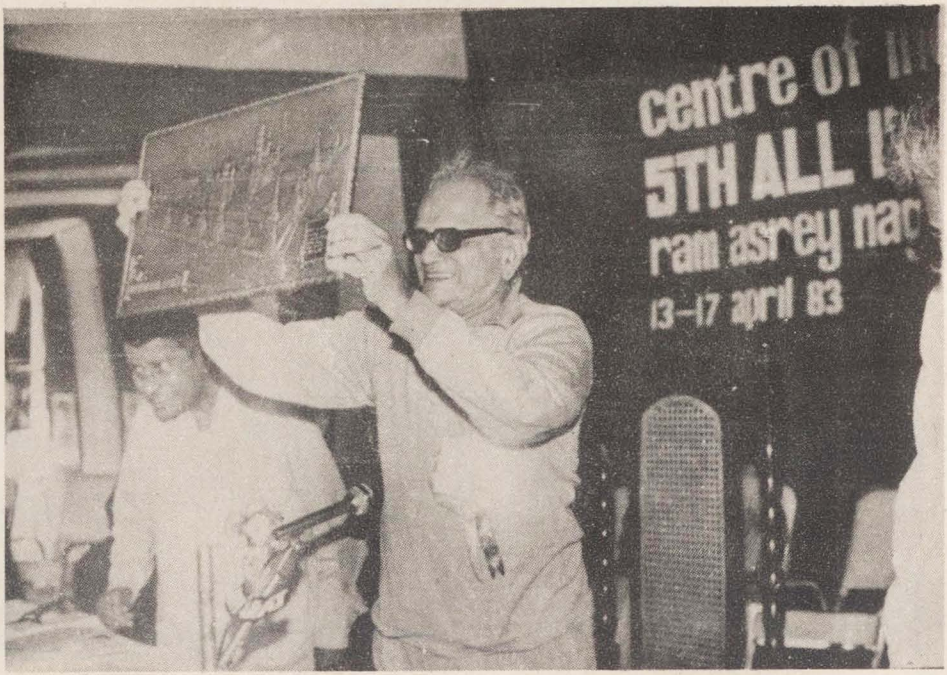
With a delegation from Vietnam



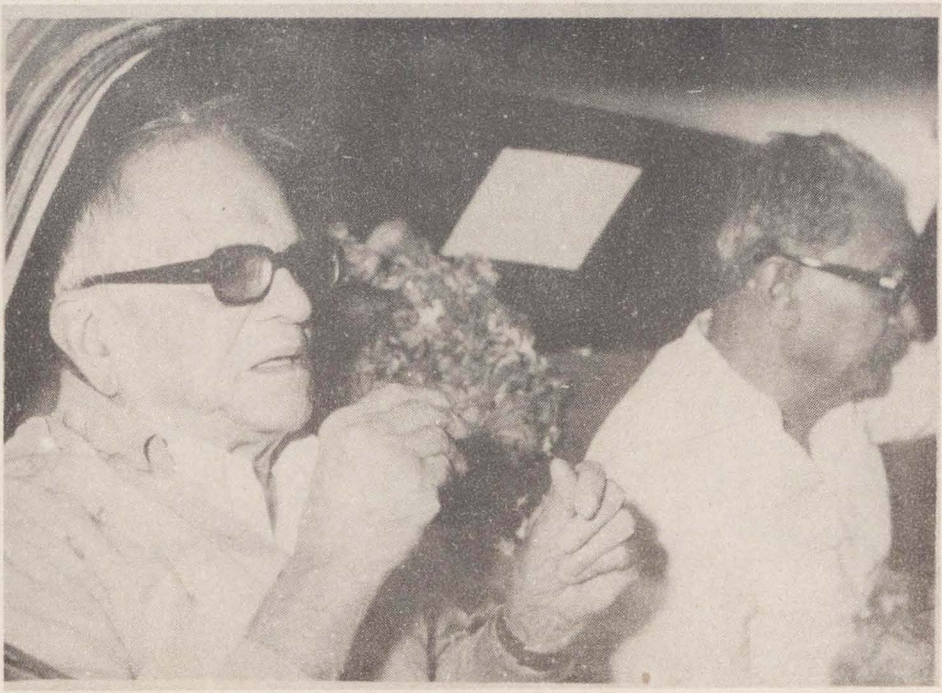
With Com. A. K. Gopalan



With Com. P. Ramamurthy



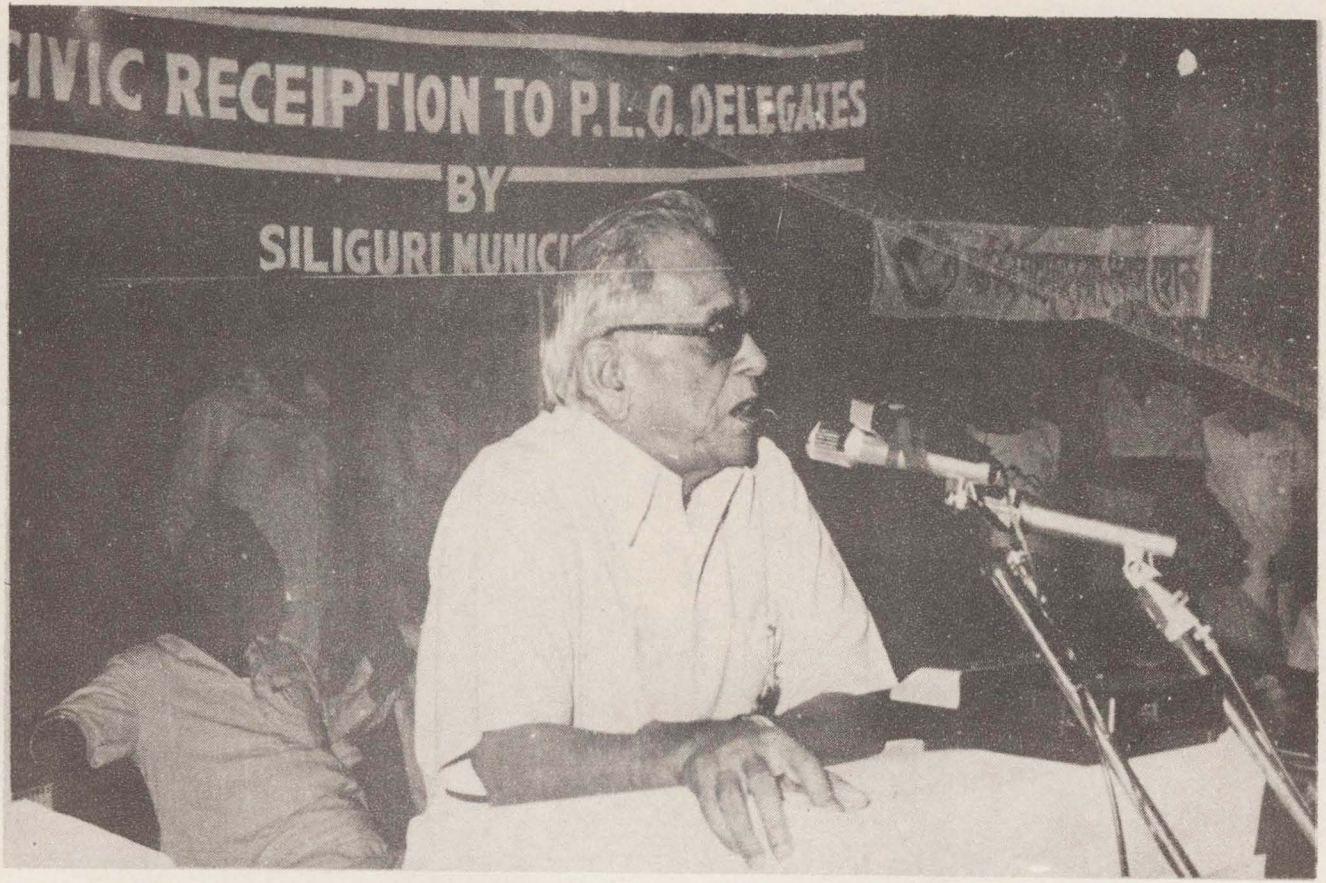
Alongwith Com. Nrishi ngha Chakraborty



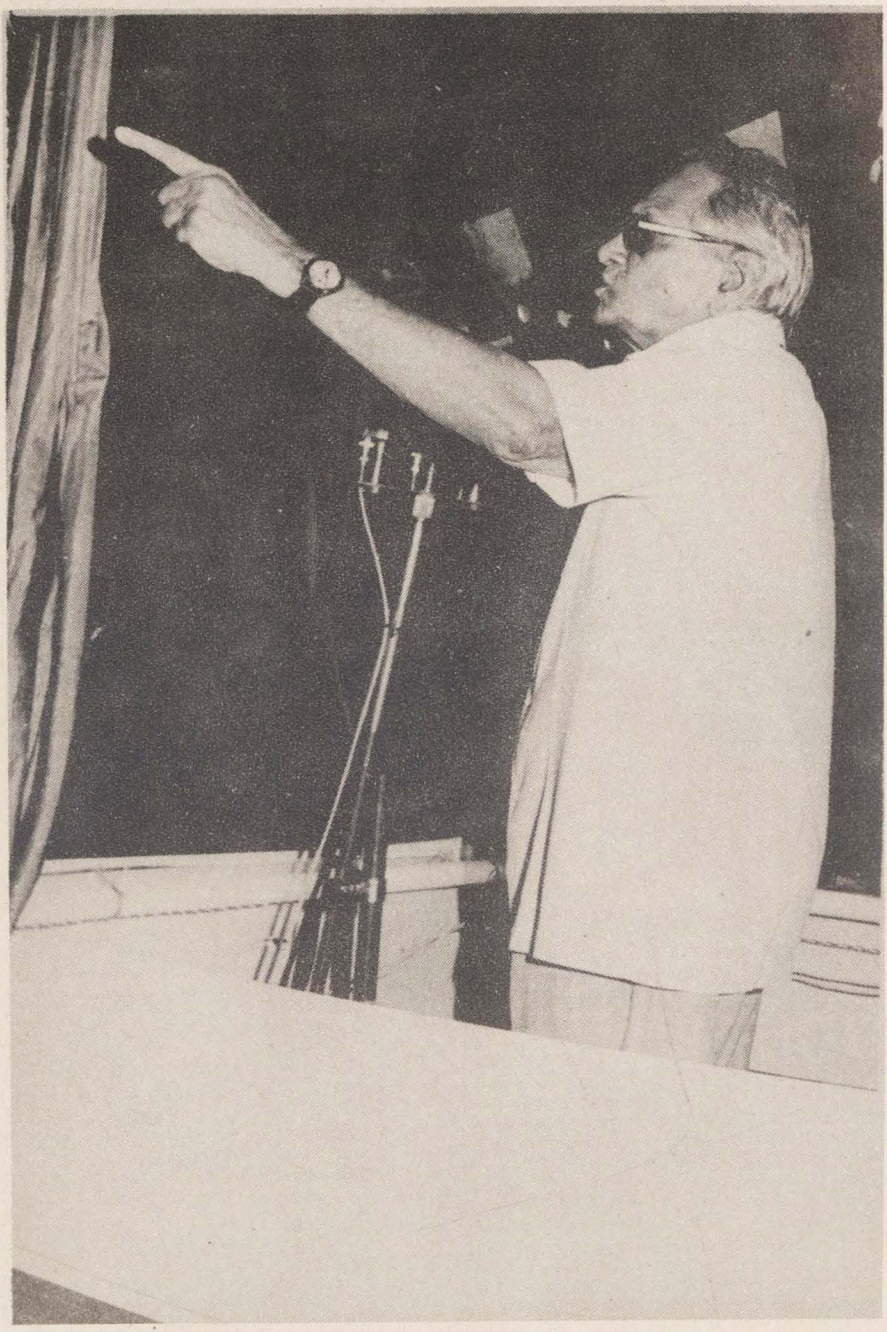
During 5th CITU Conference with Com. P. R.

Addressing Conference & Public Meetings

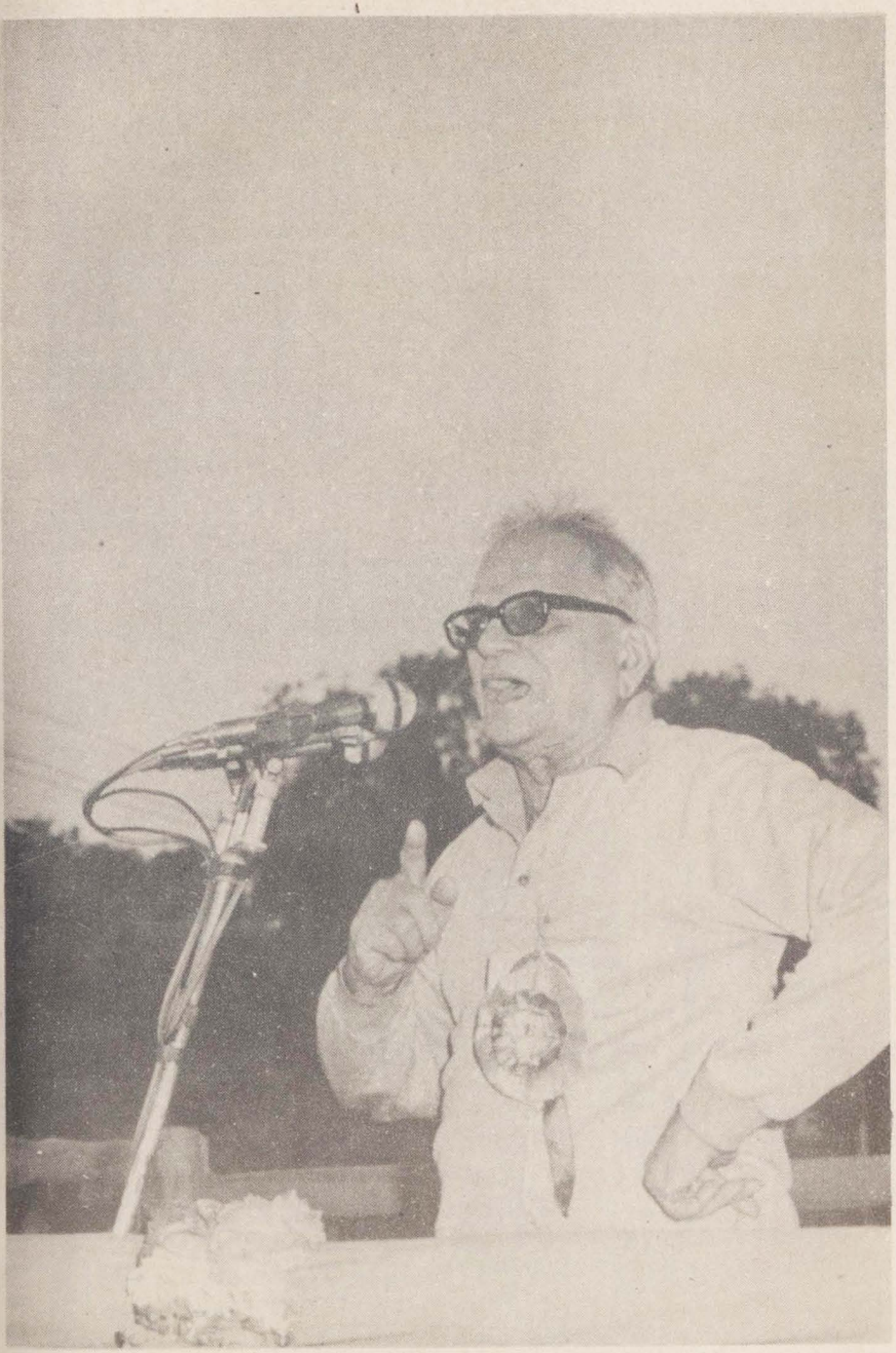
Addressing Conference & Public Meetings



Addressing Conference & Public Meetings



Addressing Conference & Public Meetings



Addressing Conference & Public Meetings

At the 1st All India Women's Conference

1

Resolution of Goa Convention

The following is the text of the resolution adopted in the Convention of the members of General Council and State Committee members of AITUC held at VASCO DA GAMA on 9th and 10th April, 1970. This was drafted by Com. B. T. RANADIVE

1. A Grave situation faces the militant trade union movement and all class-conscious workers in the country. The AITUC, which over long years had grown as the rallying centre for all militant trade unions in the country for carrying forward the united struggle of the working class has ceased to be so due to the class collaborationist policies of the Dangeites and is serving as an instrument in their hands for splitting the trade unions and disrupting the united struggles of the workers.

2. These class collaborationist policies were marked out as the official line of the AITUC in the notorious "Two Pillar Policy". The Government's plans of capitalist development in collaboration with foreign monopolies and with the massive aid from America and other imperialists, whose bankruptcy stands completely exposed today, were eulogised as plans for "independent development" and the working class was asked to support the Plans. The working class was thus sought to be disarmed and prevented from playing its role of rallying the democratic forces against the danger of penetration of American imperialism on our economic, political, social and cultural life, and in the struggle against the Government's Plans and policies in the interest of monopolists and big landlords.

3. As a natural corollary to this line, the dominant leadership of the AITUC praised to the skies the tripartite conferences and committees, the wage boards and such other machinery set up by the

Government to sow illusions in the working class and paraded them as big victories of the working class. Rationalisation 'without tears' was accepted in 'national interest'. The leadership gave its full co-operation to the Government's scheme of 'Productivity' and accepted in 'national interest'. The leadership gave its full co-operation to the Government's scheme of 'Productivity' and so-called 'workers' education', the so-called 'Code of Discipline', weighted against the working class, and which was used by the employers as an instrument to malign the militant working class struggles, was agreed to. And finally in 1962, Industrial Truce was accepted.

4. When the militant workers began to revolt against these fetters on their struggle and carried on their class struggle, the dominant leadership resorted to bureaucratic dictatorial methods in the trade unions. The Dangeite leaders in many unions, entered into the agreements with the management on questions of increased work-loads, rationalisation and automation, wages, bonus, etc. against the interests of the workers, and behind the backs of the Executives of the unions and the general body of the workers and thus forced them on the workers. When this met with the resistance of the workers and fearing the verdict of the workers, in many unions the Dangeites refused to hold elections and submitted fake returns to the authorities. When, finding the democratic functioning was totally barred, many of workers held the elections on their own initiative, the AITUC dominent leadership refused to recongnise them and kept these workers and unions outside the organisation. Where elections were held and the Dangeites were defeated, they, in many cases, split away and formed rival unions and these rival unions were given affiliation to the AITUC. Hundreds of militant unions that sought affiliation were denied affiliation and thus hundreds of thousands of militant fighting workers were kept outside the pale of the AITUC.

5. Repeated efforts made by the class conscious workers and those who wanted to carry forward the line of class struggle to put an end to this disruption and unite the trade unions were frustrated by the dominant leadership. The leadership refused to implement even the principle that had long ago been accepted by the AITUC itself of unity of the trade unions on the basis of demcratic elections with proportional representation and democratic decision by the workers and their elected organs of all questions affecting the

workers.

6. Not content with all these, the dominant leadership inflated the membership of their unions, refused check up of membership, on the basis of any norm and affiliated bogus paper unions—all with a view to keep absolute control over the organisation.

7. With this control, it nominated its own nominees in Governmental bodies, such as Tripartite Committees, Wage Boards, Study Groups of the National Labour Commission, in which these so-called representatives of the working class joined hands with the employers and Government representatives, demanded the curtailment of the right to strike, slandered the working class action and asked for greater police intervention in workers' struggles. Dange's own role in the Bonus Commission, as a result of which the bonus then obtained by hundreds of thousands of workers has been substantially reduced, is well known.

8. Despite all these disruptive and splitting activities, the militant trade unions struggled hard to forge the unity of the workers from below and launched heroic united struggles against the determined offensive of the employers and the Government to transfer the burden of the crisis on to their shoulders. Their awakening brought into existence the U.F. Governments of West Bengal and Kerala, which served as weapons in their hands to carry forward the struggles. The general strikes of jute, tea gardens, textile workers of West Bengal and innumerable other strikes and other forms of struggles, in which they had the fullest support of the U.F. Government, compelled the employers to concede their demands, and workers won victories unknown in recent years. Similarly the strike of 2 lakh plantation, cashewnut, and coir workers and agricultural workers won substantial wage in bases, thanks to the policy of the U.F. Government of Kerala, which served as weapons in their hands to carry forward the struggles. The general strikes of jute, tea gardens, textile workers of West Bengal and innumerable other strikes and other forms of struggles, in which they had the fullest support of the U.F. Government, compelled the employers to concede their demands, and the workers won victories unknown in recent years. Similarly the strike of 2 lakh plantation, cashewnut, and coir workers and agricultural workers won substantial wage in bases, thanks to the policy of the U.F. Government of Kerala. These victories inspired the workers throughout the country and enabled them win sizeable increases in

wages, in the Engineering, jute and other industries, both in the public and private sectors.

9. Precisely at such a time, when the leaders of the Bangla Congress and its Chief Minister, started slandering the working class actions and struggles and launched a campaign of vilification of the Government, the dominant leadership of the AITUC abetted and encouraged the Bangla Congress leaders. When the working class and employees marched together to smother the conspiracy to topple the Government and take away from their hands this weapon of struggle, these leaders did their utmost to prevent the rallying of these forces. When after the toppling of this Government the working class of West Bengal went ot a general strike on 17th March 1970, these leaders came forward as strike-breakers. They had no compunction in joining hands with employers' Goondas in barbarous assaults and shooting down of workers as in Kesoram Rayon Mills in order to break the strike. Their activities led to the butchering on many militant workers on that single day. The unity and awakening of the workers, however, failed their nefarious attempts and the general strike was a glorious success.

10. In Kerala, these leaders in collusion with the Congress and all reactionary parties toppled the U.F. Government and formed a mini-front Government with the support of the Congress and all reactionary parties and groups; after toppling the U.F. Government these leaders have come forward as strike-breakers in every struggle of the working class—the coir workers' strike, the road transport workers' strike and agricultural workers' struggle and supporters of the unprecedented repression let loose by the mini-front Government against the struggling workers.

11. Thanks to the class collaborationist policies of the dominent leadership, the AITUC thus has been reduced to an appendage of the ruling Congress party. It can no longer serve as a rallying centre for the militant working class, and for forging the unity of the entire class struggle against the attack on the monopolists and their policies, if these collabortionist policies, the anti-democratic and dictatorial methods, and disruptive and splitting activities are not given up forthwith.

12. The Convention of the members of the General council and of State Council and Committees of the AITUC is convinced that the struggle for trade union unity cannot be advanced if the unions who want to carry on the line of class struggle, unity and trade

union democracy continue to remain inside the AITUC. It must be pointed out, that in the greater united struggles that took place in the last few years it was these unions which forged unity and launched strtuggles. They did so, by overcoming the obstruction of the dominant leadership and by forging unity of the workers from below. It is equally significant that in these centres like Bombay, where Dangeites boast of great influence, they did not launch any struggle worth the name, despite the fact that the working class faced tremendous offensive such as closures, retrenchment, bonus and wage cuts. No wonder that they offered no resistance to that anti-working class, fascist forces-the Shiva Sena—but on the other hadn began to kotow it and actually supported its call for a 'Bombay Bandh' in a chauvinistic campaign.

13. This Convention, therefore, is of the opinion that a new All-India Trade Union Centre should be established to carry on the struggle for unity and to rally the entire working class around consistent policies of class struggle, and for unleashing the united struggles of the workers against the offensive of the ruling class.

14. It decides to hold a Conference of the delegates of all trade unions, who are opposed to the class collaborationist and disruptive policies of the dominant leadership of the AITUC to discuss this proposal, take a final decision and chalk-out further course of action.

15. The Convention is happy to note that the BPTUC, which has stood in the forefront of the struggle against these disruptive and class collaborationist policies, which has such a proud record of leading united struggles has come forward to invite the conference in West Bengal. The Convention gladly accepts the invitation, and decides to hold the Conference on 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st May 1970.

16. It authorises the BPTUC to make all the arrangements for holding the Conference. The members of the General Council of the AITUC, who had boycotted the Guntur Session and other members who agree with this line will take all steps for the successful conduct of the Conference.

17. The Convention invites all Trade Unions, who are wedded to the policy of elass struggle, who want to fight these disruptionist and collaborationist policies, to send their Delegates and take their rightful place in this great battle of the Indian working class.

2

Foundation Conference Of CITU

The All India Trade Union Conference was held in Lenin Nagar, Ranji Stadium, Calcutta on 28th, 29th and 30th May 1970 as per decision of Convention of AITUC General and State Committee members at Goa on 9th and 10th of April, 1970.

A Reception Committee was constituted by the West Bengal State Committee of AITUC including Com. Jyoti Basu as Chairman and Com. Manoranjan Roy as General Secretary.

The Reception Committee enrolled 50,000 workers as members of the Committee. Various sub-committee were formed to make elaborate preparations for the Conference. The response among the workers for the Conference was so great that though the Reception Committee gave a call for a fund of Rs.2 lakhs the collection exceeded Rs. 3 lakhs in a short period of three weeks. Arrangements for housing delegates was made in 22 camps while free food and transport was supplied to all the delegates. The Reception Committee prepared an exhibition depicting the major highlights of the Indian Trade Union movement. The Indian People's Theatre Association staged cultural shows for thousands of workers who assembled in outdoor stadium every evening, while leaders from several states spoke on working class struggle in their states, and gave a brief resumes of the proceeding of the delegate-session. A volunteer Corps of 5000 was formed to discharge all responsibilities during the Conference. The People's Relief Committee, Calcutta, made adequate arrangements to give every medical assistance to delegates whenever necessary.

Com. Krishnapada Ghosh hoisted the red flag and placed wreath at the martyrs' column to mark the beginning of the Conference on 28th May, 1970. The delegates and observers then assembled in the pandal at 1 p.m.

Com. M K Pandhe welcomed the delegates on behalf of the participants in Goa Convention and proposed the following names as presidium of the conference.

1) Com. Mohammed Ismail,
2) Com. Suhrid Mullick Chowdhury,
3) Com. Haridas Malakar,
4) Com. E. Balanandan,
5) Com. Bimalananda Mukherjee,
6) Com. Balasubramaniam,
7) Com. S Y Kolhatkar.

Com. Jyoti Basu, Chairman, Reception Committee then delivered his address welcoming the delegates.

Com. P Ramamurti proposed the following names for the Credentials Committee :

1. Com. M K Pandhe,
2) Com. A Nallasivan,
3) Com. Shanti Ghatak,
4) Com. Biren Roy.

Com. Manoranjan Roy seconded the proposal which was adopted unanimously by the conference.

Com. P Ramamurti explained the salient features of his report which was earlier circulated among the delegates in English, Hindi Bengali, Urdu, Tamil and Malayalam languages.

The conference then passed some resolutions before Com. Ramamurti's reply to the debate.

Com. M K Pandhe then placed before the conference the report of the Credential Committee stating that, 1759 unions having a total membership of 8,04,637 had joined the conference and sent 4264 numbers of delegates. Moreover 116 delegates and 1134 observers had been sent by fraternal unions, making the total member of participation to 5514.

Com. B T Ranadive summed up the conclusions of the conference.

The Presidium then conducted the elections of the new office-

bearers and the General Council members, which included Com. B T Ranadive as President and Com. P Ramamurti as General Secretary.

The open session of the conference was held at Brigade Parade ground where nearly a million of workers participated.

CONCLUDING SPEECH

Comrades,

We are now reaching the end of our labours during this historic conference that we have held. You all represent the various trade union and industrial centres of India. You have come to Bengal where some of the biggest working class fights in recent history have been fought and you have all seen that the new T.U. Central organisation that we have launched already commands the respect and influence of lakhs of workers, who face lathi charges and police bullets, as part of their trade union struggle.

This conference and this new organisation have come into existence not because of a fight between two leaders, not because of a factional fight between two sections but on the crest of one of the biggest strike waves that swept over India involving lakhs of workers. And it is they who have participated in the recent struggles, those that have experienced the repression and those that have also experienced the joy and happiness of being victorious in these struggles-it is they who are founding this new organisation, the lakhs of workers, their leaders and not this or that individual. I am asking you to remember this because after a few years, some other reformist, like Dange, might write and say that the AITUC was split by this or that person.

We are starting a new organisation, out of the very needs of the workers' struggles, out of the class struggle, to which we adhere.

You all have endorsed the proposition of the Goa Convention that it is no longer possible to work inside the AITUC dominated

by the Dange leadership, for working class unity, for class struggle, for defence of the daily interests of the working class. It is not because there was a penchant for a new organisation, but because the very necessity of promoting the unity of the working class demanded that the initiative should no longer be surrendered to the Dange Group, to the reformist group in the AITUC but should be taken by the militant unions, by the workers themselves. It is out of this that the necessity for the new organisation arose.

During the course of the debate on the report of Com. P. Ramamurti, every one of you who spoke, endorsed his report and arrayed much more evidence, your own independent evidence, to show how the dominant leadership of the AITUC was either disrupting the struggle or betraying the working class and doing everything that was necessary to disrupt the unity of the working class. That is now our common experience. It is this common experience that has brought us here together. But is that all? Is the Conference being called to deliberate on Dange & Company? Have we come here travelling hundreds of miles, have we gathered there in thousands only to declare our opinion about the dominant leadership of the AITUC? We are concerned with something much more serious, something which is very vital for the very existence of the working class and that is the class struggle against our main enemy. It is only because the dominant leadership would not allow the All India Trade Union Congress to function as an organ of that class struggle, it is only because it would not rally behind it the entire working class to fight our main class enemies, it is only because of this that we have to part company with it and not because we have some personal quarrel with it.

Our comrades must remember that in India, today, we are locked in a deadly combat with our main class enemies, against the monopolists against the big capitalists, and the Government which protects them. Com. Ramamurti mentioned what is happening in other countries, briefly referred to the international situation. While we are carrying on the T.U. movement, we have to remember the period in which we are living in; if we do not remember the international developments and the mighty battles that are taking place all over the world our Conference will not have taught you much. You passed a resolution on Cambodia. From where did American imperialism got this courage to attack a country like Cambodia, when its military prestige lies in dust in Vietnam? Does

it show the strength of American imperialism or is it not the gamble of a desperate adventurer who now being cornered from all sides, wants to gamble with his very life, with his very existence? That is the world situation, to which some reference was made by earlier speakers. We, the working class of the world, we, the toilers of the world, we, the common people of the world, are on the march, on the victorious march. This age is ours, this age is of the common people and the working class, and whatever the tribulations and trials mightcome, whatever bombs American imperialism might hurl against anyone, the judgement is already written on imperialism and capitalism—you are a dead society, bound to be dead in the near future; (applause) and the working class is going to bury you.

The entire socialist world, the mighty Soviet Union, People's China with its breath-taking advance, the imperishable struggle of the Vietnamese people—all are the proud achievements of the world working class. A titanic struggle between socialism and imperialism is going on and we are part of this struggle. It is in this period when the whole world is in turmoil, that we are living and every struggle of ours, even in the remotest corner of India, even in the remotest factory, has to partake something of the big events that are taking place in the world. That is why today you find that every struggle has to be desperately fought. Every TU struggle has to be desperately fought, organised consciously if you really want to defend the daily interests of the working class. On the one hand, we have passed in the last two years through a period of tremendous onslaught against us, the type of which the present generation of workers had never seen, something which the earlier generation of the thirties, and forties, had seen. That tremendous onslaught took the form of factories closing, thousands being rendered unemployed, workers being crushed, workers being repressed, strikes extending for four and half months. In the preceeding period, reformism had taught that the strike was only some kind of satyagraha like activity. Now every strike struggle has become a serious struggle. Despite this in many struggles, the working class of Tamilnadu, the working class of many other States came out victorious, and a peculiarity of the position in Bengal was that in the midst of the worst capitalist crisis, the working class helped by the Government which played a vital role in defending it, turned the tables against the capitalist class on many issues and won signal

victories as in jute, in tea and in textiles. And yet in the country as a whole the working class lost tremendously, had to put up with unemployment, closure of factories, because the revisionists failed to organise the struggle and betrayed it. To a great extent the burdens of the crisis were passed on to the workers. The Government advertise every day, that the economic crisis is no more. The next day it says that some of the public sector factories must be closed. Unemployment goes up, economic conditions cotinue to deteriorate.

The economic crisis is shattering the unity of our enemies. Ten years ago, five years back, four years back, these very people stood united against us. The Congress stood united against us, against the working class, against the common man. By 1967, the Congress unity disappeared. Our workers do not know, our ordinary people do not know it is their hands that have shaken the foundation of the Congress, it is their struggles that have shaken the foundation of the Congress and today, it stands divided. From the factories, the voice is now coming, my enemy is getting weaker, and weaker, and hence, attempts are being made to suppress our movement, on the other hand, the ruling class is getting weakened. At the same time, somebody else is attacking us. We are being disrupted by the reformists and revisionists. A simultaneous attack is being made on us by the Government, the capitalists and the reformist and revisionist disruptors.

It is in this context that we have to understand the tasks before our organisation. Economic crisis is intensifying, political crisis is deepening and the deepening of that crisis no longer means simply police, jail, no longer means simply lathi-charges, not even martyrdom by dying in a police firing. It often leads to stabbing by goondas in the lanes and bye-lanes of Calcutta. That is the shape of class struggles which has started in W. Bengal. It is one thing to face the police. But you return home after a good day's T.U. work, enter your lane and you are attacked from behind by a goonda of the capitalist or perhaps of one of your earlier united front parties. In Kerala the same thing is happening. When we say that the class struggle is deepening, understand that in these two States, especially in West Bengal, even in T.U. struggles, even in ordinary struggles, in any struggle, there is some murder, some stabbing, some shedding of blood. Bloodless struggles seem to have been over, our enemies are attacking us continuously.

We have already explained why we have to start this new organisation. It is precisely because in this period, only an organisation devoted to the unity of the working class, and pledged to lead its united resistance will be able to defend its daily interests. Others will just charter and in the end, betray. That is why to accept the domination of the Danage Group measns surrendering the initiative to fight the common battle of unity to these who are out for disruption. But it is not only T.U. disruption we have seen. It is not simply lack of democratic functioning that we see. Something much deeper had happened during the last 3-4 years, and that something you see in the complete political somersault of the people who are now in the leadership of the AITUC. During the last four years, step by stop they have completed their treachery. In Bengal and Karala, instead of joining hands with the working class and other forces, to organise a united front against the Congress party and its policies, these people have gone to the other side, breaking up the U.F. in Bengal, breaking up the U.F. in Kerala and forming a ministry in Kerala which is repressing the workers, which is repressing the peasants. This political collapse of the dominant party in the AITUC has had its repercussions and its impact on their T.U. line. Their line of trade union disruption follows from their political line which has taken them deeper and deeper into co-operation with the Indiara Congress. We demanded democratic functioning, we criticised their class collaborationist policies; they have openly joined hands with the Congress Party, with the Government; they are even supporting the anti-strike proposals and legislations. How dangerous it is in this critical period to have an organisation which is expected to lead lakhs of workers and struggle, but whose leadership betrays them into the hands of the enemy ?

In the speeches made by our comrades, no doubt much enthusiasm was shown, no doubt sme comrades came and said this separation should have taken place three years back itself. But we require something more than mere enthusiasm to make our organisation an impregnable fortress of working class untiy. Have we given up all our wrong ideas? If you play 'holi' with the revisionists, then the reformist colour is bound to stick to your clothes or on your body. All these days you have more or less-been playing 'holi' with the reformists. Our criticism was more like throwing some 'gulal' and nothing else. Now we have to reveal ourselves to our-

selves. A unity resolution was passed at our instance at the Bombay Session of the AITUC in 1966. I will not ask how many of you have tried to practise that resolution. In that resolution we agreed that in order to unite the working class inside the AITUC, we should carry on the fight against the monopolists, against American imperialism; that resolution also contained a demand for friendly relations with People's China and they under our pressure, could not oppose a single item. What happened? We did not do much to carry it into practice, leaving the initiative to the revisionists.

We charged them with economism. We charged them saying that they were not taking the working class seriously. We said that during the course of the strike struggles and the militant struggle of the working class, they were trying to imprison the workers in the economism, they were not trying to take them forward to a greater socialist consciousness, they were not trying to take them to a greater democratic consciousness; no doubt in our advanced cadres we have overcome or are over coming these weaknesses; but in many parts of the country I am not saying everywhere-what are our credentials, the credentials to be revolutionary, trade unionist? Our practice has yet to change. We have correctly understood the Dange line is a reformist and revisionist line, and have rejected it in the T.U.s, have started our organisation, but if our practice remains the same, then this becomes a non-genuine, an insincere fight, a fight which need not be started. That is why we say, the resolutions, we have passed, the resolution on international solidarity, the resolution on threat of American imperialism to our country, the resolution for agrarian revolution, the resolution for supporting the peasantry, the resolution for the democratic front, these should become the common consciousness of the ordinary worker; they should not be stored in the consciousness of a few leaders only. This is the point that must be remembered.

We are starting a new organisation with a new line. We wish to give a new orientation to the T.U. movement, But for that all the leaders of the TU movement, every one of us, must change his own consciousness, must be determined to give up the old consciousness and the old practice; then alone will we be able to carry in the concrete a correct struggle against the reformist line of all others. And what is our struggle? We have already stated that our struggle is struggle for the unity of the working class, unity of the T.U. movement. That unity should extend to all workers. If you study

the TU statistics of our country, you know that a major part of the working class is unorganised, it is neither in the INTUC nor with the HMS nor with the AITUC. If you take the strike struggles of 1968, 40 per cent man days were lost in the strike struggles carried on by unions which were not affiliated to any central organisation. Understand, 40 per cent of the man-days lost in this country, recent statistics show, were carried on by unions which were not affiliated to any central organisations. During the last year or so, unions of the AITUC were responsible for conducting 47 per cent of the total strikes in India. A major part of these strikes were fought in West Bengal. And we find that the most important battles in West Bengal were fought by unions which are represented here and which are no longer with the AITUC (Applause) This is a statistical fact which is recorded long before we decided to take our own course and have our own organisation. That is a matter of pride for us but even then a large number of strike struggles are carried on by trade unions outside any central organisation. TU. Unity, unity for resistance means every worker whether he belongs to some organisation or not, whether he is organised or unorganised, must be rallied, on this or that issue, to join the common class struggle. And that is why we must see today that the stguggle for unity, which we want, becomes the foundation stone, the foundation of our activities.

In their anger, some people might concentrate their fire on the revisionists and forget the main enemies. This will be inexcusable. It is exactly the thing that the revisionists do when they attack us. Should we do that mistake? We fight reformism, we fight revisionism, we fight every such tendency, only because our common class struggle against our main enemy is hampered. Every worker must see in us the sacred defender of his interests, the sacred defender of the unity of the working class in the struggle against the employers; they must realise that we fight the revisionists or the policies of the INTUC only because they disrupt the common struggle. Our unions if they are afraid now, of bold U.F.tactics, of bold U F offers to revisionist unions, reformist unions, wherever they have following, then we will fail in our efforts for unity. This is the time when the working class demands unity, this is the time when the working class on its own thinks that unless it is united, the offensive can not be met. This is the time when our organisation must jump into the fray, and tell everyone, here is the banner of unity, of common

action, joint action. Let everyone who stands for unity irrespective of his organisation and affiliation join this banner, experience all policies and decide for himself the correct way. (Applause). This is our message to the working class, not a secluded organisation to protect this or that group but at the same time, no compromise with reformist practice, no compromise with revisionist sabotage, no more cheating of the working class in the name of a false conception of unity. Working class unity, working class struggle and fight against the reformist sabotage in daily struggle-these must go together. The fight against reformist ideology and practice must be understood by the working class not as a partisan fight between this and that party, but as a fight between a correct policy for the working class and a wrong policy for the working class (Applause). This is the tactics of uniting the working class and simultaneously isolating all poisonous ideologies.

You must remember also what great importance Lenin attached to the fight against reformism in the TU movement. He told the advanced workers in Germany, in England, in America, you will never be able to raise the question of political power of the working class unless you vanquish the reformist influence in the TUs and drive out the reformist leaders. To achieve it, you must have influence over the mass of workers, win their confidence. Therefore, the fight against reformist practice in the trade unions has to be combined with the growing struggle for unity in action of the working class, the two cannot be separated. If the two get separated, you are finished. The one is the complement of the other, the more you are able to organise the unity of action and struggle, the more difficult it becomes for the reformists, to cheat the working class; the more you are able to carry on your propaganda properly against reformism and its concrete practice, the easier it becomes for you to organise joint actions of the working class and face the capitalist class. You have to re-organise yourselves completely. If supposing we were to put a condition for affiliating, that only those unions will be affiliated, who at least follow their own constitution, i.e. hold their monthly meetings regularly, hold their Executive meetings regularly, do not take decisions without consulting the executive of the workers-how many unions represented here can be affiliated? Absence of democratic functioning of unions is a basic disease of the trade union movement in our country. Democratic functioning means what? In most of the unions, is it a

fact or not that the ordinary worker is more of a guest in the union than the man whose fortress it is, whose house it is. Good, well intentioned, honest, men of integrity-but some of them slowly became trade unions bureaucrats, they dominate the unions. A tendency is there to make the union a preserve of few leaders, instead of a wide-spread organisation of the mass of workers. It only becomes a focal point-the workers are loyal. In strike struggles, they participate, they pay union subscription, but leave the taking of decisions to the leaders. The consciousness that we have created is such that not a single worker protests that you are functioning the union undemocraticially. They think that unions are to be functioned in this manner. It is a business of the leaders to carry on the work of the unions, some times, specially, if strike is there, we will come and join. What is the difference between the reformists and ourselves if we continue unions like this? And we say, we want to unite the working class. When we say that we want to organise the resistance of the working class, we want first of all to say, that the unions of ours must become a real live thing for every workers who rallied round its banner and every worker must consider that here is my fortress, not the leaders' fortress, or the leaders' house, but the ordinary workers' house, that is there, that must be our line (Applause). Otherwise there is no difference between ourselves and the reformists.

Take one of the basic principles of TU organisation which revolutionary experience has taught us, which in the earlier years was a must for every revolutionary, on the basis of which the rank and file workers became the leaders, huge unions were founded, and huge strike struggles could be conducted. In strike struggles, the union executive is not sufficiently broad based to conduct a big strike struggle, a strike committee must be elected not only by union members but all the mass of strikers. And that must be the organ of strike. It is through this organ of strike, that the battle between the reformists and revisionists on the one hand and the revolutionaries on the other hand were fought in the thick of strike struggle, the reformist policy was completely isolated in the strike committees and the revolutionaries marched ahead. But now sometimes strikes go on for months and no strike committee is formed. It is essentially a basic mistake, a wrong thing for which in the end we have to pay some price. Everything that revolutionary experience has taught, if you deviate from it, if you violate it, you

will get some kick somewhere from the capitalists. We demand democratic functioning in the unions, in the strike, everywhere, because we want to bring the wrokers in the common, struggle not as spectators, but as active participants, as active leaders. Then alone the grip of reformist and revisionist idology over the T.U. movement can be broken.

Our work generally is outside the factory, constant political and T.U. work,—that political work which is a part of the T.U. work, that constant work inside the factory is a rarity; it is there in some places, but it is a rarity. What does it mean? Why has the revolutionary experience of the T.U. movement everywhere insisted that for the T.U. its political and economic work, the basic thing must be the factory, where you catch that backward non-T.U. worker, who does not even pay the T.U. dues; if you want to catch him, if you want to have U.F. with him, if you want to have the U.F. with the most backward workers, then catch him where he is-he does not attend even you factory gate meetings, he will not attend your street meetings, but because the capitalist brings him inside the factories we should catch him there. There are the methods of U F with non-T.U workers through which we have to build and forge unity. Inside the factory there may be three unions, several unions; it is only on the factory basis that the U.F. of the workers from below is forged so that the resistance of the top leaders of the various unions crumbles down. That is why we say in the present period unless all the old methods of functioning are changed, unless agitational methods of functioning are changed, and we come to the basic proletarian methods of functioning, and working class democratic methods of functioning you will not be able to unite the workers, you will not be able to organise common resistance. It is not only enough to have good intensions, to have good lines-what it necessary is also to have the correct organisational practice, which will yield results along with the good line.

The present method of our functioning, as well as the reformist functioning come precisely from reformism. As your line is, so your functioning is. If you believe in courts, if you believe in arbitration machinery, if you believe in courts, if you believe in arbitration machinery, if you believe in workers' education schemes prepared by the bourgeois—landlord government, if you believe in representation only, then you exactly have a corresponding or-

ganisation, a few handful of leaders all like-minded people, who will normally accept all arbitration and keep the workers at a distance. Workers may be just members of the organisation but are never consulted. The class collaborationist TU line of the Dange group produced a corresponding TU organisation, the INTUC line produced a corresponding TU orgainsiation. We, who are breaking away from it, must see that, that TU organisation is replaced by a genuinely democratic organisation.

Comrades have asked-what should we do about the conciliation courts and other official machinery? We have come to the conclusion that wage boards, these workers' education schemes, conciliations, arbiration, so much workers' legislation, are all devices applying the brake to the class struggle. They are not devices to help forward the working class struggles. They are devices of the ruling class to put the brake on the working class struggles. This idea, this conception, we must have, this outlook we must have. That does not mean that you will simply from tomorrow, boycott everything. But with what outlook you use them and what do you teach the workers? While utilising these, when necessary, we do not create illusions about them, but by our honest militant and correct functioning, we shall prove to the workers that these are devices to delay our struggle to cheat us; we must repose confidence only in our organisation. But the reformists and revisionists are creating illusions to side-track the struggle. Whether conciliation produces results, whether arbitration produces results, or something else produces results, or legislation produces results, it only depends on how big is your movement to beat the capitalism. If you have a big danda, conciliation may produce good, if you have not got it, it simply ruins you, because everything in the end is the question of the proportionate strength between the two classes at a given question of class struggle.

Then comrades, when we are talking of the disruption of the trade union movement, we must recognise its political origin. The INTUC is based on the Congress ideology; the HMS is part of the same thing, now the Dangeites also are pushing a variant of the same ideology. That is the influence of the bourgeois ideology on the working class.

There was a time when all our comrades said, INTUC is a dalal union. Yes, the leaders acted as open collaborationists, there is no doubt about it, some of them took money, from the capitalists, they

betrayed and still section of workers went behind them. Why? And we were very honest, men of integrity, but they would not join us. Because INTUC at one time, even now to a great extent, represented the influence of the national ideology of the bourgeoisie over the working class, the political following of the Congress party. The workers said this particular leader was bad, but we are not going to leave the Congress. That is while fighting for unity we have to reckon with the political influence of the Congress. We have to fight patiently against this ideology. The task cannot be achieved only by trade union exposure. The membership of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union is now 94,000. One united front strike with INTUC men participating, and the barrier is broken between it and the Red Flag and a vast mass comes to you and joins your union (Applause). All because you understand that it is still a force, we must have united front, you do not call them dalals. The powerful lever of economic struggle, when you correctly applied the U.F. tactics, was able to take the workers to a great extent-not completely-but to a great extent, out of the clutches of bourgeois leaders, at least on the T.U. front and open the flood-gates for our influence.

One anti-working class agreement does not mean that they are finished, one may be finished, one particular indivudual may go down in the eyes of the working class, but not the oganisation because some political affiliations are there. That is why the fight against reformism of the INTUC leadership as well as of the AITUC leadership and HMS leadership has to be carried on concretely, taking into consideration their influence, and every time, in the fight, we must come forward as the people who work for the unity of the working class, united resistance of the working class. Ideological fight combined with every tactic which supports unity of action of the working class-that should be our line so that united resistance and united struggles go ahead. If you make any vacillation here, any mistake here, it is going to give a big jolt,a big shock to us, big set-back.

When we are talking about the politicalisation of the working class, and bringing the working class more and more to common class consciousness, there should not be a tendency to underestimate the importance of the powerful lever of the direct economic struggle. Once again look to West Bengal. In 1967 elections, Hindi speaking jute workers did not move away from the Congress. In

1969 elections, they moved just a litttle. The 1969 jute strike draws all sections in common action and the barrier is broken. The powerful lever of economic struggle operated through the U. F. of several unions, broke age-old barriers, brought the workers together; but if we sit quiet on that and do not develop it into further political consiciousness, there will be a set-back. In our consistant fight for the unity of the working class, united front understanding, joint actions, whatever forms are necessary, we should be prepared to adopt.

We must remember that disruption is not being threatened simply from the T.U. side. Now much more down-right rightist attacks are being made on the working class consciousness and unless the working class consciousness is solidly organised, whatever TU organisation is there in this country, will be endangered.

Attempts are being made to inject our working class with the poision of linguistic chauvinism. If the worker considers that the tie of his language with his capitalist is firmer than his tie of common exploitation with the worker speaking another language, then he is finished. But that is what is being taught in Bombay by the Shiva Sena. The Shiva Sena has arisen in a situation in which reformism has led to the abandonment of class struggle in the working class. Reformism, of the Dange type, reformism of the S.S.P, linguistic chauvinism of all these parties are today really responsible for the ideological base of the Shiva Sena. Similar developments have taken place in Tamil Nadu. In Andhra, it is not even linguistic chauvinism, the issue of Telangana versus Andhra has been raised. In one union, we find one section of the workers is with those who advocate separate Telangana and others are with those who advocate united Visalandhra. Working class is divided. On what issue? Who is dividing them? The landlords. Elsewhere the Jana Sangh attempts to organise communal riots. Ahmedabad, Ranchi, Meerut and now in Maharashtra, have shown the sinister offensive to divide the workers by attacking the Muslim workers and their lives and properties. The Jana Sangh, the Shiva Sena, and other anti-communist organisations are precisely using this weapon to create disruption in T.U. unity so that TU in Bombay for long time dared not think of taking up this challenge. Only when the ordinary worker begins to fight, then alone some kind of life enters into the trade unions. The worker starts that fight because the Shiva

Sena in the name of giving jobs to the Maharashtrians, starts supplying strike-breakers to the capitalists. It is a planned affair to disrupt the common movement and behind it is the hand of the CIA, also. You see the Congress Governments of some States in their fight against the Communists, utilising the same weapon. The Maharashtra Government takes the help of Shiva Sena and supports it. The Congress leaders exploit the same weapon in their struggles against each other, as happened in Ahmedabad under the Syndicate Government. In Delhi, they hold a conference for National Integration and in Bombay, they support those who foment riots. This new challenge, if it is not taken up in time, the common working class movement, the common TU movement will be in danger, and there will be very little left of the common T.U. movement between the linguistic chauvinists, the communal rioters and casteists, all of whom are trying to distort the consciousness of the workers. Unless we devote much attention and take concrete steps to fight this meance, our organisation itself will not be able to make much progress.

Then, finally, what I want to say is, comrades, that we have indicated in a general way in the Constitution how the working class should really step out of its T.U. economism and go ahead. What is already impressing to the working class is precisely the experience of the two U.F. Governments in Kerala and West Bengal. I am not here referring to the activities of these two Governments in defending the interests of the working class to which previous speakers have referred. What I am referring to is the political experience of the working class. What is that political experience? Yes, the U.F. Governments gave it so many concessions. What does it mean? When the working class allies itself with all other democratic forces in the country in the common cause to defeat the Congress, then it gains in economic aims tremendously. It is now perhaps a common experience in West Bengal, but not yet felt in Bombay and other States. It is now clear that if the TU movement does not confine itself to pure economic questions, but considers itself to be part of people's struggles against the existing regime, and makes its own contribution to it, then not only the democratic forces get strengthened, but the T.U. struggle for economic demends of the workers also gets strengthened. The simple truth that millions of people should learn is that the moment this happens, the Government attacks. But why? Because of the work-

ing class and the common man when united increases tremendoulsy. And here again, you see who is afraid of it? Not only the capitalists, not only the Congress parties, but also some of our erstwhile colleagues like the Dange revisionists who were in the U.F. and who now betrayed the U.F. because they are also not too much confident of where exactly this mass of workers and peasants, if they really start marching forward, where exactly they will go. Their vested interests are also affected. This common political experience has to be dinned into the ears of the working class of the various States, telling the workers, this is what the democratic alliance can achieve any time provided the TU and the working class take initiative in releasing these forces, in championing the cause of other sections. In West Bengal, one year back, two years back, a movement started among the workers, to go and protect the crops of small peasants of bargadars or others, crops which were thereatened by the landlords. It was the beginning. But everywhere else, some times the slogan is given but the consciousness is so rooted in economism that actual practice is very little. Our TUs and our orgainisations will commit a fatal blunder if they seek to fight their economic battles in terms of the old ideology, if they tell the workers that the economic battles can be fought in isolation from the other democratic forces, without their consciousness and active support. Class struggle is going to be so fierce that every time fierce attacks will be made, and working class alone will not be able to meet those attacks unless it has got powerful allies in the democratic forces. We have to teach this repeatedly to the workers so that they are completely armed with this outlook.

We said American imperialism was growing threatening the independence of our country. But simultaneously it was taking away the jobs of the working class. Because the crisis was accentuated by our dependence on American loans; devaluation accentuated it leading to closure of engineering factories; and the workers lost jobs. But the trade unions movement was not conscious of it. Today, they say, the export of engineering goods has gone up by 30 per cent during the last year. How? Only because this country has been compelled to quote lower prices. The profits of the capitalists has been made up either by subsidies or lower wages. Thus the people and working class have to pay for the exports. The dependence of the economy on the USA and others is accentuating the economic crisis in this country and has actually started affecting

the jobs of lakhs of our workers. But if you see before you only one engineering employer, and do not see the whole social system and the dependence on America, then you teach nothing to the worker. The INTUC does not do it, the HMS does not do it, the AITUC dominant leadership rearely talks about it. This is where the working class as a class can be more vigilant about national interests, about protecting the interests of all the people of the country, of all the toilers of this country, because the first attack of this policy means loss of jobs for the working class or cut in wages.

The revisionist line has brought disruption in the working class and it is our business and our duty to see that unity is restored in the ranks of the working class and that its fighting forces are organised. The struggle for unity is a serious struggle, it has to be carried on with the great precision, with great confidence and in the bargain and in the process, the forces of disruption have to be isolated. Only then, our organisation can really develop the fighting strength of the working class, can be an effective organ of the struggle to defend the working class and can be an effective organ to develop its consciousness further so that it can discharge its political obligations which history has placed on it. Only then we will be able to seize initiative in the common democratic struggle to replace the bourgeois-landlord Government by a genuine people's government, and forge a durable alliance with the peasant masses and other democratic forces and march to victory against the ruling classes who exploit the people and growingly yield to imperialist pressure.

The trade union movement can never forget that Socialism and freedom from exploitation will remain words if the working class does not consciously struggle to capture power; and that the first steps towards it is to remove the present bourgeois-landlord Govt by a genuine people's Govt. To constantly struggle to replace the present Govt, to initiate and participate in the democratic struggles in alliance with the peasantry, to support the struggles for agrarian revolution, and to fight at each step the attacks of the present Government and for this purpose to throw its full weight for effecting a united front of all democratic forces-these are the necessary tasks of the trade union movement. To the extent that it fulfils them, its way to further advance against exploitation will be cleared.

I thank you very much. (Thunderous Applause).

Foundation Conference of CITU was held at Calcutta on 20-30 May, 1970.

3

On United Action of the Working Class

Resolution in the foundation Conference drafted by BTR May 28-30, 1970

During the last four years, the working class of India has gone through indescribable sufferings. Under the national Planning of the Congress Government, which is only another name for building capitalist industry, with main reliance on and in collaboration with imperialist exploiters from abroad, the working class continued to suffer. The wage gains which it achieved through hardships and prolonged struggles were repeatedly spirited away through inflation and high prices-one of the specific weapons of "national planning." By 1965 itself, the real wage of the working class was reduced to the pre-war starvation wage of the British days.

In the name of planning the working class and the people have been subjected to extortionate taxation - taxations some times forming 40 to 60 per cent of the price of consumer goods. The monstrous defence expenditure running into more than Rs. 1000 crores a year-a result of the reactionary policy of the Govt-has piled further burden on the people.

As the national economy got into growing dependence on American loans and borrowing—the exploitation of the people and the working class increased. The American dictated devaluation of the rupee, increased prices, increased the burden of foreign debts and the working class and the common people had to pay for it through attack on their wages and standard of living. In recent years the foreign debt to imperialists has increased rapidly adding to the burden.

Now every year India must pay Rs. 375 crores to meet her foreign obligations. India must sell her goods abroad at cheaper rate to accomplish which the employers are cutting down wages and increasing work load. The American dictating devaluation further created an acute crisis in the engineering industry during the recession by raising the prices of imported machinery.

The American Oil Companies in our country have been the first to launch the automation offensive and they are intensely anti-Indian and anti-labour. The rate of profit earned by foreign monopoly capital in India is the highest in the world and proves the inhuman exploitation of Indian workers.

The dependence on the foreign monopoly capital and the logic of the capitalist path led to the recent economic crisis, entailing heavy sufferings for the working class and endangering the progress of the country.

A new offensive was launched against the workers—retrenchment, lay-offs, workload, direct or indirect wage-cuts and loss of several gains. The rising cost of living lowered the real wage still further. The rapid rise in unemployment, the figure of registered unemployed in cities already exceeding 3.4 million—created growing uncertainty about jobs and services.

The stoppage of fresh recruitment by many industries especially the Railways, the threat of automation, designed to throw thousands doing clearical jobs, all added to the sufferings of the workers and employees.

The workers of engineering, textile, plantation, mining and other industries were the warst sufferers.

The attempts of the capitalist class and the Government to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the workers evoked dogged resistance from the working class who waged protracted strike battles extending over months. Several lasted for more than four months, reminding the working class of its tenacious battles in the period of the 1929 world economic crisis.

In many places, the workers united their ranks, brought all unions, irrespective of political affiliations and suceeded in offering united opposition. The united textile strike of Madurai and Coimbatore underlined the urgency of the urge for unity was early as in 1966.

This same urge for unity was in evidence during the 1967 general elections and 1969 mid-term elections when trade unions

and workers opposed to the Congress regime joined hand with other democratic forces to defeat the Congress and won signal victories in Kerala and West Bengal.

The electoral victory of 1967 and 1969 unleashed the urge for unity further. The performance of the Kerala and West Bengal U.F. ministries in defending the interests of the workers led to a new upsurge in organisation and unity. The united strike of jute, tea garden, and textile workers in which all unions from the INTUC to the AIUTC participated, won significant victories for the workers in the period of mounting capitalist offensive. The united strength of the engineering workers of West Bengal also won them significant wage increases. These victories together with the advances in wages and salaries won by other workers and employees including state employees were rendered possible, because the unity of the workers in action was helped by the united front ministry in West Bengal. Similarly in Kerala large concessions were won by the fighting and struggling workers helped by the United Front Ministery.

The political force of popular unity helped the united trade unions to secure immediate concessions.

However, considering the all-India offensive of the employers, the working class could not muster all its force over the country, to rebuff the employers and the Government. In other states, though the employees and workers tried to unite and resist, both the forces of trade union unity and popular unity were far too weak to meet the offensive.

In some other states, where the militant trade unions based on class struggle were weak, and the revisionist and reformist influence were strong, no initiative was taken to forge unity of all trade unions as was done in West Bengal. The leadership of the Dange group did nothing to unite the workers but did everything to sow dissensions. That is why in the big industrial centre of Bombay, despite the offensive the working class resistance was piecemeal and could be easily beaten down by the employers and the Government. The Maharashtra Congress Government in the name of running mills in distress, introduced monstrous cuts in the DA and yet united resistance could not be organised.

Taking advantage of this state of affairs, the Government launched merciless repression against the fighting workers, as in Jamshedpur, and else where. The Railway workers are now subject

to barbarous punishment, if they undertake strike in defence of their interests. And the strike of the Central Employees was brutally suppressed. New legislation is afoot after the report of the Gajendragadkar Commission to attack the right to strike and organisation. The Maharashtra Government has brought forward an atrocious bill attacking the trade union liberties under the guise of legislation for recongnition of unions.

The working class has also to face the challenge of the communal and chauvinistic forces which organise riots leading to massacres of workers of minority community These reactionary forces also rouse feelings of provincial and linguistic chauvinism; chauvinism to create barriers between one section of workers against other as the Shiva Sena does in Bombay. The working class must protect its unity and fight reactionary forces like Jana Sangh and Shiva Sena.

The economic situation presages a further attack against the workers. The export drive and every other device to save the tottering economy is leading to further attacks on the workers-wage cuts, increased workload, refusal to implement accepted agreements, threats of lockouts and closures are increasing. Managements of industries, banks and mercantile firms are everywhere demanding machanisation, Increase in work load and automation as the price of paltry wage concession.

Simultaneously, the ruling classes have succeeded in dividing the workers; the united front ministeries and the popular forces behind them opposed to the Congress have been disrupted by the revisionists and reformists and the political strength of the movement has been weakened; the dominant AITUC leadership like the INTUC leadership, is functioning as the unofficial wing of the Congress Government, aiding it to curb the rights of the workers and disrupt the common struggle of the working class.

In the coming months, it is all the more necessary and vital for the working class to preserve and strengthen its class unity in the daily struggle and reinforce it by political united front of all popular and democratic forces opposed to the Congress Government and its reactionary anti-people policies. Disrupted from within and confronted by a merciless offensive of the employers and the Government, the working class will have to fight an unequal and losing battle unless it reunited its ranks and rebuffs the disruptors.

This Conference therefore appeals to all workers and their organisations to unite and stand together against the growing onslaught of the capitalist offensive, against the attack of the Government on their rights. There is nothing more important and more vital for the working class than to build its own unity in factory and industry, and expand and extend it to all workers. When the workers, irrespective of their organisational attachments and political beliefs have stood together, have united for common actions, they have won despite heavy odds against them.

This Conference pledges itself to fight for the united action of the workers in all industries, for the united action of all central trade union organisations, in the common fight. It calls upon unions in various factoires and industries to come together for the defence of the common interests of the working class. In particular it calls upon all workers and trade unions to unite and fight :

1. For need-based wage and full compensation against rising cost of living;
2. Ballot for trade unions recognition;
3. For unemployment benefits;
4. Against retrenchment and closures;
5. Against wage-cuts in any form;
6. Against all repressive laws and repressive measures;
7. For ban on automation;
8. For better P.F. and ESI;
9. For a united front of all democratic forces opposed to the Congress regime;
10. Against rise in prices;
11. For reduction in taxation and defence expenditure;
12. For abolition of property rights;
13. For nationalisation of companies owned by Indian monopolists;
14. For nationalisation of concerns owned by foreign monopolists;
15. For nationalisation of Foreign Trade;
16. For solidarity with peasant struggle for land and moratorium on debt repayment.

The Conference is confident that the unity forged in these daily struggles will lead to united common unions embracing all workers and functioning democratically making the strength of the unions impregnable and invincible.

4

Let Everyone Help "The Working Class"

Our monthly paper "The Working Class" will fight for the policy of the CITU which has for its objective the bringing in of socialist society on the basis of the socialisation of the means of production and capture of political power by the working class.

The paper will further fight for the demands of the Trade Union Movement, for the rights of the workers and against repression on the working people and the democratic masses. It will urge the Trade Union movement to work in close co-operation with the movement of the Indian peasantry and other democratic sections against their common oppressor—the bourgeois-landlord regime.

Above all it will strenuously advocate unity of the trade union movement so that a common front is established against the increasing attacks of the capitalists and the Government. It is clear that in the absence of such unity neither the Trade Union movement nor India's working class has been able to exercise its full strength in the struggle for its economic demands or on the various political questions that face our country and our people. In spite of its growing numbers, the working class has been unable to use its strength in influencing the political decisions of the Government and has often played the part of a helpless spectator to the adverse decisions taken by the Government attacking its rights and democratic liberties. Even such an outstanding event as the great happenings in the Bangladesh has witnessed a passive attitude on the

part of the majority of India's working class.

This disunity and lack of common action is not accidental. It is the direct product of the poisonous growth of reformist and revisionist influences on the Trade Union movement which have corroded the class consciousness of sections of Indian working class. These influences have dimmed the awareness of class-struggle and have prevented the workers from directing their frontal blows against their class-enemies. They have also prevented the working class from understanding its responsibility towards the democratic movement especially the peasantry and now threaten to turn the Trade Unions into narrow, sectarian, economic organisations concerned only with trade or factory.

The struggle for unity in the Trade Union movement means also a struggle to overcome these weaknesses and turn the Trade Unions into the most important bastion of the democratic struggle of the Indian masses. "The Working Class" will devote itself to waging this struggle for unity in the Trade Union movement and seek the co-operation of all trade union workers to make it effective.

"The Working Class", besides, will serve as an instrument of education and information for our trade union cadres. The local trade union leaders deeply immersed in the day-to-day work of the unions get very little time to master official legislation or the changing economic situation or the many organisational problems that the trade unions are facing today. It will be the endeavour of the paper to give them broad guidance on these issues so that their day-to day functioning is rendered more efficient.

Apart from this there are the organisational problems pertaining to the functioning of the trade unions. In many trade unions democratic functioning is absent, the initiative of the workers is discourged and unions become the concern of the bureaucratic leaders only. Such a state of affairs is completely inimical to the development of the trade union and political invitative of the working class without which all talk of socialism is meaningless.

"The Working Class", besides, stands committed to proletarian internationalism. It will fight chauvinism in the trade union movement and assert the soildarity of India's working class with the workers of socialist countries and the working class of the capitalist world. Fighting against the aggressive policies of U.S. imperialism "The Working Class" will support the valiant struggle

of the people of Viet Nam and educate the working class of India on its historic role.

"The Working Class", following the line laid down by the CITU will mercilessly expose the danger from U S imperialism to our country and raise its voice against our growing dependence on the U S A a dependence which is expressed in enforced exports at the cost of the workers and the people. The treacherous role that U S imperialism is playing is seen in the military support it is giving to the Yahya regime of Pakistan which is massacring by thousands the workers, peasants and intellectuals of Bangladesh.

Let every one help "The Working Class" to discharge its responsibility and help forward the process of creating a unified militant Trade Union movement based on the initivative of the working class and capable of discharging its responsibiliy to defend the rights of the working class and of helping forward the democratic movement on its road to socialism

B. T. Ranadive,
Chairman,
Editorial Board

The Working Class Vol. 1 No. 1, September '1971.

5

Indian Working Class and Bangladesh

The democratic and progressive forces all over the world are supporting the valiant struggle of Bangladesh. A section of American dock workers refused to handle goods to be shipped to Pakistan a month or so back. All over the world there is a wave of anger and indignation at the atrocities perpetrated by the Yahya Regime on the people of Bangladesh.

What has been the role of India's trade union movement and the working class on this vital question!

Our Serious Failure

It must be admitted to our great shame that with the solitary exception of West Bengal working class, which raised financial contributions and offered political help to this struggle, the trade union movement in the rest of the country and the working class have virtually done nothing to help their fighting class-brethren. Barring some anemic conventions there has hardly been any response to this great struggle.

Is there anything in recent times to compare with sufferings of the Bangladesh people. Lakhs of people killed, millions forced to flee their motherland, their wives and daughters raped, and their childern killed before their eyes—there is not one crime left uncommitted by the bestial hordes of Yahya Khan. A correspondent of a foreign news paper recently stated that hundreds of Bengali women have been kidnapped and kept in military brothels by the authorities.

Against this massacre, against these rapings of working class

and toilers' women should there be no angry protest, no indignant expression of the Indian trade union movement? Should it remain callous and indifferent to this outrage against a whole people—its own class?

Nature of Bangladesh Struggle

The struggle of the Bangladesh people is perhaps the biggest political event in recent times in this part of the world. It is the freedom battle of the people against the military tyranny of W. Pakistan Junta, a struggle for democracy, for minimum rights to the common man, for the freedom of Bengali language, for the rights of the people to rule themselves, for the end of the martial law regime, for ending of national exploitation at the hands of the Pakistani exploiting classes.

Under this regime let it be remembered that the working class strikes are punishable with more than ten years' jail. And yet the workers of Bangladesh fought many battles which often ended in cruel massacres at the hands of military. The courageous and fighting students of Dacca University fought numerous battles and hundreds laid down their lives to free their motherland.

The peasant masses along with the working class and the middle classes were mercilessly exploited by the Pakistan Junta and repressed with utmost ferocity.

The working class has no rights under the Pakistan regime. It has no right to organise trade union; no right to strike or hold meetings; no right to have its own class party. It is against this slavery that the working class and the people of Bangladesh are fighting.

Whose duty is it to help this working class—the people of Bangladesh? The working class of India, the trade union movement utters loud cries of Workers of the World unite on May Day, on the 7th November Revolution Day, on the Chinese Revolution Day. Has that cry any meaning, does it not become hypocritical and hollow if the working class fails to do its minimum international duty towards its Bangladesh brethren, towards the freedom struggle of a fighting neighbouring people.

Importance of the Freedom Struggle

Every successful freedom struggle weaknes the imperialists and the exploiters and facilitates the progress of the proletarian struggle for socialism, for ending poverty and unemployment. The Bangladesh struggle besides is of direct and vital importance to the

democratic and working class struggle in India. The working class and the people of Bangladesh are undermining the foundations of the reactionary military dictatorship in the sub-Continent thereby releasing tremendous freedom forces in the neighbouring country. If successful these will be of tremendous help to the Indian people and the working class in their march to socialism.

The freedom struggle besides has yet another importance. It is undermining that monstrosity created by the British—the religious barrier batween the two peoples which prevented fraternal co-operation between the toiling classes of the two countries. By their joint struggle against the military dictatorship, by mingling their life's blood in the common struggle the Muslim and Hindu workers and people of Bangladesh have blown up the old barrier and opened new vistas for fraternal co-operation of the two movements. The common struggle if successful will not only bring freedom to Bangladesh will also bring freedom to the people of W. Pakistan and give a big momentum to the struggle in India.

It is therefore not accidental that American imperialists are openly helping the Yahya regime to crush the movement. The hateful gendarme of world reaction is piling up arms for the defence of the military junta and engages in double talk and downright cheating.

It is amazing that the leaders of the Soviet Government still support a solution within the framework of Pakistan while the leaders of People's China continue to voice their friendship with the military regime.

Our Responsibility

Who will then support this struggle? It is the responsibility of Indian working class to champion the cause of the Bangladesh, discharge their fraternal international responsibility.

What can the working class do? If united the working class is a powerful force which can compel the Indira Government to change its policy of equivocation and vacillations which threatens to end in open betrayal. After supporting the freedom aspirations of the Bangladesh people the Indira Gandhi Government is now going back on its previous commitments, refuses to recognise the Bangladesh Government and give the requisite help to the fighting people. The fighting guerrillas, the commandos and Mukti Bahini warriers all require arms, more arms and still more arms. Their armed struggle will have a legitimate claim on the Indira Govern-

ment if the working class compels it to recognise the Bangladesh Government.

The Government of India is afraid of U.S.A. reaction, it is afraid of displeasing the Soviet leaders all of whom are against a freedom solution.

Unity—Need of the Hour

The working class of India must unitedly raise the demand for recognition of the Bangladesh Government and all help to the struggle. The trade union movement must join hands with all democratic forces who stand for recognition. All democratic parties support the demand. A powerful movement should be created to pressurise the Government and save the Bangladesh struggle. The trade union movement must unitedly demand that every possible help be given to the struggle.

The danger of downright betrayal is very great. The External Affairs minister brazenfacedly said at the Simla Session of the AICC without the least sense of shame that a political solution could be found within the framework of Pakistan. International conspiracies are about to encourage a fake political solution and betray the fighting people.

The Revisionists' Role

Taking their cue from the Indira Congress and the Soviet leaders the revisionists who lead the AITUC only talk about Bangladesh but are against a movement to compel the Government to give recognition. Some of the other organisations follow this same line of sabotage in practice.

The Government and all its agencies are now talking only about the return of refugees, as if the problem of freedom is not there at all. Every thing should be done for the refugees but it shluld be realised that they will go back only when the people are victorious and the military dictatorship is defeated. Otherwise the huge burden will remain and the same people who are betraying the Bangladesh struggle will tomorrow attack the living conditions of the working class in the name of looking after the refugees.

CITU to Rouse the Working Masses

The sufferings through which the millions of refugees are passing, the atrocities which the Bangladesh people are facing, the courage with which the guerrillas are fighting—all these are still unknown to the vast masses of the workers. There is less awareness of the importance of the struggle as we go away from W. Bengal

and in the South very small sections of the workers understand the importance of the Bangladesh struggle. It is the task of the CITU unions to break through this deadlock and rouse the working masses to the vital importance of the Bangladesh struggle. They must organise united protest against the atrocities of the military regime and raise united demand for recognition of the Bangladesh Government. Through conferences and conventions, the voice of the working class must be raised on behalf of the sacred cause to overcome the resistance of the Government.

Along with this political campaign, funds must be collected from the unions in support of the Bangladesh struggle. It the movement is united, it will be easy to ask the workers to contribute a day's wage for the success of the struggle.

Unite the trade unions to demand Recognition to Bangladesh Government, All help to the freedom fighters, to collect financial help for the struggle and for aid of refugees.

Protest against atrocities :

Express solidarity with our class brethren in Bangladesh.

The Working Class Vol. No. 3, November '1971.

6

The Government Employees And The People

The Central and State employees' movement have been suffering from a basic weakness since their inception—a weakness that is now hving dangerous consequences for the employees. These movements, with all their just demands, and claims of justice in their favour, are conducted in a manner which more or less completely divorces them from the people, and from the democratic movement conducted by them against the present regime. They are conducted in isolation from the trade union struggle of the working class, and even from the struggle of the employees in the private sector. The 12th July Committee in West Bengal is serving a vital need by bringing the central organisations into contract with the people.

This isolation, this complete surrender to their own economic demands, was in the beginning imposed on them by the conditions under which they were working during the British regime. The Congress regime perpetuated the main condition—under service rules, preventing participation in political activities and association with other unions or organisations. What this means in practice must be realised.

The struggle for better economic conditions for the Central and State employees is an integral part of the struggle for better living conditions, for democracy and socialism conducted by the working class and our people. It is part of the great struggle of the Indian toilers against poverty, unemployment and impoverishment accentuated by the heavy burdens of foreign loans. It is clear that the

growing unemployment among the educated which makes jobs scarce for the sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of the employees, cannot be fought, cured or lessened on the strength of the Central employees, that retrenchment cannot be prevented under these conditions and security of jobs maintained unless the democratic struggle defeats the policies leading to unemployment. The rising price spiral cannot be controlled on the strength of the Central employees. The latter at best only fight for the D.A. which is never adequate. Once again, the people must defeat it, Even the partial demands of the employees are part of the democratic struggle of the people.

Today, vast masses in India listen to the talk of socialism. Even the ruling party has to indulge in this talk. There is growing realisation that without socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, without real power in the hands of the people, poverty and unemployment cannot end, living conditions cannot improve radically. Only the Central and State employees and their orgnisations are supposed to avoid all mention of socialism lest they might be accused of talking politics.

Second Grade Citizens

The Central and State employees are virtually reduced to the ranks of second grade citizens by depriving them of the right of political expression and action.

This is having harmful consequences for their immediate movement. They have been forced to keep themselves away form the main trade union organisations and plough lonely furrow. They cannot join a common central T.U. organisation. In England, the civil servatns' union is affiliated to the British T.U.C. But in Congress India, this is virtually prohibited. So much is the fear of political contamination that in one of the most well-orgainised strikes of State employees in one State, I found the leadership of the employees disinclined to address meetings called in their support, by the political parties.

Apart from isolating the Government employees this situation leads to absurd results. The demands of the employees are addressed to the Government. Government policies are responsible for their plight. And yet, in the name of avoiding politics they are not supposed to analyse the basic Government policies dealing with economy, foreign policy, taxation, prices. The Government refused D.A. or need-based wage to the employees but spends

Rs.1000 crores annually on military expenditure which is necessitated by its wrong foreign policy. If the employees counter the Government's refusal in this way, then it becomes politics. The Government, goes in for deficit fianancing to finance the capitalist path and raises prices. But the employees cannot demand a change in this basic Policy without inviting the charge of politics or Communism.

The employees are therefore forced to voice their economic demands only, and aviod all political contacts with other sections fighting the Government's basic policies except perhaps in West Bengal. No where do the State or Central Employees show much concern for the common movement of the people against economic misery, against the Government. They thereby create a gulf between themselves and the people from whose ranks they come—an estrangement which is exploited by the Government to beat down the resistance.

Don't Alienate the People

Every demand of the Central and State employees has to be met from public treasury. This fact the Government utilises to tell the people that the employees want to advance their demands at the expese of the people. And the Government often succeeds in creating apathy in the minds of the people because the latter hardly find the employees taking interest in protesting against taxation on the common man or the rise in prices, or joining popular protests any time. They appear before the public only with their demands. Besides, the employees do not realise that they stand in special need of cultivating the friendship and understanding of the people as its is through a large number of them that the misdeeds of the administration and the social system are passed on to the people. They are the innocent vehicles of all that it bad in the administration. Some of them instead of cultivating public sympathy, actually alienate it by their behaviour. The rupture of the link with the people, the lack of common bond through common suffering and struggle is likely to prove costly to the employees' movement.

The Central and State employees' organisations must overcome these weaknesses. How the trade unions and political parties are able to rally the people in their support, how people respond in sympathy with them, has been shown in the last bundh in West Bengal, on October 13. There are now unmistakable signs that this isolation is likely to have disastrous consequences. A Government

faced by economic recession, by the influx of refugees, will resist all demands. All these months it has refused to revise D.A. though it was bound to do so under an agreement. Now finding no other excuse, it has referred it to the Pay Commission to kill time.

Join the People's Movement

What it will do under present circumstances was clearly seen during the course of the last Bundh in West Bengal. Goonda gangs headed by the police took charge of central establishments, and at the point of knife or revolver forced the striking Central or State employees to go back to work. Houses of some post masters were raided with the backing of the police, they were threatened with immediate murder and forced to work. In some places, keys of the building were forcibly seized, the building was occupied and systematic strike-breaking was organised. Gangs of hoodlums now invade the office of Central and State employees, LIC, occupy chairs and intimidate the workers.

Who will protect the minimum rights of the employees if they do not get the protection of the people?

Big Struggle are looming ahead. They are part of the entire people's battle for livelihood. The employees will be successful in so far as the people are successful. In the new situation, neither old form of organisation, old level of unity, nor old outlook of economic aloofness is sufficient. In fact, it it suicidal. Let the Central employees break through the shackles of the past, forge their unity, create public sympathy for their cause and regard themselves as one of the section of the democratic and popular movement marching forward to Socialism.

The Working Class, Vol. 1. No. 4, December 1971.

7

Bangladesh is Born WHAT NEXT?

The war over Bangladesh is over. The occupation army enslaving the people of Bangladesh have been routed by the combined operations of the Mukti Bahini and the armed forces of India.

Imperialist Game Not Over

But the struggle is not over. Only the first phase is over. The American imperialists are conspiring to undermine Bangladesh and restore Pakistani rule in one form or other. They are offering their protection to the collaborators and murderers guilty of in human crimes against the people of Bangladesh.

The working class of India, the organised trade union movement has an important role to play in defeating the machinations of American imperialism, in making the other contingents of the world working class realise the sinister role that American imperialists are playing.

Working Class Caught Napping

It has to be again admitted that the working class and the organised trade union movement were caught napping when the vital battle for Bangladesh was going on, and when American imperialists threatened to intervene with the 7th Fleet.

The appearance of the American Task Force in the Bay of Bengal with the shameless excuse to protect the murderers and genocide-perpetrators was a direct threat to the people of Bangladesh and people of India. The main enemy of the world working class, the perpetrator of inhuman atrocities against the heroic people of Vietnam, was threatening us. Yet the orgainsed trade

union movement failed to rise in angry denunciation and forge a united protest. The Unions affiliated to the CITU also cannot altogether escape their responsibility.

Throughout this magnificent struggle of the Bangladesh people, the working class and peasantry, and other sections, the organised trade movement have at best played the role of a sympathetic spectator, following the banner of others, but failing to put its own stamp and character on the solidarity struggle. Continuation of this attitude spells danger for the Bangladesh struggle as well as for the trade union and democratic movements in our country.

Strengthening of Democratic Forces in Bangladesh—Responsibility of Working Class

The working class in supporting the Bangladesh struggle, in demanding that the Govt. should recognise the Bangladesh Govt. and render it all help including armed help, had definte democratic objectives. It wanted the defeat of the forces of occupation, the freedom for the people of Bangladesh and complete liberty for the democratic and trade union movements in Bangladesh. Its objective therefore is not ensured only by the rout of the forces of occupation. Its international outlook, its solidarity with the toilers of Bangladesh demands that new vested interests should not curb and curtail the liberties of working class and the people and that every peasant and worker must feel the glow of the new freedom. Strengthening of the democratic forces in Bangladesh inevitably helps the working class and democratic movements in this country.

The working class of India cannot remain silent if freedom fighters in Bangladesh are attacked, if those who bore the brunt of the struggle, went through inhuman sufferings and trials, are now hounded as criminals for demanding punishment for the enemies of the people.

The presence of the Indian armed forces on the soil of Bangladesh enlarges the responsibility of the working class. The task of the armed forces whose members shed their precious blood in the fight against the occupation army is to complete the rout of the remnants of the military Junta's para-military forces. If under the pressure of American propaganda they are to accept further responsibility in the name of maintenance of internal order, it will lead to harmful consequences undermining the fraternal feelings that have developed between the two peoples.

The working class must express its feelings of solidarity and fraternity with the working class and toiling masses of West Pakistan whose military rulers dragged them into a war with India. The trade union movement has no doubt that the democratic forces there will succeed in putting an end to all legacies of the martial administration and usher in a popular rule responsible to the aspirations of the people. There is no doubt that they will soon see through the appeal to religious frenzy meant to divert their attention from the democratic tasks facing them and keep in being a state of tension between the two countries.

The working class cannot forget the great danger represented by American imperialism to the security of our country, and the freedom of Bangladesh. American arms helped Yahya Khan to butcher the Bangladesh people by lakhs, and kill Indian fighters by thousands in the recent encounter. And American imperialists threatened India with-direct reprisals against its forces in W. Bengal.

Demand Greater Friendship with Socialist Countries

The working class must realise that it was Indira Gandhi's Government that was all these years presenting the American Govt. as a friend of India because of the loans and credits granted by it. The virtues of American democracy were being taught in our colleges and schools while socialism was being described as totalitarianism.

Only the advance section of the working class has been demanding a policy of friendship with the Socialist countries and exposing the danger from American imperialism.

In this critical period the Socialist Soviet Union and other Socialist countries stood by the people of Bangladesh and India. It is a matter of profound shock that China supported the Yahya Khan's regime and refused to recognise the freedome character of the Bangladesh struggle.

Realising the danger from American imperialism, the working class must raise the demand for a change in foreign policy, for greater friendship with socialist countries; and further demand nationalisation of all American monopoly concerns beginning with the oil companies and immediate moratorium on all American debt payments.

Resist offensive of Ruling Class
In The Name of Help To Bangladesh

While exercising vigilance on the Bangladesh developments, the working class must get ready to face the immediate offensive that is likely to be unleashed as an aftermath of the war.

The working class and the people of India no doubt are profoundly moved by the struggle and sufferings of the Bangladesh people and would like to do everything possible for them and for the refugees. But the Govt., exploiting this sentiment, is seeking to impose one-sided burdens on the common man, in the name of helping the refugees. As a result of official policies, prices of daily necessities are rising higher and higher, eroding the real wages of the workers. Heavy additional taxation is also cutting away a slice from his income. The fraudulent and manipulated consumers' price index number further is concealing the real rise in the cost of living. Over and above that the Defence of India provisions are being used to suppress legitimate strikes as in the case of Hindustan Teleprinters workers in Madras.

At the same time, the capitalists, monopolists, speculators, are allowed to gather huge profits—and escape with verbal sallies. The Jute barons of West Bengal are making unimaginable profits. Yet the Govt. has done nothing to compel them to meet the demands of the jute workers.

The working class cannot put up with this state of affairs and must be ready to fight the imposition of additional burdens. All central organisations must come together to foil this game of making the working class and the people the scapegoat of the war.

Danger Facing The T. U.
Movement

Far more serious is the situation in W. Bengal, where under the President's Rule, Indira Gandhi's Govt. continues its semi-fascist repression during the days of war also. Mass raids by Congress goondas with the aid of the police are carried on against working class, peasants and middle class, localities. Trade union and other leaders are murdered. And the murderers escape with the least effort. Under President's Rule 97 industrial workers have been murdered in W. Bengal up to 16th March, 1970. The police often accompany the raiders to prevent any resistance. The working class of India, the CITU affiliated unions have failed to comprehend the danger facing the trade union movement of the country.

The role played by the AITUC leaders in W. Bengal is despicable in as much as they screen the Government misdeeds and help the attacks against the trade unions of the CITU.

The CITU unions must rouse the working class against this attack and demand an end to it.

Ruling Congress Using Bangladesh Issue To win Elections

The working class must realise that the ruling Congress party is using the Bangladesh issue to bolster itself. It claims all the credit for the bloodshed by the Indian forces, for the heroic deeds of the Mukti Bahini and it is using it to secure votes in the coming elections so that its bourgeois-landlord governments can again rule the States and impose their anti-people policies. It refuses to withdraw the emergency all over the country.

The fact is that the Govt vacillated till the last before giving help to Bangladesh. It was the trade unions and democratic parties that were foremost in demanding all-out support to Bangladesh. It was the united people and the armed forces along with the Mukti Bahini that made the victory possible. The Congress party should not be allowed to use it as its own achievement for electoral purposes. And its design to impose fresh burdens on the people under this screen must be exposed.

The Working Class, Vol. 1, No. 5, January '1972.

8

Resist The New Offensive

The ruling classes and the Government of India, as expected, are planning blatant attacks against the workers, to meet the critical economic situation accentuated by the recent war. In this, they are directly helped by the opportunist leadership of the INTUC and also partly by the leadership of the AITUC which tails behind the former. The trade union movement and the entire working class must be vigilant in time before the attacks start in right earnest.

The Government and its apologists and advertisers, seek to attack the living conditions of the workers and the common people with the catching slogan of national self-sufficiency on their lips. They make it appear that any defence of the living conditions of the workers and employees, any refusal to accept new unjust burdens, is an act against national interests.

The working class, the trade union movement and the entire people stand for economic independence from foreign monopolists, from the U.S. imperialists. It is the working class and the common man that have to meet the burden of repayment of foreign debts which today amounts to not less than the annual wage of two milion workers. Apart from direct exploitation this dependence creates a danger to our national freedom and sovereignty, placing strategic lever in the hands of U.S.A. and foreign monopolists.

How the USA used this stranglehold during the vital days of war over Bangladesh, is fresh in the memory of everybody. It threatened to paralyse our economy by withholding its so-called 'aid' and even used military pressure.

It is the successive Congress Governments from Nehru to Indira Gandhi, that have been responsible for dragging the country into

abject dependence on the USA loans—all because they wanted to build capitalism in India. It is this anti-national policy that has reached its fruition when without American loans the economy finds itself in a critical condition and the Government is forced to talk about self-sufficiency.

The working class movement has repeatedly warned the Congress Government against this policy and had called upon it to build solid and abiding economic ties with the Socialist countries—the USSR, Prople's China and others. Today, the Government is often compelled to strengthen its ties with these countries to counter the US pressure. The Government has apparently been pursuing a policy of balancing between the imperialist and Socialist world, but in reality its dependence on the West continued to grow.

This policy has not changed. The slogan of self-sufficiency is mainly a reaction to the situation created by the stoppage of American "aid" and not a new policy of dispensing with loans from all imperialist countires. The stoppage of American loans creates a difficult situation for Indian economy. The Government wants to belittle it because it wants to conceal from the people the depth of our dependence of the U.S.A. Twenty per cent or more of India's imports have been hitherto financed by U.S. 'aid', which roughtly amounted to not less than 40 per cent of all aid secured by the country. It seems that the gap in external assistance would now widen to Rs. 850 crores and make it difficult to realise the modified targets of the Fourth Plan.

It is obvious that unless drastic measures are taken the situation cannot be brought under control. Failure to do so will lead to slow down, closures, further unemployment and attacks on the workers and the people.

To feed the industries, foreign exchange must be saved. The biggest source of drain is foreign debt repayments, especially to the USA. These payments now amount to Rs. 435 crores, a substantial part going to the USA. Any one who is serious about self-sufficiency etc. must agree to delare at least a moratorium on all debt payments of the State, at least those of the USA. The moratorium will ease the situation substantially and be a weapon of countering the American threat. It is equally necessary to nationalise all American concerns beginning with the oil companies. The American private capital has been earning the highest rate of profit in

India, higher than anywhere else and its nationalisation will place substantial funds in the hands of the State. Similarly, it is necessary to nationalise big foreign monopoly concerns in chemicals, tobacco, etc. which drain huge sums out of the country. There must also be a strict control on the porfit of private concerns.

This should be accompanied by the nationalisation of Indian monopoly concerns and efficient functioning of the public sector which must get rid of the bureaucratic set-up. The land ceilings and land reforms together with guaranteed living conditions for industrial and agricultural workers should give the major elements of a programme for developing independence of the economy.

But the Government has no intention of embarking on a genuine programme of this type. While Mrs. Gandhi talks about national self-sufficiency she has no intention of either declaring a moratorium on foreign debt payments nor of nationalising American concerns, much less other monopoly concerns.

As for Indian monopolists, in the name of increasing production, and utilising the existing capacity, they also are to be allowed to expand their production and their restrictive grip over the Indian economy. There is, of course, no talk of control of profits.

So far as the peasant is concerned, land reform in his interest has been again put in cold storage.

What about the workers? Instead of guaranteeing better conditions for production enthusiasm, there is a conspiracy to attack them, to increase their work-load, to exploit them to the maximum in the name of national self-sufficiency.

In the first place, though war has ended, the Defence of India Act is used to attack the workers' right to strike. Further, the Govt. of India, the employers, the INTUC leaders and the AITUC leaders all continue to subscribe to the notorious December declaration which virtually sacrifices the right to strike. They all met recently to implement this shameful piece and the INTUC leaders in the most blatant manner proposed compulsory arbitration in every dispute, thus depriving the workers of the right to strike. The opportunist leadrship of the AITUC did not protest against this betrayal, but only suggested that the arbitration should be voluntary.

In the meanwhile, every effort is being made to compel the workers to contribute to the National Defence Fund. Pressure is being brought on them to contribute one day's wage every month. This has really nothing to do with national defence but Government's

method of countering the inflationary pressures at the expense of the workers.

And finally comes the call from President Giri to abjure strikes for three years, so that the workers can be mercilessly exploited without a stop. Giri wants to deprive the workers of their only weapon, their only check against the inhuman greed of the employers. And this to be done when prices are rising and workers' wages are getting eroded. There is to be no guarantee that prices will be checked and need-based wages will be ensured.

Defence of India Rules, Government, INTUC and AITUC, Employers, joint declaration, morantorium on strikes-these are the major weapons of Congress self-sufficiency. What has this in common with a genuine programme to end the country's dependence on the USA ?

Once again, we find the ruling classes passing the burden to the working class and the common people while talking about national interests. They made the common man pay for the Bangla Desh struggle, and the rufugees, and are appropriating all the credit for themselves.

Now faced with the prospect of stoppage of American aid they neither want to strike at debt payment not at the profits of the monopolists. They seek to solve the crisis by making the workers and people pay for it, while keeping their profits intact. In the bargain they do not wish to take the basic measures to end all dependence.

They are in a hurry to recoup their losses at the expense of the workers and the people. Besides, they are in a hurry to produce more to exploit the Bangla Desh market. They want the workers to work more, earn less, so that they can make huge profits in the new market. This is one of the reasons why they agreed to take over certain factories in West Bengal but at the same time denying the workers all rights guaranteed under the legislation. The Government of West Bengal is supporting the owners of the Annapurna Textile Mills in the most shameless manner for the very purpose.

Behind patriotic appeals, an attack is on against the workers. They must resist it.

The Working Class, Vol. 1, No. 6, February 1972.

9

A New Blueprint For Class Coloboration

To carry forward the unity, to develop a broad-based front of all militant organisations for action, this is the duty of all those who stand for the defence of the interests of the working class. The fighting workers who follow the INTUC or the AITUC or the HMS or the CITU expect their organisations and leaders to develop united struggles and lead the workers' battles in the present difficult days.

These united struggles in which the CITU is playing an important role, are causing deep concern to the Government and the employers who are out to curb the growing strength of the workers. But the reformist leaders of the INTUC, the AITUC and HMS are giving up the path of unity and entering into agreements with each other to restrain working class action and curb the militancy of the growing movement.

Why are the reformists giving up the path of unity ?

It seems that the three organisations have agreed to form a joint council for consultations and common decision. This has made the Labour Minister as well as the employers happy. Can the workers be happy about it ? On what principle, on what basis, are these organisations coming together ? For joint action for democratic rights of the workers, for defending the workers against retrenchment, unemployment ? If it were so the working class would have welcomed the move. But they would not have ignored and bye-passed the CITU which has been consistently leading the struggles and which is playing a role in every united struggle. They would

not have ignored the other central organisations which stand for militant action.

But they have precisely ignored the CITU because their unity is not for action, but for delaying and restraining them. Otherwise, the leaders of the AITUC and HMS, who participated in the unity conference last May, unitedly attacked Government's labour policy and who along with the CITU formed a Convenor's Committee to carry forward that unity, would not have deserted the other militant organisations to join hands with the INTUC leaders. Shri Ramanujam has openly announced that the INTUC will be directly working under the dictates of the Indira Congress. It means it will be subservient to the Government. The HMS leaders, though often critical of the Congress, basically possess the same class outlook as the Congress. In recent times, their political leaders have often to depend on the Congress to get into Parliament. N.G. Gore crept into the Rajya Sabha on the strength of the Congress vote. Recently, the ruling Congress and the Government started lifting important leaders of the HMS in a big way. Shanti Patel, one-time president walked into the Congress to become the Mayor of Bombay. A Secretary of HMS, Bagaram Tulpule was made the Manager of Durgapur Steel Plant. Another luminary of the Socialist Party S.M. Joshi is made a Director of the Reserve Bank. Another Secretary of the HMS is offered a similar post. And one of the important leaders—Manohar Kotwal, a fortnight back entered the Congress declaring his full faith in "Indira Gandhi's socialism."

The political leadership of the AITUC is represented by the Right CPI which is a dependent of the ruling party. In the last partliament elections, the party won most of its seats with the support of the Congress.

The Government wants all its supporters to come together, endorse its policy and counter the influence of united struggles of the CITU and other militant organisations. All these years the INTUC leaders could fulfil this role. But now with the growing disillusionment about the INTUC, additional help from other organisations with a militant past is required. It is therefore not surprising that the leaders of the three organisations have not a word to say against the ghastly repression against the CITU in West Bengal, against the murders of trade union leaders and workers. On the other hand, they offer an alibi to the Government and do their best to conceal its crimes.

This is a united front that is going to hamper the growing struggles, and the unity that was being forged at the May Conference from which the INTUC alone stood aloof. What do the opponents of genuine trade union unity seek to achieve through it? They seek to create a facade of labour support for Government's anti-labour policies. They seek to stiffle the voice of the CITU and the militant trade union movement by preventing them access to conferences and meetings where labour policies are discussed. They thus want to create an impression that Government's policies have general support among labour and barter away working class rights.

Sell-out of workers interests by the Reformists

Their very first act after their proclaimed decision is to let down the workers on the question of trade union recognition. The workers have the right to demand that the employers deal with them through the union assured of maximum of working class support. This is their minimum democratic right which every civilised Government and employer has to accept. But not so, in Indira Gandhi's India.

In the last May Conference, the demand was put in the following words by the CITU. ".....The CITU stands for recognition on the basis of secret ballot of workers and it also demands that all agreements entered with the union leadrship should be endorsed by the mass of workers. This will leave hardly any scope for the so-called inter-union rivalry because then the mass of workers through their ballot would have participated in choosing their union and will have continuous voice in its activity whenever major agreement has to be endorsed by them. It should be remembered that the second U.F. Government in West Bengal passed a bill granting recognition on the basis of workers' ballot but the President, under the advice of the Central Ministry, refused to sign it and the bill failed to become law. All T.Us irrespective of their political affiliations should support the stand that recognition should be decided on the basis of workers' secret ballot and thus restore to the workers' the democratic right to choose their own union, and take the wind out of Government's hypocritical talk about difficulties in choosing the negotiating agent etc. If this principle is endorsed by the T.U. movement, there is no doubt that it will serve to unify our ranks and enable us to move in the direction of one common union in one industry." It was fully endorsed by all the other organisa-

tions including the AITUC and the HMS. Now without the least sense of scruples leaders of both these organisations have joined the INTUC leadership in repudiating the principle of ballot and accepted Government's recognition proposal where the final decision will not be with the workers but with a bureaucratic judge.

The CITU denounces this sell-out and further states that the leaders of the three organisations have no authority or mandate to commit the trade union movement to this anti-working class proposal.

The CITU warns that denial of recognition on the basis of ballot will add to exacerbation of industrial relations by handing over the initiative to leaders and unions who do not represent the mass of workers. The agreements entered into by such organisations cannot be implemented. The recent case of the Simpson's strike in Madras when defence production was dislocated because an unwanted leader was foisted on the workers by the DMK Government is a case in point. In fact, many industrial disputes have their origin in the agreements made by stooge unions and the Government mis-represents these disputes as due to inter-union rivalries. The political preference of the Government and the employers for certain leaders and unions, irrespective of the following they command, intensifies a situation rendered acute by worsening economic conditions.

The agreement among these leaders that ballot will be taken where rival unions have a membership of less than fifty percent is only intended to mislead the workers. Unions favoured by management often claim more than fifty percent membership. Moreover, the so called tentative proposal provides that ballot will be taken only after verification and that too if the difference of two unions is only marginal. So there will be no question of ballot in the vast majority of cases.

All this shows that there is no genuine effort to tackle the question of recongnition so as to create direct channels of negotiations between the employers and the genuine representatives of the workers. There is an obvious effort to protect the vested interests of certain organisations which are acceptable to the employers. This is no remedy for maintaining industrial peace.

Having given up the ballot the organisations have accepted verifications with the help of a judge whose verdict will be final. It is the judge and not the workers who are to determine who should

represent the workers and have the power to determine their wages, living conditions, etc. The employers do not want a strong union to represent the workers. The Government also does not want it. The reformist and revisionist leaders are also afraid that ballot will mean their monopoly to represent will go.

The leaders of the three organisations in their opportunism go further. They do not want to shed the privileges which some of them enjoy at present. Therefore they agree whereever the INTUC has the privilege under present acts, it should not be disturbed. Also they accept the present anti-working class legislation in a number of States and do not propose to challenge the reactionary provisions regarding recognition contained in them. So acceptance of the anti-working class legislation like that of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra, etc., retention of the privileged position of the INTUC and the giving up of the ballot — these are the fruits of the united front of the three organisations.

No wonder the employers are happy. No wonder the Government is happy. All these forces are preparing a new offensive against the workers with the screen provided by the leaders of the three organisations. Having let down the workers, on the question of recognition the leaders are having talks with the Government for imposing a moratorium on strikes. There is every danger that they will agree to barter away the workers' right to strike under one pretext or another.

Working class must raise its united voice against this surrender

The working class which is fighting its battles unitedly—the working masses belonging to the three organisations should unite with the CITU and others to defeat this anti-working class and anti-unity trend. They must bring pressure on their leaders to desist from this reactionary course and prevail on them to assert the principle of ballot for recognition, and repudiate all moves of a moratorium on strikes without any guarantee of living conditions. All workers must unitedly raise their voice saying that they will not surrender the right to determine their living conditions to people certified by the bureaucrats. Only the workers through the ballot will decide who will represent them. And the workers will not surrender to their continuing offensive of high prices, unemployment and increased workload against them.

10

Let The Indian Working Class
Unitedly Defeat Rising Fascism in West Bengal

The Working Class of India, the trade union movement in our country, must rouse itself to meet the grim menace facing our class and our people in the wake of the rigged West Bengal Assembly elections.

The creeping shadow of fascism now definitely lengthens over the country, unless the danger is checked and eliminated only by the united working class.

West Bengal had become a slaughter house of every democratic liberty during the last two years. The State saw gangsterism, open murders of leaders of the working class and democratic movement. Assaults and raids on the working class localities, by goondas in the pay of the police, Section 144, curfew, murders, mass arrests, PVA Act, MISA these were the weapons used by the Congress Government to protect the fundamental rights of the people.

During the period preceding the elections, all these weapons were being used to oust tens of thousands of voters from their constituencies and terrorise lakhs of people.

The elections saw the culmination of the process. Now even the formal right of vote was denied to the people. The goonda gangs invaded the polling booths at gun point and in the presence of the police captured the ballot papers and stamped them in favour of the Congress and the Right CP. The Police and military surrounded some areas preventing the voters from exercising their right. Goonda gangs armed with weapons roamed the localites threaten-

ing everybody if they went for voting the next day they would be done to death.

In this game of intimidation the Congress goondas trusted nobody, not even the Congress voters. They also were asked to go back in some localities, and were cynically informed that their votes were already cast.

In other constituencies, where open gangsterism could not be organised, falsification, substitution of bogus votes for genuine votes, change of ballot boxes, substitution of the name of defeated candidates in place of the victorious ones by the presiding officers—all these heinous methods were used to secure a fake majority for the Congress. The rigging of the results was thus complete.

The Constitution was slaughtered; the right to vote was trampled under foot, parlimentary procedures and democratic norms were thrown on the scrap heap.

Why this open abandonment of even the pretence of Democracy ?

Why this gangsterism in West Bengal? Why this open abrogation of every pretence for democracy? None denies that the Congress Party in West Bengal has still sizable following. In the last elections, it is known that it had captured more than a hundred seats. Why then this outburst of gangsterism?

The plain reason is that the Congress with all its claims of Indira wave, dared not think of winning a majority in the legislature by fair means. Last year, when in the rest of India, it was having a "triumphant march", in West Bengal it had to be content with 13 seats in comparison with 20 secured by the CPI (M).

Since then it has been slandering its opponents while launching a campaign of terror and murder against the people. During the last two years, more than 600 fighters have been killed by the goondas and the police, thousands have been forced to leave the localities, hundreds have been maimed; many women have been raped; thousands are arrested and detained and many thousands are under warrants of arrest.

But neither slander nor terror could break the unbending spirit of the people and working class of West Bengal. The defiant spirit continued to develop in face of the combined attack of the CRP, the goonda gangs and the local police. The slander began to boomerang on the ruling party, honest people realising who the aggressors were.

To revive its prestige, to assuage the rising anger of the poeple, the Congress attempted to exploit the Bangladesh developments claiming all credit for itself. It invited Mujib Rahaman for a grand meeting in Calcutta to bolster Congress prestige. While the Bangladesh developments did help the Congress in some sections the mass of people could not be deflected from their course of opposition to the Congress rule. Their discontent and anger did not abate. On the contrary, it became clear the mounting discontentment might find an avalanche like explosion through the ballot box.

The Congress realised it a little too late. Otherwise, it would have postponed elections. Having lost all hope of getting a majority, the ruling party went in for a gangster type of election, a rigged-up election by the use of every unscrupulous means.

The people have not voted for the Congress. They have given no mandate to the Congress. It is clear that the Congress was afraid of the popular vote considering the means adopted by the Congress.

For the Congress Party nothing is sacred except its own power

The West Bengal events once more underline the fact that for the Congress party nothing is sacred except its own power. People's rights Constitution, rule of law all convenient weapons to be discarded when they go against the interest of the Congress and the capitalist landlord classes. It shows how bourgeois-landlord dictatorship asserts itself when the functioning of parliamentary democracy endangers its interests. It once more reveals the truth that bourgeois-parliamentary democracy conceals in reality the dictatorship of the exploiting classes.

Ruling party is afraid of the rising wave of mass struggles

The West Bengal elections further reveal the acuteness of the class struggle, the great rise in the struggle of the democratic forces of which the ruling party is now mightily afraid. It is because of this that the Congress is not prepared to tolerate even a sizeable opposition, but must rig up the election to have its yes-men all around. It knows that a sizeable opposition in conditions of West Bengal will not be just a decoration setting off Congress democracy, but a big weapon of turning the assembly into a forum of class struggle. So the Congress is intolerant of all opposition and is

determined to crush it.

The Congress has been driven to the position by the strong advance of the democratic movement in West Bengal. The innumerable strike battles of the working class, the employees, the struggle of the peasants, students, of women, the great bundhs, the heroic struggles against gangsterism all these had paved the way for a mighty surge forward. The crowning stroke was the alliance of the left parties from which only the revisionist traitors had fled. The working class and the people of West Bengal had no reason to turn to the Congress. The Congress had heaped unemployment, closures, high prices, victimisation and continuous attacks on the trade union rights; it had defrauded the peasantry and the middle classes by high prices, it had systematically robbed all sections and showed its utter incapacity to relieve unemployment by allowing closures to continue over months, in some cases over more than a year. It was because of similar reason, that in the rest of the States, though the situation was not as bad as in West Bengal, the Congress vote had started going down, despite the boost it got from the Bangladesh struggle. Is it not then preposterous to claim a big rise in Congress vote in West Bengal when it was falling elsewhere? Is it not conclusive evidence to prove the foul means adopted by the Congress leaders ?

After the fake election, goonda gangs let loose on a wild rampage against the people

But the full meaning of this unscruplous gangsterism, is to be found in the aftermath of the elections. Flushed by their fake victory, the goonda gangs are in a wild rampage of murder, arson and terror in many parts near and around Calcutta and in some districts. They are raiding the working class localities forcing thousands of workers to leave their homes. From the Baranagar constituency of Jyoti Basu more than five thousand had to flee their homes. Similar is the tale from the mining areas, from the Barrackpore industrial belt and other areas.

Along with this large number of trade union offices are being occupied by the Congress hirelings at the point of pistol, trade union funds are being demanded for the unions of the INTUC; a demand is made at pistol point that the unions should hoist the Congress flags and join INTUC; that if the workers do not do so, they will lose their jobs and some of them their lives. The office of the Sen-Raleigh Employees Union affiliated to the CITU has been

illegally occupied by the INTUC with the police staying on the sidelines. The leaders of the Sen-Raleigh Employees unions are either under arrest or threatened by the goondas and unable to reach the office.

This is the Congress programme for extending the INTUC influence, the programme of meeting the demands of the people. In this nefarious game they are helped by the leaders of the AITUC whose political leaders, the Right Communist Party are in alliance with the Congress and support the ministry. The treachery of the AITUC leaders knows no bounds. They are acting as the willing tool of the Congress to inflict murder and terror on the people and smash the trade union movement.

Entire Working Class must rise in mighty protest against this fascist menace

The brave working class of West Bengal is going through a fiery ordeal in defence of its democratic and trade union rights. The fake electoral mandate of the Congress is being used as a weapon to attack the trade union movement and the CITU. It is the duty of the entire working class of India irrespective of their political affiliation to protest against this thuggery—the fake elections and the wanton attack on the trade unions. All CITU unions should make efforts to hold united meetings to protest against the policy of murder and gangsterism against the trade union and the democratic movement. They must educate the working class regarding the facts about the face of West Bengal elections. They must send their protests against the forcible occupation of the trade union offices, of attacks on working class localities and the campaign of murder to the West Bengal Government.

Let the thousands and lakhs of workers following the CITU raise their voice of solidarity with the West Bengal workers.

Fascism is trying to secure a foothold in West Bengal. Let the working class unitedly say it will not have a foothold, it will be defeated.

In this great task of defeating the rise of fascist tendencies, the unions must secure the co-operation of all democratic parties and elements for it is the common task of all to save democracy from the attacks of reaction.

The Working Class, Vol. 1, No. 8, April 1972

11

May Day Manifesto Of The CITU 1972

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions, on the occasion of May Day 1972 — the great international day of working class solidarity— expresses its sense of pride for the relentless struggles launched by the working class and other toiling people of India during the last one year to protect their working and living conditions and for trade union and democratic rights.

The CITU pays homage to hundreds of martyrs who laid down their precious lives while fighting against police repression and against gangster attacks by the hirelings of managements and the Congress (R). It takes pledge to carry forward the struggle left incomplete by these valiant fighters till the achievement of complete victory in the cause for which they devoted their lives.

West Bengal Braves The Onslaught Of Capital

The militant trade union movement and working class of West Bengal which fought innumerable strike struggles during the last twelve months against the onslaught of capital is to-day faced with the most ferocious attacks organised jointly by the Congress hoodlums backed by police, CRP and the authorities. Hundreds of union offices belonging to the CITU affiliates have either been burnt down or occupied by INTUC goondas. The records of these unions have either been destroyed or captured, thus making normal trade union activity almost impossible. Over 650 leaders and activists of the trade union, kisan student, youth, mahila, and other democratic movements have been brutally murdered by this combine. While anti-social elements are given free reign to carry out their nefarious plans, thousands of trade union functionaries

have been involved in false murder cases or detained under PVA or MISA. Section 144, curfew, combing operations and merciless beatings in police lock-ups have become the order of the day. Tens of thousands of workers have been forced to evict from their residences by letting loose a reign of terror in the entire industrial belt.

The leadership of the ruling Congress and the Right Communist Party hatched a conspiracy to rig the elections in West Bengal and deprived millions of voters of their voting rights. This butchery of democracy is being paraded as victory for the Ruling Congress and the allies. CITU congratulates the working class and other toiling people of West Bengal for their courageous resistance to the rising fascistic tendencies in the State and calls upon the working class of India to take up this challenge of the ruling party in West Bengal and raise their powerful voice on this May Day in condemnation against the conspiracy to suppress the trade union and democratic movement in West Bengal at the gun point. CITU appeals to all international T.U. Organisations to rally in defence of the West Bengal workers and express their solidarity for the cause of freedom and democracy.

This offensive against the working class in West Bengal has come in the wake of several militant struggles organised unitedly by the trade union movement in the State. The successful Bengal Bundhs unitedly organised on August 27, in support of charter of demands including demands like reopening of closed factores, unemployment relief, bonus, rectification of price index, withdrawal of CRP, Military and recognition of Bangladesh, was a unique success. The Union Labour Minister Khadilkar's efforts to disrupt the unity of the workers failed miserably. Another Bengal Bundh on October 13 against arbitrary dismissal of 13 top leaders of State Government emloyees and 32 leaders and workers of four Ordinance Factories in West Bengal was also organised unitedly.

Several other long drawn struggles of workers in West Bengal showed the growing tenacity of workers to defend their rights and living conditions, Notable among them are the struggles of workers in Sen-Raleigh, Kesoram Rayon, Annapurna Textiles, HSL Steel Plant, Graphite and AVB workers in Durgapur, Coal Mine workers in Raniganj belt as well as those in jute, plantation and engineering industries. The State and Central Government employees, employees in Mercantile Firms have also conducted several struggles for

achieving their longstanding demands. As a result of all these struggles the T.U.Movement in West Bengal acquired a place of honour in the hearts of the working class of India as a whole. It is due to this that the capitalist class and their accomplices resorted to these fascistic measures for suppression of T.U. and democratic movement in West Bengal.

The CITU congratulates the working class of other States for their unique solidarity for the working class of West Bengal. Forty lakh State Government employees all over India observed 5th November as "West Bengal Day" to protest against the vindictive measures against the State and Central Government employees' leaders. Anti-Repression Day was also observed in first week of February all over India by CITU Unions to condemn the savage repression on the T.U. movement in West Bengal. These solidarity actions have clearly shown that the Indian working class is no more in a mood to take these attacks lying down.

Working Class Struggles Intensified

In Kerala the workers in cashew, coir, plantation, road transport and engineering industries have participated in several strike struggles which assumed State-wide character in some cases. The agricultural workers have also conducted State-wide as well as district-wise strikes demanding wage rise and protesting against atrocities in police lock-up. The State Government employees and school teachers also joined State-wide strike action for interim relief at par with Central Government employees. The Achutha Menon Government shamelessly advocated wage freeze and opposed workers demands thus providing no better than other Congress Governments.

Tamilnadu last year witnessed an unprecedented wave of strike struggles. The strike of workers in Simpson Group of industries against Government interference in union affairs, the strike of 6,000 textiles workers in Coimbatore, the strike of Hindustan Teleprinter workers despite prohibitory orders under the DIR, strikes of sugar workers in Nellikuppam, public sector strikes of workers in vehicle factory at Avadi as well as electricity and beedi industries have marked the growing unity and militancy of Tamilnadu workers. The DMK Government resorted to police repression and openly came forward as defenders of the capitalist class.

The historic strike of two lakh Bombay textile workers on the question of bonus was followed by strikes in Nagpur, Sholapur, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Kanpur, Delhi, Akola, Kolhapur and other textile centres in India. These outbursts of workers against the pro-employer Bonus Act has brought to the forefront the demand of minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent.

The strikes of J.K. Rayon and Indian Explosive workers in Kanpur, Hotel workers in Delhi, NCDC employees in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, PECO workers in Assam, Colliery workers in Dhanbad, struggles of rice mill workers in Andhra Pradesh have kept the flag the struggle flying during the year.

The Central Government employees who were totally dissatisfied at the paltry rise of second interimrelief and inordinate delay in publication of Third Pay Commission Report continued their struggle for higher emoluments. The State Government employees had to face bitter opposition of their Government even to get accepted the simple demand of payment of interim relief at par with Central Government employees. The Rajasthan Government employees had to face brutal repression of police while Kerala Government imposed break in service on the striking employees.

The workers in Eastern, South Eastern and North Eastern Frontier Railways conducted several local struggles despite obstructive tactics of the established leadership, The Bhrauni-Garhara workers had to wage a longdrawn struggle for project allowance.

The employees in banks, LIC and other commercial firms resisted the attacks on their T.U. rights In some places they had to resort to strike action to win their demands.

CITU To Strive on For United Actions

A key-note of these struggle was a tremendous urge for unity shown by the mass of workers and employees. The employers and the Government had to come down to meet their demands whenever the struggles were united and militant. The experience of the last one year's struggles shows that despite difference it is still possible to unite workers of all shades of opinion because the issues facing the working class are so pressing that they leave no other alternative but to close their ranks if they want to achieve their demands. On many occasions the rank and file workers have taken initiative and brought workers of all affiliations together in struggles. The CITU greets all these workers who offered stiff resistance to the

onslaughts of capital despite heavy odds.

CITU expresses its solidarity for the agricultural workers is West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra who organised struggle for higher wages. The CITU congratulates the peasants who fought for land and successfully harvested the land they have won.

Alarmed by these rising struggles of the workers and realising their growing isolation from the workers the leadership of INTUC, AITUC and HMS are joining their hands behind the back of workers and devising ways and means of collaborating with the employers and the Government. They have jointly and separately betrayed the struggles of workers on several occasions. They joined struggles only when they were forced to do so by the united strength of the workers and as soon as they got opportunity they did not hesitate to stab them in the back. This attitude of the leadership of these organisations is a great stumbling block of the unity of the working class. On this May Day, let workers of all shades of opinions make a categorical declaration that they would stand united for struggles and oppose every ganging up against the interests of the workers.

The CITU did its best in building a united front of all central trade unions and national federations and it played a positive role in making the conference in May last year a success. The enthusiasm created in the minds of the workers was however shortlived due to the unilateral decision of the AITUC and HMS to join hands with INTUC in collaborating with the Government. The leadership of these organisations accepted declaration of emergency. They gave up the concept of secret ballot and indirectly supported the Government's call of moratorium on strikes.

The CITU still considers that a united front of trade unions can even now be forged on the basis of the following most pressing demands :

1. Need-based minimum wage.
2. Cent per cent dearness allowance.
3. Immediate granting of relief to unemployed workers pending inclusion of right to work as the fundamental right in the Constitution.
4. End of manipulation in consumer price index numbers.
5. Recognition of trade unions on the basis of secret ballot.
6. Complete restoration civil liberties.

Behind talks of socialism Govt. continues offensive against the people

Smt. Gandhi's Government despite lip sympathy for socialism and Garibi Hatao continues to boost the big business and landlords and hit the working class and poor sections of the people. The high taxation on the common people and concessions given to monopolists convincingly proves the fallacy of the claims of the ruling party. While talking about self-reliance the Government continues to rely on heavier and heavier dose of foreign loans and collaboration agreements. While talking of checking the prices the Government resorts to deficit financing and inflation which further boosts the price level. While talking about giving more jobs to the unemployed the Government goes ahead with programmes of modernisation, rationalisation, automation etc. swelling further the army of unemployed. On this occasion of May Day this year the working class should realise that no basic improvement in their living conditions is possible unless the capitalist-landlord Government is dislodged from power and a genuine democratic Government of the people is installed in its place.

The CITU denounces the role of U.S. imperialism during the struggle of Bangladesh people and warns the working class that the machinations of U.S. imperialism in India still continue and pressure is being exerted on the Government of India. The CITU calls upon the working class to be vigilant and defeat all the conspiracies of the U.S. imperialists on the Indian soil.

Fraternal Greetings !

The CITU conveys its warmest fraternal greetings to the liberation forces in Vietnam, Combadia and Laos who are engaged in a life and death struggle against U.S. imperialism and are heroically inflicting crushing defeats upon U.S. imperialism and its stooges. Though Nixon administration talks of withdrawing from Indo-China it resorts to massive air-raids. The CITU is confident that the people of Indo-China will ultimately succeed and U.S. imperialism will be routed.

On the occasion of this May Day, CITU sends its fraternal greetings to the people of Bangladesh who have been able to throw out the yoke of Yahya Khan after great sacrifices. The CITU is confident that the people of Bangladesh will defeat all imperialist conspiracies and build self-reliant economy of Bangladesh.

The CITU sends its fraternal greetings to the working class and people of socialist countries for their achievements in socialist construction and valuable support to anti-imperialist struggles. The CITU sends its warm greetings to the U.S. dock workers, British Miners, Italian agricultural workers and other workers of advanced capitalist countries who have fought long-drawn struggles against the monopoly capital.

The CITU conveys its greetings to the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America for their struggle against imperialist machinations and for national independence. Their struggles go ahead despite repressive measures.

The CITU on this May Day upholds the cause of world peace and reiterates its firm commitment of firm support to every struggle against imperialist preparations of war and armament.

Pledge For Unity, Democracy And Socialism

Let the working class of India take a pledge on this May Day to redouble its efforts to unite the entire people of India in the struggle against monopoly capital and landlords and for the establishment of democratic regime of the people and socialism on the Indian soil.

'The Working Class' Vol. 1. No. 9. May '1972

12

The National Council of Trade Unions

What It Means To The Workers

It is no suprise that the Labour Minister describes the formation of a National Council of the All India Trade Union Congress, Indian National Trade Union Congress and the Hindi Mazdoor Sabha as a historic agreement. He has every reason to be satisfied over it because he has been the main inspirer and guide of the negotiations that were taking place to bring the three organisations togethers. The purpose of Mr. Khadilkar was to forge an instrument which will enable the Government to impose its labour policy on the working class and at the same time, provide a facade of labour support to all its measures.

The coming together of these three organisations is nothing short of an alliance of the Government and the pro-Government parties on the T.U. front. It is not a combination to resist the anti working class policies of the Government but one to give prestige to the measures which the Government is planning against the working class and at the same time divide the T.U. movement and facilitate the task of the administration to suppress the left T.Us. The basis of this unity is made quite clear by Mr. Khadilkar. It is to lend support to the ractionary recommendations of the National Labour Commission which seek to impose arbitration on the workers and to eliminate the right to strike. Another reactionary proposal is to reject ballot as the basis of trade union recognition and have it decided through verification by a High Court Judge. The basic right of the workers to decide who should represent them

in the vital negotiations with the employers is being done away with by the Government and the three central organisations have shamelessly decided to sell it. It is this that is the basis of the so-called unity of the three organisations.

The three organisations are signing a pact with the help of the Labour Minister and in support of Government's policies when the Government has unleashed widespread terror in West Bengal against the T.U. movement and virtually illegalised a large number of militant T.Us. Occupation of T.U. offices by gangsters, murders of T.U. leaders constitute the order of the day in West Bengal under the Congress rule. Instead of protesting against this monstrosity joining hands with the other militant T.Us to defeat this offensive of the Government, the three organisations have decided to come together to lend their support to Government policies and split the ranks of the workers. The agreement is no doubt historic because very rarely in Indian T. U. history was there such a blatant betrayal of T.U. rights by trade union leaders to suit the convenience of the ruling party and curry favour with it. The Right Communist leaders who are shooting down workers in Kerala in partnership with the ruling party have no scruples in surrendering the rights of the working class all over India.

The CITU warns the Government that this method of creating fake support through subservient organisations will not deceive the workers and will not contribute to industrial peace. It has invariably failed where it has tried to bypass the real representatives of the workers and impose agreements through its own nominees. The CITU warns the workers that this formation of so-called National Council of the three organisations is but a prelude to further attacks by the Government and the capitalist class on their rights and standard of living. It is an instrument through which the Government seeks to mislead the democratic opinion and isolate the militant working class movement.

Let all militant unions and their central organisations expose this game of the Government and its labour lieutenants and take firmsteps to maintain and develop the unity of the T.Us in the common fight against the attacks on democratic and T.U. rights.

The Working Class, Vol. 1, No. 10, June 1972

13

On Unemployment

The Magnitude of the Problem :

Our observations on the questions raised by the Committee should be considered in the background of the magnitude of the problem facing the country. The remedies suggested in the questionaire are in the first place judged in the light of the stupendous character of the problem and its basic causes.

When we stress on *basic* remedies, we have no intention of neglecting any transitional measure to relieve the distress of the unemployed, to give relief to one region or another facing acute employment problems, like backward districts, states or regions like West Bengal and Kerala, where unemployment has assumed an intense form.

While we stand for every measure of genuine relief we insist that it should not be paraded as an effective fight against unemployment. We also have to state that even the proclaimed and intended transitional measures do not produce the desired effect because of bureaucratic control and the interference of vested interests.

The figure of unemployed has reached such huge proportions that both the Govt. and the Planning Commission have decided to conceal its real magnitude under one excuse or another. The previous reports of the Planning Commission used to estimate the backlog at the beginning and end of each plan and forecast the number of unemployed in the coming years, after making allowance for the new jobs created under the Plan. Every successive Plan

revealed the inefficiency of planning to meet the problem and ended in an even larger number of unemployed. Finding this verdict on their bankruptcy embarrassing the Government and the Planning Commission started suggesting that there was no precise definition of the unemployed, and therefore, no proper estimates about their total number could be made.

These are dishonest efforts to conceal the real incidence of unemployment and they show that the Commission has no intention of dealing with the problem seriously. They show that the Commission thinks that definitional manipulation is a weapon of meeting part of the problems.

In consonance with this need the draft outline of the Fourth Plan refused to give the backlog of unemployment and its estimate of unemployment in the coming years. On the other hand, it sought to rely on the low estimate of the 1961 Census which reduced the total number of unemployed in India to only 1.4 million, of whom 0.8 million were in urban areas and 0.6 million in rural areas. (P-23 Report of Committee of Experts on Unemployment.) This was of course due to definitional jugglery which virtually spirited away all unemployment, when in the same year, the Planning Commission had estimated a backlog of unemployment at 7.5 million. The magnitude of the problem can be realised from the fact that it has been estimated that unemployment might reach the colossal figure of 29 million.

Official figures themselves underline the gravity of the problem :

Backlog of Unemployment (Millions)

	First Plan	Second Plan	Third Plan	Annual Plans 1966-69
At the beginning of Plan	3.3	5.3	7.1	9.6
At the end of Plan	5.3	7.1	9.6	12.6

It will be seen that between the three years 1966-69, one million was being added every year to the number of the unemployed.

Gross Underestimation

Secondly, these figures constitute an under-estimate. The number of 12.6 million has been arrived at by arbitrarily reducing

the backlog at the beginning of the Third Plan. Earlier estimates put it at 9 million, but by a change in definition of the unemployed it was reduced to 7 million. (P. 5 — Report of the Committee of Experts.) Thus the number of unemployed by 1969 should be at least 15 million according to official calculations.

Huge as the figure is, it itself constitutes a gross under-estimate as it does not include vast sections of under-employed or even sections of unemployed in rural areas.

It will be seen that the problem is a grave one and shows the planning efforts of the Government are unable to meet it. On the other hand, the situation is accentuating every day.

How the situation in the urban and industrial areas and cities is reaching a breaking point can be seen from the following. Between 1968 and 1970, the number of applicants on the Live Register increased by 33 per cent form 30 lakhs to 40 lakhs. The recession, the planning holiday, the slow tempo of the plan, all are responsible for this sudden jump.

In the midst of a widespread talk about meeting unemployment, the following figures are eloquent :

No. of Applicants on Live Register (Thousands)		
1960	-	1606
1964	-	2493
1967	-	2740
1968	-	3012
1969	-	3424
1970	-	3995

These figures reflect the numbers thrown out of employment by closure of factories, by retrenchment, by absolute decline in employment in the private sector. It is in this period that nearly 100 cotton textile mills closed down in India and not less than 250 factories closed down in West Bengal. Industries and industrial development are supposed to open new avenues of employment, but in recent times, in actual fact they are adding to unemployment. Besides even when they are adding to new employment, the rate of addition is too small to absorb the backlog.

The Live Register shows an increasing number of educated among the unemployment.

No. of Educated on Live Register.

1960	-	507,220
1964	-	804,858
1967	-	1,087,371
1968	-	1,309,340
1969	-	1,526,250

(P 123 - Expert Committee's Report)

Between 1967 and 1969, educated unemployment has increased by 50 per cent, by half a million. The continuous increase in educated unemployment since 1960, shows the bankruptcy of planning efforts, to hide this suggestions are being made to curtail the spread of university education. In 1969, among the unemployed 909,000 were matriculates, an increase of one lakh over 1968; 401,000 were intermediates, 189,000 graduates and over 25,000 post-graduates.

In December 1969, the number of graduates in arts on live register was 79.9 thousands; there were 46.8 thousands science graduates on the live register; the number of commerce graduates was 26.3 thousands, of engineering 12.8 thousands and of medical graduates 1.5 thousands.

The number of post-graduates in Arts was 12.1 thousands, of post-graduates in science 5.3 thousands, of those in commerce 2.1.

Slowing Down Growth of Employment.

Since the middle of the Third Plan there has been a slowing down in the rate of employment increase. Between 1966-1970, due to recession, the private sector showed an absolute decline in employment, while in the public sector showed employment, increased at a reduced rate. The net effect was to add to unemployment. The low rate of progress in the public sector and the decline in private sector added to the intensity of the unemployment situation. This must have added tremendously to the backlog. That industries in private sector have yet to reach the pre-recession figure of employment will be seen from the following. The reduced figures of employment show how the capitalist owners have been reducing the complement of workers.

Employment in Private Sector
(In lakhs)

	March 1961	March 1966	March 1967	March 1968	March 1969	March 1970
Agriculture, Livestock Forestry and Fishery	6.7	9.0	8.7	8.5	8.1	8.1
Mining and Engineering	5.5	5.1	4.8	4.3	4.2	4.3
Manufacturing	30.2	38.6	37.5	37.1	37.7	39.0
Construction	2.4	2.5	2.3	1.5	1.5	1.5
Electricity Gas, Water & Sanitary Services	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4
Trade & Commerce	1.6	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.8
Transport Storage and Communica- tions Services	0.8 2.8	1.2 8.0	1.2 8.5	1.0 8.8	1.1 9.2	1.0 9.6
TOTAL	50.4	68.1	66.8	65.2	66.0	66.9

Instead of increased employment since 1966, there is absolute decline till 1970. In 1967, the total number employed in private sector was 66.7 lakhs, in 1968 it went down further to 65.2; in 1969, it was 66 lakhs and in 1970, it had reached only upto 66.96 lakhs.

This absolute decline in private sector aggravated the unemployment situation. It should be further noted that employment in some sectors is even now below what it was ten years back, inspite of increased production. The tendency of capital to employ less labour relatively which is expressed in retrenchment of workers with the installation of more sophisticated machines is seen here. Mining and Engineering is employing less persons than ten years back, though production has increased. Construction is also employing less persons than ten years back. Industrial production has increased since 1966 but the number of employed shows just a small increase since 1966.

In the public sector employment continued to increase, though at a slower rate. The total number of employed in all Government undertakings and services was 70.50 lakhs in 1961 March; it was 93.78 lakhs in March 1966 and was 103.39 lakhs in March 1970. Between 1961 and 1966, the increase each year was between four and five lakhs while between 1966 and 1970, it was between two and three lakhs.

That the rate of increase in employment under the organised sector is falling and the planning efforts of the Government are failing to meet the needs of the situation, will be clear from the following :

Employment-1961-69 in Public & Private Sectors

Year ending March	Total in lakhs	Public Sector	Private Sector	% change over the previous years. Total	Public Sector	Private Sector
1961	120.9	70.5	50.4			
1962	125.8	74.2	51.6	4.1	5.2	2.4
1963	134.0	79.5	54.5	6.5	7.1	5.8
1964	140.4	84.5	55.9	4.8	6.3	2.6
1965	150.0	89.6	60.4	6.8	6.00	8.1
1966	161.9	93.8	68.1	3.2	4.7	1.0
1967	163.1	96.3	60.8	0.8	2.7	-1.4
1968	163.2	98.0	65.2	0.1	1.8	-2.4
1969	166.3	100.3	66.0	1.8	2.3	1.2

(RBI Bulletin, 1970 August)

This stagnation due to planning policies has accentuated the problem in recent times.

Unemployment in Kerala.

West Bengal and Kerala offer examples of an intensely acute economic situation. Between 1963-1968, the total number of the live register in Kerala increased by 54.8 per cent from 128,544 to 199, 006. The number of matriculates increased by 60.2 per cent from 63, 959 to 102, 488; and of graduates and post-graduates increased by 275.8 per cent from 2285 to 8588 (Page 127-Expert's Committee).Today, according to the report of the Committee on unemployment in Kerala, there are ten lakhs unemployed and 14

lakhs under-employed in Kerala.

Instead of new jobs being created, old jobs are being done away with, with factories closing down and workers retrenched on a mass scale. Between October 1970 to July 1, 1971, 123 factories were closed and 30,701 workers lost their jobs.

The real base of Kerala's employment is traditional industries like coir, cashewnut, handloom weaving and beedi, which are not capital intensive, compared with the industries in the organised sector. It is precisely these industries that have been mainly affected by recession, precisely these that have been neglected under "National Planning." Roughly six lakhs are employed in coir industry. The workers in the industry are facing intense hardships. Thousands of beedi workers from Cannanore District and thousands of cashew factory workers from Quilon District have been thrown out of work. The plight of handloom workers all over India is wellknown. The epidemic of closure has not escaped the industries started under the Rural Industries Projects. In Kerala, 254 industries were started as part of the Rural Projects. Of these, 44 have been closed down, some for want of capital, and 22 for want of market.

Of the total unemployed in Kerala, more than 27 per cent are said to have educational qualifications. Today, the number of unemployed medical graduates is 500; at the end of the Fourth Plan it may rise to 970. The number of unemployed graduates by that time may reach 5,000 and of diploma holders 40,000. The number of unemployed trainee teachers is estimated to rise to 5,000 by that date, apart from 5,000 B. Ed. degree holders who are estimated to be without jobs.

Unemployment in West Bengal

The situation is extremely critical in West Bengal. Though West Bengal is supposed to have 13.7 per cent of the total employment in the organised sector in the country, next only to Maharashtra, unemployment is most acute here. Nearly 15 per cent of the country's total registered unemployment comes from West Bengal.

We have seen that total employment in the private sector declined after 1966 and only in 1970, it had reached its pre-recession level. In West Bengal, the absolute decline in factory employment started in 1966 itself, where the total employment in factories dropped from 929,000 to 873,000 i.e. 4.4 per cent. In 1967

there was a further decline of 1.0 per cent and in 1968, another decline of 1.8 per cent. Between 1965 and 1968, employment declined by 60,000-a result of retrenchment and closure.

Employment in coalmines has been declining since 1961. Between 1961-68, it declined by 14,000 by 10 per cent. In the jute industry, employment decreased by more than 41,000 during 1968-69. Between 1964 and 1967, employment in plantations declined by 48,000 i.e. by 20 per cent. It is estimated that nearly 15,000 cotton textile workers have lost their jobs due to closure etc. between 1968-70. The number of seamen has also gone down. The major decline has taken place between 1959 and 1965 when the number of jobs were reduced from 16,000 to 8,000. By 1969, there was further reduction. The number of registered seamen fell from 16,000 in 1965 to 12,000 in 1969. In 1959, it was 26,000. In the engineering industry, employment declined from 3.41 lakhs to 3 lakhs, by 40,000, by 11 per cent.

Thus the Planning Commissions's efforts in West Bengal were reducing jobs instead of adding to them. Did they not notice this process all these years? Here it is not population explosion or new entrants in the labour market that alone were adding to unemployment. Here, even those who had jobs were adding to the numbers of the unemployed because of closure, etc. The figures of the live register seem to be total under-estimate. Because they showed a reduction in the number of live register precisely when official factory and other statistics showed an absolute decline in employment. In any case, by 1970, August, the number of persons on the live register reached half a million-545, 970. By June 1971, the figure reached 745—852 a big rise of 37 per cent. It forms 20 per cent of the total registered unemployed in India.

Between 1967 and 1970, the number of educated unemployed rose from 152,000 to 190,000. While the number of matriculates dropped, the number of intermediates, and under-graduates increased from 54,000 to 91,000; of graduates in engineering from 895 to 1717.

These facts are staggering by themselves. Add to them, the number of unemployed and under-employed in the rural areas and the picture will be complete. Nothing is needed to show the utter bankruptcy of the basic policies of the Government and to show that unless they are changed, people's sufferings cannot end; the situation cannot be remedied.

Unemployment among women

A vast section of women does not enter the labour market. They are confined to household work, which affects their economic status in society, leading to low wages, not-withstanding proclamation of the equality of sexes in the Constituation.

Economic conditions are now forcing the women to enter the labour market in larger numbers. But the number of women employed in industries is being reduced. To neglect the problem of growing unemployment among women and the increasing numbers of new entrants into the labour market, is an attempt to escape the reality. According to one estimate, whereas in the period between 1966-71, the net number of women entering the labour market was 4.8 million, between 1971-76 it will be 6.10 million and between 1976-81, it will be 7.05 million. These of course will prove to be conservative figures.

There had been heavy reduction in the women's working force in several industries—cotton textile, jute, plantations and mining. Intensification of work, coupled with the opposition to pay equal wages for equal work, and escape expenditure on special provisions and benefits for the health of women workers have been responsible for this. In the last few years, though the percentage of women in the organised sector has remained constant, they form only 11 per cent of the total employed. The services engage the largest number-8 lakh women.

Between 1960 and 1964, the number of educated women on the live register of employment increased from 54,437 to 103,305-an increase of 90 per cent. Between 1964 and 1968, it rose to 194,813 another of nearly 90 per cent. Of these 131,496 are matriculates; 35, 720 are intermediates; 23,885 are graduates; 3,711 are post-graduates. In 1968 , West Bengal had 38,000 educated women on the live register, i.e. nearly 20 per cent of the all-India total. By 1970, the figure increased to 45,000

Basic Policies Responsible

Such is the magnitude of the problem. It is the basic policies of the Government that have accentuated the situation; that are directly leading to growing unemployment. Unless the basic foundation of the present social order, with its private property in the means of production, and hunt for individual profit, are removed, there is no hope for solving the problem. All that can be done however is to mitigate the sufferings, lessen the rigour and offer

some transitional and temporary measures to ease the situation. The immediate relief must of course be grant of unemployment relief to all those seeking work.

Apart from this, many measures can be taken to increase job opportunities for some. The Government and the Planning Commission indulge in long-winded proclamations about using the labour potential, protecting smaller industries. But had they been serious, they would have moved in to protect the coir, the beedi, the handloom industries in Kerala.

In fact, some relief could be directly given if the Government intervenes to protect the workers and small employers from the exploitation at the hand of speculators who corner raw materials, or who fix its price too low, if agencies are established to bring the small producer directly into contact with the home or foreign market. Regular supply of raw materials at cheap prices, finance at cheap rates, guarnateed markets, with the help of the Government agencies and co-operativisation—all these can help in a certain measure. A Major problem is of course that of finding and maintainting guaranteed markets and in the course of it, saving the industry from competition with big owners.

Besides, there are problems like those of equitable distribution of raw materials, as in the case of casew industry. Those with money corner the raw material leaving the factories and workers without employment. These are simple steps that could be taken, since they involve measures against black-marketeers, holders of money, the bureaucracy is afraid of taking them.

Is it so difficult to help the beedi industry? In some places at least, the beedi factories or establishments were moved out of one State to another where low wages could be ensured. This attempt to encourage "development" in one State at the expense of the workers in another on the basis of low wages is reprehensible. The fact is that if the Government had moved in time, much suffering could have been prevented. The questionnaire suggests plethora of alternative remedies which of course are well-known. But not one of them has been used with any degree of seriousness hitherto.

The same thing can be said about West Bengal. Here unemployment has been growing apace over a number of years. Unlike in Kerala, West Bengal contains huge industrial firms together with small-scale modern units, as distinguished from the traditional industries of Kerala. The small units have their own problems and

they are supposed to play an auxiliary role to the big units, apart from catering to their own market. Has there been any attempt ot demarcate th sphere of the two sections, insulate the smaller units from competition from big units? The problems of financing, raw materials, guaranteed markets, including markets outside the State and the country-they have not been looked into and no systematic attempt has been made to prop them up. Yet if they had been done in time, much suffering could have been prevented, though naturally, the problem could have been far from solved.

How insincere and callous is the administration, can be seen from the fact that though a large number of cotton textile mills have been closed, not one has been taken over, through the formation of a textile Corporation. The Maharashtra Government was compelled by the workers' pressure to take over eight or ten mills belonging to the Indo Group in the Bombay City alone. Besides they have had to take over some mills in Vidarbha region and one mill in Sholapur. What is the use of considering various alternatives if measures that can be taken are avoided?

Development of Backward Regions

It should be seen therefore that a number of measures can be undertaken to relieve the immediate situation for some people, but these also are not being taken because of the pressure of vested interests.

In this connecion, we have to state our position about backward regions or districts, etc. Of late, there has been much talk about back ward region and advanced region and statements are being made showing greater verbal solicitude for backward districts and regions.

It is a fact that the so-called national planning has left certain regions and districts virtually untouched by modern developments. This is inevitable under capitalism. At the same time, the economic problems, including the problem of unemployment, loss of jobs, are the problems of not some regions, but the entire country.

Take for instance, the situation in West Bengal. At the end of June 1969, West Bengal accounted for 13.7 per cent of the total All-India employment in the organised sector and was only next to Maharashtra with 14.7 per cent of the total. West Bengal's percentage to India's population was 8.2 as against Maharashtra's 9.1 per cent, U.P. with a population of 16.6 per cent had 10.7 per cent of the All-India employment. Kerala had 4.3 per cent of the employment;

Mysore 4.7 per cent and so on.

At the same time, figures given by us show how acute unemployment is in West Bengal.

The point is that under the capitalist path, whatever "development" has taken place is too little and has accentuated the problems of all regions. In the name of regional development, one region should not be pitted against another, by turning a blind eye to the economic realities.

With this in mind, one can look at the problem of regional "development" There is no doubt that every attempt should be made to bring the backward regions and districts into contact with modern developments. Certain regions are endowed with rich natural resources, which can be fully exploited. The list of such resources is galore in Kerala where both the sea and land are rich in resources.

Such utilisation of these resources, and building of new industries will no doubt help to ease somewhat the local situation. But there should be no illusion about it. In the first place, such efforts will be just marginal from the point of view of solving the problem of backwardness. Neither the problem of backwardness nor unemployment can be solved or even substantially reduced on a regional basis.

While, therefore, the working class has full sympathy for special efforts to advance the progress of backward regions, it cannot at the same time remain silent without uttering a warning. The way in which the problem is being posed should rouse the suspicion of toiling masses. An insidious attempt is being made to pit the toilers in one region against another. Secondly, in the name of such development concessions are being offered to private capitalists without of course guaranteeing the wages and conditions of the workers. Thirdly, some people in Kerala once talked about inviting foreign monopoliists in the name of such development. Fourthly, some State Ministeries are not averse to sell workers' right to strike in the name of overcoming backwardness. If these things are taken into consideration it appears that this solicitude for backward regions is perhaps an attempt to escape the organised labour movement and exploit the unorganised workers of backward regions. We do not wish that this should happen. We support every honest plan which will contribute the development of backward regions.

Why This Unemployment?

The fact that unemployment in India is incresing by rapid strides is not accidental. The ruling classes of India have set the country on the path of capitalism. As a result the laws of capitalist society are being superimposed on earlier economic relations making the situation worse every day. One of the basic consequences of capitalim, the consequences of the law of capitalist accumulation is increasing unemployment. No capitalist country in the world escapes this problem. Though there may be ups and downs in the employment situation capitalist societies have never reached the objective of full employment, except perhaps when they are engaged in murderous war.

Today, one of the richest capitalist countries, America find itself in the midst of an economic crisis, euphemistically called recession, and the number of unemployed has reached the figure of more than 5.5 millions. This itself constitutes an under-estimate but is enough to give an indication of the problem that faces even the most advanced capitalist nation. In Britain also the number of unemployed exceeded 7 lakhs by 1971 and was higher than at any time after the war. It seems in Canada it reached half a million mark, record figure for the country's entire history.

Thus, it will be seen that the problem of unemployment is the problem which dogs the capitalist society since its inception and cannot be got rid of even when national income reaches record figures.

It is also seen that only in the Socilaist countries where the means of production no longer constitute the private property of individuals belonging to a small class, but are socially owned and controlled, where the means of distribution also are socially owned and controlled and where the objective of production is not individual profit but satisfaction of the needs of society, unemployment has been banished and the right to work has been fully inscribed in the Constitution. In India, the right to work is described as only one of the directive principles of the Constituation, but not jurisdically enforced. It is thus just a hoax. But in the Socialist countries it is an enforceable right and the State binds itslf to provide employment to all able bodied people.

The amazing progress made by the Soviet Union immediately after the Revolution, and the successes it scored in socialist planning leading to the abolition of unemployment and exploitation

are known to all. The remarkable achievements of People's Republic of China stand out as another historic success of the Socialist System on the soil of Asia. The conditions under which the People's Republic of China was founded were perhaps more backward than those obtaining in India. Backlog of unemployment was perhaps more serious in China than in India. The problems facing the leadership of the People's Republic of China were at least as stupendous as those facing India, yet, the achievements of the two countries stand out in sharp contrast to each other. Even the worst critics of China has to admit that she has gone a long way towards solving her basic problems and is today in a position to provide work and decent livelihood for every one while in India the problem of unemployment, destitution and impoverishment becomes accentuated every day.

The crux of the matter lies not in inventing a scheme here and there and Micawber-like expecting something to turn up. The crux lies in overhauling the basic foundations of society, its property structure which was done in China in a thorough-going manner while in India, the old structure was allowed to continue with some adaptations only.

In China, the means of production became the common property of the people, socially owned and controlled. The small industries were gradually converted into co-operatives and the land communes replaced the old private property relations in land. All these led to a tremendous enthusiasm enabling the mass of common people to contribute the best of their labour for social good, making labour a thing of pleasure instead of something which they must do to maintain themselves on a starvation ration. No one feels he is exploited and everyone works for society and himself.

In India, on the other hand, the means of production were left in private hands and Government's public sector became only an instrument of helping forward the growth of capitalism. The so-called land reforms did not shake the basis of land monopoly and land concentration continued to exist, though it was often concealed to escape the provision of law. The so-called mixed economy became a paradise for the big propertied classes and it is not an accident that national planning which was supposed to reduce economic dispartities and take the nation forward on the road to prosperity actually ended in growing concentration of economic

power in the hands of monopolists, increasing unemployment and impoverishment for the mass of workers. The accumulation of wealth and capital at one end and poverty and destitution at the other is the unmistakable result of the so-called national planning which is a mere euphemism for the capitalist path.

Inevitable Result of Capitalist Society

These results namely, the unemployment and impoverishment for the vast masses and concentration of the country's wealth and capital in the hands of a few people are the inevitable results of capitalist society with its private property in the means of production. In India, the situation gets worsened by the fact that these capitalist relations are super-imposed on a variety of antiquated land relations. The inevitable results arise from the fact that every step forward in a capitalist society takes place at the expense of the working masses. Thus, capital formation depends on how much the capitalist is able to rob the worker of the produce that he produces. If the living conditions of the workers improve, it leads to the fall of the capitalist profit, and thereby, an inherent contradiction itself develops in the very process of production. In the competition for the market, the success of each capitalist or each competing country depends on how far he or it is able to cheat and rob his or its labourers and thereby either make excess profit or sell more of the goods produced in the market. In this competition, each capitalist wants to capture more of the market, by using sophisticated means of production which imply bigger and bigger investments in capital, but relatively less and less employment of labour. The whole trend of modern production lies in more and more capital being used by less and less number of workers, i.e. a trend towards increased productivity of labour leading to relatively lesser employment of the mass of labourers. It was Karl Marx who correctly pointed out that in every step forward of industry, the constant capital increases and relatively the variable capital decreases, i.e. as capitalist soceity advanced, productivity of labour increases, total production increases, but the hands required for this total production relatively decrease and create the problem of unemployment. This is an inevitable law of capitalist society, which it has not been able to overcome though it might have adopted strategems and gimmicks to lesson its rigour. In imperialist countries, if some times, near full employment is achieved it is

either in times of war or at the expense of the backward people and colonies for a short time.

This is seen in connection with the progress of capitalist factories in India also. Each successive year shows an increase in the amount of productive capital per employed worker. It reveals a fall in the employment potential of a given unit of capital:

All Industries—All India

	1946 Rs.	1952 Rs.	1955 Rs.	1960 Rs.	1961 Rs.	1962 Rs.	1963 Rs.	1964 Rs.
Productive capital employed per worker	2645	4897	5424	7748	8669	11902	13459	16214
Gross input per worker	2882	5823	6209	8858	9878	10600	11571	12674

Ref : Statistics of Selected manufacturing Industries Part I—National Commission Labour.

Every step forward of modern industry requires a larger amount of capital for employing the same number of workers. It shows that without a very high rate of progress the tendency will be to add to the number of unemployed. But such high rate is not possible under the present planning.

It will be seen the problem of unemployment in India is thus a problem of the developing capitalist relations super-imposed upon old semi-feudal relations. Any attempt to treat it apart from this context is bound to fail. To treat it only as a problem of a 'developing' or 'backward' country, without taking into consideration the property relations will be just cheating oneself, and cheating the people. Experience of old capitalist countries shows that there is no end of unemployment unless the property relations are completely overhauled, and unless means of production, distribution and

exchange are socially owned and controlled, which means at the same time unless the State of the working class leading the toilers is established. It is in this context that the problem of unemployment must be examined. Its basic solution of course depends upon the liquidation of the present property relations. It is, therefore, wrong to search for sources of unemployment in imbalance in economic growth or in minor lacuna in planning. Actually, it is the social and economic structure that is at fault. Other weaknesses may add to the situation without being the main source.

Apart from this, there are certain special features of the Indian situation. It is no doubt true that there is a more rapid growth of population compared with earlier years but this cannot be used as an alibi by the planners because the rate of production and growth of national income is itself very low due to the social and economic factors. But apart from this, there is one special feature which should be common to all countries which enter upon the capitalist path and that is that the very growth of modern industries and the new strides taken in overcoming the old backwardness themselves create and accentuate the problem of unemployment. In India, for instance, the growth of many new industries is accompanied by a rapid decay of old village and artisan industries depriving tens of thousands of people of their jobs. While the employment potential of modern industries may be only a few thousands, the total number displaced by them may amount to tens of thousands. This is a process which has been noted in the decennial censuses; the slow growth of modern industries is unable to absorb the displaced people from the ruined industries, thus adding to unemployment in rural areas.

The rate of development under national planning has hardly affected the traditional percentage of occupational distribution. In fact, till 1961, i.e. at the beginning of the Third Plan, at least the percentage of these engaged in agriculture had increased computed with that in 1901 and the percentage of those engaged in manufacturing, big and small industry, had decreased or remained at the same level. It seems that till 1971 at least the process of going back to agriculture had not ended. According to 1971 Census the cultivators and agricultural workers constituted 68.23 per cent of the working force. As per 1961 Census the corresponding figure was 69.49 per cent.

Rigour of Unemployment

Official policies often seek to give help to what they call small industries, or what are described as labour intensive industries but generally they have failed to notice that the break-up of the old village and artisan industries still continues and that it is adding a sizeable proportion to the problem of unemployment. The horrible conditions under which the vast masses of handloom weavers in this country lives, conditions which are a disgrace to any civilized nation, shows how tenaciously the workers in those industries will continue to stick to their jobs whether they get decent living out of it or not. In reality, most of these people should be considered to be either unemployed or partly employed becasue for all their labour of 15/18 hours, they hardly get a pittance which can keep body and soul together.

The rigour of unemployment may be felt by different sections and regions in a more or less intensified manner. India's caste structure as well as the compartmentalisation of life based on communal and religious considerations makes it inevitable that certain sections like the tribals and the untouchables, the minorities like the Muslims and other backward castes, should suffer in such a situation relatively more than others. However, the unemployment problem today has become a huge problem embracing all sections of toilers including the educated and backward and no section who lives on its labour is free from it.

Regional disparties also often tend to accentuate this problem but of course there is no regional or district-wise solution to the great problem that is faced by the toilers all over India. In such a situation, to try to reduce unemployment by transferring industry from one district to another or giving more encouragement for starting of industries in one State or another and call it an attempt to solve the unemployment problem is to cheat the people. No doubt, the starting of an industry in a backward region may give jobs to a section of the people there who would normally not go to the cities or other places for jobs. It may also help the progress of the region or the district in other ways. But all this will be a minor development compared with the needs of employment in that district or region and the general progress of that region. In fact, the so-called attempt to remove regional unemployment is just a thin shield for greater exploitation of the people of that region with the help of the State. The State is supposed to finance the start of

industries in such regions, some times the industrialists are given a guarantee that strikes also will not take place, there is no minimum guarantee of any wage and the industrialists are attracted with the promise of cheap labour.

Growth in Economic Disparity

It was inevitable that under the national plans there should be an increase of economic disparity but the real character of this disparity is being concealed by official spokesmen and the same attempt is made in the questionnaire of this committtee. It is not correct in this connection to say that benefit has not accrued to 'some weak and poor sections', that high incomes have accrued for 'specified groups or sections'. In reality, what has happened is that both in the rural and urban areas the income advantages have accrued to certain definite classes, certain classes who are in a position to exploit others. This is not the same thing as saying that certain groups of persons have been benefitted under the planning. The planning being based on the capitalist path it has in the first place led to greater and greater acquisition of wealth for capitalists who exploit labour. Among the capitalists on the basis of the law of capitalist accumulation and competition, the bigger capitalists have benefitted most and it is an illuminating commentary on India's planning that after 15 years of a declared struggle against economic inequality the Government was forced to appoint a commission on monopoly concentration of wealth and practices. The big monopolists have benefitted the most from Government's planning wealth and because under capitlism it is they who garner all because under it concentration of economic power, is an unavoidable law.

Simultaneoulsy Government's refusal to deal with the old landloards drastically, its reliance on these very landed elements to run the State Administrations has led to a situation in which the upper crusts in rural areas, the big landholders, the rich peasants, the capitalist elements all have monopolised the benefits from Government's expenditure on agriculture, credit facilities, community development projects, package programmes and every conceivable device that the Government resorted to help these sections. There was a method in this madness. For what the Government has been insterested in, is not so much to solve the food problem of the country including the food problem of destitute rural masses, but to create a sizeable marketable surplus for

feeding the cities so that the wheels of industry could run. With this limited objective, they started helping the upper sections who would have a greater marketable surplus. The result has been a strata of exploiters in villages who have garnered huge wealth, who do not pay taxes, who are getting more and more land under their control and who continue to exploit the mass of rural population, whether through rack-renting, low wages usury or any other method. It is these elements that virtually loot the States' Finances, refuse to pay back the debts they owe to co-operative credit societies and many of them by introduring mechanisation and electric devices actually lessen the demand for labour in agriculture.

As a result of the 'Mixed Economy' the big capitalists and the landed interests which have come on top while the main mass of toilers has become impoverished. It is no doubt that a narrow section of the intelligentsia, a large number of bureaucrats, most of them corrupt, speculators and traders also have benefitted under the recent economic growth. But the vast mass of people are finding the situation more and more acute. Factories have closed down, and real wages of the industrial workers have gone down. The real wages of agricultrual labourers have decreased and they now get lesser number of days of work. The process of eviction of the small peasants continues unabated, and the small artisan in the village continues to join the ranks of the destitutes. It is now estimated that in the rual areas, those who are living below the starvation line, constitute nearly 80 per cent of the population.

Equally bad is the situation facing the educated middle-class, whether they are teachers, employees, professors or others. Unemployment among them has increased, large number of engineers are unemployed, large number of scientists, engineers and technical intelligentsia flee the country and try to get jobs abroad and the condition of those who remain, gets worsened everyday becasue of the lag between their salaries and ever rising prices. Today more than a million educated are unemployed and the Government finds no remedy except suggesting that university education should be restricted.

Economic Policies Benefit Exploiting Classes

It will be seen from this description that only the exploited classes have been adversely affected under the planning. This is some thing different from suggesting that some weaker sections

have not benefitted and some specified groups have benefitted. Government should not try to conceal the class reality that is seen through the effects of the planning, that it has been a paradise for the exploiter and hell for the exploited. The inequality in distribution follows from the unequal relations to production-relations of exploitation. This should not be screened by suggesting that the inquality is the result of inadequate job opportunities.

The entire financial, fiscal and economic policies of the planners and the Government are class policies which are meant to help the exploiter classes at the expenses of the exploited masses. There is no other explanation for the policies that are being pursued. What explanation is there for Government's failure even to tax the top rich in the rural areas who, on all counts, have gathered huge wealth? What explanation is there for the existence of huge amounts of black money which in the language of the Finance Minister has established a parrallel economy and which plays with the lives of the people? What explanation is there for the ease with which big capitalists are able to avoid taxes, the arrears now amounting to hundreds of crores of rupees? The so-called measures of economic control, whether licensing, state trading, nationalisation are not meant to rectify the balance between the exploiters and the exploited, but constitute an instrument for the better organised functioning of the system of exploitation in the interest of the capitalist class itself. They constitute in reality a measure of internal discipline for this class and at the same time, through the State, they enable this class to monopolise financial and legal resources for the promotion of capitalism in the country. Every time, when because of the rising prices the government employees demand neutralisation in the rise in the cost of living, the Government opposes it. Official records themselves show that labour productivity has increased more than the increase in real wages. Yet, on every occasion, like the capitalists, the Government demands that workers should allow themselves to be exploited more in the name of national advance. There has been a talk about freezing of wages also, though no one has suggested freezing of profits and running of concerns as patriotic concerns, without any eye on profit. Whenever the workers take action for their demands, it is suppressed with the aid of police. The public sector factories of the Government become one vast prison house where workers are made to feel that they are not free citizens of a free country, but helpless slaves of a

system compelling productive activity through lathis and bayonets.

Simultaneously, the corrupt bureaucratic administration which dominates the public sector has created a situation which is extremely inimical to the growth of production, security of employment and its further extension. The fact that a number of public sector plants are running at a loss is almost entirely due to the currupt management of the bureaucrats. Official circles falsify the situation and hold the workers responsible for the impasse. But it is on record that several times, the workers as well as official committees have exposed the treacherous role of the corrupt bureaucrats but they have not been punished. On the contrary, workers who had tried to serve the country by exposing this fraud have been victimised. This creates a situation which is extremely inimical to further growth of industry and thereby accentuate the problem of unemployment.

Government's policy of borrowing from abroad, its huge loans as well as its encouragement to private foreign capital also impose heavy burdens on the masses. The rate of profit demanded by foreign capital is higher and in India, it perhaps earns the highest rate. This means greater exploitation of the workers. Similarly, the huge debt burden which has been accumulated also means that so much income of the nation must be sequentered for paying back the foreign loans. The sum of Rs. 435 crores kept aside for payment of liabilities this year is equal to full annual wage of 20 lakhs of Indian workers. It means that 2 million workers are working for the foreigners without any payment. How can there be any equitable sharing of the benefits of economic advance under these circumstances?

This growing inequality among classes is an inevitable consequence of the capitalist path. Those who control the means of exploitation will naturally acquire more at the expense of those who are exploited. The fiscal, economic and financial policies of the Government represent this relation because the Government itself represents the exploiting classes. Therefore no new tinkering with the financial and fiscal policies will bring a basic change in the situation of the masses unless the basic formulations are completely overhauled. So long as this is not done, whatever financial gimmicks the Government might resort to, the masses will get poorer and the exploiters will get richer.

Capitalism Breeds Unemployment.

From what is stated above, it is clear that it is a fatuous idea that "rapid economic development of the country and greater industrialisation will ipso facto create more job opportunities, will have a snow-balling effect on employment opportunities, and will bring about substantial improvement in the employment situation without any special measures, specifically directed towards the creation of employment being taken." On the contrary, as we are showing, progress along the capitalist path means greater unemployment which can be eliminated only under Socialism. Secondly, under Indian conditions and in the context of the present state of world capitalism one cannot think of capitalism or the capitalist path as having potentiality of transforming the backward structure of India into a modern economic structure.

Thirdly, as we have already shown, in India, the process of industrial development even now is releasing more people from employment than absorbing. That is one of the reasons for the accentuation of this problem. To leave the fate of employment to the tender mercies of the industrialists—this is the meaning of the above sentence—if just to give them a free licence to play havoc with the jobs of the people. Economic history also shows that even in the earliest stages of capitalism job opportunites could not be created without the most intense suffering for the people during the transitional period. The real point is to shift from economic development in industry based on profits to one based on social need. It is only then that the tempo of industrialisation and economic development backed by the production enthusiasm of the working masses will rise to such a height that the entire back-log of unemployment will be cleared in the shortest possible time and the people released through the break-up of backward industries and occupations will be quickly absorbed in the developing of big industries. Capitalism is incapable of such a tempo and industrialisation based on capitalist relations is incapable of solving the unemployment problem. On the other hand, it will accentuate it still further.

To argue that allocation of resources between the different sectors have been responsible for the inadequate growth of employment opportunties is to miss the central point of the problem. It is not because there was certain emphasis on modern and heavy industries in the plans that the unemployment problem has either

been created or accentuated. As a matter of fact, such an emphasis was very necessary in the context of our dependence on foreign imperialist sources and countries. From the point of view of national defence also such emphasis was justified. In fact, we should have had more heavy industries by now and more machine-building plants. The fact that these big public sector plants are not being worked efficiently only shows the bankruptcy of the capitalist path and the Government. But that does not mean that they were not necessary in national interests or more of them are not necessary if India is to make rapid advance. But it only means that rapid advance is not possible under the capitalist path.

Low Purchasing Power of the Masses

It is true that the employment potential of big and heavy industries is less than that of small industries. The allocations have to be decided from the overhaul interests of the country. To find an explanation for unemployment in the modest growth of heavy industries is totally wrong. As we have said unemployment is inevitable because of the nature of the system, secondly, it increases by leaps and bounds also because the rate of total growth is extremely slow and thirdly, because the class policies of the Government which enrich the exploiters at the expense of the masses lead to a shrinking of the purchasing power of the people on which alone development of small and big industries could in the final analysis be based. The real fault here was that the economic advance did not simaltaneously promote the purchasing power of the people and thereby it led to fall in demand for the products of the industry thus reducing employment opportunites. If along with the heavy industry, we could have planned a bigger growth rate and greater impetus to mass production enthusiasm, this situation would not have arisen.

As regards unemployment in agriculture, it is primarily due to the fact that the Government has not succeeded in liquidating the antiquated land relations and distributing land to the tiller. After this is done, efforts at co-operativisation and Government help for inputs and introduction of new technology will lead far greater employment of the available labour power and naturally to greater production. Investment, advanced technolgoy, agro-industries, small-scale industries, all will play a role in fighting unemployment only on the basis of liquidation of the present land relations and transfer of land to the real producer. Then alone his interest in

production will be roused 10 times and he will reap full benefit out of the technical advance and other benefits. To find an explanation for une ployment among the educated in the reluctance of the educated people to soil their hands or to do manual labour is to attempt to establish an alibi for the Government and the ruling classes. Today, the struggle for existence is so severe that none except a very rare perosn would refuse job just because it involves soiling of hands by manual labour. Besides, the question is posed as if jobs are available for those who are willing to do manual labour. This of course is wholly unture. The lakhs of unskilled workers who are in the employment exchange list and millions in the countryside testify to the fact that no jobs are available whether you are educated or uneducated. The simple fact is that the number of educated unemployed are rising because avenues of employment are developing at a very slow rate under the capitalist path. If we take the proportion of persons undergoing university education, it is not at all either a big percentage or a big number for a country like India and our planning is so effective that it cannot provide jobs even for these. It is not only the graduates in arts that are unemployed, engineers, and technical intelligentsia also find it difficult to get jobs. Scientists and research workers emigrate abroad to get a decent job. it is the incapacity of the present system to employ talents that creates the problem of unemployment. To hide its bankruptcy, it passes on the buck, to the unemployed by suggesting that they are unwilling to soil their hands or do manual work.

The schemes of the Planning Commission, in fact all official schemes, are based on a wrong approach. They preserve the present property relations and seek to tackle the problem of unemployment within its framework. The Constitution itself has made the right to property a fundamental right. Their schemes thus deal with the symptoms and manifestations of the disease, not with the disease itself and its root cuases.

Lack of Awareness of the Planning Commission

There is total lack of awareness on the part of the Planning Commission that they are dealing with live human beings with an oppressed and a bitter class, feeling angry and frustrated and that without evoking a sympathetic response from them, without tendering bonafides to them, no scheme will succeed. That is why the Planning Commission's scheme amount to only aggregates of

financial allocations and nothing more. The financial sums are supposed to do the trick without the participation of the affected people. In fact, the unemployed are treated as if they are inanimate things like timber, iron or bricks.

The various schemes in the Fourth Plan programme fall under this category. No doubt, they prescribe substantial sums on this or that sector, and promise to produce new additional wealth. They appear to address themselves to the various economic problems before the country, and claim that they are taking care of the employment potential of the Plan. They distinguish between small-scale industry, the labour intensive industries on the one hand and the big industries on the other, and attempt to show that a proper balance is struck between the various sectors so that economic development combined with larger and larger employment can go ahead. But for all this, there is hardly any supporting evidence to show that the anticipated employment will be generated, that the total effect will not be increased unemployment, but its decrease. The experience of the last three plans merely demonstrates how this kind of planning has, instead of abating the intensity of unemployment, actually contributed to it. Howsoever you might talk of encouraging small-scale industries or labour intensive industries, whatever sums you might spend on promoting them, a sizeable attack against unemployment cannot be made unless Government's economic measures assure a growing market for the products of these industries. You cannot build either heavy or small-scale industries, capital intensive or labour intensive industries, on the basis of a shrinking purshasing power of the common man, created by the inflationary process. In the absence of such a guarantee of continuous increase in the purchasing power of the common man, attempts to develop small-scale industries and labour intensive industries just become propaganda stunts which are unable to affect the employment situation. Such financial spending may help some individuals to advance their economic interests, may help some owners of small industries to get out of the tight economic situation but it cannot create a situation in which the major problem of unemployment can be really attacked. Some times, it is suggested that the large-scale concerns should leave the production of components and accessories to the small-scale concerns. Some times, it is suggested that some other traditional industries should be entirely left to the small-scale concerns. The

employment potential of such measures will be badly affected if the market for their products is not guaranteed through extension of the purchasing power of the people, which means rectifying the mode of distribution of income which obtains at present. The sad plight of the handloom industry even after certain reservations in its favour reveals how chimerical are the proposals to protect the small-scale industries, expand it and use it as a weapon to fight unemployment.

Plans too small to solve Unemployment Problem

The fact is that transitional measures to protect small-scale industries, to develop them and to use them as a wepons against unemployment can be effective only if the ruling class is interested in really curbing and eliminating big property and socialising means of production. Only then such measures will have a telling effect on the employment situation because then the purchasing power of the consumer will consistently increase with the development of production and distribution also will not be one-sided in favour of certain exploiting classes who will have no place in economy whatsoever. It will be seen therefore that even such questions as using the ample labour power in our country through labour intensive industries to solve unemployment problem is not possible for planning as it stands today.

So far as the total effort seen through the various schemes of the Fourth Plan is concerned, it is obviously too small for having a telling effect on the employment siutation. Actually, a much bigger effort is required to develop the economic resources and attack the problem of unemployment, an effort which cannot be made under the rule of the present Government. For such an effort will mean an end of the privileged position of the exploiting classes, it will mean inspiring the producing classes to put their best in every productive effort, rouse them to lead a real war against poverty and call upon them to make every sacrifice possible for the common cause. Then it will be easy to find the requisite resources for starting a genuine struggle against the unemployment. But the present planning does not even think of securing the active and conscious participation of the real producers, is incapable of thinking of such an effort.

The usual criticism confines itself referring to the so-called imbalance in sectoral allocations. Some critics opine that too much is being allocated to the big industries sector and too little either to

agriculture or small industries. This is nothing but juggling with figures. It cannot be anybody's claim that the Planning Commission had assigned too much for modern industries because even now to a large extent we continue to depend on foreign imports and foreign aid for many vital supplies and the day-to-day functioning of modern industries. It is well to remember in this connection that though we are a politically independent and sovereign country, we are still far too dependent economically on foreign supplies and foreign loans. At the same time, it is equally true that one cannot say that the other sectors have been given their due importance. The same expenditure on agriculture would have brought far bigger results had the ruling classes removed the land monopoly and unleashed the productive enthusiasm of the poor peasant and agricultural labour. But those who dare not pass any law for land ceiling and go on chattering about it for years, how can one expect of them to take this simple measure which would have saved the country hundreds of crores of rupees and open the way to the salvation of our agriculture and enabled us to take in right earnest the problem of unemployment and under-employment in rural areas?

The fact is that considering the magnitude of the problem, the depth of poverty and the backlong of unemployment, our Plans are too small; their foundation is rotten. To think that more sectoral adjustments within the framework of the present Plan will give substantial results is to cheat ourselves.

Token Measures Will Lead Us Nowhere

To enter into a discussion therefore, about which allocation is more labour-oriented and which will give slightly more jobs is to miss the whole point. So many schemes may help a few to secure a few jobs, may help even to add to production, may give some relief to those who run small and village industries, but all these schemes do not affect the main situation. In reality, most of them have the same character as the famine relief works of the Government of India, namely, immediately giving some kind of pseudo-employment to stop starvation and that too, to a small percentage of people affected. No one has claimed that famine relief works or scarcity works constitute weapons of eliminating unemployment. The Planning Commission's schemes in a large measure constiture nothing but such relief works and they do not create a permanent self-developing condition which will enable the country to attack

the problem of unemployment in a more and more effective manner.

Besides, it should be remembered that these financial sums may mean very little in actual practice. It should be noted that inflationary condition reduce the value of the allocations every month. Secondly, the schemes are operated by anti-people bureaucrats and the Government is as afraid of the suffering people and their participation as the British Government was when it ruled the country. It is amazing that there is hardly any stress on securing the effective participation of the people and the unemployed in the task of promoting new schemes. To by-pass the common man, the Government and the bureaucrats take help of the district panchayats and panchayat committees, most of whom are dominated by the rural vested interests. They harp on the role that the co-operative societies are supposed to play, but they conceal the fact that these societies are again dominated by the rich vested rural interests.

The vested interests coupled with the bureaucrats see to it that the various schemes are utilised by them, as an instrument of extending patronage, corruption, and feathering their own nests. Only a small part of the expenditure trickles to the common man, who, in the name of a new job, is asked to work on starvation wages. In fact, it is also noted that in many places, contract labour is used under these schemes which means that the contractor gets away with a substantial part of the wages which should really go to the worker. Thus the effectiveness of the schemes cannot be measured even by big financial allocations. Whether some of them will create real national assets of a permanent character is also doubtful.

However, with all this, it is certainly necessary that there should be big schemes for promoting rural activity. Building of roads, of house, schemes for water supply, improving of land and building and expansion of rural industries, should certainly be undertaken to relieve the unemployment situation in the rural areas. To be effective, to see that what has been spent, is really spent for the relief of the unemployed, there should be effective supervision by the organisations of the people concerned and mass organisations like the Kisan Sabha, the agricultural workers' organisations, and the political parties. Without such supervision, even the limited relief that one can expect from such schemes will not reach the common man.

Massive Programme of Rural Construction

It has been asked : Will a massive programme of the construction of roads and the improvement of rural communications including the market and feeder roads generate considerable productive employment in the rural areas? In this connection, certain objectives of public policy have been suggested, e. g. to bring every village in a developed and agricultural area, within 6.4 km. (4 miles) of metal roads and 2.5 km. (1.5 miles) of any road. While undertaking such a big scheme, both its aspects should be taken into consideration. There is no doubt that building of roads and the improvement of rural communications will certainly contribute to additional employment in the rural area. How much, additional one cannot say. The claims are likely to be exaggerated if one thinks in terms of a massive increase in employment. Afterall, such activity can only be one of the ways of increasing employment but at the same time, it should be realised that the same activity is also likely to create unemployment in the rural areas to some extent at least. After all, building of roads, feeder roads and improvement of communications really means carrying the capitalist market and capitalist relations to the remotest village. It is not only a one-sided affair. It is bound to affect the traditional means of transport and some traditional occupations whereby people in remote areas have been eking out a living. Extension of capitalist development while creating new jobs at the same time, displaces a large number of people in a under-developed country like India. This fact we have already noted. Unless counter-acting measures are taken to stop this process, the net employment generated through such a programme may be very little and even nill.

It is difficult to estimate without going into details the total financial requirements of an all-sided rural programme to attack unemployment and poverty over a number of years. A recent estimate made by two economists puts it at between 800 to 1000 crores of rupees, per year. It is not difficult to raise this sum by means of additional taxation of the rural rich, of those who exploit the black-market and of the monopolist and big capitalists on whose consumption there should be strict restriction. If there is honesty in administering the laws duly passed by the Parliament, like the law of taxation of income, a big sum can be garnered because in its absence taxation arrears have mounted up to hundreds of crores of rupees. It is of course futile to expect that the present bureaucratic

Government will be capable of making the rich pay for fighting the unemployment problem in the country. Therefore, calculation of what such programme will require merely becomes an exercise in futility.

The financial institutions of the country should certainly be called upon to make their countribution for raising finances for this kind of programme. But once again, the vested interests will be there to oppose it. The public sector financial institutions will have to bear the brunt but here again, commercial calcultations, need for profit, all these will sway the authorities and their role to that of a charitable doner for a few 'worthy' causes.

Section IV

The absence of adequate financial assistance and credit facilities to the self-employed including the educated unemployed, desiring to become self-employed, is stated to be one of the handicaps in the way of such persons becoming self-employed. Once again, this reduces the whole question to one of financial assistance only. There is no doubt that financial assistance is the need of self-employed persons, especially in these days of continuous rise in prices which is growingly depreciating their monetary capital and also increases the need of monetary resources. But this does not mean that if all these self-employed persons and all those who wish to be self-employed were given necessary financial assistance their problem of unemployment will be solved. They may spend the money alright, but they will soon come into conflict with the shrinkage of market created by the increasing poverty of the masses. It is thus not simply financial assistance that will lead to the solution of this problem but something more basic. To present the question as financial assistance will do the trick, for all these people is just to raise high hopes and cheat them in the bargain. No doubt, individuals will be definitely helped by such financial assistance and the assistance being restricted it will only go to certain favourites of those in authority asking others to live on hope.

Hardships of Self-employed Persons

At the same time, it is to be admitted that a lot of suffering and economic hardship would have been prevented had there been a greater concern for the self-employed people in the ruling circles. In the villages and elsewhere, they are rapidly losing their means of livelihood and some at least can be saved by timely assistance, from the financial institutions. Till now this has been a neglected

problem and the small fellow could hardly think of getting assistance from anybody except the moneylenders, paying higher rate of interest. Such financial assistance can at best soften the rigour of the economic situation for a small section of the self-employed. Why even this has not been done is clear. The banks, the financial institutions, co-operative societies are all dominated by the vested interests and they have been manipulating finance for themselves. What chance has the small self-employed person when face to face with them? The fact is that the banks, co-operative societies and financial institutions are considered by those who control these as purely commercial institutions out to make the highest profit and not as custodians of social capital, whose duty is to promote social development and help the under-dog. This has been the main reason why they have shown a callous attitude throughout. Naturally, they try to conceal their class bias by putting forward the criteria of credit worthiness and such other things to effectively eliminate the smaller fellow from the competition for credit. This attitude of the bankers and others will not change just by enacting amendments to the existing law. Only if the managing boards of these institutions are re-vamped with the direct representatives of the labouring masses including the self-employed and their organisations, only then will it be possible to use the institutional finance as an instrument of giving relief to the self-employed, or the unemployed, who wish to become self-employed. In such a situation, these representatives can go through the various schemes and applications for help, examine their viability and sanction the required loans. This will put an end to bureaucratic corruption, to the looting of co-operatives by the agents of the vested interestes and see the credit really becomes the weapon of help to the unemployed or the self-employed.

Industrial Licensing helps Big Business

The present policies and procedures in regard to industrial licensing actually help the big capitalists and monopolists to dominate the scene. Even the recent modifications have given them a place of honour, allowing them not only freedom of investing in the core sector, but also in concerns with a capital of more than 5 crores of rupees. We have already said that unless the power of the monopolists is broken and the means of production in their hands are immediately nationalised, the country cannot tackle the unemployment problem seriously. The recent provision to issue liberal

licences in the middle sector may help a few capitalists to put up concerns, it may save them to some extent from competition from big monopolist groups, but that by itself, will not lead to increased tempo of industrial activity so as to contribute to the lessening of the intensity of unemployment.

It seems the Government has taken for itself the right to make exceptions in favour of monopolists and allow them to penetrate the middle sector as well. Besides, it is the experience of all recent legislation that the monopolists have shown themselves to be quite capable of evading the law and entering prohibited territory by dispersing their units. It has also been found that in many cases, in the industiral estates the main beneficiaries are some of the monopolisits themselves. Therefore, the recent modifications of the industrial policy, the liberalisation of the licences for the so-called middle sector, all this will not weaken the hold of the monopolists; they will operate through other channels. Now will the liberalisation of licences in the middle sector unleash a new industrial upsurge because this sector will be mostly dealing with consumers goods, market for which is again determined by the purchasing power of the common man? All-told therefore, the existing industrial policy will not mean any acceleration of the industrial development and cannot be looked upon as contributing to the fight against unemployment. Similarly, the recent exemption limit in regard to licensing provisions from Rs. 25 lakhs to one crore, may only lessen the burden of corruption on this section of industrialists but will not necessarily create a demand for the products so that they can give a push to industrial production. It is a fact that the above two sectors are feeling the effects of competition from the monopolists in relation to licences for new concerns etc. The above modifications may give them a sense of protection but their economic results are likely to be halting.

In fact, the Government and the country are already facing a serious economic situation in the midst of this new policy. The industrial concerns are unable to utilise their productive capacity some times even with one shift working and there are reports that instead of going in for the nationalisation of the concerns of the monopolists, the Government is thinking of relaxing the restrictions against them. There is talk that the Monopolies Act has retarded industrial development and therefore it should be modified. This will all multiply the evils that are already there and accen-

tuate the unemployment situation. In fact, the Government itself while it prattles about employment oriented industries and other things, is financing modernisation operations in the jute and textile industries which are bound to lead to heavy retrenchment. Not satisfied with this the Government is also thinking of erecting a computer factory in the public sector. This will result in drastically reducing the jobs of the educated.

The Question of Regional Imbalances

In the name of removing regional imbalances, the Planning Commission has prepared a list of industrially backward districts which qualify for concessions in finance from the financial institutions. Another list of industiral backward districts has been prepared which qualify for central subsidy amounting to 1/10th of the fixed capital investment of new industrial units. It is quite clear that when the Planning Commission thinks of regional imbalances it has only the interests of the capitalists in its mind. In the name of removing regional imbalances a large number of financial concessions are to be given to those who would start industries in these backward districts. But it is amazing that there is no provision for protecting the interests of those who will be employed in these new concerns. These backward districts, many of them, inhabited by tribals have the lowest wage rates in India. The enterpreneurs are being encouraged to take advantage of the unemployment proverty and low wage in these areas so that with the help of State's concessions they can garner big profits. And all this is being paraded as an attempt to solve the unemployment problem in that particular district. Actually, it will be an invitation to exploit the backward areas and nothing more. There is no systematic plan even to develop these districts in an all-round manner so that their comparative backwardness is overcome and at least equal pay is assured to them for equal work. All that will result is a few concerns whose employment potential may be very little, but whose rate of exploitation will be very high. If there was any desire to rectify the regional imbalance, there would have been an attempt to think in terms of an all-round development and not just encouraging a few private concerns.

There can be no stability and security for small-scale industries unless competition from big industries is completely eliminated. Besides, the productiveness of small-scale industries has also to be increased in order to meet shrinkage in the purchasing power of the

common man. Only when competition is eliminated and the surreptitious methods of undermining small-scale industries are prohibited, then alone other measures of promotion will succeed. Some times, lack of raw materials is due to the fact that the supplies are either cornered by big industry or they are dependent on the production of big industry. Black-marketeers also create artificial shortage of raw materials. Lack of finance is of course there and it is felt all the more because of the inflationary situation. But merely tackling these two, without protecting the small-scale industries from the competition of the big industry will lead nowhere. In a rational planning in the transitional period, people will have to be taught that certain products made from big industries are eschewed and should only be produced in small industries. But we find on the other hand so many products being produced by big industries which should have been left to the small sector. This is natural because the Planning Commission and the Government are dealing with the development of capitalist production and capitalist production demands the growing elimination of the smaller sector and greater and greater concentration of production. So long as this tendency is not actively counteracted by deliberate measures of policy, all talk of helping the small-scale industries will be meaningless. In its absence, once again, financial accommodation, supply of raw materials, availability of markets, all such measures will only give marginal relief, but will not solve the growing crisis of small-scale industries and will not therefore stop the flow of unemployment.

The magnitude of rural unemployment is of such staggering proportion that small remedial measures will not even affect the fringe of the problem. The question of providing increased employment to the rural unemployed and under-employed, is bedevilled by the existing land relations, by the policies pursued by the Government and by the chill in labour enthusiasm which these have induced.

Land Relations Chill Productive labour

What could be done once the land relations are over-hauled and the producer is made to feel that he is working for himself has been shown by the experience of the Chinese Communes. There not only problems relating directly to agriculture were taken in a big way, but all problem relating to rural development as such so that rapid development of agriculture could be easily achieved.

Chinese problem like ours was precisely the problem of huge surplus manpower and how to utilise it. By transforming land relations, by abolishing exploitation of labour with the State throwing its full weight against exploiters, the entire labour power was utilised for productive purposes, and for solving the problem of unemployment.

How the existing land relations chill all productive labour and actually become a hindrance for further employment of labour on a viable basis is easily seen today in India. In large parts, the land monopoly of the few has become a synonym for backward production, exploitation, rack-renting, and has discouraged any initiative on the part of the producer to invest more either in labour or land. This failure to increase the productive forces in agriculture has naturally imposed a veto on all development in other directions and thereby completely clogged the labour market in the rural areas.

It is axiomatic that the stupendous problem of rural unemployment cannot be solved unless the entire social system is overhauled. But at the same time, strong remedial measures can be taken if we begin with radical alteration in land relations. All the so-called laws of the Congress Government dealing with land have really ended in a complete failure of altering the balance in favour of the rural producer. They might have helped to redistribute land among the top sectors of the rural vested interests but they have not relieved the situation so far as the tiller is concerned. The result has been that the mass of the rural producers are still suffering, from rack-renting, usurious debts which deprive them of the fruits of their labour. This itself leads to a rapid shrinkage in the purchasing power of the rural masses and thereby acts as a veto on the development of both rural and urban industries. Apart from this, the heavy taxation of the Congress Government in the name of planning, the deliberate policy of inflation and high prices, which weighs heavily on the small producer—all these virtually assume an expropriatory character, lead to the ruination of the small producers and thereby contribute to the increasing number of unemployed. Recent inquiries have noted that in some places with the high prices prevailing the situation has become so impossible for the small farmer that he is unable to cultivate his own plot and is forced to lease it out to the rich or a capitalist farmer. Instead of absorbing the landless and the agricultural labourers on land,

under the Congress planning, the process of mass eviction of peasants and turning them into agricultural labourers or paupers continue and the rural unemployment grows apace. This failure of the land reform has been noted by all the economists as well as by the planning commission itself.

The situation has been brought about because the Government represents the interests of the landed gentry. They rely on these sections for political support and therefore are incapable of taking any drastic action against land monopoly. The way in which ceilings are fixed in Congress legislation only to be violated at every step, the way in which after solemn promises by all the chief ministers earlier, no steps are taken to lower the ceilings shows clearly that there is no chance under the present regime of a basic radical land reform giving land to the tiller which alone will rapidly raise agricultural production and create the basis for allround rural development, absorbing in a great measure the surplus labour available.

Boost to the Rural Rich

The Congress Government, having given up the fight against the existing land relations, has really chosen the way of financial support to the richer sections of the rural classes in the name of agricultural development. It seeks to bolster a class of substantial and by 'farmers' who will produce enough surplus on their farms to be sold in the market so that the cities can be supplied with their food needs. The big landlords, the rich peasants, the capitalist farmers all are therefore having a field day and are enabled to put more and more capital in land while the mass of peasants are denied ordinary facilities and are forced to surrender their land to the upper sections. Besides, as the field of operation of these upper sections increases, as they begin to apply more and more capital to land, they consider themselves as industrial entrepreneurs and measure their success by the amount of profit they can get in their investments. This leads them to use greater and greater labour saving devices, mechanisation, tractors, modern methods of watering the fields, and so on, all of which growingly lead to a decreased demand for labour. Fantastic tales have been circulated that modern methods of agriculture are simultaneously leading to increased demands for labour and that technological advance automatically means an advance in the demand for labour. To prove this, a temporary phenomena in a small area is taken when

there is a huge crop and a comparative labour shortage.

The Indian rulling classes seem to be set upon the coourse of mechanising the agriculture to the extent it is possible under Indian conditions. They are set upon the course to preserve the present land monopoly and present it as an instrument of improving agriculture and solving the food problem of the country. Their claims however cannot be proved in practice. After the fairy tale of the Green Revolution, which is supposed to have been ushered in through larger inputs and new varieties, it has been found now that the big increase in production was more due to the bounty of nature and timely rainfall and other natural conditions and only a small part can be traced to the inputs and other things. But the policy of the Government pins its faith in these vested interests and showers all the benefits of fertilisers, irrigation, water, credit, money, marketing etc. on them at the expense of the masses of the peasantry. It is not possible even to talk about lessening the rigour of unemployment in rural areas unless this policy is abandoned. The present policies will intensify unemployment instead of reducing it.

It is some times asked how distribution of land to the tiller will enable the peasant to have more efficient production. It is suggested that distribution of land in small plots to people who cannot arrange to put new inputs in agriculture will in fact lead to more inefficient production. The same people are not ashamed to talk about incentives when the profits of capitalist industry go down. Distribution of land to the tiller is in the first place the biggest incentive to the small producer to put his best in land. It will tender the bonafides of present day society to the peasant that effective measures will be taken on its behalf. The Government is not supposed to stand still after the distribution of land. With the aid of the peasant organisations, it is to rouse the peasantry for greater efforts, and should be in a position to supply it with all the wherewithal for advancing productive activity. And then, the peasant organisations, the orgnisations of agricultural labourers can be harnessed for gradually winning over the organisations to greater co-operative effort instead of individual effort on a small field. Thus soon after the distribution of land to the tiller, a situation can be created in which all modern technological developments can be applied to the farms of the peasantry working together in great co-operative fields. This of course will mean a break-up of the

existing property relations and will not be tolerated by the present Government. But it is on this basis that not only agriculture was salvaged in China but surplus labour was harnessed in other activities so that the entire rural development programme could be tackled with the greater speed.

Radical Land Distribution Progress-Need of the Hour

Given the present policy, what chance has any step or measure to radically affect the present situation? For instance, it has been asked what measures would we suggest for providing employment to the landless labour, people with small holdings, and marginal farmers so as to make them viable in agriculture and allied occupations like animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries, etc. Once again, such supplementary measures of giving financial assistance for poultry or piggeries, may help a few people but in the context of the existing situation they again fail to make any sizeable dent in the conditions obtaining and remain merely a conscience-saving device. Because as we have said, the biggest problem for those with small holdings is how to retain these holdings in the context of the present economic situation and the question only wants to know what supplementary sources can be provided for them in order to make them viable. It is not our opinion that even the small remedial measures should not be undertaken. They should be certainly taken even if they help only a few people. But fantastic claims that they constitute part of the attack on unemployment problem should not be made, if there is to be honesty anywhere.

Obviously, the most important step to provide them with employment will be to distribute land among them. This, as we have said, actually lead to big consequences and will be an effective step to tackle the problem of unemployment in rural areas. If this step is taken, then immediately many needs will arise, need for non-agricultural operations in the villages, need for transportation, construction and services and these will lead to further demand for labour. Once again, we come against the basic problem, how to arm the common man with the necessary purchasing power which will enable him to claim many more needs and which will really accelerate the process of creating new jobs to satisfy these needs. On the other hand, if we simply start from the other end, of trying to create some avenues of employment here and there, they remain

solitary outposts unable to make a permanent constribution towards the solution of the problem of unemployment.
In reality, there is great future for rural programmes, for programmes of general development if the basic question is tackled. Having tackled it, once we succeed in rousing the productive enthusiasm of the peasant producer, unbelievable production feats can be achieved and these will be a great base for creating new employment and an accelerated programme of rural development. In this background, financial assistance from Government sources for various plans and schemes will really work wonders and a big stride can be taken against the problem of rural unemployment.

Government have undertaken a number of schemes with a view to alleviating the prevailing conditions of unemployment and under-employment in the rural areas. This is what the questionnaire says. One of the schemes is in respect of Small Farmers' Development agencies. It is stated that the small farmers in the country form 52 per cent of the total rural households but only 19 per cent of the crop area is comprised in small holdings; that the benefits of the new agricultural technology have largely been availed of by the bigger farmer, modern technology is however rendering even small farmers one or two hectares economically viable. Government has therefore decided to have this scheme for helping this section so that it gives the benefit of modern technology. The aim is no doubt very laudable and every genuine step which official agencies take to help the small farmer will meet with our approval. But it is extremely doubtful whether even the present scheme will help the small farmers in an effective way. In the first place, the scheme will be operated by bureaucrats who are instruments of upper classes. A large number of big farmers will easily pass themselves off as small farmers to get the benefit of this scheme. Secondly, so long as the co-operatives are dominated by the upper sections and so long as their stranglehold is not removed it is futile to expect that the small farmer will get the required help from them. Besides, the main problem facing the small farmer is not simply the lack of benefit from adequate technology, but the crushing burden of taxation, the rising burden of inflation, the uncertainty of prices, which ruins his farm with one adverse season. Even after this scheme, there will be more small farmers ruined than saved.

Resistance of Vested Interests

Similarly, the scheme for marginal farmers and agricultural labourers again professes very praiseworthy objectives. The one thing that it does not say is that it will provide them with adequate land. It will investigate their problem; evolve adequate arrangements for implementing various programmes, it will promote creation of common facilities of production, etc. and for this purpose it will stimulate the flow of credit from various institutional credit agencies, particularly the co-operatives. All these are vague phrases and promises and during the course of last three five-year plans, we have had a plethora of them. Perhaps there is not one co-operative society, from where the small farmer or agricultural worker is able to secure credit without having to offer some bribes in kind or cash to the officials. The grip of vested interests in the rural areas is such that no programme of real benefit to the agricultural workers and poor pesants will be allowed to succeed. Anything that tends to raise the price of labour in rural areas will be resisted by the vested interests; anything which makes the small farmer or the agricultural labourer a little bit independent of the vested interests will be physically resisted. To advance such schemes without reckoning with the reality that exists in the rural areas, is to indulge in day-dreams.

The scheme for the establishment of Agro-Service Centres is supposed to provide assistance to the unemployed graduates and diploma holders in mechanical, agricultural and electrical engineering etc. Once again, considering the gravity of the problem of educated unemployed, this is nothing but tinkering with the situation. In reality it will raise more hopes than jobs because for all the services in the rural areas which they are supposed to fulfil, there are already certain agencies doing the job. It may be that in certain cases, there is shortage also. But by merely giving financial assistance, to some of the graduates, how will demand for their services or additional demand for their services be cerated in the rural areas and how will they stand in competition with the existing agencies which may have better facilites for competition? This is not to say that there should be no effort to help the engineers and others to settle in villages and engage in some of the modern services required for agriculture and other occupations. But once again this will only lead to some marginal increment in jobs and

nothing more. It seems that the Government only intends to show that it is doing something,but it is not serious about doing much.

Whither "Crash Programmes"

Then there is the crash programme for rural employment. The cost of the scheme is about Rs. 50 crores per annum and the programme will remain in operation till the end of the Fourth Plan. Each project under it is supposed to provide employment for 1,000 persons on an average continuously over a working season of 10 months in a year in every district. This in reality is something in the nature of a relief programme because only those belonging to families where no adult member is employed will have preference. The wage rate also will be extremely low. It shall be equal to the off-season rate for agricultural labour in the district and shall not in any case, exceed Rs. 100/- per month. It is better to call it a programme for relief of the unemployed. There can be of course no objection whatsoever to opening of relief centres for the unemployed, and Government spending for such purpose. The only criticism should be that while the employed are supposed to produce durable national assets, they should be given at least a decent wage. The provison that preference would be given to families where no adult member is employed, will be an instrument in the hand of local authorities to show favouritism. The projects under the scheme are supposed to undertake labour intensive schemes like building of roads, reclamation and development of land etc. there would be no objection; in fact, a comprehensive programme of rural development must include all the items mentioned under this heading. But it is amazing that many months have passed and it is not yet known whether any project under this scheme has started anywhere in India and whether there is even a single member who has been given jobs under this scheme.

Section IV—B

It is preposterous to suggest that any labour legislation adversely affecting the interests of the workers and putting a premium on lower wages and greater exploitation, will help increase the demand for labour, will help labour intensive operations and thereby, ease the unemployment situation. Such steps will have contrary effect in as much as if pursued on a big scale, they will lower the purchasing power of the people and thereby lower the demand for goods.

Production Scandal in Public Sector

The industries which are unable to use their full productive capacity are to be found both in the public and private sector. The strategic industries in the public sector constitute some of the worst offenders in this respect though it appears that some private sector industries also are vying with them. The production in the public sector steel plants has already become a scandal, but it cannot be said that the private sector steel plants are anywhere using their full productive capacity. The enginnering industry in the country also is unable to utilise a substantial part of its production capacity in spite of the fact that the Government have helped it liberally with subsidies to find new export markets.

The reason for this situation is in the first place, the economic recession or crisis through which India has been passing and under which a large number of factories and concerns have been closed. In such an important industry as the cotton textile industry out of 600 mills, 100 mills have been closed down though in the country, a great part of the people are unable to clothe themselves sufficiently all the year round. The fall in the market demand has arisen as a direct result of the exploitative relations and the mal-distribution of income arising from them. It sounds ironical that factories and concerns should continue to be closed down just when the Government and its apogolists were indulging in an unprecedented euphoria over the so-called Green Revolution which in theory at least was supposed to have benefitted the peasantry.

This once more shows that the contradictory process of capitalist development while it increases the productive potential at one end also brings down such misery among the mass of people that it is unable to utilise this very productive potential which leads to either under-utilisation of the productive apparatus.

Apart from this, the incapacity to utilise the full productive capacity also stems from the fact that in an under developed country like India there are severe limits to capitalist expansion, especially on the basis of the retention of old land relations. The productive potential that has been built has gradualllly started coming into conflict with the general limitation and it will be found that every new step forward of building the productive apparatus will be attended by a greater difficultly in utilising it. Otherwise, there is no explantion for such absurd phenomena like the utilistaion of the Ranchi Plant in some sectors only to the extent of 25 per cent and

nothing more.

It should also be noted that so far as the public sector is concerned there seems to be over-estimation of the full caspacity of some of the plant. At least in relation to one steel plant, the Durgapur Steel Plant, workers have been pointing out that the faulty construction and the material used for it have reduced the total capacity of the Plant much below what is claimed by the official Managers. The foreign firm and the Indian Contractors responsible for the building of the Plant have created a plant which is incapable of producing to the full announced capacity Secondly, there has been a systematic robbing of the public sector plants by the contractors, the bureaucrats and the officers who have been using material of inferior quality in the production process, and who have thereby demaged the production capacity of the plant itself. The bureaucrats and the contractors combined have reaped a huge profit by supplying materials below standard and when the workers exposed this state of affairs, the Government failed to do any thing against these robbers, each one of whom should have been punished and sent to jail.

Shortage of Raw Materials and Components

The concerns in the private sector have repeatedly complained about lack of raw materials, components, intermediary goods and laid their failure to produce more at the door of these shortages. The engineering industry for instance, has been complaining that but for the shortage of steel it would have been able to produce much more and execute big export orders and contribute to the foreign exchange resources of the country. The cotton textile industry has also complained that the shortage of cotton is one of the reasons why the industry could not produce to its maximum capacity. From all these, a picture is drawn as if there is nothing wrong with our economy except slow production in certain industries; if that is guaranteed, the economy will do its onward march in a big way.

This of course is not correct as is clear from what we have stated earlier. But the fact is that the complaint about shortage of raw materials, components, etc. is also partially, true. How far, it is a reason for the closure of concerns, on non-utilisation of the full capacity is anybody's guess. In some cases at least, the apparent shortage seems to be due to the cornering of the commodity by speculators and black-markeers who have been thriving under the present policies. It is true that in the last few months not only steel

production did not rise according to estimates and in relation to capacity, but perhaps there was an absolute decline also and Government was forced to import steel from abroad. But reports show that part of the steel also found its way in the blackmarket and perhaps ›me of the concerns to whom steel was alloted thought it better to make profit in the blackmarket rather than by using it to produce further goods. It is also a fact that notwithstanding the Green Revolution,. there has been a shortage of cotton in the country, but here again. the situation was made worse by specularors who tried to corner cotton, by mill-oners also who wanted to make money on the side-lines all of which hampered cloth production.

Shortages in some other commodities like components etc. which are imported from abroad are really an indication of our incapacity to finance the industries that we have built. Notwithstanding the policy of import substitution we require huge maintenance imports, the extent and quantity of which in a large measure depends on foreign aid and loans from abroad. If there are less loans on less aid, to that extent our capacity to import goods necessary for running our industries gets lowered. This really speaks both of our dependence on foreign aid and our incapacity to sustain the present industrial production. This type of shortatge cannot be overcome just by asking or exhorting concerns to produce more.

Apart from the basic measures which we have already advocated, in order to reap the full benefit of present industrial capacity, it is necessary in the first place, to break the bureaucratic stranglehold over the public sector and make it run wholly in the spirit of a public sector. At present public sector undertakings constitute a vast prison house ruled by terror and worse place for the worker than even private sector. So long as this atmosphere does not change, the bureaucratic strangehold is not broken, the workers are not inspired to contribute their best to production, the public sector undertakings would be nowhere near utilising their full productive capacity. Besides, working conditions of those working in the public sector undertakings must be radically improved and secondly, the practice that reduces the public sector to a mere adjunct of the private sector has to be given up. If these hurdles are crossed, curruption and jobbery are eliminated, the strict rules regarding quality of materials are imposed, and ordinary worker is encour-

aged to exercise supervision over all these, the public sector undertakings will be in a position to give a good account of themselves. So far as the private sector is concernd, so long as the monopolists continue their stranglehold on industry, they will use restrictive practices. The immediate problem both for the private sector is the fall in market demand induced by the growing impoverishment of the people when majority of the people have to spend more than sixty per cent of their earnings on food alone, is it surprising that market for products of industries either narrows or expands slowly. So far as others and especially smaller industries are concerned, many of them have got genuine problems of raw materials supplies, of technological help, of credit availability all of which can be solved if an officialdom not sychophantic to big business is put in charge of implementing the schemes.

Reduce Working Hours

Large sections of workers go in for overtime in industrial units, commercial establishments, public utilities, etc. because basically their wages or salaries are too low. In a sense therefore, they are economicaly compelled to accept overtime, after a day's hard work so that they can make both ends meet. If needbased minimum wage is secured for these sections, then there will be less tendency to go in for overtime and to that extent a larger number of people can be employed. But abolition of overtime without ensuring need-based wage will only mean partial employment or partial unemployment to a large number of people. It may satisfy some people's conscience that they have given more jobs to more pople. But actually, it only ends in reducing the incomes of the workers and amounts to short-time working.

In the present situation, it is necessary that every effort should be made to see that industrial concerns work more than one shift. If they do this, this naturally provides more employment. This will certainly mean that those who work during night-time should be given special wages or allowances, and that all other measures to safeguard their health should be undertaken. Considering the tremendous intensification of work during recent years, and considering the miserable wage that the worker gets, the present working day is too long and exhaustive. It is our demand that both the daily working hours and the working week should be reduced since productivity has risen very much. This of course means that there should be no reduction in the earnings and emoluments of the

worker with reduction in working hours. If this is ensured, then the reduction in working week will definitely give increased employment provided that further intensification of work is not openly or clandestinely attempted by the authorities.

The question of exportable surplus and earning of foreign exchange have become important in the context of the dependence of our economyon foreign loans and the debt charges that we have to meet. The heavy terms on which these loans have been incurred, the downright cheating that has been often practised against us, all these now have created a debt service charge of more than 400 crores of rupees per year, a sum which represents nearly 27 per cent of our export earnings. Our export trade is virtually mortgaged to foreign payments. It is futile to talk about an export surplus, and financing through it a large-scale industrial development to relieve unemployment in our country. We cannot take a step forward unless we at least declare a moratorium on all foreign claims and try to divert our foreign exhange earnings for our own use. The remittances on foreign private capital also constitute big drain on our resources, but every time, the Government goes in for a new loan or allows entry of foreign private capital, it advertises that this will help to relieve the foreign exchange situation.

Exports at What Cost?

The capacity to finance large-scale industrial development through export earnings depends on whether there is real exportable surplus, that is whether there is a real expanding domestic market with a rising purchasing power of the common man. Exportable surpluses created by denying the common man his necessities only mean exploitation and cannot lead to a rapid development of industries in the country. Or one cannot think of simply exporting goods which because of the poverty in the country cannot be sold in the country. There are fantastic plans for collaboration with foreign capital under which goods produced will only be exported to other countries. This presumes that some of these goods will be in competition with our own demestic production, but they will only be exported abroad. This is nothing but exploitation of cheap Indian labour to enable the foreigner to sell their products at competitive prices on the world market in return for a small pittance of a wage for the workers and some profits for the capitalists. The idea that such tricks to earn foreign exchange can be the basis of industrial development is preposter-

ous.

An under-developed country has to face the problem of import of foreign technology and machinery from abroad, and therefore has to meet these needs either through loans or through direct export payment. But it is not necessary to develop a relation of economic dependence in the name of getting development loans as is the situation in India today. Firstly, it is not necessary to go to the imperialist powers as there are many socialist countries who can supply modern technology and modern instruments of production on the basis of mutual benefit. Big opportunities for bilateral trade and export of Indian products are available in our trade with socialist countries and with our great neighbour, People's China. There has been failure to utilise these proposals because the Indian ruling classes feel perhaps a greater affinity towards the West than towards the Socialist countries. Even today we see that while the entire capitalist world is queing to get an access to the huge Chinese market, it is only the Indian Government that is lagging behind. If they are fully utilised, it will be possible for India to develop trade relations with the West on the basis of equality and import machinery and technology without harming the interests of the country.

Here also however, the starting point must be an internal policy which really unleashes the productive effort of the people and create genuine surpluses. How to do that, we have already indicated. But the problem of earning enough through exports to finance our industrial development can be tackled ony on the basis of widespread initial productive effort in the country which will ensure the continued production of the required exportable surplus. It is not sufficient if the so-called surplus is confined to a few commodities or a few goods or natural products. To be able to finance large-scale industrial development a much bigger productive efforts is required. Socialist countries have achieved this without going in for exorbitant loans and credits from Western countries. They have been able to buy all they needed through their exports because they were able to unleash the productive enthusiasm of their people and create a huge all-round surplus. The example of People's China is extremely pertinent in this case. During the period in which India saddled herself with huge loans to finance her hobbing industry, the Chinese succeeded in building a huge industrial apparatus, developed their own technical knowhow, purchased their needs, by exporting their surplus and

even managed to pay all their recent external debts.

It is good that the Committee thinks only in terms of purchasing our import needs through export surpluses and does not think interms of furth r foreign loans. But as we have said to be able to do this certain conditions must be fulfilled.

Educated Unemployed

The incidence of unemployment among the educated and the technical personnel is directly related to the slow progress of the economy. It shows that even though the percentage of educated personnel to the total population is very small, the economic progress is too slow to absorb them. It has been estimated that more than a million educated are unemployed and the total scientific, technical and engineering personnel unemployed, is more than a lakh. Quite a substantial number of Indian intellectuals who can contribute to the country's development in various ways choose to go abroad because they find no scope for their talent and scientific knowledge in India. To describe this as a certain imbalance between the supply of the educated and the technical personnel and the demand for them is to attempt to conceal the bankruptcy of the present economic system. The immediate measures may comprise of giving help to enable these sections to go to the rural areas and use their talents for the advance of agriculture and other occupations or start supplying needed services to those who are engaged in these occupations. A large number of educated unemployed can be absorbed in the task of spreading adult education, spreading literacy, and engaged in private or Government schools where none exist. The spread of literacy and adult education will definitely contribute to productive effort because those educated can be made to take interest in advancing modern techniques to the occupations that they carry. Also, there will be a greater social awareness of their rights so that any scheme of production meant for them will not be sabotaged by the rural vested interests.

Any proposal to restrict entry to universities and institutions of higher learning or higher institutes and colleges like IITs, Engineering Colleges, Medical Colleges, etc. or pre-university classes, must be deemed to be a thoroughly reactionary class measure discriminating against the poor classes. In practice, this will mean that entry will be reserved for those coming from families with higher classes and ways will always be found to keep out merited students coming from the poorer sections. Instances are not lacking today

where worthy students of very poor families are not admitted to the university classes to make room for sons and relations of ministers. In fact, students had to conduct a prologned strike in one of the Maharashtra Universities precisely to fight against the favouritism shown towards the son of a minister.

It is atrocious to suggest that in a country like India where for hundreds of years the lower classes were denied even minimum knowledge and all higher learning was monopolised by one ro two dominant castes there should be restriction on the spread of higher learning. It is a strange way of solving the unemployment problem, not by creating more employment for the educated, by reducing the number of educated and adding them to the ranks of the uneducated.

What the country requires is widespread higher education. The only criteria of admission can be merit and nothing else though in Indian conditions, some provisions will have to be made for extremely backward communities like tribals in some cases. But at the same time, the craze for reservations in the name of protecting the interests of the backward communities has also to be fought. The main problem is how to provide higher education for the growing number of people who aspire for it.

The total abolition of illiteracy should be our target within the next 10 years, and if this is seriously adopted, thousands of teachers will be required to implement it. That will lead to large-scale employment of the educated unemployed and bring some relief to them. But employment does not mean starvation wages. The idea that employment means any pittance of wage is wrong and the educated should be drawn to the villages in the task of fighting illiteracy by a decent wage which they would normally secure if they are employed.

There is no doubt that our education system inherited from the British suffers from manifold defects. At one time, it was said that the British Government through the universities wanted only to create clerks to run their administration. This was perhaps a very apt description of the general effect of the British educational system. It fitted in also with the British policy of not promoting industrial development and therefore, of discouraging scientific and industrial advance and education. Since then, there is no doubt there has been some changes.

The educational system today both represents the needs of the

ruling classes and their incapacity to absorb the educated. When they encourged education in engineering rather than Arts, developed a few engineering colleges and started some diploma course to meet the needs of their so called national planning, they found that there were too many engineers to be employoed and in some cases, they even closed down the teaching institutes.

Whatever reform the present education system might need it is not correct to state that the educated has less employability because he was educated in a particular way. Actually, whether he is educated or not, whether he is an engineer or a graduate in arts, he is unemployed because there is hardly any job for him. The authorities therefore should not establish an alibi for themselves by pointing out to the defects of the educational system of which there are many. No doubt, reforms in the proper direction may help the educated to fit themselves better for occupations that are available but that is hardly saying that it will really relieve the employment situation.

It is very strange that the Committee's questionnaire makes hardly any reference to the problem of the growing unemployment among the industrial workers. The Committee, we hope, is not unaware of the vast increase in industrial unemployment due to closure of factories, partial working of some, due to retrenchment and the recent recession. The recent economic survey of the Government of India shows that employment in factories has been falling since 1965 and even in 1970, there is an absolute decline in factory employment as compared with 1965. It means that for 5 long years, despite new factories, despite new arrivals in the labour market, employment in industries has declined. Similarly, over the years employment in mines and in plantations has declined while that in Railways has either remained stagnant or shown a tendency towards absolute decline. It is no accident therefore that the figures of registered unemployed in the cities which are big underestimate (according to a Survey only 42 per cent of the unemployed register themselves on the employment exchanges) has now reached 4 million, which of course includes the figure for the educated middle class. In West Bengal alone, during the last 6 months or so, the figure of registered unemployment has shown a sudden jump, perhaps mostly due to the closure of 200 or so factories, which have thrown our of employment nearly 75,000 workers. Nearly 100 Cotton Textile Mills have closed down in the very same period and

thrown out of employment 75,000 workers. In West Bengal, perhaps, the majority of the cotton textile mills have closed down. It will be the biggest irony if any Committee which claims to deal with the unemployment in India chooses to by-pass the unemployment that is growing before our eyes and does not even ask for remedies to meet it.

We may add that a number of foreign companies including foreign oil companies have contributed their quota to this unemployment by terminating the services of workers.

Recent measures of automation taken by the employers and the Government has made the problem of unemployment among the educated more serious. New recruitment in many offices has virtually been stopped. Despite assurances given on several occasions in Parliament and outside that there would be no retrenchment as a result of automation job displacement has taken place in the garb of voluntary retirement, early retirement schemes etc. The question has become more precarious after the permission was granted to IBM the well-known international monopoly to manufacture one hundred computers per year. On the top of this the Government itself has decided to manufacture computers in public sector which will further add to the gravity of the situation.

On the plea of more efficiency the employers both in public and private sectors have resorted to the use of automation. In reality, they have been adding to their profitability at the cost of jobs of several educated employees.

Along with these known figures of unemployment, the cities of India swarm with the mass of unemployed or partial employed people who live on pavements, who live in slums worse than the notorious jails on the Congress Government who are not registered as unemployed. The situation created by industrial unemployment, by urban unemployment as a whole is extremely explosive and is bound to produce volcanic repercussions if immediate measures are not taken. Of course, to begin with, we again suggest the complete nationalisation of foreign concerns and monopoly concerns so that these should be used as a lever for controlling the private sector and their anti-employment policies. The main question again is how in the first place, to stop the growing unemployment, the closure of factories and then to see that the employment potential of industries increases. We have already suggested the basic changes that should be brought to effectively eliminate all

unemployment. We have also stated that a guarantee of continued employment can be had if there is automatic provision for expansion of the domestic market along with the expansion of production. This constitutes the sure foundation for a situation which will ensure growing ight and final elimination of unemployment.

But all this means that there should be a rapid programme of industrial expansion which should be in a position to attract larger and larger number of employment, do away with the backlog and also meet the demand of new entrants in the labour market.

Prevent Lock-out and Closures

Immediately we will suggest legislation to prevent lock-outs and closures and do away with the right of the employers to dispense with the jobs of the workers. No one in a democratic society has a right to tamper with the livelihood of thousands of workers all the more so, when such a thing is done for the purpose of individual profits, or out of sheer inefficiency or corrupt management. Secondly, it should be made compulsory for the Government to take over all concerns which the capitalists decline to run after giving sufficient notice, acquire them without compensation and run them with the participation of the workers in the management, as a public sector concern ensuring at the same time the wages, the living conditions and the rights of the workers under the law. We strongly denounce the Maharashtra and Madras Governments for their legislation which arms them with powers to reduce the D.A. and wages and dispense with the other rights of the workers in factories which these Governments run as distress undertakings. This should be legally prohibited for this amounts to reducing the living conditions of the workers, taking advantage of the large-scale unemployment. This exactly is what the capitalists want to do and it seems the two Governments are doing it on their behalf and when the mills will start earning profit, they will duly hand them over to the former owners to make further profits. While the workers are made to work full time, they have to experience huge cuts in their D.A. and they are legally deprived of their dues under the various acts of the Government.

Right to Work

Since it is impossible to imagine that so long as the present social relations remain unchanged any serious dent can be made in the unemployment problem, we demand enactment of a measure to grant immediate unemployment relief to all those who cannot be

employed. Besides, we demand that the right to work should be enshrined in the Constitution as a fundamental right so that the ruling classes can no longer escape their responsibility to provide decent livelihood for everybody.

If this measure is ensured, then the working class as well as unemployed will take other schemes of the Government seriously and will express their willingness to examine them and contribute to their success.

Basic Measures Alone Will Eliminate Unemployment

While we demand basic measures because we are convinced that without them unemployment cannot be eliminated we also strongly advocate all interim measures which can relieve the sufferings of those who are without jobs and which can even create a few jobs for a few people. While we strongly protest against such measures being advertised as a panacea for the present evils, we would certainly encourage Government financial assistance, bank credits, and other facilities to all those who need them and stand for a big rural work programme which will create new productive assets and at the same time help a few to get additional jobs. We would simultaneously like the educated unemployed to be drawn into the work of spreading literacy, adult education and other services, the condition being that they should not be asked to work on starvation wages. As a transitional measure, we acknowledge the importance of protecting small-scale industries and also utilising the huge manpower resources of our country for creating produce-time capital. But our enthusiasm and support for all these is tempered by our understanding that the present class Government will only talk too much about this and do too little for the people.

—Memorandum on behalf of CITU
Submitted to the Expert Committee
on Unemployment, 1972

14

Minimum Bonus Achieved

Struggle For Bonus To All Workers Continues

The decision of the Government to accept minimum 8.33 per cent bonus for profit-making as well as non-profit making concerns covered by the Bonus Act is the direct result of the strength of the working class behind the demand. It is this strength, unity and solidarity in meetings, demonstrations and protest actions organised by workers owing allegiance to different central organisations that compelled the authorities to accede to the demand and prevented vacillations on the part of the trade union leaders assocaited with the Bonus Review Committee—the representatives of the INTUC, the AITUC and HMS.

The inclusion of public sector-undertakings—whether competitive or non-competitive—under the new bonus formula is also a big success of the trade union movement and a tribute to the growing unity of the workers in the public sector undertakings.

It is well-known that the Central Government mouthing the slogan of socialism did its best to oppose and negate the demand with the help of the employers; that the so-called independent chairman and economist members of the Bonus Commission fell in line and joined hands with employers to offer a bonus of only five per cent to workers in "non-profit making concerns" and that they all wanted to replace cash payment by payment to Provident Fund account of the excess over 4 per cent.

The Prime Minister intervened and held talks with the leaders of the AITUC who through their party, the Right C.P. are in politi-

cal alliance with the Congress. The Labour Minister called a meeting of the leaders of the three collaborating organisations to reach a compromise.

If in the end everything failed and a minimum of 8.33 per cent had to be sanctioned for all concerns, it was not due to the generosity on the part of the Government nor a sense of loyalty to garibi hatao.

The Government could not ignore the sullen and angry mood of the workers and their strength and unity. Strike actions had begun to develop on a wide scale due to pressure of un-controllable prices, denial of demands for wage-rise in a number of industries, delay and sabotage of other demands and the realisation that the cost of living index was a fraudulent instrument to cheat the workers of the agreed rise in dearness allowance. The continuous jump in the cost of living and the denial of interim relief to Central and State Government employees was already leading to widespread discontent.

The anger over these accumulated grievances ws getting keyed up and was likely to explode on the general issue of bonus which brings together all sections of workers.

The Government also realised that in this background neither the political influence of the Congress party nor the use of repression or the use of the three collaborating organisations—the INTUC, the AITUC and the HMS—will be effective. This will only expose the ruling party and its instruments and achieve nothing.

The Bombay Corporation stirke was a pointer. The INTUC unions which were forced to withdraw from the strike under the political directive of the Congress Party could not break it. They only brought discredit to the Congress. The AITUC and the HMS—the other partners had to support the strike openly and lend their bonafides to the workers.

The cement strike was yet another significant pointer. The unity of all the organisations—INTUC, CITU, HMS, AITUC—was so strong that the strike was an unprecedeted success and was the first all-India strike of 70,000 cement workers. It was a strike to settle long-standing wage demands and in spite of pressure the INTUC leaders refused to accept a settlement on the basis of paltry relief in the initial stages. But then Indira Gandhi personally intervened asking in INTUC workers to accept the interim relief

and the INTUC leaders had to withdraw from the common action. But the other workers and unions continued their strike.

It was clear that on the question of minimum bonus the workers would have accepted no compromise, and Indira Gandhi's word would not have had any weight. The compromisers from the ranks of the trade unions would have been totally repudiated.

Triumph of Unity

In more sense than one, therefore, the realisation of 8.33 per cent bonus is a triumph of the unity of the working class, its trade union movement. This is no gift of the garibi hatao-wallahs, no gift of the employers, but a demand extracted from their unwilling hands.

And yet the victory is partial. All sections of workers do not become eligible for bonus under the new formula.

The workers working in departmental undertakings of the Government like the Railways and P&T will not be entilled to bonus. On what basis does the Government exclude these sections of workers who constitute a vital part of the working class of India? Similarly, the workers in un-orgainsed industries, in factoreis employing less than twenty persons will be deprived of any benefit as they are not covered by the Bonus Act. There are tens of thousands of workers under this category and they will not get a naya paisa to add to their miserable wage.

Similarly, Central and State Government employees, employees of municipalities and corporations will be excluded from the benefit of the bonus.

The mills and factories taken over by the Government have always denied even the minimum bonus to the workers on the plea of their financial difficulties. The Government decision that concerns unable to pay even the minimum bonus may appeal to the Government for final decision may be systematically used to deprive a large number of workers of their bonus. The workers of such undertakings will have to remain vigilant and protect their hard-won right to bonus.

The Government is thus depriving a substantial section of the working class of the right to bonus, while trying to meet the minimum demand of the rest. The united trade union movement must defeat this game of divide and rule and stand by those who are deprived of the benefit of bonus and lend full support to their struggle.

The decision of the Government does not say a word with regard to the bonus disputes pending in several private and public sector undertakings. Many employers last year refused to grant more than minimum bonus on the plea that the Bonus Review Committee was considering the question. The workers in such concerns are facing a great disadvantge in their bargaining position with the employers. Though all the Central T.Us in their memoranda to the Bonus Review Committee demanded retrospective effect to the formula from 1970, the Government has not shown the decency to follow the normal practice of making the application of the formula from the year 1970.

The earlier proposal to credit the excess over 4 per cent in Provident Fund account having been torpedoed, the Government now proposes that where the employees were getting more than 8.33 per cent bonus any addition to the bonus they got last year should be paid to the Provident Fund. This is introduction of the wrong theory that increases in working class emoluments lead to an inflationary rise in prices.

As per decision of the Government workers, who received less than 8.33 per cent last year but are entitled to get over 8.33 per cent this year, will have to accept depositing all the quantum of bonus over and above 8.33 per cent of the P.F. account. Thus they will get only the minimum bonus in cash now.

It is however surprising that the three T.U. representatives belonging to INTUC, AITUC and HMS have very mildly put up the case of the workers on the question of crediting the additional bonus to the P.F. account. Even in the joint report submitted by three. T.U. leaders and a representative of the public sector undertaking their opposition has not been put in a clear cut manner. The refusal of the three Centres to put up a stiff resistance to the Government move in this regard is also responsible for this forced cut in the quantum of bonus in cash.

Not Acceptable

The trade union movement cannot accept this anti-working class theory. The ruling class has been manoeuvering for years to thrust this outlook on the workers. This will be used as a battering ram in future negotiations.

The workers should not feel elated. Having formally conceded the workers' demand, the Government is conspiring to undermine it in practice. An ordinance embodying the new bonus formula will

make provision for avoiding hardships to units which are not in a position to pay the minimum amount. These concerns will be allowed to move the appropriate Governments about their inability to pay. The Government, if satisfied about their case, will have the powers to e mpt them from the purview of the Bonus Act.

The working class must be warned against this sinister game. If such a provision is incorporated it will be downright cheating. It will mean any concern can approach a State Government to consider its inability and the State Government can grant exemption to it. The responsibility of the Central Government will disappear and the workers will have to fight their battle all over again. The workers must see that such a provision is not incorporated in the ordinance. They must stand by those like the Railway workers who are being denied the benefit of the Act and support their struggle. And they must raise their voice against the introduction of the vicious principle of payment creditting to the Provident Fund account. The unity of the working class, its solidarity, has secured important successes. That unity must be kept unimpaired and strengthened to secure further advances.

The Working Class Vol. II No. 2, October 1972.

15

Let Workers and Peasants
Rise in Defence of Their Living Standards

With the economic distress of the people increasing every day, the Government and its spokesmen find nothing better to do than to advertise bombastic measures, pass resolutions full of verbiage, and behind this facade attack the working class and the common man.

The speeches of Congress and Government leaders and the recent measures proposed by them follow this course.

The ruling party and its spokesmen, the ministers with their corrupt retinue are never tired of speaking of our responsibility to the country, to our people. They sermonise the fighting workers on their duty to their rural brethren only to blunt the edge of their just struggle.

But what are they doing today when the country is in the midst of the most acute distress, perhaps the acutest since the fateful Bengal famine of 1943? The shadow of widespread famine reminiscent of the great calamities of the nineteenth century hangs over the entire country. Today it is not one State, one District but almost the majority districts in a number of States that await the disastrous consequences of the grim calamity. In Andhra, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, U.P., Bihar, West Bengal—millions are already starving. Hundreds are flocking to the cities uncared for and unattended. The number of starvation deaths though denied by the Garibi Hatao Government, are increasing everyday. It might reach colos-

sal proportions during the coming months.

What is the Congress Government doing? Its major concern is to conceal the truth about the extent of sufferings and distress, to hide the slow deaths that are taking place and create a sense of complacency among the people. By these means, it seeks to escape the responsibility for the deaths of innocent people and the consequent indignation it will lead to in the country.

Apart from this, what plan has the Government to feed the people, to ensure availability of food grains at prices within their reach, to ensure free distribution of grain to areas in distress?

In spite of repeated demands from all sections of the people, including those from the ruling party, the Government has refused to declare the affected areas as famine areas and accept responsibility of feeding the population. Can callousness go further? The Congress Government is only imitating the British rulers who drew fine distinction between scarcity conditions and famine conditions to mock at the distressed people.

In all States, the relief works that are provided and advertised through bourgeois newspapers constitute a big scandal and a farce. The money sanctioned is totally inadequate to meet the situation and provide for even a fraction of those who are in dire need of it. The rates of wages can be branded as criminal and are meant to ensure starvation and a slow death over a period. Besides corruption, inefficiency, robbery by officials and contractors deny even these to the people working on relief. There are demonstrations and protests of people in some States when men and women working on famine relief have been denied this pittance for weeks.

The working class and trade union movement should not believe a word about the claims of the Congress and the Government regarding the anti-famine measures. To believe will be a crime against the rural masses, mass of agricultural workers and poor peasants who are the real victims of this hoax.

The resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee at Ahmedabad carried forward the same callous chicanery. What does it promise to the working class, to the rural masses to control prices, to ensure effective and equitable distribution of necessities at reasonable prices? In the first place, there will be no 'take over' till the rabbi harvest. Till then people must shift for themselves and the wholesalers will have a free run offering blessings to the Indira Government. These ardent advocates of garibi hatao and socialism

do not even propose to take over the wholesale trade in sugar, oil, pulses. Oh, no. They only propose to "take over" the wholesale trade in wheat and rice and the exact character of its "take over" and how it will be implemented, has been left undefined. Past experience shows that the take over operation will be done by authorising the present wholesalers and blackmarketers to act on behalf of the Government and thus providing them with official stamp for their nefarious operations. They will be only asked to somewhat regulate their loot so that the whole hoax is not exposed.

If the Government were serious about countering the rise in prices it would have assured the people that there will be immediate nationalisation of wholesale trade and it would be followed by reasonable prices. For this purpose it would have commandeered the stocks of wholesalers, big farmers, and landlords and called for the co-operation of all democratic parties to unearth and unhoard them. But the Government which is dependent on the wholesalers does not even mention the word 'nationalisation'.

But this is precisely what the Congress Working Committee and the government refuse to do.

What does the Working Committee resolution then amount to? For the working class, the employees, the city poor and urban population as a whole there will be no respite from high prices. There will be no fair prices though there will be 'fair price shops' galore. The working class and salaried employees will have to buy a substantial part of their necessities in the black-market at exhorbitant prices which will not be reflected in the cost of living index, thus enforcing a wage-cut on the workers and nullifying their recent bonus gains.

However, it is clear that in its own interest the capitalist class and its Government will see to it that the cities and industrial areas continue to have a steady supply of foodgrains, though at unreasonable prices. But under this wholesale trade take-over the rural masse will be left to shift for themselves, literally to starve and die. This is the fate that awaits the famine-stricken population, the real meaning of working committee resolution.

The working class will not and cannot tolerate this guresome plan to starve out the rural areas. It cannot allow the slow strangulation of the rural poor inherent in the farcial Congress take-over. It will not allow any hunger victims and death and must use its full striking power to see that the Government does not solve the

famine crisis at the expense of the peasantry.

The peasant masses are the basic allies of the working class. The working class is born out of the womb of the peasant class. Its struggle for better living conditions, for socialism cannot succeed except, in alliance with the peasantry, without protecting the agricultural workers and poor peasants against Congress depredations. The united working class movement which is growing, all Central Organisations, all trade unions must combine to protect the peasant and render every help to the rural masses and warn the vested interests that the rural poor are not without strong friends in the cities.

In the coming days, besides the working class will be busy fighting its own battles against price rise, against new attacks on the right to strike, for bonus for all Central and State and Municipal Employees. To mislead the people, the Government is launching new propagands attacks against the workers. At the same time, it is conspiring to extract heavy and intense work from them by adding to their work load. Labour Minister Khadilkar's plan for seven days work in the name of increasing production is an unashamed plea for increase of workload in the interest of the capitalists.

Who does not know that the Government and its planners are the biggest criminal saboteurs of production ? Who is responsible for the sabotage of electricity—whose bankrupt planning ? It is not correct to say that everywhere shortfall is due to scarcity of rainfall. In many places, as in West Bengal, the shortage is due to earlier corrupt planners who used rotten machinery which can no longer function. Thanks to this hundreds of workers are suffering of loss of wages and income.

In this background, official talk of increased production is just an excuse to extract more work from the workers.

The trade union movement has to fight the new offensive in the shape of Central Industrial Relations Bill and rebuff it with its united strength. Let the united movement, through the UCTU and CITU in particular throw the full strength of the workers against the price rise, for the right to bonus of all employees and workers, against the new attack on the right to strike. And above all, let it rise in defence of India's peasant millions for whom the Congress policies are preparing slow and sure strangulation.

The Workiing Class No. 3, November '1972

16

Unitedly Fight And Defeat
The Government's Wages And Incomes Policy

The Approach to Fifth Five Year Plan advertised by the Government as a forward looking document constitutes a warning to the people and the working class that big attacks on their incomes and living standards are contemplated under the next instalment of Congress planning. Wage freeze, high prices, prohibition of strikes, organisation of subservient trade unions to disrupt working class resistance—these are the promises held by the advocates of the new approach.

The Approach document attempts to promise all things to all people. Rise in consumption goods, growth of heavy industry, balance between modern and labour-intensive industries, control over distribution of necessities of life, self-reliance, and expenditure of over Rs. 50,000 crores—there is nothing that is lacking so far as sums and promises are concerned. But the planners and the Government, the sychophantic agents of the big bourgeoisie refuse to lay their finger on the main malady, and address themselves to the colossal problems of destitution any unemployment facing the people. There is absolutely no promise, no indication that the monstrous unemployment facing the country will be lessened, leave aside and indication of finding jobs for all the able-bodied. On the contrary, there is every indication that unemployment will engulf the economy at a rapid rate before and during the Fifth Plan.

The reason is that the basic policies are not going to be changed the policies of fattening the monopolists, the private sector, the

speculators, the unscrupulous landlords and rich landed interests. On the contrary taking advantage of the plight of the people, the agents of the monopolists are coming out openly demanding freedom for their masters to loot the people and asking the Congress leaders to give up even the verbal pyrotechnics directed against them. While Indira Gandhi and her Government continues to befool the people with the talk of a new approach and socialism, while the treacherous leadership of the Right CPI heading the AITUC seeks to screen the Congress policies by holding only the monopolists responsible for the present ills, Indira's henchmen, like Sidhartha Shankar Ray, are openly demanding full freedom for the monopoly houses to expand production in the name of relieving the unemployment problem.

Besides, the authors of the approach document hope to woo the foreign capitalists and foreign Governments with the government offering them maximum concessions, allowing them to import entire plants in the name of expanding exports, and promising them exploitation of cheap labour. This does not prevent them from talking about self-reliance endlessly.

But this is not all. They have something more for the working class—a direct and open attack on its living standards. This is to be concealed under the innocuous name of wages and incomes policy.

What is this policy? Does it promise to nationalise monopolist concerns or bloated incomes of the big capitalists, the landlords and speculators and turn them into national assets? Of course, no. Does it promise to hold the price line, and all deficit financing and stop the continuous erosion of wages through the mechanism of rising prices? Again, no and a definite no. Does it promise to lower taxation—the colossal taxation on necessities of life which raises their prices and takes them out of the reach of the worker and the common man? No. Does it promise that rapid steps will be taken to ensure that all sections of workers will get the need-based wage during the course of the Fifth Plan ? Again, no.

Freezing Wages

What is then this incomes and wages policy? It is a policy of freezing wages, of refusing to raise them unless the worker accepts increased exploitation, a policy of refusing to guarantee the holding of the price-line or full neutralisation against rising cost of living and, at the same time, permitting the capitalists to accumulate vast profits.

The planners present that there is "need to maintain a *reasonable* balance as between wages, prices and incomes." They do not say that prices will not out-strip wages. It is an open announcement that price mechanism will be used to strip the wages in the name of reasonable balance.

They further promise increased output of wage goods and assured supplies of consumption goods at *reasonably* stable prices. What the Congress Government considers as reasonably stable prices can be gathered from the 20 paise per kilo increase they have announced for sugar prices and reasons advanced for it. The stability here means stability of the enormous profits of the capitalist magnates and nothing more.

What is the incomes policy—the policy which affects the incomes of the rich? Nothing more than self discipline for the property-holders. They are only asked to discipline themselves—there is not even a verbal promise to mop up their ill-gotten gains. See how neatly the planners put it so as not to wound the susceptiblities of the monopolist profit-hunting crowd "At the same time, the need for proper *discipline* on the part of those who draw their income from property and enterprise has been emphasised."

And what is the wages policy for the workers. "There is emphasis on need to avoid rises in wages unrelated to improvement in productivity. An equitable national wage-structure, covering the public and private sectors has to be evolved." Wonderful socialism which refused to mention living wage or need-based wage even as objective during the five years of the plan. Equitable wage structure may therefore mean anything and justify the lowest wage. The linking of wages with productivity under Indian conditions is the introduction of a vicious principle against which the trade union movement has continously fought. When the minimum conditions of living are not guaranteed, when even the need-based wage is not accepted, when there is no guarantee of full neutralisation against government-manipulated rising prices, making wage rise conditional on increasing productivity means imposition of the worst type of exploitations. This means in future whatever profits the capitalist might make, however prosperous the industry might be, whatever might be the condition of the worker, he cannot lay any claim to rise in wages unless he accepts increased exploitation.

More Exploitation

Self-discipiline for the Birlas, more exploitation for the workers—this is the incomes and wages policy of the fake planners. The planners in their hypocrisy make it appear as if the working class is getting wage increase without increase in productivity.

The fact is that the working class is getting reduced wages in spite of big increase in productivity. The proposal to make wage increases completely dependent on increased productivity now is only to force the workers to accept increased work-load which he has been resisting all along. It is also intended to leave him defenceless against the rising cost of living and deprived of all relief even when the industrialists are making huge profits.

How the Government and the employers have been exploiting the workers inspite of increasing productivity is seen from official figures. The index number of estimated factory employment (base 1961 : 100) rose to 126.0 in 1970-71 while the index number of production in monopoly industry rose from 109.2 in 1961 to 177.2 in 1971 while the index number of real earnings dropped from 100 in 1961 to 98 in 1970. With 26 per cent rise in the number of workers the rise in the total production is more than 60 per cent, while the real wage has fallen by two per cent.

Index number of employment in mining industry declined from 100 in 1960 to 95.1 in 1970; index of mineral production increased from 110 to 177 in the same period whereas real earnings increased by 15.9 per cent. With five percent reduction in the number of workers, production has increased by 60 per cent and real wages only by 16 per cent.

The index number of employment in tea plantations has dropped from 100 in 1961 to 90.9 in 1970 while production per worker has increased from 354 Kg. to 551 kg in 1970.

The truth has been that the worker is being mercilessly exploited despite increased productivity. This has been made possible by refusing his right to need-based wages. Having pocketted all the profits from this increased productivity, the planners now seek to deny him any relief unless he submits himself to further exploitation. The worker has a right to increased real earnings, to need based wage here and now and cannot agree to make wage increases conditional on increased productivity.

This is a mere euphemism for wage freeze which was first openly proposed by Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1971 after the Parlia-

mentary elections. The strong protests of trade union movement compelled her to resile from the statement. But now again the same proposal is being introduced under the innocent name of wages and incomes p icy.

Needless to say this all round attack on the people and the working class in the shape of uncontrolled prices and profits and wage-freeze cannot be implemented without organising disruption in the ranks of the workers accompanied by coercive attacks on the rights and liberties of the trade union movement.

It is therefore not surprising that the AICC resolution passed at its Ahmedabad session talks about multiplicity of trade unions and the need to check it. What is meant thereby is bringing together unions affiliated to INTUC, AITUC and HMS to confront and combat the militant trade unions and support Government policies. The Congress cry against mulitiplicity of unions is nothing but a screen to patronise unions whose subservient leadership agrees to support official policies.

This by itself is not enough. Therefore, the Government while talking of socialism is bringing forward an anti-working class bill prohibiting strikes and attacking working class resistance which is bound to be evoked by its wage policy.

The Government has circulated the draft of the new anti-working class bill to its favourites, the leaders of the INTUC, the AITUC and the HMS. The bill will be introduced in Parliament in the next budget session. It constitutes the most shameless attack on the freedom of trade union movement. It attacks the right to strike, denies recognition of unions on the basis of the ballot, imposes compulsory arbitration and puts an end to collective bargaining.

The provisions of the bill are so reactionary that it has evoked protests from the leaders of AITUC and the HMS who hitherto have been acting as the allies of the Government to split the trade union movement. Dange, who has been upholding Indira Gandhi as a great progressive, has now denounced this new exhibition of progress. The three conspirators, INTUC, HMS and AITUC seem to have fallen apart on this issue, the INTUC leaders shamelessly supporting the bill.

Betrayal

The Government has been emboldened to introduce this reactionary bill because the AITUC and HMS betrayed the workers, split the ranks of the trade unions and sought official patronage to

fight the CITU and other central organisations. They openly voted for class collaboration and surrendered the principle of recognition by ballot. Their ranks should repudiate these disastrous policies and do everything to restore the unity of the trade union movement.

The CITU, of course, fully reciprocates to the statement of the two organisations to "reject these proposals which if enacted would sound the death-knell of trade unionism in India and to unitedly fight Government's efforts to impose a controlled trade union movement on the workers". We only hope that this is not just a left posture for getting some concessions from the INTUC and the Government but a genuine desire to fight the impending danger. All must unite to resist this wanton offensive of the reactionary Indira Government.

The working class and the trade union movement must realise that the new bill is a preparation for implementing the nefarious wages and incomes policy of the planners. The trade union movement must unitedly fight both and defeat Congress policies.

The Working Class, Vol. 2, No. 4, December 1972

17

Opening Speech

At CITU General Council Meeting (Dec. 27-30, 1972)

Comrades,

The General Council of Coimbatore reviewed the economic and political situation facing the trade union movement.

Since then, a number of important, even vital changes have taken place confronting the trade union movement with a serious and critical situation.

Before I turn to them, I offer my salutations to the memory of our comrades who have fallen while defending the rights of the workers and the trade union movement.

Comrades, the largest number of our martyrs come from West Bengal, where our movement has to face the terror challenge of the Congress rule. All honour to our martyrs who refused to haul down our flag and defied the terror gangs of the ruling class. We will always remember the names of these brave comrades of ours who have fought in the best traditions of the Indian working class.

I cannot but remember with deep emotions the martyrdom of our well-beloved Comrade Azhikodan Raghavan who fell victim to the assassin's dagger in Trichur. Coming straight from the ranks of the worker, Com. Raghavan rose to the leadership of the trade union movement of Kerala, became a top leader of the CPI(M) and was elected to the General Council of the CITU in its foundation session. His name will ever shine in the annals of our movement, an unforgettable and imperishable name.

Comrades, on behalf of all you, I send our condolence to the families of our martyrs; I also send our warm greetings to our

comrades, hundreds of them, languishing in the jails of West Bengal detained without trial under the MISA and other repugnant legislations. We will continue to fight for their release, the release of those who are prepared to sacrifice the best years of their lives for our common struggles. We also send our warm greeetings to our fighting workers, trade union cadres and leaders in West Bengal who are courageous by defending our movement.

Last year's elections, following in the wake of the Bangla Desh struggle and war, have created an unprecedented situation whose full importance the trade union movement has yet to realise. The Congress Party, committed to serve the capitalists and landlords, has secured an electoral victory in almost all States and is using it with vengeance to attack the working class and the common man. The firings on students and workers, the lathi-charges and attacks on Government employees, teachers, the open help of the police to goonda gangs attacking the workers or committing atrocities on the untouchables prove the reactionary results of Congress victory.

The West Bengal developments, before and after the elections, bring out in full the sinister import of Congress victory and policies. It is well-known that despite the Bangla Desh euphoria the Congress was not in a position to win the 1972 elections in West Bengal. It therefore resorted to wholesale rigging, falsification of elections murders and gangsterism to ensure a fake victory for the Congress. In the course of this gangsterism, arson, loot and rape were resorted to and thousands were forced to leave their homes, refugees in their own country. A large number of trade union cadres, leaders of CITU unions were forcibly prevented from joining their work, under threat of murder. Hundreds were assaulted and wounded. More than two hundred union offices, offices of unions affiliated to the CITU have been forcibly occupied by Congress hirelings with the help of police. These attacks are continuing even now.

These developments show that the Congress Party when faced with an electoral defeat at the hands of the left democratic and working class parties, will not respect the verdict of the ballot-box. It will use gangsters methods to suppress the workers and peasants and falsify the election results. It will resort to every kind of illegal act to remain in power, to fulfil the wishes of its masters, the monopolists, the big capitalists and landlords. The Indian toilers are now face to face with the emerging threat of one party dictator-

ship. This will place all democratic rights, all trade union rights, the rights of agitation and strike at the mercy of a dictatorial Government. West Bengal developments show that the first sufferers is the working class, which has to bear the brunt of all the attacks.

We must all go from here determined to fight this danger, to rouse the working class against it, to rouse them in defence of our movement in West Bengal, to rouse to defend the democratic rights of our people.

Let there be no complacency about it. Our Comrade Azhikodan Raghavan fell a victim to the same gangsterism that has been ruthlessly practiced in West Bengal for the last two years or more. Our enemies are using the same weapon where we are strong, to prepare the way for the installation of a one-party rule.

In this connection Comrades, we cannot forget the heinous role played by the leaders of the Right Communist Party who control the AITUC. They not only split the common trade union movement in West Bengal. They lent a helping hand to the ruling party in its murderous campaign, screened the falsification of elections and became a party to the one-party rule. While we are determined to pursue the line of trade union unity., to extend our hands to all who are prepared to fight the Government and the employers on economic or political issues, we cannot forget the role of the AITUC and other reformist leaders on this issue and cannot but educate our and their ranks on the dangerous and reactionary consequences following from it.

Against the spreading danger, it is absolutely essential that all trade union organisations make a common front. I am confident that the United Council of Trade Unions will take initiative in mobilising all trade unions to defeat this threat. It is all the more necessary for all left and democratic parties to come together to stem this menace.

Starvation and Famine

Last eighteen months since Coimbatore have been months of misery, starvation and prolonged struggle for the workers. They have along with the peasants and the employees borne the burden of high prices, of mounting unemployment, of higher taxation, taxation to meet the costs of the Indo-Pak war and the Bangla Desh refugees. Above all, the working class along with the other toiling sections has been made the scapegoat of the bankrupt Congress policies and the recession.

Under the rule of the garibi hatao imposters, a major part of the country is today in the tight grip of famine.

In Andhra, Rajasthan, Orissa, U.P., Bihar and West Bengal, millions are actually starving, their bodies already a prey to disease.

Hundreds are now flocking to the cities uncared for and unattended. The thousands of famished men, women and children—honest peasants and agricultural labourers—reduced to beggary and camping in cities like Bombay brand the congress leaders and their Government as the biggest criminals.

Unimpeachable reports from several sources reveal that starvation deaths have already started. The leaders of the opposition in Maharashtra Assembly gave the places and names of those who died of hunger and slow starvation. On the floor of Parliament a list of thirty hunger victims was given by the CPI(M) spokesman. An Andhra minister himself had to admit starvation deaths in the affected regions of Telangana.

But the major concern of the Congress Governments at the Centre and the States is to conceal the truth about the sufferings and distress, to hide the slow deaths that are taking place and create a sense of complacency among the people.

In spite of repeated demands from all sections of the people including those from the ruling party, the State Governments under the instructions from the Central Government refuse to declare the affected areas as famine areas and accept direct responsibility for feeding the people under the Famine Code. Callousness cannot go further. The Congress Governments are only imitating the tyrannical British rulers who drew fine distinction between scarcity conditions and famine conditions to mock at the distressed and dying people. It seems the garibi hatao Indira Government has directed the Maharashtra State Government not to declare a State of famine in the affected districts.

In all the States, the relief workers that are provided and advertised constitute a big scandal and a farce.

Our trade union movement should unitedly demand adequate relief measures, adequate food supply and its effective distribution, and their supervision and conduct in association with opposition parties and mass organisations. The trade unions must be ready to supply their advanced cadre along with kisan sabha and other mass organisations to supervise the relief operations which alone will ensure their efficiency and integrity.

Given this, the trade unions will be in a position to give a confident and stirring call to all workers to contribute their best financially for the help of our peasants and agricultural workers.

Sinister Plan

The working class must realise the full meaning of Congress plan to combat food shortage and famine.

It is clear that in its own interest the capitalist class and its government will see to it that the cities and industrial areas continue to have more or less steady supply of foodgrains, though at exorbitant prices. But under their wholesale trade take-over, the rural masses will be left to shift for themselves, literally to starve and die. This is the fate that awaits the famine stricken population.

The working class will not and cannot tolerate this gruesome plan to starve out the rural areas. It must use its full striking power to see that the Government does not solve the famine crisis at the expense of the peasantry.

The peasant masses are the basic allies of the working class. The working class is born out of the womb of the peasant class. Its struggle for better living conditions, for socialism cannot succeed except in alliance with the peasantry, without protecting the agricultural workers and poor peasants against Congress depredations. The united working class movement which is growing, all Central Organisations, all trade unions must combine to protect the peasant and render every help to the rural masses and warn the vested interests that the rural poor are not without strong friends in the cities.

Production Sabotage

The country-wide electricity sabotage this year has further nailed down the bankruptcy of Congress policies, the utter ineffeciency and criminal responsibility of those who are supposed to manage our economy. While the Government and especially Indira Gandhi and her satellite ministers have been sermonising the workers on the merits of keeping the wheels of industry moving, of increased production, they themselves have brought about the worst sabotage of production, which was perhaps difficult even for a CIA agent to achieve so easily. Thanks to this electricity famine, factories have closed, workers have lost jobs, the country has suffered loss of crores of rupees, industrial machinery in many cases has been ruined and electricity for vital agricultural operations had to be curtailed.

Wages and Incomes Policy

The so called wages and incomes policy is an instrument of all capitalist Governments gripped by economic crisis to make the workers pay for crisis. It poses to control both the wages of the workers as well as the incomes of the capitalists in order to control prices. In reality it neither guarantees the control of prices, especially workers cost of living nor is intended to do so. Similarly, it is never effective in restricting the profits of the employers. But it only effectively debars all wage increases unless the workers defy the law and reduce it to nullity.

This has been the experience of the wages and incomes policy which was introduced in the USA, in the midst of the recent crisis. The British experience is the same. Mr. Heath, British Prime Minister, announced standstill on pay, prices, rents and dividends in the beginning of November as a temporary measure which was expected to last for 90 days. The objective of the measure was described as "the maintainance of a high rate of growth and an improvement in real incomes; and improvement in the position of low-paid and pensions; and moderation in the rate of cost and price inflation."

The British TUC refused to accept the policy and demanded statutory control on prices. It naturally refused to accept a statutory control on working class incomes. The TUC leaders taking a flexible position than asked the Government to guarantee that retail price index in general, and food prices in particular would not be permitted to rise by more than 5 per cent in the course of the year. The Government refused and thereby made it clear that the policy meant that wages must be frozen while prices may rise.

The Indian Planners' incomes and wages policy as announced in the Approach Document follows the same pattern.

What is this policy, does it promise to nationalise monopolist concerns or bloated incomes of the big capitalists, the landlrods and speculators and turn them into national assets? Of course, no. Does it promise to hold the price line, and all deficit financing and stop the continuous erosion of wages through the mechanism of rising prices? Again, no and a definite no. Does it promise to lower taxation—the colossal taxation on necessities of life which raises their prices and takes them out of the reach of the worker and the common man? No. Does it promise that rapid steps will be taken to ensure that all sections of workers will get the need-based wage

during the course of Fifth Plan, no.

What is the incomes policy—the policy which affects the incomes of the rich? Nothing more than self-discipline for the property-holders. They are only asked to discipline themselves—there is not even a verbal promise to mop up their ill-gotten gains. See how neatly the planners put it so as not to wound the susceptibilities of the monopolist profit-hunting crowd: "At the same time, the need for proper discipline on the part of those who draw their income from property and enterprise has been emphasised."

And what is the wages policy for the workers, "There is emphasis on need to avoid rises in wages unrelated to improvement in productivity. An equitable national wage-structure, covering the public and private sectors has to be evolved." Wonderful socialism which refused to mention living wage or need based wage even as objective during the five years of the plan. Equitable wage structure may therefore mean anything and justify the lowest wage. The linking of wages with productivity under Indian conditions is the introduction of a various principle against which the trade union movement has continuously fought. When the minimum conditions of living are not guaranteed, when even the need-based wage is not accepted, when there is no guarantee of full neutralisation against government-manipulated rising prices, making wage rise conditional on increased productivity means imposition of the worst type of exploitation. This means in future whatever profits the capitalists might make, however prosperous the industry might be, whatever might be, the condition of the worker, he cannot lay any claim to rise in wages unless he accepts increased exploitation.

How since Independence the worker is being defrauded while more work is being extorted from him will be clear from the following: With 1939=100 the index of real earnings fell to 92.2 in 1951. With 1951=100, the index of real wages rose to only 104.4 in 1964 while index of production per workers rose to 148 in 1964. The real wages in 1964 stood at 96 compared to 1939. Shri Dinoobhai Trivedi, Textile Labour Association, Ahmedabad, in his note of dissent to Report of study Group for Wage Policy comments: "The final picture, therefore, compared to 1939 level is real wages are low by 20% and productivity has increased by 50%.

Situation has deteriorated since then.

The index number of estimated factory employment (base 1961

: 100) rose to 126.0 in 1970.71 while the index number of production in manufacturing industry rose from 109.2 in 1961 to 177.2 in 1971 while the index number of real earnings dropped from 100 in 1961 to 98 in 1970. With 26 per cent rise in the number of workers the rise in total production is more than 60 per cent, while the real wage has fallen by two per cent.

Having pocketted all the profits from this increased productivity, the planners now seek to deny the worker any relief unless he submits himself to further exploitation. The worker has a right to increased real earnings, to need-based wage here and now and cannot agree to make increases conditional on additional increased production.

A study of trends in finances of 1500 large and medium public limited (non financial) companies published in July 1972 issue of the Reserve Bank of India Bulletin reveals that "the wage costs (which include salaries) have declined albeit marginally from 14 per cent in 1965-66 to 13.2 per cent in 1970-71."

In the same period, the percentage of excise duty in the value of product has risen for the 1500 companies from 8.1 per cent in 1965-66 to 8.8 per cent in 1969-70. For 290 large companies the percentage was 9.3 per cent in 1965-66 and 11.2 per cent in 1971.

The consumer is being put up against the worker who is held responsible for the rise in prices. It is necessary for the working class to expose this fraud, and show how the excise duties peg up the prices of commodities. The following figures for 1970-71 as revealed by the study of 1500 selected medium and large nonfinancial, nor govt. public-limited companies are eloquent.

Industry	Wage bill (Salary etc.)	Excise (in lakhs)
Edible vegetable and hydrogenated oils	402	749
Sugar	2339	4972
Tobacco	1164	136,04
Cotton textiles	224,32	9874
Iron and Steel	4478	3174
Medicines & Pharmaceuticals	2798	943
Matches	369	1545
Cement	1773	3555

The excise duty at its lowest is at least 40 to 50 per cent of the total wage-bill. It is four, five, even ten times the total wage-bill in important necessaries of life. On vegetable oils, it is more than 150 per cent; on sugar it is more than two hundred per cent; and so on. And yet the Government wants the people to believe that it is wage that are responsible for the high prices of necessaries of life.

Struggle Against High Prices

In recent months, the working class has been unitedly struggling against the effects of the sky-rocketting prices. A number of united actions, conferences, demonstrations, and protests have taken place but there is no evidence of any positive response from the Government. The Congress Party and the Government made a show of moving towards take-over of wholesale foodgrains trade when public protests against the rocketting prices were mounting. Now it is evident that there will be no effective action from the Government side.

If the wholesale prices of food articles have arisen by 16 per cent, during the year ending October 1972, the retail prices have risen much more. And in the coming months, with artificial shortages, with one fair price shop among three, being a fictitious one existing on paper, as admitted by the Finance Minister, no one knows how high prices will rise. Today, the retail prices of cereals, pulses, milk, edible oils, vegetables, fish and sugar, have already gone beyond the reach of the worker and the common man. A major part of the pay packet—more than 70 per cent—has to be used for just the bare itmes comprise the two meals of the family.

Not satisfied with this, an obliging Government has sanctioned increase of 20 paise per kilo of sugar and another increase for Vanaspati.

It should be remembered that the free market prices of sugar has arisen by over forty per cent in the last year and a half. One of the reasons given for the fresh rise was, apart from the rise in the rate of bonus, rise in the bank's lending rates.

This touching solicitude for the profits of the magnates who are reported to be munificent contributors to Congress election fund, is really the most convincing testimony to Congress professions of socialism.

This deliberate policy inflation and price rise is reinforced by a fraudulence in compilation of working class cost of living index.

During the year ending July 1972, the percentage variation in

the wholesale prices index for food articles has been of the order of 14.1 per cent. The retail prices must have shown larger increases and the effect on the working class cost of living must be much more. But official index gives only a 6.2 per cent rise for the year.

The entire fraud consists in the collection of unrepresentative and bogus prices. Not only prices of foodgrains are doctored but prices of cloth, of sarees and other articles of consumption are openly manipulated. It was revealed that according to these scientific compilers, you can purchase a pair of sarees for only thirteen rupees, in W. Bengal. Bogus quotations price, substituting lower quality materials, arbitrary removal of one item of consumption and replacing it by another, for which these manipulators have no authority, reliance on prices declared in official fair price shops when the bulk of supplies have to be pruchased from the black-markets—are some of the unashamed methods used to cheat the workers.

Thanks to these, the working class is being cheated systematically more so when a sudden price spurt takes place. Thanks to these methods, the entire 8.1/3% bonus earned by the working class has been neutralised, as has been the earlier wage increases.

We must demand and end of this fraud. All trade unions must unitedly demand a revision of the index number, overhauling of the compiling machinery, strict adherence to international norms in the compilation and full neutralisation and point to point increase. At the same time, on behalf of the people, we must demand an end to the present policy of fleecing through high prices, deficit financing.

The Challenge of Unemployment

Our Coimbatore session of the General Council had warned the workers against the growing menace of unemployment. Eighteen months back official statistics showed that there were four million registered unemployed in the cities. Today, the same statistics show that there are more than six million registered unemployed. Within a year and a half the number has increased by 50 per cent. It includes not only the industrial workers but also the educated, the graduates and under-graduates, the doctors who number (3000), engineers who number many thousands and others. The number of the educated unemployed is 6 lakhs in W. Bengal and more than two lakhs in Maharashtra. They also include a growing number of educated women, now totalling over a lakh.

This increased unemployment is not due only to closure of factories and concerns; though these also have added thousands to the workers of those without work. The basic source of this unemployment is the capitalist planning which can but create only a few jobs; while displacing many more from the jobs they are holding. Every year, a larger and larger amount of capital is required to employ a person. It is no surprise that under this capitalist planning with every plan, the number of unemployed has increased. Today, along with the rise in urban unemployment, the number of those without work in rural areas has increased to 30 million. According to one calculation, by 1980 there will be at least 70 million people without jobs in India.

A few figures about the implementation of one of the much-advertised crash programmes are enough to condemn the rulers. Under this programme, W. Bengal, the most unemployment-ridden State was allotted Rs. 299 lakhs but the expenditure was hardly more than Rs. 150 lakhs. The share of Maharashtra was Rs. 325 lakhs but its expenditure was only Rs. 126 lakhs. Bihar, perhaps, holds the record in inactivity, its allocation was Rs. 408 lakhs, its expenditure was less than Rs. 35 lakhs.

This is the seriousness with which rural unemployment is being fought.

While the Government advertises its unemployment measures it at the same time finances the textile and jute capatalists to displace labour, retrench old hands in the name of modernisation. The employment potential of certain industries is being reduced by the delibarate introduction of new automatic machinery.

Already there are 180 computers in use; seventy six of these are used by the private sector and as many 61 by Government agencies.

In the third week of November, Smt. Indira Gandhi approvingly stated in the Rajya Sabha that the Electronics Corporation of India had formulated a programme with the object of making the country "self-sufficient" in computers. This self-sufficiency means, according to the Director of Information analysis group of Electronic Commission, that the country must produce in the next five years 1300 computers, at an annual average demand of about 260 systems. This is what is being planned with the approval of Smt. Indira Gandhi, in the name of self-suficiency. Has middle class educated employment any chances before this planned onslaught

of the computers?

To facilitate the execution of this self-suffciency the Government has secured the help of the pliant Dandekar Committee which has left the introduction of automation to the tender mercies of a tripartite body where treacherous trade union leaders are now available to impose it on the workers.

The workers and employees alike must face this menace unitedly. The latter who have hitherto kept themselves away from the main trade union current must see the folly of this policy, realise the grim danger from automation drive and join hands with the workers to defeat it.

The organised trade union movement, the employed workers can no logner ignore the plight of the unemployed and their demands. Till now except in Coimbatore, the organised workers have failed to fight through action for the demands of the unemployed, for jobs for them. Today unless the organised workers champion the right to work of the unemployed, the very existence of the trade union movement will be jeopardised. The young unemployed are easily turned against these with jobs often become a weapon of attacking the organised trade union movement. It is the minimum duty of trade unions to demand immediate unemployment benefits for all unemployed, or work for those without jobs; that the right to work be inscribed as a fundamental right, in the Constitution. The trade unions must lead the common struggle for these demands and forge the unity of the two sections.

The Bonus Unity

Comrades, the unity displayed by the working class on the bonus issue, the united demand of all organisations for a minimum 8.1/3% bonus resulted in a big victory for the workers. The Government, however, is depriving lakhs of Central and State employees, railway workers, and municipal, Corporation and local Self-Government workers of this right. After a clear court verdict that bonus is intended to partially make up the gap between the present wage and the living wage, there is absolutely no justification for withholding it from this vast section of employees. There is no reason for the Bombay Corporation or the Maharashtra Government to deny it to the Bombay Corporation or BEST workers who only a few months back had to fight a militant strike to secure it.

The Government has circulated the draft of the new anti-

working class bill to various Ministries. The Bill will be introduced in Parliament soon. It constitutes the most shameless attack on the freedom of trade union movement. It attacks the right to strike, denies recognition of unions on the basis of the ballot, imposes compulsory arbitration and puts an end to collective bargaining. The provisions of the bill are so reactionary that it has evoked protests from the leaders of AITUC and the HMS who have been collaborating with the Government.

The CITU, of course, fully reciprocates to the statement of the two organisations, to "reject these proposals which if enacted would sound the death-knell of trade unionism in India and to unitedly fight Government's efforts to impose a controlled trade union movement on the workers". We only hope that this is not just a left posture for getting some concessions from the INTUC and the Government but a genuine desire to fight the impending danger. All must unite to resist this wanton offensive of the reactionary Indira Government.

On behalf of all of you, I greet the formation of the UCTU which has brought together a number of fighting militant central trade unions whose collective strength is no doubt greater than that represented by the three collaborators. The UCTU, its formation, the initiative we took to bring it about all are evidence of our persistent efforts for uniting the workers. There is no doubt that with the UCTU in action, the efforts to forge unity will be strengthened many more times.

In the last year and a half, the weapon of linguistic chauvinism and parochialism is being deliberately used to undermine class solidarity and the unity of democratic struggles.

Such slogans as jobs only for the local people are being raised to make one worker fight another. Slogans of sons of the soil, jobs for the sons of the soil are deliberately roused to undermine class and national unity. Local Congress parties initiate or support this outlook and conflict.

Today, the grim results of this outlook are witnessed in Assam where under the Congress regime arson and murders of minority members are taking place with impunity. The reactionaries in Assam seek to suppress that language of the Bengali minority, refuse them the right to have it as its medium of instruction and forcibly uproot them from their jobs and professions. Democratic and working class unity is being disrupted in Andhra where

regional conflicts over the question of jobs has been roused by vested landed interests from Telangana with the open encouragement from the Central leaders of the Congress party. The Congress leaders who sermonise the people on the need of national unity are deliberately undermining it to keep themselves in power. Nothing will remain of the democratic unity of the Indian people, the class unity of the working class if it does not end this fight between toiler and toiler. The working class of Assam, the working class of Telangana, Andhra, the entire democratic movement will remain captives of the landlords and the vested interests, a plaything of the Congress party if they do not see through the game and defeat it by countering it with the unity of toilers from majority and minority linguistic groups and regions. There is no democracy, no socialism for the working class if it does not defeat this chauvinistic offensive, and realise that unemployment can be solved only by ending the Congress rule, the rule of capitalists and landlords.

In our foundation conference, we had warned against the sinister role of American imperialism. Last year, with the American Seventh fleet openly threatening us from the Bay of Bengal, with the USA declaring India to be an aggressor in connection with the Bangla Desh developments, the real face of the American imperialists was unmasked for all to see. Even the Government of India, for some time, adopted a critical attitude towards the American imperialists, developed closer relations with the Soviet Union and continued to help the Bangla Desh.

But all this was being done with a view to restore the old relations and once again a new free flow of goodwill, exchange of pleasantries and friendliness has started. American imperialism has not changed a bit and the desire of India's rulers to get in the good books of the US imperialists spells danger for the country. It is dictated only by a desire to get fresh loans from the USA because of the dependent character of our economy.

The Government of late has been talking about "self reliance". It is made to appear as if the Government is determined to end our dependence on foreign capitalist loans and collaboration, end our exploitation by foreigners and free our economy. The practice of the Government shows however that all this is more propaganda, than anything else. Though trade with Socialist countries has developed much more than before with the USSR becoming and biggest partner in our trade, every effort is being made to strengthen

the links with the West and seek more aid from them. The World Bank is being courted. The USA is being approached. The Japanese monopolists are being assured that India is not committed to nationalisation, i.e. there is no fear of nationalisation of their capital if they invest. British and other capitalists are entreated to ship complete out-dated plants promising them supply of cheap labour to expect their products. The Government dares not nationalise the foreign oil concerns, who have been exporting huge profits, exploiting the people and the working class by manipulating crude oil prices and expanding capacity illegally. Other private foreign capital has been exporting huge profits over years as has been revealed recently. The accepted rate of profit on American manufacturing concerns in India was 14 per cent in 1970. Along with the increased debt-service payments of the Government of India this private drain has been making India more dependent on foreign aid, and the Government has done nothing about it. The Fifth Five Year Plan itself is dependent for its implemmentation on a substantial amount of foreign aid. As if all this was not enough the Govt. has recently announced foreign collaboration for beer, gramaphone records, footwear with PVC soles, plastic toys, locks and latches and cigarettee filters.

And recently it was further reported that a foreign company will transfer an entire factory from abroad to Agra where thousands of shoe makers working by hand are eking out their livelihood on foreign orders. This is also called self reliance as fighting unemployment through use of labour intensive methods.

The CITU trade unions must rouse the workers against this danger, of growing dependence, and economic slavery of the working class of foreign exploitation, prepared under the slogan of self-reliance.

True to its international outlook, the CITU stands for the support and freedom of the working class and democratic movement in the countries of the Sub-Continent, India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, etc. and carries fraternal feelings of proletarian solidarity with the working class of Bangla Desh and of Pakistan.

Above all, it stands for peace and friendship between the countries of the Sub-Continent and welcomes every genuine effort and measure towards this end. We should express our warm appreciation of those democratic froces in Pakistan who are demanding recognition of Bangla Desh, friendship with India and democ-

racy inside Pakistan. We extend our warm hand of friendship to them. We also send our greetings to the fighting workers of Karachi and other places of Pakistan who like us are struggling for better and human conditions, whose goal is socialism and who have to bear the brunt of Government repression.

We send our warm greetings to the workers of Bangla Desh who after independence have to go through lot of difficulties and repression. Democracy and freedom in Bangla Desh will be jeopardised if the workers continue to be repressed. It will only help the American imperialists and the agents of Pakistan's military clique to undermine the hardwon freedom of Bangla Desh.

We must fight these like Jana Sangh in our country who stand for confrontation between India and Pakistan. The working class can never forget that American imperialists headed by Nixon seek to achieve their aims of domination in this part of the world by promoting antagonism between India and Pakistan. This is part of their policy of making Asians fight Asians.

Now that the dispute over the delineation of the line of control is over, quick steps are necessary to restore normalcy and create an atmosphere of friendship between the two peoples. It is the responsibility of the people and governments concerned to see that the Pakistan prisoners of war who have been in prison camps for a year except these who are required for trial for war crimes are repatriated and the great anguish felt by the people of Pakistan is set at rest. It is also clear that the great issue of establishing relations between two countries of the sub-continent should not be made dependent on what comes first—a meeting between two Statesmen or recognition. The workers of India must demand an end to the present state of affairs, demand friendly relations in the subcontinent so that the democratic and socialist movements in these three countries are no longer side tracked but are able to pursue their struggle uninterruptedly.

Before concluding, let me pay tribute to the glorious fighters of Vietnam. They have defeated the American imperialist on the battle-field; defeated them at the negotiating table. A treacherous enemy is trying to wriggle out of the agreement Let the people of the world see that the agreement is implemented. Let our working class join its voice with that of the workers of the world. And may our Government at last get the courage to give up its vacillating equivocating position, stand four-square for the Vietnamese people

and recognise the Provinsional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

Comrades, before I sit I would like you to devote proper attention in the course of your discussion to the

(i) Famine situation in the rural areas;
(ii) unemployment;
(iii) high prices;
(iv) the new legislative attack;
(v) the bonus agitation;
(vi) united struggles;
(vii) diversionary tactics;
(viii) UCTU;
(ix) functioning of our unions.

18

May Day Manifesto Of The CITU 1973

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions on the occasion of May Day, the great international day of working class solidarity, greets the fighting working class and other sections of the people of India for their innumerable struggles launched in defence of their living standards and for trade union and democratic rights.

The CITU pays its homage to valient martyrs who laid down their lives, since the last May Day, fighting police bullets and gangster attacks of anti-social elements. The blood of these Comrades did not flow in vain. It has only made the working class more determined in carrying forward the struggle with more vigour till the fulfilment of the cause for which the martyrs gave their precious lives.

Heroic Resistance In West Bengal

The trade union in West Bengal led by the CITU and other militant T.U. Centres continues to face most ferocious attacks of the anti-social elements and hirelings of the Congress party shamelessly backed by the police, CRP and armed personnel. Over 300 officer belonging to CITU and other unions are still under forcible occupation of goonda gangs. Many working class areas are still out of bounds for the trade union activists. Forcible collection of union subscription, destruction of union records, murderous attacks on trade union activists still continue unabated. Thousands of trade union functionaries and workers have been forcibly evicted from their residences and reduced into destitutes. About one thousand have been detained under MISA and other preventive legislation while warrants of arrests have been pending against a lakh activists

in the T.U. and democratic movement.

Despite this semi-fascist terror, the working class of West Bengal is resisting heroically and several united struggles in Jute, Cotton textile, Engineering, Steel, Coal mines, Plantations and other industries have been fought during the last year. The CITU unions played a notable role in bringing round other trade unions in the struggles. As a result, the conspiracy of the Congress Government and its accomplices to suppress the vanguard of the workers met with firm rebuff in West Bengal. The mass squatting jointly organised by 26 organisations on 28th March on the question of unemployment etc. was just a first shot in the series of forthcoming bigger struggles on common issues facing the people.

New fighting Mood

Following West Bengal, the working class and the people of Kerala have fought several struggles against Achutha Menon Government backed by the Congress party. The workers in plantations, Coir, Cashew, Transport industries as well as agricultural workers have orgainsed several strike struggles and faced most savage police repression. The NGO's and teachers have recently experienced large scale arrests, police beatings of demonstrators and prisoners. Even women were not spared. Yet they fought for 52 glorious days which only showed the new tenacity of our fighting working class employees.

In Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, U.P. and Bihar, several strikes were organised, newer and newer sections joining them in large numbers. The Railway workers, Central and State Govenment employees have displayed remarkable fighting mood and even readiness to face repression by the armed police and gangster elements. The Loco-running staff in various railways resorted to work stoppages demanding reduction in working hours.

The united all-India strike of Cement workers completely paralysed the industry for several days. Despite betrayal by INTUC leaders the strike continued for some more days.

Among other notable struggles, mention must be made of the success in the achievement of 8.33 per cent minimum bonus. The diabolical plan of the Government to credit part of the bonus to PF Fund account was by and large defeated by the united struggles of the workers. However, the government's refusal to pay bonus to State, Central and local self-government employees and other

unorganised workers is still to be defeated and country-wide struggles are developing to achieve this demand.

Bankruptcy of Capitalist Planning

The bankruptcy of the capitalist planning is now clearer to the people than ever before. The Fifth Plan despite loud promises will intensify poverty and misery of the common people, increase unemployment, while the monopolists and landlords will fatten themselves. The crushing burden of taxation in the current budget accompanied by high rate of deficit financing and inflation will further boost the prices of essential commodities. The Congress Government is trying to push up exports for repayment of earlier foreign debts, the burden of which again falls on the common people. While the Government takes pleasure in boasting about self-reliance it is going with a begging bowl in different countries for onerous 'aid'.

The problem of unemployment has assumed serious proportions as a result of these policies. The estimated urban and rural unemployment today exceeds 4 crores while the registered unemployment is nearly 69 lakhs. The gravity of the problem can be well understood from the fact that the registered unemployment during 1971 alone increased by 35 per cent. Yet the Government continues to introduce automation and other job killing devices which will further aggravate the situation.

During the last year the prices shot up by 12 per cent leading to decline in real wages of workers. Offical statistics show a decline in real earnings of workers, compared to 1960. This has happened when the production per worker during sixties increased by 28 per cent.

The sufferings of the working class and the people are crossing the endurance level and they are forced to take the path of struggle to protect their living conditions.

In the face of the demand for nationalisation of all coal mines and one-day all-India strike of coal miners on Januery 15, the Government took over the management of non-coking coal mines but gave huge compensation to the mine owners and attacked the job security of workers. The new custodians in collusion with the former mine-owners are tampering with the State Assets and funds. This has made a mockery of the concept of nationalisation itself.

New Attacks in Offing

Smt. Indira Gandhi's Government while mouthing loud slogans of "Socialisms", "Garibi Hatao", is conspiring to launch new attacks on the working class and the people.

In the name of improving the conditions of lowest 30 per cent of the people, the Government is refusing to grant any concession to organised workers and Salaried employees.

The recent circular of the Bureau of public Undertaking to all the public sector units asking them not to grant any monetary concessions to workers without prior permission of the Finance Ministery is an attempt to impose wage freeze from the back door.

The Third Pay Commission while recommending only Rs.185 as the minimum wage to the Central Government employees has in return imposed additional working hours on the employees leading to increase in the workload. The Commission has rejected the demand for a need-based minimum wage and full neutralisation in the rise in cost of living.

The formation of National Council of Trade Unions was a vicious attempt on the part of the Government to stifle the militant trade union movements. The leadership of AITUC, INTUC and HMS have become willing partners to it. However, this unholy allinace is already showing signs of crack in face of rising struggles of workers. The formation of United Council of Trade Unions last year only reflected the growing urge of unity among the working class to intensify struggles against anti-worker, anti-people policies of the Congress Government.

The proposed Industrial Relations Bill which provides recognition for favoured unions and allows only those unions to declare a strike, will hit at the basis of freedom of Association in the Country. The provision of compulsory arbitration and ban on strike will also take away all the trade union rights won by the working class through hard struggles. This Bill is a challenge to the entire T.U. movement in the country and must be defeated unitedly without which no advance in the T.U. movement would be possible.

The ruling Congress Party finds it increasingly difficult to serve the interests of the capitalists and landlords without attacking democratic rights and civil liberties. Increasing use of MISA, DIR and other preventive Acts during democratic struggles have become a matter of routine. The dissolution of the Legislative

Assembly in Orissa to suit the convenience of the ruling Congress only shows the growing tendency towards establishing one party dictatorship. The working class while fighting for their day to day demands will have to oppose these dictatorial trends in the country.

The CITU expresses its full solidarity and support to the agricultural workers, poor peasants who are fighting for taking away the land of the landlords and distributing it free to them. The destitution of the rural masses is making them restive and bringing them into the area of struggle. The CITU calls upon the workers to rally behind the peasant masses so that a powerful unity of workers and peasants can be achieved under the leadership of working class against the anti-people policies of the Congress Government.

Fight Against Disruptive Forces

The CITU warns the working class against the rising disruptive and chauvinistic forces which are frantically trying to divert the attention of the people from their struggle against the ruling classes. The recent language riots in Assam, anti-Bengali riot in Orissa, the agitation for separation of Andhra Pradesh, the Shiva Sena campaign against South Indian workers are some of these machinations. The working class must remember that these fissiparous tendencies are getting direct helping had from sections of the ruling party and foreign agencies and it must fight these tendencies with all their might in the interest of preservation of unity and solidarity of the people's struggle.

Glory To Vietnam Struggle

The CITU sends its warmest greetings to the valiant working class and people of Vietnam for their crowning success in the struggle against U.S. imperialism the most ferocious enemy of mankind. The indomitable courage shown by the people of Vietnam in facing the most barbarous and near-nuclear bombing has no parallel in human history in recent times. The U.S. imperialism still continues to show its fangs and conspires to sabotage the settlement. It continues murderous air raids in Cambodia and Laos. The CITU calls upon the working class to remain vigilant and defeat the U.S. machinations in South East Asia.

The CITU greets the working class of Soviet Union, People's China and other Socialist countries for their remarkable achievement in Socialist construction and for their help in the struggle against imperialism.

The CITU conveys its greetings to the working class of Bangladesh who has been fighting against police repression and murderious attacks by gangster elements. It supports their struggle against imperialist conspiracies and for strengthening national independence. CITU sends its fraternal greetings to the working class and people of Pakistan who are struggleing to secure elementary democratic rights and democrtic consitution.

The CITU greets the working class of U.S., Britain, France, Italy and other countries who resorted to several strikes to defend their immediate interests.

The working class and people in Asia, Africa and Latin America during the last one year, have conducted innumerable battles against imperialist intrigues and for national independence. The CITU sends its fraternal greetings to them and extends full support in their struggle till they attain victory.

Let the Indian working class, on this May Day, while fighting against capitalists and landlords, express its firm determination to carry forward the struggle against imperialism and for preservation of world peace which alone is a guarantee for establishment of Socialism in India.

19

Launch Bigger United Struggle Against Ruling Classes

Comrades,

We are meeting nearly three years after our foundation session and on behalf of the Working Committee, I convey my apologies to you for our inability to hold the session in time. The Bangla Desh developments, the Indo-Pak War and the elections came in the way of convening our biennial Conference, according to Schedule.

On behalf of all of you, I salute the memory of our departed comrades—three valiant members of our General Council who are no more with us. Comrade Azhikodan Raghavan fell a victim to the assassins' dagger to a cowardly attack by the enemies of the working class. A rank and file worker, he rose by his sacrifice and qualities of leadership to occupy leading position in our movement and also carried the burden of the Secretaryship of the CPI(M), the biggest political party in Kerala. His memory will remain evergreen in our minds.

We will forever remember the names of Comrade Rajen Sinha whose sudden death deprived us of a valuable comrade. We cannot forget our fighting comrade Sunil Sen, leader of our Dum Dum unions, who fell a victim to goonda attack.

Comrades, we salute the memory of the hundreds of martyrs of our movement who have fallen victims to semi-facist terror in West Bengal—sons of proletariat and leaders of trade union movement —and leaders of other democratic movements. They came from the ranks of the working class, the students, teachers, peasants, employees—all of whom were martyrs to the same cause—the cause of democracy and Socialism.

We dip our banner in the name of all our comrades in Kerala and elsewhere—in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra, who fell fighting for the cause of the workers.

We send our message of solidarity to the thousands of our comrades—trade union leaders, leaders of the democratic and kisan movements, languishing in the prisons of West Bengal and elsewhere. Thousands have been detained under the outrageous MISA Act and other obnoxious legislations ; there are many who have been held for years under trumped-up criminal charges but denied bail. We assure them that the trade union movement will continue to work for their release.

Comrades, our session is meeting just a few days before May Day, that great day of international solidarity of the working class of the world. On this day, the entire working class renews its pledge of international solidarity and its determination to end imperialism and capitalism and establish Socialism, a world free from exploitation, free from all possibilities of war, a world of permanent peace and freedom, from the fear of bestial bombings, aggression and nuclear blackmail.

International Solidarity

Let me take this occasion to express our fraternal feelings of solidarity and brotherhood with the entire world workings class. We salute the working class and people of the Soviet Union, of Peoples China, of all Socialist countries and wish them continued successes in their onward march.

Above all, we offer our greetings, full of emotion and fervent feelings to the working class and people of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, to the working class and people of South Vietnam led by the National Liberation Front. Their struggle, unprecedented in history, has been a relentless ordeal for freedom, for advancing the cause of the international working class. Having forced a ceasefire on the American enemy, they have to undergo further trials because of Nixon's treachery. We express our firm support to them and are confident that once again they will emerge triumphant.

Comrades, nearer home, we send our warm greetings to the working class and people of Bangla Desh bent on the task of consolidating their freedom and expanding democracy. We offer our warm greetings to the working class and people of Pakistan who still are struggling to secure elementary democratic rights and

a democratic Constitution.

An unprecedented situation has developed in West Bengal since we met last. Never was the trade union movement, even during the British days was faced with such monstrous repression as during the last three years. Com. P. Ramamurti's report deals with this in some detail and I do not wish to devote much space to it. These assaults continue today also, the latest instance being the goonda attacks on our Ranigunj comrades and unions and the murder of Com. Bimal Chowdhury leader of our Durgapur Union. It reveals the relentless efforts of the Congress Party to maintain its rule at all cost and underlines the trend towards one-party dictatorship. While open semi-fascist terror stalks through W.Bengal, the violation of all accepted parliamentary norms to keep the Congress Party in power is seen elsewhere also. The unscrupulous behaviour of the Governor in Orissa under instruction of the Centre only repeats what happened a couple of years back in W. Bengal and other States.

The gruesome happenings in Kerala in connection with the recent strike of the NGOs emphasise the same trend. Under a ministry headed by Right C.P. Chief Minister and a Congress Home Minister, unprecedented terror was let loose on the struggling employees and the people, while the Congress leaders were plying the country with the slogan of Garibi Hatao. The raping inside police stations, the brutalities committed on the arrested people, the mass-beatings, the raids on colleges and beatings of students, of employees and other members of the public and the mass arrests constitute the beginning of the process leading to the semi-fascist terror. The invasion of Trivandrum College, the blood-spattered walls, the criminal assaults on students—they constitute new milestones towards annihilation of democracy and establishment of one-Party dictatorship.

The NGOs of Kerala deserve our full congratulations for withstanding this terror and holding on for fiftytwo days. The working class and the trade union movement of Kerala, our CITU unions deserve full praise for their active solidarity and support to the cause of the employees, for facing repression in their solidarity action with them. The students, teachers and the entire people of Kerala turned the NGO's struggle into a democratic struggles, a popular struggle and deserve our congratulations. This the sign of the times. The local economic struggle of one section evokes the

support of all downtrodden section, and has the potentiality of developing into a common democratic struggle in face of repression.

What we have passed through in W. Bengal is something unprecedented. Our trade unions, our working class and leaders have withstood the onslaught and by their courage and devotion, have brought new glory to our movement. It is the duty of all CITU unions to rouse the working class against the common menace of semi-fascist terror and one-party dectatorship and activise them to defend and help our fighting movement in W. Bengal.

Rising Resistance

The magnificient and rising resistance of the working class despite increased repression is seen from the following:

Year	No. of strikes and lockouts	No of workers participated	No of mandays lost
1965	1835	9,91,158	64,69,992
1966	2556	14,10,056	1,38,46,329
1967	2815	14,90,346	1,71,47,951
1968	2776	16,69,294	1,72,43,679
1969	2627	18,26,866	1,90,48,288
1970	2889	18,27,752	2,05,63,381
1971	2137	12,26,812	1,65,45,636
1972			1,51,81,977 (Provisional)

On an average a million and a half workers have been participating in widespread struggles since 1966—the year of recession and crisis, of enforced devaluation at the dicates of the American imperialists. The number of mandays lost reveals the protracted character of the struggles waged against heavy odds. We the CITU are a part of this great and continuous struggle waged by India's working class.

I need not detail the privations, the sufferings and oppression our working class had to undergo during the course of these strikes.

Along with these were also political and sympathetic strikes undertaken by the working class, through protest or solidarity actions.

In 1970, there were in all 118 political and sympathetic strikes involving 3 lakh 31 thousand workers which accounted for a time

loss of 3 lakh 86 thousand man-days. The hightest time loss was in W. Bengal.

In 1971, there were 110 political and sympathetic strikes involving a maximum number of 3 lakh 51 thousand workers accounting for a loss of 5 lakh 79 thousand mandays, the highest time loss was recorded by Maharashtra.

Comrades,

How during this period, the employers tried to coerce us, break down our resistance by means of lock-outs will be clear from the following. Figures for all India show that in this period the loss of mandays due to deliberate lockouts has been substantial. In 1968, it was more than 50 per cent of the loss due to strikes. For W. Bengal, the figures are revealing. In 1967, loss due to strikes was 15,32,000 mandays while that due to lockouts was 34,83,000 ; In 1968, the loss due to strikes was 31,56,000 while that due to lockouts was 35,65,000; in 1970, loss due to strikes was 57 lakhs and that due to lockouts was 36 lakhs. In 1971, the corresponding figures were 16 lakhs for strikes and 28 lakhs for lockout. In 1972, 10 lakhs for strikes and 26 lakhs for lockouts. The loss through lockouts is often bigger than that through strikes.

The vindictive attitude of the employing class is seen through these lockouts which were intended to bring the workers to their knees. The bourgeois papers always condemned strikes, the Govt. repressed them. All talked of loss of national production in relation to strikes. But they never raised a word of protest against the monstrous loss through lockouts which often exceeded the loss through strikes. Naturally so, because the lockout was the class weapon of the capitalist class to coerce the workers into submission. One should remember that these agencies raised a hue and cry against the U.F. Govt. in W. Bengal because of the rising strikes. But they concealed the fact of the offensive through lockouts.

The incessant economic conflicts of these years arose out of the direct efforts of the ruling classes to make the workers the scapegoat of the crisis. Through prices, through taxation, retrenchment and increased workload the ruling class was attempting to make the workers pay for the crisis. The workers went on fighting, they were in the earlier years tremendously helped by the United Front Governments of left parties. They secured important gains but again and again they were attacked and their direct advance was again nullified through rising prices engineered by Govt.'s deficit

financing. In many industries, the workers after prolonged battles had to accept retrenchment, increased workload or premature retirement. And yet again, the workers fought and made gains, as for instance, the 8.1/3 per cent minimum bonus, the increase in wages in jute and steel industries.

But for these incessant struggles, the working class would have been saddled with further load of work and further cut in wages. As, matters stand, despite heroic battle the working class under Congress regime could hardly defend its real wages.

During the last years the real wage of the workers working in manufacturing industries has actually declined. This is the most bizarre comment of Congress planning and reveals the severe limitations on our achievements placed by the laws of the Govt. and of the capitalist society.

Average annual earnings of workers employed in manufacturing industries of employees earning less than Rs. 400 per month.

	1961	1966	1968	1969	1970
Average Annual Earnings in Rs.	1540	2112	2449	2591	2655
Index of Money Earning	100	139	160	171	175
Index of Real Earning	100	95	94	101	98

The entire course of real wages of the working class since independence underlines the constant war of the employing class and its Govt. against the working class wage and the truth that under capitalism the worker cannot think of radically improving his conditions. The stark truth must be realised that in spite of the gains of some sections the real wage of the working class is only marginally above what it got under—under the hated rule of the Britsh; notwithstanding the shameless claim of the Indira Govt. and its apologists—the revisionists. There has been a continuous trend towards fall in real wages since 1955—the effect of capitalist planning. Remember 1951 real wage index 100 was equal to 92.2 based on 1939=100. The course of real wage index since 1955 has been as follows :

	(1951=100)
1955	123.7
1960	113.8
1961	115.5
1962	116.3
1964	104.1

The 1964 index came to 96 of the 1939 level.

If the 1970 and other indices are reduced to 1939 level, they will be found to be only three or four per cent above 1939 level. Such is the story of wage movement under Congress rule.

In this connection, we may note the following findings of a leading economic daily in relation to the Bombay textile worker who is supposed to be better paid: "Though the incomes of workers in the cotton mills of Bombay increased from Rs. 130 in 1961 to Rs. 255 in 1972 their real earnings at 1961 prices remained more or less static, at the 1961 level. The inference is clear. The bare needs of the workers are barely met and better standard of living for him remains a mirage."

It will be understood that while we were desperately fighting to hold on to what little we had the capitalist and the Govt. were straining every nerve to defraud us. The increase in money earnings was used by the bourgeois press, the Govt. and others to charge the workers with unsatiable and unrealisable demands. There was a constant propaganda barrage against us and some bourgeois theoreticians also started talking about the tyranny of the trade unions or describing the working class a privileged class. The reality was that to retain its miserable real wage of a decade back which differred very little from the pre-war wage of the British period, the working class had to undertake protracted strikes and face lathis and bullets.

Comrades, it is instructive to find how the reformist hangers on of the bourgeois—the AITUC leaders like Dange embellish the capitalist rule by advertising progress where none exists. When India's workers are hardly able to maintain their old real wage of British days, Dange in his report of the AITUC adevrtises that under the Congress rule the colonial wage structure has been indeologically smashed. He says in his report to the AITUC Session : "It was only after Independence that the whole framework of colonial cum-feudal wage was first ideologically smashed. It began to be replaced by the new humanist concepts and norms with the adoption

of the resolution of need-bsed wage. The new definitions were forced on the bourgeoisie in our country by the mass struggles which gathered new momentum in the Second Plan period." Only a confirmed class collaborator will advertise the passing of a mere resolution as an ideological smashing of colonial wage structure. And to do this when the wages were being forced down by the capitalists to the pre-war level one requires an uncommon love for the bourgeoisie.

Of late, the Prime Minister and her paid retinue, are vociferously raising the demand for linking wage increase with productivity and it has been solemnly enshrined in the Approach to the Fifth Plan. In the absence of provision for a stable need-based wage, the stability of prices, provision for full neutralisation of the rise in the cost of living and elimination of the fraudulent manipulation of the cost of living index, the demand is one for sweated slave labour and nothing else. We and other organisations have rejected it.

The reality is that what the working class has got for increased productivity is reduction in real wage, unemployment; the profits have been garnered by the capitalists, their State and Govt. and the parasitical bureaucratic and social structure they support.

The National Commission on Labour observed: "We find that production per worker has increased by about 62 per cent between 1952 and 1964:. It had to concede that the rise in real wages has not been commensurate with the improvements in productivity—a mere euphemism saying that workers were being forced to work more for low wages.

The same story continues in the last decade, Between 1961 and 1970, the index number of factory employment (base 1961=100) rose to 126.0 while the index number of production in manufacturing industry rose from 109.2 in 1961 to 177.2 in 1970-71. There was thus 28 per cent rise in productivity per worker while the index for real earnings dropped from 100 to 98.

Index number of employment in mining industry declined from 100 in 1960 to 95.1 in 1970; index of mineral production increased form 110 to 177 in the same period whereas real earnings increased by 15.9 per cent. With five per cent reduction in the number of workers, production has increased by 60 per cent.

More productivity means less employment and less wages to workers—this law of capitalist society is proved by the course of production and real wages since independence. The entire propa-

ganda that the working class is not producing more or that it is gaining without productive effort is just a lying propaganda.

Factories are maiming houses

The increased workload, extraction of more work to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the workers, has transformed the factories and mines into workers' maiming houses. The abnormal rise in accidents unprecedented perhaps in the history of any country exposes the hazard, to which a worker is exposed under the being rule of the Congress party.

Between 1951 and 1964, production per worker increased by 62 per cent and the rate of accidents and injuries has also increased by more than 60 per cent. It was 29.93 per thousand in 1951; it reached 47.12 per thousand in 1964.

The following figures tell their own tale:

Accident rate per thousand workers

1951—29.93 ; 1954—36.31 ; 1957—42.78 ;
1960—43.05 ; 1964—47.12.

Between 1961 and 1970 productivity per worker increased by 28 per cent and the accident rate increase by more than 50 per cent.

1961—45.67 ; 1964—47.12 ; 1967—48.13 ;
1968—55.93 ; 1969—63.48 ; 1970—70.11

The number of workers involved in accidents and injuries was nearly 76,000 in 1951 ; it rose to 145,000 in 1969 and the provisional figure for 1970 placed it at 238,000 a grand march of the injured and maimed.

The rates in certain States are still more alarming. In West Bengal, the rate was 108.65 in 1969 ; and 127.08 in 1970. Every one person in ten had to sacrifice his limb, impair his capacity or get other body injuries to satisfy the lust for increased productivity. Madhya Pradesh vies with W. Bengal and produces a rate of 115.5 in 1970.

It seems that W.Bengal officials, now face to face with the huge increase of accidents from 57,000 in 1966 to 118,000 in 1971, have started doctoring the figures. In 1972, the official figures now show a fall of 30,000 in accounts.

The colossal loss in mandays through these accidents is conceded by the ruling classes. According to reply given in Parliament on March 3,1973, the loss amounted to 28,95,000 mandays in 1970, which is one-seventh of the loss due to strikes and lockouts in that year.

If further this is not sufficient to shock the placid conscience of detractors of labour, the following from the Chief Inspector of Factories might do it. In Oct. last, he stated at the 22nd Annual Conference of Chief Insepectors of Factories : "Over all frequency rates of injuries have gone up by 25 per cent in 1971 over previous year." He further said that the total loss of mandays due to accidents surpassed that due to strikes and lockouts in 1971. The accidents caused a loss of 17 million while strikes and lockouts caused a loss of 13 million.

Such is the grim reality about the effect of productivity which also underlines the collapse of factory legislation, safety rules and inspection. The capitalist class in need of more production and exploitation in the midst of the crisis has no time to bother about safety rules, and workers' lives. Was Karl Marx not correct when he compared human progress under capitalism to "that Hindu pagan idol that would not drink nectar but from the skulls of the slain."

Comrades,

The increased workload, the intensity of work, and the deterioration in wage conditions have caused deterioration in the health conditions of the working class. It is precisely at this time that the ESI scheme which was supposed to confer sickness and other benefits on the workers is failing or is being deliberately manipulated to deny the legal benefits to the workers. It seems that the capitalist class, not satisfied with the open robbery through reduced wages and increase in workload is resorting to underhand pilfering of workers' benefits. The mounting arrears of Provident Fund which now amount to Rs. 22 crores due to failure of the employers have already become a scandal.

Save the Peasantry

This is a year of widespread famine for our peasant masses, for our agricultural workers and peasants. The condition is so serious that hundreds may fall victims to starvation and death if a cruel and callous Govt. is not forced to change its ways. Millions in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal today are facing utter starvation and death. A bankrupt and callous Govt. plays with their lives by refusing to accept the affected areas as famine areas.

These hungry masses of peasantry are in certain places—Ahmednagar Dist. of Maharashtra are forced to undergo vasectomy operations before they could claim relief. Can monstrosity go

further ?

The relief works constitute a scandal and the relief wage is also not regularly paid. With the arrival of the monsoon the Congress Govt. intends to close the relief works and compel the peasant to shift for himself. That is the real danger, the time when hundreds might die unnoticed because the people will be made to believe that the famine is over.

The destitute peasant, with his cattle dead and gone, will neither be able to undertake agricultural operations nor maintain himself during these days.

The working class and the CITU must raise their voice in defence of the agricultural worker and peasants and compel the Govt. to see that they are not deprived of relief and literally thrown to the wolves.

The working class has yet to make its contribution for the defence and relief of the peasantry. Though some sections have contributed liberally for financial relief, still we cannot say that we have discharged our duty. Much less can we say that we have brought our full strength to bear on the Govt. and compel it to provide adequate relief to the peasantry.

Failure in this respect will be an act of callousness, of political suicide and betrayal. All talk of socialism and democracy in the mouth of trade unionists must end if they cannot defend the peasant mass, the ally in the struggle for democracy and socialsim.

Shall we not raise our righteous protest against the supply of American milo liberally mixed with Dhatura poisonous seeds, to our famine-stricken brethern ; of milk powder unfit for human consumption to the children of these suffering people ; of gram mixed with iron pieces to our people?

Prices, Taxation and Wages

Comrades,

One of the persistent propaganda of the Govt. and its agencies is that the workers' wages are more responsible than anything for the rise in prices of commodities. We have repeatedly replied to this showing how wages belatedly follow prices and how the real wage of the workers' lags behind the cost of living index.

We have also laid bare how official deficit financing is responsible for rising prices. Our workers however do not yet realise that the high commodity taxation of the Government is also responsible for continuously pushing up the prices. Official propaganda against

workers' wages is intended to conceal the responsibility of the Government and pit the consumer against the worker.

The following figures show how the Government garners huge sums through excise and other duties, sums which often exceed many times the total wage-bill in the industry. It shows how these duties add substantially to the prices while the workers' wages form only a small part of the value of the product.

Wages and Excise Duty in relation to the value of output in certain industries (Rs. in crores)

Industry	Estimated value of production in 1972	Estimated money earnings of workers 1972	Excise Duty revised estimate 1972-73 budget	Column 3 as % of Col. 2	Column 4 as % of Col. 2
1	2	3	4	5	6
Sugar	480.36	21.37	177.40	4.4	36.9
Cement	213.57	9.45	56.00	4.4	21.5
Iron & Steel	1096.26	119.05	158.90	10.9	14.5
Cigar & Cigarettes	324.82	10.23	152.00	3.1	49.9
All Textiles	2299.16	394.38	319.43	13.2	13.9
Non-Ferrous Metals	216.39	18.26	61.18	8.4	28.3

While workers' wage constitutes only a small percentage of the value of the product, contribution of Government's taxation to the price of the commodity is 36.9 per cent in sugar, 21.5 per cent in cement, 49.9 per cent in cigar and cigarettes and so on.

Unemployment

The full effects of Congress-sponsored capitalist path are being felt by lakhs of workers through the mounting unemployment. The rapid strides with which it is overwhelming the industrial workers and educated classes can be easily seen through the official figures released by Employment Exchanges. The staggering scale of rural

unemployment which is estimated to be nearer 30 million is reducing the rural areas to a vast ocean of destitution.

In 1961, the number of registered unemployed was 18 lakhs ; in 1966 when the recession was starting it was 26 lakhs, a rise of 45 per cent in five years. By 1969, it was 34 lakhs, a rise of 30 per cent in three years. In 1970, it was 40 lakhs, a rise of 17 per cent in a year. By November, 1971, it was 50 lakhs, a rise of 25 per cent in a year ; by June 1972, it had reached nearly 57 lakhs and now exceeds 68 lakhs.

The number of educated unemployed has risen from 20.53 lakhs to 26.12 lakhs between June 1971 and June 1972; according to the latest Economic Survey in the same period it has risen by 39.1 per cent, in West Bengal the actual figure being 4.48 lakhs. The number of unemployed engineers was according to other estimates 49000 in December 1972 and ITI trained craftsman 112000 in July 1972.

The number of unemployed educated women increased from 54,000 to 103,000 between 1960 and 1964; and to 194,000 by 1968.

Such are the staggering facts of the last decade. West Bengal and Kerala are the worst victims of this development. By 1970, the former had 45,000 unemployed educated women. Twenty per cent of India's registered unemployed were from West Bengal in 1971.

It is estimated that there are a million unemployed in the State of Kerala. By the end of the Fourth Plan, the number of unemployed doctors may exceed 900 and of graduates 5,000 in that state.

These bare figures do not really reveal the full tale of misery imposed on the working class and the educated section. They denote not only absence of new jobs but forcible deprivation of existing jobs throwing thousands on the street.

Situation in Industrial Centres

The workers in the industry are facing intense hardships. Thousands of beedi workers from Cannanore District and thousands of cashew factory workers from Quilon District have been thrown out of work. The plight of Kerala's Coir Workers, handloom workers all over India is well-known. There have been closures of industries started under the Rural Industries Projects also.

Similar has been the situation in all industrial centres with closures, retrenchment, lockouts, a mass offensive against the employment and livelihood of the workers. Never before had the

working class of India to face such a sweeping offensive against its jobs ; never before do the working class youth entering the labour market face such bleak prospects.

In this attack of mass unemployment it is the sons of the workers and poorer classes that suffer most, even if they have requisite qualifications.

Mr. Bhagwati, Chairman of the Expert Committee on Unemployment recently stated that the number of engineer job seekers was 73,000 at the end of December 1972. Nearly two-fifths of the applicants were from families whose income was less than Rs. 100 per month. About 30 per cent came from families with income between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200 per month.

Not A Passing Phenomenon

The working class and the trade union movement have to realise that present unemployment is not a passing phenomenon, that the situation will continue to deteriorate rapidly so long as the Congress rule continues.

It is not accidental that every Five Year Plan of the Congress Govt. has led to increased unemployment. The backlog of unemployment was 5.3 million at the end of First Plan, it was estimated to be 12.6 million (an underestimate) by 1969. The total urban and rural unemployment is estimated to be 4 crores.

The tortuous rate of the progress imposed by the capitalist path, the failure to achieve the miserable objectives, and the consequent slow expansion of employment opportunities condemns the workers, middle classes and rural masses to increasing unemployment.

What chance has employment to increase when the growth of employment in public sector is three per cent per year and in the private sector only 1/3 per cent as has been the case in recent times; what chance have the workers got when total employment in certain sectors absolutely declines because of capitalist crisis?

The much advertised Fifth Plan Approach with its play with huge sums not only is not going to alleviate the situation; it is going to aggravate it. They themselves promise that there will be more unemployment in organised industries at the end of the Fifth Plan when they admit "wage-employment likely to be generated in the Fifth Plan period shows that the total will fall short of the estimated increase in the labour force.

Their proposals to spend big sums for rural unemployment for

giving jobs to the educated unemployed are just palliatives to raise hopes, to give some miserly relief, they only mock at the problem.

Government Attacks Jobs

While The Government advertises its unemployment measures it, at the same time finances the textile and jute capitalist to displace labour, retrench old hands in the name of modernisation. The employment potential of certain industries is being reduced by the deliberate introduction of new automatic machinery.

Already there are 180 computers in use; seventy six of these are used by the private sector and as many as 61 by Govt. agencies.

In the third week of November last, Smt. Indira Gandhi approvingly stated in the Rajya Sabha that the Electronics Corporation of India had formulated a programme with the object of making the country "self-sufficient" in computers. This self-sufficiency means, according to the Director of Information analysis group of Electronics Commission, that the country must produce in the next five years 1300 computers, at an annual average demand of about 260 systems. Has middle class employment any chance before this planned onslaught of the computers?

The workers and employees alike must face this menace unitedly. The latter who have hitherto kept themselves away from the main trade union current must see the folly of this policy, realise the grim danger from the automation drive and join hands with the workers to defeat it.

Capitalism Creates Unemployment.

Why is this happening ? Capitalism cannot exist without continually creating unemployment. That is why we find unemployment in advanced countries like the U.S.A., England, Japan. The profits of the monopolists increase when more capital or bigger means of production are set in motion by a smaller number of workers. In India, productive capital employed per workers was Rs. 2645 in 1946 ; Rs. 5424 in 1955; by 1964, Rs. 16,214 were required to keep one worker engaged.

That is one of the reasons why unemployment grows despite increased production. That is why the Indian worker canot escape the curse of unemployment under the present rule. Here besides the misery becomes multiplied because capitalist methods are superimposed on antiquated land relations which deny land to the tiller, which keep the peasantry poverty stricken. With the workers and peasants poverty-stricken, the market for industrial goods

becomes narrow and it further hampers industrial development. At present, industrial goods in India are mostly consumed by a thin narrow upper crust of the population.

This is inevitable under capitalist-landlord rule because the means of production are owned by these classes and their profits can be secured only by more and more exploiting the people. That is why no capitalist country is free from unemployment.

Socialism Ends Unemployment

It is also seen that only in the Socialist countries where political power is in the hands of a proletarian state where the means of production no longer constitute the private property if individuals belonging to a small class, but are socially owned and controlled, where the means of distribution also are socialy owned and controlled and where the objective of production is not individual profit but satisfaction of the needs of society, unemployment has been banished and the right to work has been fully inscribed in the Constitution. In India, the right to work is described as only one of the directive principles of the Constitution, but not juridically enforced. It is thus just a hoax. But in the Socialist countries, it is an enforceable right and the State binds itself to provide employment to all able-bodied people.

The amazing progress made by the Soviet Union immediately after the Revolution, and the successes it scored in socialist planning leading to the abolition of unemployment and exploitation are known to all. The remarkable achievements of People's Republic of China stand out as another historic success of the Socialist System on the soil of Asia. The conditions under which the People's Republic of China was founded were perhaps more backward than those obtaining in India. Backlog of unemployment was perhaps more serious in China than in India. The problems facing the leadership of the People's Republic of China were at least as stupendous as those facing India, yet, the achievements of the two countries stand out in sharp contrast to each other. Even the worst critics of China have to admit that she has gone a long way towards solving her basic problems and is today in a position to provide work and decent livelihood for every one while in India the problem of unemployment, destitution and impoverishment becomes accentuated every day.

The working class must fully realise that to escape unemployment and poverty it has to wage a battle for replacing the present

rule by a democratic regime of the people led by the working class for abolishing the capitalist-landlord system and establishing Socialism.

This is the socialism of the working class, of the toilers as distinguished from the Socialism of the Congress Party which protects the landlords and the monopolists.

Fight for Unemployment Relief

While working for this final consummation, the trade union movement must wage a fight for security of jobs, here and now, for providing work for the unemployed and pending that full unemployment relief. The trade union movement must unitedly demand that the right to work be accepted as a fundamental right in the Constitution.

It must at the same time fight all attempts to set the unemployed against employed, and forge unity between the two. The ruling class unable to offer any relief, sets workers of one linguistic region against another, in the name of jobs for the sons of the soil. Against this offensive the trade union movement must combine the struggle of the two sections, to secure the demands of the unemployed.

Ideological offensive

Comrades,

The ruling classes and their party have while launching repression against the workers opened a new ideological offensive to breadown the resistance of the organised class—the working class—which is valiantly fighting the social battle against poverty.

The essence of this offensive is to present the working class as a privileged class, as a class not suffering from poverty, by drawing compaison between what the working class earns and what the pauperised peasantry or agricultural worker earns. The utterly destitute condition of the rural masses, of the agricultural workers, is a fact and the biggest condemnation of the Congress Government policies. But the destitution of the rural masses does not make the working class a favoured class, does not push it above the poverty line.

At best, it makes it less destitue and less poor than the mass of rural workers.

All this interested propaganda is to conceal the real criminals—keep from the view the real privileged classes—the capitalists and landlords. It is obvious that the condition of the rural mass

can be immediately improved by taking away the land of the landlords and distributing it gratis to the agricultural workers and poor peasants. It is not the working class that is monopolising this land.

Not wanting to attack the landlords and capitalists and monopolists, the Government, the planners and their agents seek to pit the two oppressed sections of workers and peasants, against each other so that both can be kept in enslavement. Along with the working class the middle class also is to be attacked in the name of providing relief to the lowest 30 per cent. By drawing an arbitrary proverty line the planners plan to attack the working class and the middle classes under the pretext of serving the lowest strata.

The deliberate attempt to pit two sections of exploited, to mix one with the exploiters is the usual trick of capitalist government, espacially those taking the path towards one-party dictatorship. In this, they are aided by their sycophantic theoreticions who are prepared to do violence to economic science by lumping together the big monopolist and his sweated employees. Listen to the following outpouring of one of these gentries: "The entire industrial production gets geared to the growing incomes and needs of this sector. This is what the organised sector today is. It consists of the entrepreneurs, the owners of capital, the managerial class and the organised workers ably led by their unions." (It is not known whether the landlords are included under enterpreneurs, managerial class, owners of capital or organised workers). "Together they constitute only 10 per cent of the labour force. But they have monopolised the entire economic apparatus and are using it mercilessly to their own selfish ends. (The workers also). The facade is provided by 'socialist planning'. The drama enacted is one of class conflict, and the march of industrial workers on the socialist path. The fact is that a small organised sector, aided and abetted by the politician, is busy feathering its little nest to exclusion of all unorganised masses."

This is the language of emerging fascist outlook. It is the usual trick to do away with all distinctions between the exploited and the exploiters, to talk of sectors. Its advocates pretend to fight for the unorganised masses, but in reality they are the servitors of the landlords and the monopolists. They don radical clothes to criticise the Congress but act as its fifth column. We are reminded that the Nazis came to power thundering against capitalists but waging

war against the organised trade union movement.

Comrades, we have our won programme for emancipating the lowest strata, the entire down-trodden of Indian society. We stand for a thoroughgoing agrarian revolution, for taking away all land of the landlords and distributing it gratis to the poorer sections in the villages, the agricultural workers, tribals, untouchables, poor peasants. We demand immediate nationalisation of foreign monopoly concerns. We demand nationalisation of all monopoly concerns owned by Indian capitalists. And we work for ending this accursed capitalist-landlord rule and replacing it by democratic regime led by the working class, opening the road to Socialism. We know where the blow is to be struck.

The ruling classes have been spreading this outlook for some time. Now their Fifth Plan is based on this approach. The working class must take note of this offensive and fight it.

Under the Congress rule, the unity of the country is fast disintergrating. In fact, the bourgeois-landlord classes encourage fissiparous tendencies—Andhra—Assam—to be able to maintain their rule. It is the duty of our movement to protect our class unity, and the unity of our people. Let every worker know that disintegration of nation's unity means invitation to American imperialists to intervene in our country and enslave us.

Comrades, Before I conclude, let me draw your attention to the fact that this is the 125th anniversary of that mighty document, 'The Communist Manifesto' written by Marx and Engles. The resounding call of that document, "Proletarians of the World Unite, You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have the whole world to conquer" has been the mighty instrument of changing the world. But the pledge has been only partially fulfilled. Let us rededicate ourselves to the call for proletarian unity and pledge to bring about the triumph of Socialism over the whole world.

Presidential Address, 2nd Conference of CITU

20

Right To Work Must Be A Fundamental Right

The summary of the report of the expert committee on unemployment with all its limitations, and hesitations, emphasises this colossal character of unemployment in India, which the government, the Planning Commission and certain hired experts were trying to belittle. It will be remembered that according to the 1961 census the total unemployment in India was only 1.4 million, of whom 0.8 million were in the urban areas and 0.6 million in rural areas.

But now unemployment has reached such menacing proportions that certain members of the expert committee with all the will and desire to belittle it can no longer do so.

The working group on agriculture established by the Experts' Committee estimated that there will be a backlog of "more than 7.90 to 21.30 million" unemployed persons. The lower estimate is a purposeful attempt to belittle the magnitude of the problem and save embarrassment to the Government. However, the fact is that the Committee is compelled to mention the upper limit, otherwise it would have made a laughing stock of itself. The 21 million backlog—itself an underestimate—at the end of the Fourth Plan constitutes the grand achievement of all the four plans.

The Committee's figure of 2.6 million for urban unemployment in 1971 is a total underestimate. The live registers, which cover only 40 to 50 per cent of the urban unemployed have already reached the figure of 6 million in that year.

The backlog of unemployment was 5.3 million at the end of the

First Plan, 7.1 million at the end of the Second Plan; 9.6 million at the end of the third plan and 21 million at the end of the fourth plan. In reality today the figure of 21 million itself it an under estimate. Various estimates suggest that total urban and rural unemployment cannot be below 40 million.

What are the prospects? The Committee estimates that atleast 40 million jobs have to be provided for if every one is to have full work by the end of the fifth plan. It only means that every year of the fifth plan will go on adding huge numbers to the rank of the unemployed. The estimate of one economist that by 1980 the number of unemployed may reach 70 million does not seem to be far-fetched.

The Fifth plan offers no relief from the situation and the Committee raises false hopes when it expects relief from the organised sector. The capacity of this sector to employ workers per unit of capital has been on the decline. In 1946, productive capital employed per worker was Rs. 2,645; in 1964, it was Rs. 16, 274. Unless the rate of investment increases at a rate unimaginable for the Congress planning, the organised industries can offer very little relief. In fact, the Fifth Plan planners have already announced their bankruptcy in the following words: "Wage employment likely to be generated in the Fifth Plan period shows that the total will fall short of the estimated increased in the labour force."

What solution does the committee offer to the seven million urban unemployed—from the workers and middle classes—to the more than 30 million rural unemployed who are condemned to destitution? The majority only repeats the usual claptrap of the Congress party, dangles grandiose schemes of irrigation, road construction, advancement of backward areas, crash programmes and so on. All these in the past have proved to be cruel jokes offering at best miserly relief to some small sections.

What is the committee's remedy to ease the unemployment among the educated? Its understanding about this problems is profound indeed when it says, "A major feature has been the ever growing rush to higher education." It follows, therefore, that to remove this major cause, it is necessary to restrict higher education instead of expanding it. In India in 1968, there were only two students in higher educational institutions per 1,000 population. And yet that is supposed to be a rush and higher educational explosion. Even Pakistan has more students—three per 1,000 of the population in these institutions while the UAR had 6. And yet the

committee makes recommendations which are bound to lead to curtailment and restriction of the higher education. It may be mentioned that those who prepared the Approach Document also suggest this reactionary and detestable remedy. The majority of the Committee seem to have no independent judgment. They seem to be determinded to follow the official line and remedies.

CITU Memorandum

The CITU's memorandum to the committee correctly stated :

"Any proposal to restrict entry to universities and institutions of higher learning or higher institutes and colleges like IIT's Engineering Colleges, Medical Colleges, etc. or pre-university classes, must be deemed to be a throughtly reactionary class measure, discriminating against the poorer classes. In practice, this will means that entry will be reserved for those coming from families from higher classes and ways will always be found to keep out merited students coming from the poorer sections. Instances are not lacking today where worthy students of very poor families are not admitted to the university classes to make room for sons and relations of ministers. In fact, students had to conduct a prolonged strike in one of the Maharashtra universities precisely to fight against the favouritism shown towards the son of a minister."

With the partisan and biased out-look is it any wonder that the majority rejects the basic and vital demand for unemployment relief at the expense of the State and the employers—a demdand which a number of a capitalist states have been forced to accept at least partially under the pressure of the working class movement? Can any civilised Government deny the citizens the right to work, its juridical enforcement or in the alternative the right to full relief? The real mask of the garibi hataowallas is off. They will talk about everything in the world, will make detailed calculations about employment likely to be created, when Ganges is made to join Cauvery, about other grandiose projects, but will refuse to grant relief here and now to the millions of the rural and urban unemployed, nor accept their right to live through right to work. Constitutional proclamations and fundamental rights, and directive principles are just treated as decorations, coloured toys to cheat the people. They are never to be implemented.

The coming years offer grim trials for the working class, the rural masses, the educated middle classes. Unemployment will widen its net and embrace many more millions. The advertised

Congress schemes will not touch the majority nor the basis of the problem. The basic cause is the capitalist planning of the government and the economy reared to support the capitalists and landlords. This planning which relies on foreign monopolists, on Indian monopolists and landlords inevitably adds to the unemployment and misery of the people. It is because of this that the simple remedy of providing full work to millions in the countryside by distributing landlords' land to them is not undertaken. It is because of this that the government, the big capitalists are embraking upon automation, meachanisation and other labour saving devices to increase their loot by reducing the strength of employed labour. It is because of this that the country must accept a pitiful rate of growth which only exacerbates the situation.

The interests of all sections demand abolition of this capitalist landlord system. The experience of the world shows that only Socialism, destroying all roots of capitalism and landlordism is in a position to solve the problem of unemployment and poverty.

All sections of the employed must unite to work for this goal. They must foil the efforts of the government to pit the unemployed against the employed. for right to work to be inscribed in the Constitution and full employment wage to all urban and rural unemployed, wage to all educated unemployed at the cost of the Government.

The trade union movement and the movement of the rural masses and employees must combine to wrest this basic right from the government.

—The Working Class, Vol.II, No. 10, June 1973

21

Tasks Before The Convention Of Central & State Government Employees

The UCTU at its meeting on the 15th June in New Delhi Considered the situation following the outrageous recommendations of the Third Pay Commission and decided to call a convention of all Central Government employees, together with the State Government employees, in New Delhi on 25 and 26 July next.

The recommendations of the Pay Commission have drawn universal protests. The chicanery involved in the arguments of these mountebanks who constituted the Pay Commission ; their arguments regarding diet requirements and denial of need-based wage; the denial of bonus; the minimum basic wage they have proposed; the atrocious D.A. formula which offers 100 per cent guarantee for a rapid erosion of the employees' wages and their systematic attempts to nibble at every benefit and emolument including such items as housing allowances have been thoroughly and ably exposed by several employees' organisations.

A vegetarian diet when the main deficiency in Indian diet which is one of the poorest in the world is lack of animal proteins; a young man entering the Government service is a laboratory baby without father, mother, brother or sister—these are some of the assumptions to fortify the outrageous minimum wage recommended by it.

The entire effort spread over a number of years now amounts to a recommendation of a paltry increase of Rs. 10 to 15 with guaranted fall in real wage through the cheating DA formula.

The Garibi Hatao Government will no doubt endorse these recommendations or may even modify them to the disadvantage of the workers. It is not ashamed that as an employer it offers the lowest wage in the country to its employees, whether in the Railways, Post and Telegraph Department or elsewhere. The Commission quotes figures which reveal the monstrous disparity in wages. According to it, a peon in the Central Government service had total minimum earnings of Rs. 170 on 1st January 1972; his counterpart in Nationalised 'A' Banks drew Rs. 227; in the Reserve Bank of India, Rs. 265; Engineering company Rs. 217 and so on.

Equally glaring is the disparity in relation to the industrial workers in the railways and other establishments.

But perhaps the Government thinks that this wretched Pay Commission is too radical. There are rumours that the bureaucrats are thinking of diverting the miserable increase of Rs. 10 to the provident Fund of the employees with an attractive rate of interest and are opposed to any increase in cash payments.

The Pay Commission's recommendations constitute an open offensive against the employees, their right to defend their wages and earnings, their right to have need-based wages—at least a wage comparable to that enjoyed by workers in organised industries.

It is the responsibility of the entire trade union movement to defend the interests of the Central and State Government employees and lend them a helping hand in their struggle. The offensive against the Central employees, against the railway, and P. & T. employees, against Defence and other employees is part of the wage-freeze offensive which the Government intending to lodge against the entire working class. In fact, the Pay Commission has officially recommended steps against rise in wages in other sections.

United Movement

The UCTU, therefore, is discharging its responsibility as an organ of united trade union movement in calling this convention. The two wings of the workers' movement—the trade unions and employees' organisations can no longer advance their interests by remaining aloof from each other and playing the role of passive spectators when the other is under attack. The UCTU has invited all Central Trade Union organisations, all Federations, all Central and State employees' organisations to participate in the convention.

The convention is not to be invested with narrow partisan aims but must become the forum of unity of Central employees and a forum for declaration of united support of the entire trade union movement for the cause of the employees.

The call for such a convention overriding organisational affiliation, and calling for united trade union support should have come from within the employees' organisation. But the Government and its agents have created sufficient disorganisation to prevent this. The boldness with which the Government is moving, the scant respect it pays to the protests of the employees are based on its confidence that its agents will continue to disrupt common action, sow confusion and bamboozle the workers. It has been preparing for the last couple of years and now feels confident that the blow can be struck.

The Govt. has been using its authority to recognise and derecognise unions arbitrarily so as to promote docile agents as leaders of the organisatios. It has recently engineered a split in a P & T organisation, which operated during the strike of 1960 and which it was favouring all these years. Those who have indulged in strike-breaking, like some railway workers' leaders have been awarded Padma Bhushan. It is doing everything to use the prestinge of recognised unions to disrupt the unity of the employees.

It is criminal to allow this game to succeed. The central employees are realising this and are girding their loins to meet the situation. The discontent among the railway workers has forced both the railway workers' fedrations to seek strike ballot. One of the federations has also announced its strike date. But needless to say, the AIRF leadership all these months has undertaken no serious preparation to implement its decision. It refused to support the just demands of the LRSA workers in May and the consequent action they undertook.

Emboldened by this sabotage the Govt. of India struck again and illegalised all railway strikes for six months under the DIR. And it is today arresting a number of Loco Running Staff workers for the crime of observing safety rules and working accord to rules prescribed by the administration.

It is this situation that is preventing the full mobilisation of all central employees. All sections of workers are angry, are eager to unite and find a way out. The stakes are high. They mean a miserabel life for another decade, with no relief whatever. If the

AIRF or any other section of leaders had taken the lead, lakhs would have come together in a common fighting front.

The UCTU leaders have recognised the situation and seek to help the employees by calling the convention. This initiative is essential to unleash the unity and fighting spirit of all sections of employees.

The CITU appeals to all unions and associations, to all Federations, the P & T., the Railway, the Defence and others, to all confederations, to all officials and members of the unions to rally together in the convention and express their firm determination to stand together against the Pay Commission's recommendation must over come the hesitations of vacillating leaders and neutralise and defeat the disruptors.

The CITU appeals to all central trade union organisations to make this convention a success. Let it be the biggest demonstration of working class solidarity and unity for the cause of the central employees who are fighting the common battle against the wage freeze.

—The Working Class, Vol. II, No. 11, July 1973

22

A Great And Victorious Strike

The successful end to the strike of the loco workers led by the All India Loco Running Staff Association constitutes an outstanding achievement of the railway workers' movement. Perhaps never since Independence did the railway workers achieve such direct and outright success as a result of struggle. The unity of the workers, the organisational skill of the loco leaders, the determination of the workers not to yield before the repressive measures of the Government resulted in an inspiring victory for them.

The workers fought for very just and minimum demands. They demanded eight hours' work a day instead of the 14 hours imposed on them by the bureaucratic reactionary Board.

They demanded recognition for their organisation and also put forward other demands of immediate importance and interest of the workers.

Compelled to resort to direct action for saving themselves from sweated labour, for the right to organise, the workers acted with unprecedented unity and militancy which overtook the administration and the government by surprise. The rail system was more or less paralysed on all railways except the Central and certain sections of some other railways. The railway Moghuls soon woke up to the situtation. They and the Railways Minister had to yield before unity and soliderity of the workers. Negotiations were opened. The government agreed to reduce the hours of work from 14 to 10 which meant a big victory for the workers. It agreed to withdraw all victimisation measures, release all those arrested under the DIR. It agreed to open talks with the representatives of

the Loco Running Staff Association for settling the remaining demands.

But the Government did not yield before launching repressive measures, uttering threats and ultimatums and circulating lies and slanders against the workers to prejudice their case before the public.

Some busybodies, some reformist and revisionist leaders, while formally supporting the strike created confusion by acting as the messenger boys of the Minister. Instead of calling upon the workers to remian firm, they certified the sincerity of the minister and suggested that the strike be called off unconditionally leaving all the demands for talks after the strike. A number of Right C.P. MPs with their publicity—? hunting statments and desire to appear as the leaders of the strike played this role which would have undermined the morale of the strikers had the leadership not been firm and united.

The leaders of the AIRF and the NFIR who always act as the agents of the railways board did their best to prevent negotiations and opposed a settlement on the basis of eight hours day. They were fully backed by the bureaucrats of the Railway Board who even during the strike refused to shed the illusion that the AIRF and the NFIR alone represented the workers.

Scandalised

But exactly the opposite happened. The entire nation felt scandalised by the fact that the workers were made to work for fourteen hours. The people supported their cause. All opposition parties joined hands in the Parliament to demand justice for the workers. The CITU and other central trade unions, the organisations of Central employees and all democratic forces attacked the government for its reactionary and repressive polices. Even the press was critical of the dishonest policies pursued by the Rly. Board, especially its policy of dealing only with organisations recognised by it.

The isolation of the Railway Board and the Railway ministry was complete.

The firmness of the workers and their leaders combined with the widespread popular support gave them a tremendous and deserving victory. The popular support seemed to have its impact on the inner circles of the government; otherwise the Labour Minister

and his department would not have played an active role in settling the dispute.

They were able to secure this historic victory because in the first place, they broke away from the treacherous group of the reformist leadership of the AIRF. Time and again, the reformist leaders betrayed the locomen at the bidding of their masters. The exclusive and arbitrary recognition granted to the AIRF was a device of the Board to keep the workers under the reformist grip. But the loco workers saw through it and formed a separate organisation free from the agents of the Railway Board. They nursed it; they built unity at grassroots level. They took collective decisions and pushed them through with one mind. The leaders evaded arrests and continued to build and strengthen unity during the strike. They built an apparatus which could communicate all over India within a few hours. It is this organisation skill combined with popular support that earned them their victory.

The locomen's strike has unmasked the criminal role of the Railway Board which must be branded for involving the country in a strike in the midst of a serious economic situation and imposing a loss of crores of rupees on the country's finances. Its labour policy, its policy of recognition stands out as a policy of deceipt, of nursing yesmen and favourites and not of collective bargaining with the real representatives of the employees. It is this anit-working class policy that has been rsponsible for the wide discontent among the railway workers and a series of lightning strikes. The country cannot afford to have this reactionary agency at the head of the railway communications system. The sooner these medieval fat—? salaried autocrats are made to retire, the better.

Provocation

The loco workers and the public must also realise that the railway officials are doing their best to sabotage the settlement and give provocations to workers. Every provocation is being offered to push the workers to desperation. Let the people be warned against it.

The Locomen must consolidate the fruits of their victory. The mighty enthusiasm generated by the victorious strike, the solidarity and consciousness created by it and the bond of common suffering must be utilised to build an impregnable organisation embracing thousands and spread over all railways. The weaker

sections must be sought out and organised.

Besides they should not regard their victory as their exclusive achievement. It has galvanised all sections of railway workers. It is the duty of locomen to develop solid ties of unity with other sections, help them build unity and struggle for common demands. The victory enjoins on the loco assiciations to act as the leading force of all railwaymen. Let them rise to their new responsibility.

—The Working Class, Vol. II, No. !, September 1973

23

Prevent Sabotage of Railway Agreement

THE STRIKE OF CALCUTTA PORT STEVEDORE LABOUR for higher bonus in September was an occasion for Government spokesmen to arraign the dock labourers for holding up foodships in the midst of food shortage. The shippers and exporters rolled out figures to show that the unpatriotic labourers were holding back exports worth Rs. 50 crores depriving the country of the much needed foreign exchange. All these accusations were made because the dockers demanded a 20% bonus instead of the minimum 8.33%

But the real culprit and criminal was soon exposed by the President and General Secretary of the Forward Seamen's Union. They charged that the Chairman of the Dock Labour Board prevented the shipping companies from paying a higher bonus, though the former were willing in view of the enormous profits made by them through constant increase in freights.

This charge against Dock Labour Board Chairman was substantiated by the Master Stevedores' Association. The statement said, "The stevedores were formally and informally advised by the authorities concerned not to pay anything more than 8.33% bonus in any circumstances" as such a step would have "very serious repercussions in all other parts in the country." It is quite clear that the strike was being prolonged not because the stevedores could not meet the just demand of the workers but because the Dock Labour Board Chairman was sabotaging all settlement by using

offical pressure to deny the workers their dues. It is the Government, its policy and officials that sabotage our economy to pursue their anti-working class policy.

This danger is now intensifed on the railways. The Railway Board and its officers are bent on blowing up the agreement between the Ministry and the All India Loco Running Staff Association reached last month. They have succeeded in sabotaging the negotiation talks which were held in Madras on 9.9.1973. On that day the leaders of the AILRSA met Railways Deputy Minister Quareshi only to be told that the talks were postponed as a protest demonstration was being organised by an affiliate of the AIRF whose leaders are the favourites of the Railway Board. They, it will be known, had opposed any negotiations with the AILRSA; they had betrayed the loco workers in the past.

The D. M. K. Government promptly declared it a law and order question and asked the Deputy Minister and AILRSA to abandon the meeting. When Chief Minister Karunanidhi was questioned, he disclaimed all responsibility and passed it on to his Chief Secretary.

The local Railway Administration extended full facilities to the AIRF Union to organise the so-called protest. By their circular dated 4.9.1973, they encouraged all staff to apply for leave and take passes so as to be present at the General Manager's Office on 10.9.1973 to stage a demonstration against the Railway Minister and his Deputy who were to negotiate with the LRSA. The Railway Board was telling the Ministers that they could not carry their policy over the head of the anti-working class bureaucrats.

The Railway officials were taking one step after another to see that this meeting in Madras did not take place. They did their best to see that the LRSA leaders did not reach Madras. Shri P.K. Barua, Secretary General of LRSA, was not given Railway pass to cover his journey from Lumding to Madras. Shri S. K. Dhar, Joint Secretary General, was not issued pass in time. Shri R.P. Sharma, Zonal Secretary, Northern Railway, was issued pass but was not granted leave to proceed to Madras. Shri D. N. Paul of Bareilly—North Eastern Railway, was not provided with passes and not granted leave. Shri H. S. Chowdhury, another member of the negotiating team, was not even intimated about the meeting in time.

Not For Shunters

If this was the treatment meted out to the General Secretary and others, the President, Ratna Sabhapathy, was also not spared. He was informed of the meeting and told that his absence from work will be treated as special casual leave. But he was not given passes for travel by first class. The Railway Minister may deal with Sabhapathy as the President of the LRSA but not the Divisional Superintendent. For him, he is only a "shunter" in the railway. How can he be given a first class pass? This is a garibi hatao, socialist Government. Better travel facilites are reserved only for Peter Alvares, Maniben Kara and other favourites of the Board. Not for shunters.

The Railways Administration from the Board downwards is stuffed with such anti-labour rotten officials whose filthy stench one can smell from a distance of miles.

Apart from this, there is the usual story of broken promises, the local bureaucrats refusing to carry out the assurances, given by the Minister.

The promise to withdraw all cases and persecutions remains unfulfilled and a large number of workers, though released on bail and allowed to resume duty, continue to be under the threat of prosecution. The victimisation orders vindictively passed by the authorities are not yet withdrawn. Those whose services have been terminated as part of the victimisation drive have not been reinstated. In some cases the services of the son have been terminated because his father participated in the strike. The bar against promotion, which was arbitrarily imposed against a large number of workers has not been withdrawn. Those who did not participate in the strike are being favoured and promoted. This special favour for strike-breakers is the most despicable move of the garibi hatao government. It makes an end of all trade union movement by encouraging selfishness and treachery towards fellow workers. This is where the situation regarding the Loco workers stands. If it goes on like this there is bound to be a burst-up in a few days.

The question is who rules the Railway? The boastful L. N. Mishra—has he got the guts to call railway officials to order and see that the settlement is seen through ? Will the Labour Minister and the Congress Government at the centre intervene before the Railway Board Junta plunges the country into another strike? The Congress Party often talks of a committed bureaucracy. Will it see

that railway officials not committed to the settlement are given the sack? It is the duty of the Central Trade Union organisations to make a common front to defend the loco workers. Some of the members of the Socialist Party head the AIRF. Will the socialist Party leaders intervence to see that their followers do not play the game of the Railway Board.

All democratic parties, all Central Trade Union organisations must join in suport of the loco workers and rouse the people to foil the game of the Railway Moghuls.

—The Working Class, Vol. III, No. 2, October 1973

24

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting, 3-5 October '73, New Delhi

Comrades,

We are meeting nearly six months after our Session in Ernakulam. These months have been full of rapid developments affecting our country, our movement here and the international movement abroad.

Before I describe them let us all remember our heroic comrades who fell victims to goonda daggers and police firing in the last six months. The toll of martyrs at the hands of Congress gangsters continues in West Bengal, Comrades were murdered in Durgapur. On behalf of all of you let me offer my greetings to our esteemed Comrade Chintan who though grievously wounded foiled the game of hired gangsters to murder him. Comrades, hundreds of our workers in West Bengal are facing gangster attacks daily. In the mining area of Raniganj and elsewhere their houses are raided, their wives and children beaten but they continue to uphold the red banner. Hundreds all over the country are arrested and thrown in jails during strikes. Hundreds are lathi-charged by the CRP and wounded. Many fell victims to police firing. Our organisation will be nothing but for the revolutionary courage of most of our workers.

Hundreds of our comrades and other democrats are languishing in the jails of West Bengal, maltreated, ill-fed-victims of the class vengence of oppressors who rule this land. We must assure them of our support and continue to agitate for their immediate release.

Comrades we must all stand in reverance to the memory of Dr.

Allende, who refused to surrender to the enemies of the working class, the ememies of the people of Chile, The murder of this fighting leader of Chile will go down in history as one of the most abominable deeds perpetrated by the fascist ememies of mankind.

Comrades, we mourn the death of another great son of Chile a fighter in the cause of the international working class, a great anti-fascist—Pablo Neruda, son of a railway worker, though he rose to eminence in different circumstances, he could never forget his class, his people. He joined the mainstream of the working class movement, became an active Communist and leader of the Chilean Communist Party. Relentlessly his voice struck at the fascists and imperialists, his muse remained faithful to the cause of the International proletariat.

We express our solidarity with the working class and people of Chile in the struggle against the military junta. We join our voice with others in denouncing the executions, the brutal massacre of workers, Communists, Socialists, democrats and progressives in Chile and nail down American imperialism and the CIA as the main instigators of this crime. We send our greetings to the fighting Communists and Socialists who are bearing the brunt of repression and leading the struggle.

Comrades, we should send our faraternal greetings to the working class and people of Peoples' China on the occasion of the anniversary of their great revolution. We hail their remarkable progress and wish them victories in the task of socialist construction.

Friendship with Pakistan

In our Ernakulam Conferencee we demanded a quick settlemet of the question of repatriation of prisoners of war and civilians in Pakistan and Bangladesh. We all must welcome the fact that things have started moving, prisoners are being repatriated and a certain relaxation of the situation and tension is evident. We stand for the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations among the three countries of the sub-continent in the common interest of the democratic and socialist movements of the three peoples. We express our joy that the prisoners will soon be united with their families.

Notwithstanding the evidence of relaxation, we cannot but take note of the forces arrayed against friendship and settlement. Whatever outward appearance the American imperialists are

putting up, they are busy laying the basis for future tension and discord to regain the lost initiative. One of their aims in greverishly arming Iran is to assure the reactionary military circles in Pakistan that their services will be available when necessary. These circles are opposed to the democratic people of Pakistan, their aspirations and are only hiding their time.

In India there are the reactionary parties like Jana Sangh and others who are on the lookout to discredit any move for peaceful settlement as national surrender. They would like to go back on the Simla agreement; they would like to keep the war prisoners permanently in India. All these help forward the American efforts to seize lost initiative on the sub-continent. Our unions must fight these reactionaries, and help the working class and democratic forces in Pakistan and Bangladesh to fight their own reactionaries.

Comrades, the last six months again have been the most trying months for our peole and the working class. Never before were our people and the working class assailed by so many economic calamities simultaneously. Added to famine were the man-made calamities. Electricity shortage, shortage of industrial raw material (yarn etc. for the handloom and power looms, cement, steel,) rising prices, shortages and non-availability of foodgrains and all other necessaries of life, lay-off, lock-outs, and finally callous attitude of the Government accompanied by merciless repression whenever the starving people moved to defend themselves.

The sufferings of the rural masses knew no bounds. Unorganised, defenceless, a prey to the bureaucratic administration, they were cheated, robbed their wives and children slowly starved, incapacitated for life. When some of these suffereing people died of starvation, the Governor of the State callously explained that they died of malnutrition not of starvation—adding further that malnutrition has always been prevalent in the country.

The wholesale price Index (1961-62=100) for all commodities rose by 21.1 per cent between August 26, 1972 and August 25, 1973. The corresponding figures for the two years ending August 25, 1973 are—All commodities 30.3 per cent; food articles 37.2 per cent; Retail prices have risen still more. But all the price indices have ceased to have any meaning with the actual prices—underhand prices—breaking all records and talking everything beyond the reach of the people. With rice sold at Rs. 3 to 4, bajra and jawar at similar prices and indices are ceasing to have any meaning. The

Government pursues a policy=of appeasing the wholesale black-marketeers. It does not touch their stocks. It does not arrest them. At best it directs the anger of the people against the small retailers and makes a show of intervening. After some time it regularises the prices imposed by wholesalers and promises to punish those who transgress them. This is the trick followed by the Government of Maharashtra, West Bengal and other States to defraud the people, the working class of the gains through wage-advance and bonus.

This has made a mockery of the consumers price indices as a guide to the changes in the cost of living of the working class. We have had occasion to point out that the compilation was being done in a fraudulent manner to rob the workers of an adequate dearness allowance. But the present situation reduces the indices to a complete farce as the so-called regulated prices at which nothing is available in the market are recorded in compiling the index.

This has already led to a rapid erosion of the D.A. more so for those who do not get a point to point full neutralisation. Whatever gains were secured by the workers during the last two years have been completely wiped out by the rise in prices. The minimum bonus, the wage settlements—all have been eroded and the workers are put back where they were a few years ago. The employers and the Government must realise that this is bound to lead to widespread discontent and action.

This makes it all the more necessary to secure by leagislative sanction need-based wage for workers—guaranteed need-based standard free from the effects of official price manipulation and index fraud. The monstrous price rise has strengthened the determination of the workers to fight for the need-based wage.

Central Employees

Comrades, in this connection we all must fully support the fight of the Central employees for need-based wage, full neutralisation for rise in prices, bonus and other demands. The Government and a number of reformist leaders are continuing to deprive them of this legitimate demand. We only hope that the vigilance and unity of the Central employees themselves will enable them to overcome the designs of the disruptors and compromisers.

Comrades, while the working class and the employees are unable to defend their existing standard, while it is being eroded by the rising prices, the Government is contemplating further attacks, and preparing for wage-freeze. Certain experts are busy. A secret

document has been prepared to attack the workers. It is being given final touches before springing it on the workers and their organisations. There is no doubt that certain trade union leaders will be consulted beforehand and their support bought overnight to bolster this new attack.

A wage policy which ignores the decline in real wage, which does not ensure need-based wage, and which does not even guarantee remedies against the constant erosion of real wages, such a wage policy is bound to be resented by the workers and will repel the workers from additinal productive efforts.

Foreign Collaboration

Comrades, a feature of the present economic situation must be sharply brought before the people and the working class, That is—the successive breakdowns of plants built in the public sector with foreign collaboration. The bursting of boilers in a public sector concern, the breakdown of power generators, the sudden stoppage of a fertiliser factory after the departure of foreign experts, the quick wearing out of foreign-constructed concerns, the repeated closures of atomic plants producing electricity, also of thermal plants of their failure to utilise full capacity have now come sharply in the picture accentuating the crisis. The Durgapur Fertiliser Project could not produce an ounce of urea till now though the mechanical side was complete in September1971. Attempts to start production, have, however, been frustrated by mechanical failure of imported critical items. Pumps were imported from West Germany. At Cochin also imported compressors supplied from abroad have been a source of trouble and sabotage of production. Official circles seek to mimimise the shutdowns as routine or ordinary happenings which is far from the truth.

Production Capacity Exaggerated

It now seems that the production capacity of some of the Public Sector Plants has been deliberately rated excessively high for publicity purposes or for justifying spendthrift expenditure for corrupt purposes. After expansion the capacity of Rourkela plant was estimated at 1.8 million tonnes but now it turns out that it is only 1.4 million tonnes. Similarly the capacity of Durgapur plant was rated after expansion 1.6 tonnes but according to the engineers and workerss it is only 1.2 million tonnes. Our union has been the first to point out that construction of the plant was defective and capacity was exaggerated.

The workes were being blamed for not producing to the full extent of capacity. Now it turns out that the capacity was deliberately exaggerated and the workers held responsible to conceal the crimes of the foreign capitalists and corrupt officials.

Capitalist—Landlord Economy

Comrades, the working class, like the rest of the people is made the scapegoat of the capitalist-landlord economy, relying on loans from imperialist Governments. The limping stagnant economy chokes all avenues of employment, depress wages through inflation and by other means and condemns the workers to a penurial existence. The Annual Report of the Reserve Bank of India estimates that national income growth in the years 1971-72 and 1972-73 will be considerably less than 2 per cent. The rise in real per capita income for 1970-71 is estimated to be 1.1 per cent and for 1972-73 2.6 per cent. What chance has the working class under the miserable growth rate? Need then we wonder the rapid increase in unemployment? You all know the colossal character of our unempolyment problem. There are now moe than 7.5 million registered unemployed; educated unemployment has reached 3.5 million. The total number of unemployed in rural areas may now exceed 25 million. The scramble for jobs can be seen from the fact that 12 lakh persons applied for 14,000 jobs in Kerala. In West Bengal also more than a million applied for 12,000 jobs. The capacity of the stagnant economy employing the workers is decreasing every year. The growth rate of employment has been rapidly going down since 1965-66. In the five years prior to 1965-66 the increase was at the compound rate of 5.5 per cent. In 1971-72 it had dropped to nearly 2.8 per cent—the highest since 1966-67. Even this rate could not be kept up in 1972. In recent years the rate in private sector has been 1/3 per cent and in the Public Sector 3 per cent.

In some important industries there has been a reduction in the absolute number of employed over the last five years—the years of recession. The average daily employment in cotton textile mills was 842,000 in 1966; it was 706,000 in 1971, the employment in jute mills was reduced from 249,000 in 1966 to 234,000 in 1971—an underestimate. The employment in tobacco industry was reduced from 160,000 to 121,000 in 1970 itself. The total employment in factories increased from 47 lakhs in 1966 to 50 lakhs in 1971—slightly more than 6 per cent increase in five years. The employment in tea plantation declined from 804,000 in 1966 to 760,000 in

1970; the employment in mines declined from 699,000 in 1966 to 603,000 in 1971; the employment in railways increased from 1,357,000 in 1966 only to 1,393,000 in 1972.

The stagnating economy is strangulating employment and there are no prospects that the situation will improve unless a fight is put up against all its distrotions. This is no longer a question of factory or industry, but of the entire society and of the class policies of the Government.

Once again the organised trade union movement must demand the enforcement of right to work, pending it immediate grant of unemployment relief to urban and rural unemployed. The casue of the agricultural worker has to be championed by the advanced trade union movement whose respeonisbility it is to see that the agricultural labourer gets adequate wage and protection against rising prices.

Demand Nationalisation of Foodgrain Trade

Every worker ought to know that the main cause of the rising prices, the daily erosion of his wages is the monstrous deficit financing of the Government.

To expect the Government to control prices in the interest of the people, therefore, is pure moonshine. The Finance Minister by announcing that Government expenditure will be reduced by Rs. 300 crores in the name of austerity, to check prices is just fooling the people. The most effective way to check the blackmarketing prices in foodgrains is to commandeer the stocks of the landlords in the villages and sell them at reasonable prices. This precisely is what the Government will not do. Nor will it lower the rate of deficit financing. It is therefore cheating the people with a show of effort at controlling prices.

The trade union movement must demand in the interest of the working class and the people the nationalisation of wholesale trade in rice and all foodgrains and denounce the Central Government's treachery. After its show of take over of wheat trade the Central Government staged a cowardly retreat before the sabotage of the landlords and wholesalers and sacrificed the people to this black-marketing gentry. The cowardly State Governments, acting as the tool of the wholesalers and landlords incited the workers and the people against small retailers. The working class and the trade union movement must be aware of these tricks and see that the edge of its attack is directed against the landlords, the wholesalers

and the Government. It must seize initiative in dehoarding stocks and demand a fair price for the peasants produce—a better price—so that it also throws its full weight for nationalisation and the landlords are not able to exploit it for their—own aims. It is no longer possible for the working class and the organised trade union movement to protect the food of the working class by relying only on increased dearness allowance. It must jump in the fray for nationalisation of food trade, for commandeering of food stocks of landlords, for dehaording in citties and effective public distribution. It cannot be said that our unions and workers have done their job in this respect.

Capitalist Prosperity

While the people and workers were driven to desperation by high prices, the capitalists, like the landlords thrived and made unimaginable profits. The foreign monopolists had a free run of the country and amassed huge money at the expense of the people. A recent study by the Economic Times on profits and dividends revealed that the dividend rate in 1972-73 was high at 12.2 per cent compared with 11.5 per cent in the preceding year. If bonus issues are taken into consideration, the rate would be 13 per cent. More than hundred companies retained profits of more than Rs. one crore each while many had profits exceeding Rs. 4 crores.

Foreign collaboration companies or companies with foreign capital retained fantastic profits, companies like Hindusthan Levers, Brooke Bond, Glaxo, Pfizer, Union Carbide, Indian Aluminium and Phillips India earned a pre-tax profit of not less than Rs. 4 crores in 1972-73—the year of famine, crisis, high prices for the people.

Among the foreign controlled companies Godfrey-Phillips declared a dividend of 35 per cent; Food Specialists 25 per cent; Phillips India 24 per cent; Cafe 25 per cent and ESSO 81.25 per cent.

Whether good or bad crop the peasant, the poor peasant gets ruined. This is seen in the plight of West Bengal's jute peasant today. After lot of fanfare the Jute (Purchasing) Corporation was appointed. It seems both the Jute Mills and the jute Corporation worked hand in glove to bring down jute prices and rob the peasants. Now the Government has come out with a face saving device but with so much explanation why its own handiwork has failed. And the price promised is too inadequate to meet the demands of the peasantry.

In the last six months several other sections have risen in

defence of their interests constantly assailed by high prices. We have supported their struggles and lent every help to them. We continue to support the demands of the Central and State employees. Our CITU in Rajasthan played an important role in mobilising the working class in support of the valiant struggle of the State employees. Our CITU in Maharashtra lent full support to the struggle of the hospital doctors. We congratulate the doctors on their victory. We congratulate the Rajasthan State employees on their success.

It is our desire that the artificial barriers between the employees and the trade union movement should be eliminated and all should rally under one common banner.

We expressed our sympathy and support for the power engineers' demand who sought parity of treatment with the IAS Officers. Some of these enginners often behave towards our workers exactly like the hardboiled IAS Officer. But their demand was correct. It is also the doctors demand. The refusal of the Government to accept it only means that it prizes the anti-people bureaucrat more than the doctor or the engineer. The IAS is more useful to run the machinery of repression than the engineer and the doctor. Production and health of the people come next to running the State with the aid of repression.

Comrades, it is necessary to bring to the notice of the people how political bias of the Government, how its patronage to certain organisations imposes unnecessary strikes on the workers entailing avoidable sufferings and loss of production. Quite a considerable number of strikes can be avoided, the percentage of loss of mandays lowered if the authorities show minimum respect for democracy in their dealing with the workers. The strike of the Railway Loco Workers could have easily been avoided had the Railway Board not refused to negotiate with the LRSA and not decided that its favourite the AIRF was the representative of all workers simply because the Railway Board said so. Now again the Railway Board in conjunction with the AIRF leadership is doing its best to sabotage the August agreement and provoke the workers to another strike.

The Stevedor Workers' strike in Calcutta for 20 per cent bonus has been prolonged through sheer obstinacy of the Transport Ministry officials and shippers have said the strike was holding up exports worth Rs. 50 crores besides obstructing unloading of

foodgrains. Who is responsible for this? The Stevedors were specifically told not to concede anything more than 8.1/3 per cent bonus though they were willing to settle the issue as they wee making huge profits. The strike of the blast furnace workers in Durgapur which lasted several days and brought a standstill in production exposed once more than bankruptcy of the authorities. In the blast furnace department the authorities had recognised the INTUC and entered into agreement with it regarding certain conditions. The workers were not even informed of the terms of the agreement, much les consulted. They naturally objected when they were asked to work according to the agreement. The leaders of recognished unions chosen by the authorities hardly consult the workers. The authorities are in search of pliable leaders. The result often is a strike when the implementation of the agreement starts. Knowing that the workers were not consulted the authorities should have understood the workers difficulties and opposition. For a long time they refused to come to any compromise and inflicted a big loss on the plant. The Steel Minister unthinkingly supported the authorities and tried to play the role of a strong steel man. Fortunately all the unions—six in number— including the CITU, INTUC and AITUC stood firm and the workers were saved. The Congress party should instruct its INTUC leaders to introduce democracy in the INTUC unions and not to sign agreement behind the backs of workers. The CITU has been insisting that recongnition should be demanded by secret ballot of workers and all agreements effecting the conditions of the workers should be ratified in a mass meeting of workers. This will avoid strikes and dislocations due to settlements with leaders and organisations patronised by the authorities.

Bombay Agreement

Another scandalous agreement which had to be scrapped post-haste was the agreement to work the Bombay Textile Mills for seven days. The Congress controlled Rashtriya Mill Mozdoor Sangh—the recognised union whose President is Rajni Patel who is also the President of the Bombay Congress Committee hastily entered into the agreement and presented it to the Prime Minister as an earnest desire of Textile workers to help production. The workers of course were not consulted. Their opposition in fact was well known. Our CITU union together with the AITUC and Lal Nishan unions gave a call to nullify the agreement, ogainshed two

strikes in protest. In the end the agreement had to be withdrawn at least for the time being. Once more an arbitrary agreement over the heads of the workers led to avoidable strikes.

The Seven Day Agreement in Bombay, apart from the fact it would have helped the millowners to pile up profits, also involved corrupt practices. By agreeing to sacrifice the workers' right to common weekly holiday the RMMS secured the privilege to have a say in the appointment of new recruits. It ws further provided that preference would be given to the relatives of the pesent employees. Here was a corrupt attempt to lure a section of workers by promising jobs for their relatives. This has nothing to do with principles of trade unionism, democracy and honesty.

The Government and the INTUC have been justifying the seven days week in the name of increasing employment and production. This is just an eye wash. The real reason is to bolster the profits of the millowners who also promise to earn foreign exchange for the Government through exports. Additional employment can certainly be provided by ensuring that mills which at present work only two shifts switch over to three shifts. Last year nearly 40 lakh spindals—22 per cent of total—were idle in the first shift. What about Production? The Seven Days work is not required for mills which prouduce cloth for the ordinary people. They are not working even three shifts. If the Government were sincere in provinding cheap cloth to the common people, for whom the present prices are prohibitive, it would have concentrated on these mills and ensured three shifts working for them.

But the Government is keen on advancing the profits of the Khatau, the Mafatlals etc.—who last year piled enormous profits. They produce superfine and mixed fibre cloth which fetches high price and which the ordinary man cannot afford. The export market also has been byoyant. These people determined to make as much profits as possible in the coming period are demanding seven days work. And it for their sake that the common holiday was to be sacrificed.

Another sinister game is to launch the offensive of 'modernishation' for which the Government is providing funds under the Seven Day programme. The Seven Day work will enable them to conceal the retrenchment inherent in modernisations, introduction of automatic looms and escape without working class resistance.

The textile workers of Bombay are to be congratulated on their

success in defeating this selfish game. It is regretful that elsewhere in some cities the INTUC has been able to thrust this agreement on the workers.

New Challenges

Comrades,—recent months have thrown new challenges to our movement. The danger of communal reactionary forces has increased. The open communal exploitation of the Muslim minority masses by the League protends danger for our common movement. Our movement should be deeply conscious of the oppression which the Muslim minority masses have to face under Congress rule. Defending their rights we must wage a relentless fight against League communalism and devote special attention to enlist minority workers in our common struggle.

Another feature of recent months is the wild rampages of the bureaucracy and the police against the people. We are all accustomed to brutal firings and tortures in the course of our struggle. But what heappens in West Bengal or Kerala or Tamilnadu surpasses all imagination. Tortures and deaths in police lock-up are becoming very common. Murders at the hands of gangsters are increasing. It is a matter of shame and infinite disgrace that under the Right Communist-Congress coalition women are raped in police stations and men are tortured. How can the Right Communists fight repression elsewhere and perpetrate it in Kerala.

But the main guilty party is the Indira Government whose bureaucracy treats the people in the same way that the British did. Every section of the people is made to feel that it cannot have a honourable existence under the Congress rule. Workers, peasants have always been the special victims of this rule. But today doctors, lawyers, students, nurses, housewives, professors any one of them can be killed, tortured by the police, insulted and humiliated. The Congress police behave like an army of occupation. And worse is the lot of untouchable. Their homes are burnt, their women raped, their lands taken away-with none to protect them. This emergence of the bureaucracy as the dominant force overriding all other considerations is nothing but the perfecting of the apparatus of State repression and the first step towards establishment of one party dictatorship.

As I have said while every section is being attacked, the untouchable masses are singled out for the worst atrocities. They are not only the victims of the police tyranny, they are the target of the

local landlords. Their oppression is helped because other oppressed sections in the villages and elsewhere do not run to their help. It should be our privilege to raise our voice in defence of the honour of their women, against the tyranny practised against this section of toilers. I think our General Secretary should contact all central organisations to fix a common day for voicing the working class protest against these inhuman tyrannies.

Comrades-Comrade Ramamurti in his report has described the success we have secured in organising united struggles in the fight for united action. These constitute a matter of pride for us and arms us with confidence in relation to the future. We must vigorously pursue the line of united action, we must strengthen the unity already embodied in the UCTU and see that it develops into still broader unity. The problems before the working class do require such a broad unity and we must see that it is achieved.

25

All Support To Loco Workers

ANOTHER MEETING BETWEEN THE AILRSA representatives and the Railway Board Officials has revealed that the latter are out for sabotaging the August agreement and plunging the country into a railway strike. The Deputy Railway Minister representing the Government, is helping the officials to sabotage the agreement and cheat the workers. The Labour Minister looks on helplessly paralysed and transfixed before the arrogant railway officials. The Railway Minister issues statements and promises but does neither chastise the officials nor sack any one of them. The Prime Minister who is appealed to by the LRSA leaders remains silent and does nothing. They all pin their faith in the treacherous conduct of some federation leaders to disrupt the ranks of the workers and cheat the LRSA workmen of the reduction of duty hours.

It is time all central organisations stepped in to demand the implementation of the agreement and tell the Government it will not be allowed to break the settlement which has the full support of public opinion and all political parties.

Since the end of the strike the railway board officials have resorted to delaying tactics in one meeting after another. The Board representatives have virtually told the LRSA leaders that they are not a party to the settlement and that every thing has to be discussed anew. They have come with a fantastic suggestion that a period of four years should be provided for the implementation of the 10 hour day, though the agreement lays down that the issues should be settled within three months.

Every imaginable excuse is being advanced to protract the negotiations. They railway board now pleads operational difficulties.

They say they require more engines, new lines, new quarters, new rest crew vans and running rooms before they could think of introducing the ten hours work day. All this amounts to telling the employees to wait till the dooms-day.

The LRSA representatives have exposed every argument advanced by the railway board officials. They have pointed out that operational difficulties can be easily overcome. All that is needed is to arrange relief of engine crew after ten hours duty. To be able to do this is necessary to have a sufficient trained cadre, a proper mode of transport and running rooms at certain points.

As far as the adequacy of trained cadre is concerned it is known that the administration maintains a reserve of fifty per cent and there should be absolutely no difficulty in the way of introduction of the new work day. In earlier days shortages were met through a condensed course of training and there is no reason why the same should not be done now if it is necessary. In fact this would help to absorb a number of unemployed person for whom the Government expresses its solicitude.

The LRSA has also pointed out that neither the mode of transport of relieving crew nor running room constitutes a problem.

On the question of victimisation also the same dishonest attitude is being pursued. In a large number of cases agreed decisions have been reached but these are not implemented under the plea that the settlement is a package deal and unless there is agreement on the major issue the unjust victimisation orders will not be withdrawn.

As if all this provocation was not enough, the Railway Board is trying to disrupt the ranks of the workers through bribery and by using the services of some leaders and organisations who carry no credentials with the loco workers. They have granted cash awards from Rs. 25/-to Rs. 1,000 to those who did not join the strike. It stands to the honour of the Motormen of Howrah Car Shed that they refused to accept this bribe money.

Simultaneously, the officials are working through other railway federations. According to the General Secretary of the AILRSA, they have set up a parallel consultation with the AIRF and NFIR and started negotiations on the problems of the Loco Running Staff. The question of leave reserve has been decided and for one

year the Loco Running Staff have to put up with a loss to the extent of 5%.

The meaning of these developments is plain and simple. The railway board officials are out to sabotage the agreement, divide the loco workers and plunge the country into a strike.

An extended meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the AILRSA took stock of the situation and while agreeing to meet the Railway Minister in another meeting, has come to the conclusion '"it may have to once again unleash further agitation for ensuring the implementation of the agreement." It has called upon the workers to observe a protest day and hold conventions in December to apprise other sections of railway workers and Central Government employees about the situation.

All trade union organisations will welcome these decissions. Especially welcome is the effort to seek greater unity, and understanding with other section of railway workers.

It should be noted that the AIRF convention held in October also passed a resolution to hold a convention of all trade union organisations of railwaymen and other Central employees, feeling that all in unity was necessary to needbased wage and other demands. Let the AIRF leaders put their strength behind the AILRSA and defeat the Railway Board's game of dividing the workers. They should refuse to negotiate with the Board on the question of Locomen's demands accepting the reality that the AILRSA has the confidence of the locomen.

Once more the railway officials are breaking a solemn agreement. Let the united voice of the working class be raised in defence of the loco workers and warn the authorities that the entire working class to a man will throw in its full weight behind the locomen.

—*The Working Class, Vol. III, No. 4, December 1973.*

26

Let All T.U.'s Unitedly Fight Attack On IA Employees!

THE efforts of the Indian Airlines authorities to break down the resistance of the employees to their demand for surrendering the trade union rights constitute the beginning of an all-round attack on the trade unions in the public sector. It is necessary for the trade union movement to recognise the danger and address a rebuff to official policies.

It is a matter of deep regret that the leaders of the Air Corporation Employees Union in face of this grim attack, trusted too much in prolonged negotiations and did not press upon the trade union movement the need of immediate and swift solidarity. In fact, the leaders failed to unite the several unions for a common front and allowed the authorities to operate through the AIR INDIA. If even the Air India employees were not called in for solidartity action, how could they impress the rest of the working class about the seriousness of their struggle?

An ex-Air Marshall was inducted in service to introduce, drill sergeant methods in dealing with the employees. After talking a lot about shift system, overtime and what not, he demanded complete acceptance of the charter of slavery prepared by him.

When the negotiations were on, the authorities declared a lockout, an unprecedented step for a public sector concern to take. They supplemented this illegal and indefensible action by refusing to pay the wages earned by the workers before the lockout. Here was thus an open attempt to coerce and strave workers into submission by the nominee of a garibi hatao government. A fine example was being set for private sector capitalists whom some

times official spokesment sermonise on the necessity of humane relationship in industry.

The real purpose of this onslaught was neither the question of shift system, nor the elimination of wasteful practices, but just abrogation of all trade union rights, liquidation of all organised strength of the workers, so that mass retrenchment can be effected along with increased workload.

The memorandum of settlement demands that the workers agree to observe constitutional means and eschew agitational steps and/or concerted action or any other means which may have the effect of interrupting or disrupting the Corporation work, etc.

This is demanded when the fundamental rights are not yet abrogated under the Constitution. What remains of trade unionism if you cannot agitate, if you cannot take concerted decisions and action, cannot bargain concertedly. Since when agitational steps have become unconstitutional? This is a demand to agree to banning of all propaganda, agitation, strike, a demand that each individual worker may individually represent his case but not in union with his fellow workers.

It is in pursuance of this demand that the authorities compelled individual workers to sign the bondage agreement bypassing the union. This is how the public sector authorities are promoting healthy trade unionism.

Consistently with this outlook, the authorities claim arbitrary rights to alter the working conditions of the workers. The memorandum lays down "The workmen concede that there are certain fundamental management functions as enumerated below—"The management from time to time shall lay down the duties and responsibilities of each category of workmen and the workmen shall perform all such duties and all duties incidental and ancillary thereto—The establishment strength including both the number and designiation of posts in the various categories and grades shall be determined by the management—The management will promote employees only when it is necessary to fill up a vacancy in a higher cadre and that too on the basis of suitability cum seniority.

No worker shall be entitled to take leave as matter of right unless it is sanctioned by a competent authority. Privileged leave shall be admissible on not more than three occasions in the financial year. Any workman many be required to avail such PL as the sanctioning authority may decide on giving him reasonable notice.

If leave so offered, is not availed of by the workman, he shall forfeit it and his leave account shall be debited accordingly.

What remains of trade unionism and collective bargaining after this? You are not supposed to agitate or combine with others. All your working conditions are to be determined solely by the management. The duties will be laid down from time to time by the management—the load may increase, more work may have to be done but union will have no right to say anything about it. The staff strength may be reduced, higher posts may be abolished, but union has no say. All this is the job of the management. Promotions are also made dependent on the whims of the management. Leave also is dependent on the mood and whims of the authorites and if you oppose it, you will forfeit you leave. And again discipline is the responsibility of the management and union shall not say anything if its member is unjustly punished by the authorities. Collective bargaining, right to represent individual workers, right to oppose unilaterally imposal adverse chages in the condition of work, and insecurity of jobs—all are done away with. Trade union organisation is liquidated. At best the signboard may remain as a victory trophy for the authorities.

The Government with nauseating hypocricy utters phrases about labour's participation in management while their nominees are doing their best to illegalise all trade union rights and organised movement.

The trade union movement cannot allow this onslaught to succeed. It will be soon extended to union in other public sector undertakings and then to workers in the private sector. Some of the rights claimed by the IA authories will find a place in the new Industiral Relations Bill whose main purpose is to curb working class resistance. The Union Labour Minister has been secretly confabulating with Govt. favourties—the INTUC, and AITUC leaders to forge this new attack against the trade union movement.

The shameless manner in which the railway ministry is breaking its plighter word to the Loco Running Staff again shows that the Govt. is bent on attacking the organised movement now that it can no longer be controlled by its underlings. The IA developments constitute a part of this concerted offensive. Let all Central Trade Unions and employees' orgainsations come forward to defeat the designs of the Government.

27

The Third National Congress Of The Vietnamese Trade Unions

The Third National Congress of the Federation of Vietnam Trade Unions, the mass organisation of the fighting working class of Vietnam was held in Hanoi from 11th February to 14th February.

The problems discussed, the speeches delivered, the fraternal greetings and felicitations from the leaders of the world trade unions made the Congress an outstanding event in the forward march of the glorious working class of Vietnam for unification and socialism and a mighty demonstration of proletarian solidarity for the people of Vietnam in its struggle against American imperialism.

The speeches and report stressed the vanguard role of the working class and its international proletarian outlook.

The Congress brought out the leading role of the Workers' Party—the Marxist Leninist Party in guiding the trade union and working class.

The Congress devoted its labour and discussions to the new role of the trade unions in the conditions facing Vietnam and the working class—of trade unions which have become part of the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat and on whom rested the responsibility of directly leading the proletarian masses in the task of building Socialism, of unleashing the full production offensive of the working class for the purpose of Socialist industrialisation.

Hanoi, the epicentre of revolutionary symbol of world prole-

tarian resistance to American imperialism, was naturally the venue of this historic Congress. Hanoi, along with Haiphong and a few other cities had to face the most devastating bombing raids of U.S. bombers which spared nothing. The Railway station near the Red River is now a mass of tangled metal and cement—with a few cement pillars standing erect, the symbol of the unbending resistance of the people of Hanoi. The bridge over the river was partly destroyed but was as quickly repaired. In the zoo, there stand the remains of a American bomber. The March 8th Textile Factory run by women displays repaired roofs, damaged walls and a whole line of underground shelters. But these are just the last vestiges of a destruction that was rained on a devastating scale to bring Hanoi to submission. Hanoi gave its revolutionary answer to this flood of bombs and as heroically repaired the vast demage to residences and working class houses.

Fraternal Delegates

To Hanoi came delegates from 28 fraternal countires from proletrarian centres to greet the Historic Congress. They arrived on the 9th February and were received at the airport by the President of the Federation of Vietnam Trade Unions, Com. Hoang Quoc Viet, Vice-President Nguen Cong Hoa, Vice-President Mrs. Truong Thi My, Secretariat member, Le Van; Head of the Innternational Department of the Federation Nguyen Thuyet and other leaders of the Federation.

The foreign delegates represented the World Federation of Trade Unions, the trade unions of the USSR, People's Republic of Mongolia, Democratic Republic of Korea, Cuba, Albania. Roumania, Hungary, Poland, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, France and Italy from Eupope. From India, there were two delegates—representing the CITU and the AITUC. From West Asia, the United Arab Republic, Syria, Palestine, Morocco, Iraq and Algeria were represented. And from Latin America besides Cuba, there were delgates from fighting Chile and Peru. The trade Unions of Japan were represented by the SOHYO.

The South Vietnam Federation of Labour sent a powerful delegation which consisted of working class guerrilla fighters. Fighting Laos and Cambodia still engaged in a life and death struggle with American imperialism completed the team of the fraternal organisations greeting the Congress.

Background & Victory

The Third Congress was meeting in the background of the great spectacular victory of the Vietnamese people. The Paris Agreement which compelled the U.S. imperialists to accept withdrawal of the American armed forces from South Vietnam, recognised the two administrations and three political forces, recognised the Vietnamese right for national self-determination, was one of the biggest defeats of American imperialists.

The people and working class of Vietnam had to face the most barbarous type of Bombing by a ruthless enemy determined to blot out the entire people, its entire productive capacity, its means of existence.

But the damage has been enormous. "The war has rolled back our originally under-developed economy which had just made one step forward to where it was ten years ago."

The working class of Vietnam played a heroic role in defence, in armed struggle and protecting the production capacity of the country and achieving marvels of production in face of the most devastating bombing.

The communications and transport workers continued to maintain the arteries of communications open in face of the destructive bombing, one of whose primary aims was to destroy all communications. "Acting upon the slogan, 'we may shed blood, but never shall we let communications be disrupted,' truck drivers and sailor together with the workers at bridge repair sites and ferries overcame all damages and hardships caused by enemy bombs, shells and mines to bring supplies to the front.

Arms manufacturing workers worked day and night producing improved weapons "thus contributing a worthy share in defeating the so-called superiority of modern war technique of U.S. imperialism."

Carrying out the Party's slogan, "the hammer in one hand and the gun in the other", the workers, under the worst bombing conditions evacuated their factories and offices to safe places, removing millions of tons of machines, documents, materials and equipment." The homeguard units of the workers and public employees comprising hundreds of thousands of persons, men and women, have fought valorously arms in hand, against the U.S. marauding aircraft to defend their factories, the socialist property and their comrades who were carrying on production and work.

Armed brigades of miners, cement workers, steel workers—came into existence during the war of resistance. They struck fear into the heart of the enemy with their resounding feats.
On the morrow of the end of the war, the workers magnificently responded to the appeal of the Party and the Government to turn to Socialist production and overcome all the difficulties created by the enemy's destructive bombings.

Within a short period all the railroads were reopened to traffic and all the brigades big and small on the main arteries were repaired. The power stations damaged by the bombings were quickly repaired and resumed production—their output reaching the pre-war level. Evacuated factories and machinery were brought back and reassembled and commissioned in record time. Badly damaged factories have completed their first drive of repair and resumed operation; cultural, educational and medical activities have returned to normal.

This is the glorious record in one year of peace.

At the conference inaugural speeches were made by President, Ton Duc Thong—head of the State, Premier Phan Van Dong of the DRVN Government.

Comrade Le Duan
New Stage of Revolution

Comrade Le Duan, greeting the workers on their successes and the victories of the Vietnamese people added "While referring to our working class and people's successes and achievements, we never overlook the substantial, priceless and multifaced contribution to them of the fraternal socialist countries, first of all the Soviet Union and China, of the world's working class and labouring peoples, and of all the independence, freedom, justice and peace-loving countries and peoples." He expressed heartfelt gratitude for international support and assistance.

He reminded the trade unions they were an extensive body linking the Party with the working class, vanguard class and most important force fighting for socialism and therefore they must play the most important part in translating the Party's new resolution into reality.

He told the delegates that the Vietnamese revolution has entered a new stage in very favourable circumstances but the battle for complete independence and freedom all over the country

remains very difficult and complex.

Comrade Le Duan added, "The greatest achievement of the North's socialist revolution has been the elimination of oppression and exploitation, liquidation of the exploiting class as such and co-operativisation of small-scale and scattered production." On this basis the economy made initial advances.

Thanks to it in face of the war and bombings, and adequate supply of prime necessities, education and medical care could be ensured to the people and no great disturbances were observed in the distribution of goods, their prices and the living standard of the masses, who were made safe from hunger and cold, the usual companions of a fierce and long-drawn out war.

He reminded that the North has been engaged in Socialist construction for nearly 20 years, 15 of which were taken up by the war and only eight of which were devoted to building efforts which were repeatedly set at naught by war bombings.

What is the weakness to be overcome? The crux of the matter is that in our socialist society, a small-scale, basically agricultural economy still exists.

Bye-passing the stage of capitalist development, there is no other alternative than socialist industrialisation to turn our country a backward agricultural land with a system of production mainly small scale into one with largescale socialist production.

Trade Unions and Victorious Working Classes

Comrade Le Duan then reminded the workers and trade unions, "The working class in North Vietnam has become the ruling class of the country. As for trade unions, they are no more a weapon of struggling against oppression and exploitation but are assuming the role of an extremely important link in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat. One cannot figure out the labouring people's regime of collective master without the existence of the trade unions, with their vast rights guaranteed by State laws.

He quoted Lenin to say "the State power once being seized, the proletariat has one fundamental life and death question, that is to increase the bulk of social products and the labour force of production to a large scale."

Carrying forward the Leninist teachings on trade unions under Socialism, he pointed out that to say Trade Union is a school of

Communism means first of all that it must educate the labouring people in the socialist communist ideology. The educational work mentioned here can only be done successfully in the course of and on the basis of productive labour movement of mass and revolutionary character with a view to sucessfully building socialism.

Offensive of Revolutionary Forces

Le Duan then returned to the international situation and inspiringly summed up the present position reminding the delegates that the Vietnam workers are a part of the international working class and of the revolutionary epoch.

"The Vietnamese working class, the leading class of the Vietnamese revolution, constitute a part of the international working class, a class standing in the very centre of our era. The Vietnamese revolution constitutes a part of the World revolution, and is directly linked to three great trends of the proletarian revolution in the present era.....that is: the movement of building socialism and communism in the world socialist system; the movement of struggle of the working and labouring people in the capitalist and imperialist countries, the national liberation movement and the uprising of the force fighting for national independence with a view of leading the country straight to socialism, bypassing the stage of capitalist development. The revolutionary cause of our people is a concrete picture combining closely the lofty objectives of mankind in the present era ; national independence and socialism. It is because our people have stood on the common position of offensive of the world-revolution, and made full use of the strength of various revolutionary trends of the era, that they could create their force supremacy for defeating U.S. imperialist aggressors and their henchmen. On the other hand, the victory of our people's anti-U.S. resistance for national salvation has consolidated more the position of socialism in the world, strongly stimulated the people's struggle of countries in the Third World against old and new colonialism and influenced the revolutinary struggle of the working class and labouring people in developed countries, at the same time, together with those revolutionary trends, made deeper and sharper the general crisis in the imperialist system. It is quite obvious that today the positions of imperialism headed by U.S. imperialism are being by one serious step weakened, and the

offensive position of revolutionary forces in the world is more solid than ever and the alternative of preserving peace is getting stronger than ever before."

Le Duan's speech was punetuated with applause. His peroration summing up the world situation was greeted with thunderous and prolonged applause.

How the Congress was prepared

After Comrade Le Duan, the President of the Vietnamese Federation of Trade Unions, Hoang-Quoc Viet made his opening speech. He welcomed the fraternal delegations from foreign countries; the representatives of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, Federation of Trade Unions for Liberation who have come from the "Brass Wall of the Fatherland", shining with flames of struggle and resounding with splendid victories. He thanked the leadership of the Workers' Party for its sedulous attention to the problems of the trade unions. Explaining how the preperation for the Congress was made at the grass roots level, he said, "After over three months of intensive work for the preparations of the Congress, all the trade union organisations at the primary level, in various localities and branches have successfully held their Congresses. Almost all the workers, employees and trade union members at more than 6,000 primary trade unions in North Vietnam actively took part in local Congresses, setting forth tens of thousands of proposals on such mattes as: production, management of enterprise, management of office, labour code and regulations, and trade union activities.

On Tasks

The report on Situation and Tasks of the Executive Committee of Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions was placed before the Congress by Vice-President, Nguen Cong-Hoa. In its comprehensive review of the activities of the trade unions, the heroic role played by them, by the working class of North and South Vietnam, the report dealt with the achievements as well as short comings.

It reviewed the role played by the trade unions and the working class in the harsh period of war of resistance; stressed the heroism and devotion to duty of the working class; its successes in battle field and off the battlefield; the heroic role of the People's Army and the entire people and greeted the working class for its

successes.

"The trade unions have rallied the overwhelming majority of the workers and public employees, organised them into a revolutionary force to strive for the successful implementation of the line of the Party. They have organised and mobilised the movement of the workers and public employees to engage in revolutionary acts, and at the same time, attended to the life of their members and improved their standards in all spheres. "The trade unions have launched a stirring movement of emulation to resist U.S. aggression for national salvation and to build Socialism among the workers and public employees...."

"In co-ordination with the State organs the Trade Unions have taken measures to care better for the life of the workers and public employees. Trade unions at the levels have actively taken part in the improvement of the wage system, and in the amendments to the labour policy in different periods, specially during war time. In particular during war time the trade unions have made great efforts to attend to the living conditions, transport facilities, dispersion, recreation and rest of workers and public employees and their families.

The report reminded the delegates that in spite of its bitter setback the U.S. imperialism remains very stubborn.

It said it is the task of the trade unions to heighten the class consciousness, the sense of being the collective master; develop the role of workers and public employees as collective master; initiate emulation movement; participate in the management of the factories, economy and the State; carry out the three revolutions; be ready to smash all schemes of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen, render all help to the South, strengthen solidarity with the unity of working class and trade union movement of the world in the common fight against imperialism headed by U.S. imperialism.

The report proceeds to lay down the concrete tasks at each level in great detail. It calls upon the trade unions to assist improvement in economic management in economic management whose fundamental direction is "to abolish the method of administrative and surveying management and realise the method of management along socialist lines." It asks the trade union to participate in drafting labour code and regulations and look to their effective implementation. It further asks the trade unions to participate in

the improvement of the managerial machine of the State by effective participation at all levels of management of State economy.

Together with this the trade unions are called upon to look to questions of prices, salaries, allowances, social welfare; in collaboration with the state organs, broaden the application of the system of payment according to production results; care for socialist accumulation and educate the working class in conformity with the requirements of the revolutionary task of the new stage.

Finally, the Report stressed "The trade unions bear the mass and class-character of the working class. They belong to the system of proletarian dictatorship. ....The trade union is a school of class struggle, of management of the economy, and of the State a school of socialism and communism of the working class. In carrying out its function and role, the trade unions will develop its responsibility as a link in joining the Party with the masses, and as a solid prop for system of proletarian dictatorship...."

This report was followed by another on the amendments to the Constitution of the Vietnamese Trade Unions.

The first day was taken by these reports. Part of the first day and the whole of 12th was taken by speeches of the fraternal delegates.

During the course of the deliberations, the Congress was greeted by representatives of Ho Chi Minh Youth organisation of collective farmers and of Peoples' Liberation Army. They all expressed Confidence in the working class and the Central Committee of Workers' Party of Vietnam.

At the closing session of the 14th, the Trade Unions were awarded President Ho Chi Minh's order (2nd class) for their meritorious achievements. The order was proudly pinned on the Federation Flag in the midst of deafenning applause from the delegates.

On the 13th and at the first session on the 14th the five hundred delegates who had shouldered the burdens of war, achieved marvels of production with rifle in one hand and hammer in the other discussed the reports in detail and came out with many valuable concrete suggestions on the basis of their own experience.

On the basis of this detailed democratic discussion, a final resolution on tasks was placed before the Congress. It embodied the basic formulations on and the concrete tasks as outlined in the

Executive Committee's report.

The resolution was unanimously adopted accompanied by thunderous applause.

The Constitutional amendments were also unanimously adopted the delegates fully approving the new changes and provisions. The list of new office bearers was unanimously adopted and the Executive Committee of 71 was elected.

Com. Hoang Quoc Viet was re-elected President, Com. Nguen Cong Hao and Com. Mrs. Truong Thi My were re-elected Vice-Presidents.

In his closing speech, Com. Hoang Quoc Viet said, "The unanimous adoption of the documents of the Congress has eloquently spoken out the one-mindedness and determination of the workers and employees to realise the line and policies of the Party and State plans, especially the resolution of the Party's Central Committee. The success of the Congress is a source of encouragement to the manual and brain workers and a stimulation to the workers and people in both North and South Vietnam to push ahead the struggle to achieve the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam, strive to build Socialism in North Vietnam to realise the last wish of beloved President Ho Chi Minh: "My last wish is that the entire Party unites, the entire country unites to strive to build a peaceful reunified, independent democratic prosperous Vietnam and to contribute a worthy share to the revolutionary cause in the world."

After this the Congress rose to the strains of International.

Thus ended the historic Third Congress of theVietnam Trade Unions. The Marxist-Leninist guidance given by the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Vietnam, based on Lenin's teachings on the role of trade unions under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working out of the concrete tasks in the context of the existing political, international and economic situation and the enlightening discussions of the highly conscious delegates clearly showed that the glorious working class of Vietnam and its nature trade union movement will register further victories and fulfil all the tasks—the liberation of the South, peaceful unification of the country, rendering help to the fighting Laos and Cambodia and the successful socialist industrialisation of the North.

Speech At The Third National Congress Of Vietnamese T.U.

Dear Comrades and Friends,

Allow me to offer you, on behalf of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, to the working class of Vietnam, to your trade union Conference, warm greetings of the working class of India.

Our organisation and working class highly appreciated the presence of your delegates at our Conference last April in Kerala. Their speeches and messages warmed our hearts and cemented the feelings of solidarity and friendship between the working class and the people of Vietnam and the working class and people of India. I offer my homage to the memory of the lakhs of men and women, the martyrs from the working class, from the peasantry, from the people, who fell victims to American barbarism; I offer my salutation to the memory of that revolutionary of imperishable fame—Comrade Ho Chi Minh.

The struggle that the people of Vietnam have been waging is an unprecedented and unparallelled struggle. Never before perhaps was a people pitted against such a brutal power having overwhelming superiority in the most destructive arms. But the spirit of freedom, of resistance to secure the unification of the motherland, its freedom and its right to a better social order conquered the bombs and vaunted military might of the American imperialists.

The battle waged by the people and working class of Vietnam, for unification of the country, for preserving the gains of Socialism, is simultaneously a battle for international working class, for all people fighting for freedom.

The unconquerable people of Vietnam were aided in their struggle by the valuable help from the Soviet Union, from the People's Republic of China, from all Socialist countries, from the working class and people of the world, by the American people themselves. The great banner of proletarian internationalism guided all sections to do their duty.

The result of this heroic struggle is the Paris Agreement which marked a big victory for the people of Vietnam, for the forces for freedom in the world.

But the imperialists cannot forget their habits. The United States Government has been hatching neo-colonialist plans and intervening in the internal affairs of South Vietnam. Instead of

withdrawing to the last man the military personnel illegally left behind in the guise of American "civilian advisors", it continues its aid to the military clique of Nguyen Van Thieu.

Whatever resistance the imperialists and their stooges put up, they will not be allowed to break the agreement; they will have to implement it—that is the demand of the working class and the progressive forces in India.

The glorious achievements of the people of Vietnam were achieved because of the correct leadership of the Workers' Party and the Government of the D.R.V.

Friends, Dear Workers, our working class stands in amazement not only over your military heroism, it also is deeply moved by your production heroism, which enabled you to keep the wheels of industry running.

The rapid pace of economic restoration after the barbarous raids by B52s and F-111 dropping "Smart Bombs" could not have been achieved without marvellous production work by the working class and the people. The workers following the line of the Party of the working people quickly effected the evacuation and dispersal of industries and inflicted yet another defeat on the American imperialists.

Thanks to quick repair work, you were able to double the electricity output this year compared with the same period of last year. The rapid return of machinery from evacuation plants, their re-assembly and quick commissioning you have enable the vital engineering industry to forge ahead. You have voluntarily increased by 15 to 20 per cent the the targets of production in many industries.

Peace hath her victories no less important than war. This mighty production effort of a people under the most devastating bombing, ths great saga of building socialism, will for ever be remembered by toiling people all over the world.

There is no doubt that soon the entire Vietnam will be free from the foul agression of American imperialism and its stooges; that a united people will refashion the country and take it to prosperity along the path of socialism.

There is no doubt that the valiant people of Laos and Cambodia, of the entire Indo-China will be able to breathe freely having thrown out the American agressors and their puppets.

Comrades, the working class and the progressive section in

India consider it their bounden duty to help in every possible way the people of Vietnam.

Let met offer you again my feeling of solidarity and friendship and wish you success in the battle to free Vietnam from imperialist and build a United Vietnam. Let me wish complete success to the deliberations of your Conference which will no doubt inspire the trade unions and the working class to play a still more glorious role in a gigantic task of rehabilitation, Socialist reconstruction and advance.

May the fraternal solidarity between the working class of Vietnam and of India grow stronger every day!

May the banner of International proletarian unity grow stronger every day!

May it continue to lead the fight against American imperialism!

28

Presidential Address

General Council Meeting, 4-7 April 1974, Vishakhapatnam

Comrades,

We are meeting a year after our Conference in Ernakulam. You know the reason for the delay. I do not therefore wish to deal with them.

At the outset on behalf of all of you, I offer my homage to the memory of our beloved Comarde Muzaffar Ahamad, the great pioneer of the Communist movement, member of the Central Committee of the CPI (M) and a builder of our trade union movement and founder of the kisan movement.

I offer my homage to the memory of all those who fell fighting for the working class in recent battles.

Comrades, The emergency is used to attack our movement. Thousands are being held in prison for years in Congress jails, under detention without trial or framed up criminal charges. Our organisation demands an end to the Emergency and release of all political prisoners.

On behalf of all of you, I raise my voice of protest against gangster attacks against our trade unions in W. Bengal. Our offices continue to be occupied, hundreds of workers are not allowed to attend to their jobs and earn their livelihood. The entire trade union movement must demand an end to the Government supported gangsterism and call for restoration of trade union liberties in West Bengal.

Comrades, you all know about the invitation extended to us by the Federation of Vietnamese Trade unions to attend their Third

Congress and that I was deputed to represent our organisation. I have written about the Conference in our "Working Class." I am also circulating a report of what I saw in Hanoi. I am sure the General Council will express its thanks for the invitation and send a warm fraternal message to the Federation wishing its success in its struggle for completely freeing Vietnam, for building the Socialist North, and fulfilling its leading role in the task of Socialist industrialisation.

New Situation

Comrades, the international picture since we met last in our Conference has considerably changed in favour of the working class. The Paris Agreement which was just signed then not only constituted a big defeat of American imperialism, but it came in the midst of explosive economic situation created by the deepening of the general crisis of capitalism. Devaluation of currencies and above all, dollar devaluations, currency war, piratical attempts to capture markets, balance of payments difficulties and finally mounting inflation in the midst of stagnation—these were already in evidence when the Americans had to retreat in Vietnam. They have been intensified in the last year exposing the instability and bankruptcy of the capitalist system and leading to widespread working class actions in the capitalist world.

Last year, the cost of living in Japan increased by nearly 20 per cent, in Britain, the inflation rate was 12 per cent. In 1974, the rate is expected to rise further to 15 per cent. The jump in food prices has been 20 per cent in the year with a record balance of trade deficit 234 million. In the USA, the cost of consumer goods rose by 9.4 per cent last year, the largest annual increase in two decades. For 1974, the food prices are expected to rise from 8 to 16 per cent in the year while the prices of cereals, bakery products and bread may mount up by 20 per cent.

Italy, West Germany etc. show similar trends. In West Germany, the price of bread rose by 8 per cent and vegetable by 16 per cent in January. The cost of living index went up by 10.3 per cent in the month. As a result, pay rise are reduced to nil. In France, the situation is no less worse. In March 21, the French Finance Minister had to announce a series of anti-inflation measures saying the economic situation "is much more difficult than is believed, much than is thought." He said that the country's national product rate would fall to 3.6 per cent, this year from last year's 6.6 per cent. The

balance of payments deficit it expected to be 3,600 million dollars. The annual rate of inflation in France is estimated to be 18 per cent. The French Prime Minister admitted that the new measures will have serious consequences on the French living standards.

Increasing Unemployment

In the U.S.A. industrial production has been declining in December and January—in the last month it fell by 8 per cent. Unemployment has been increasing and has been intensifed further by the energy crisis. The number of unemployed exceeds five million.

The rate of unemployment had reached 5.2 per cent because of economic slow down and may increase by half a million because of the energy crisis according to Labour Department spokesmen.

Britain has now more than two and a half million people without any work at the end of December and the Finance Minister estimated that their number would further increase this year and that "it will be necessary to fight unemployment more than ever." The number of unemployed in Italy has topped the million mark and is also rising in Scandinavian countries.

The strike struggle in these countries have been inevitably rising. The heroic struggle of the British miners against wage freeze, against attempt to pass on the burden of the crisis to the workers toppled the Conservative Government in Britian. In February civil servants, postal workers, and railway men among them went on strike for the first time in the history of the F.R.G. Two lakh and fifty thousand workers confronted with the Government they had voted for and forced an increase of 11 per cent in wages from it. Twenty million workers went on strike in Italy in early part of last year. And in Paris, on March 21, this year strikers dislocated bank, railway, and air services, blacked out stores and offices and snarled traffic throughout Paris in widespread demands for higher wages to meet soaring prices. The new "anti-inflation" measures of the Govt. were denounced as "tantamount to a declaration of war against the workers" and "an anti-wages plan, not an anti-inflation plan."

This growing collapse brought about by the general crisis of capitalism, has revived memories of the Great depression of 1930 and produced the following comment from Irving Friedman, former Chief Economist at the World Bank, "I cannot logically dispute the view that the natural consequences of the present

process is a global price surge that causes all confidence to collapse, investment in production tools to shrink in favour of gold or food and the birth of a hideous world depression." (March 25)

Watergate

It is not only the credibility of the economic system that is cracking down. Its political credibility is also strained to utmost with the Nixon scandal in the USA, the citadel of capitalism.

Today the Centre of world attention is the Watergate scandal and crime in which the American President and his retinue appear as criminals, committing one crime after another. They invade individual freedom, orgainse burglaries to gather incriminating material against their critics, raid houses, send spies into opposition parties to gather blackmailing material, raise money for election purposes illegally and submit fraudulent accounts.

As if this list of crimes was not enough Nixon topped them by starting underhand war against Cambodia, concealed it from the Congress and submitted false returns about bombings which completely misled the House and the Senate. Thus under the American democracy neither the people nor the Congress have the real right to say yes or no to a war against another country. How correct was Lenin when he said : "Take any country from America to Switzerland...in these countries, the real business of 'State' is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, Chancellories and general staffs. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people'". The Watergate scandal has further revealed that the General Staff was spying on the doings of the President and his foreign department.

Inner Conflicts

Sharp economic conflicts have broken out among the three Centres of imperialism—the EEC, USA and Japan. Contradictions have been developing among the EEC countries also.

The oil crisis accentuated contradictions among all the imperialist partners. This was particularly shown during the Oil Conference called by the USA. So sharp was the conflict between France and other EEC members that bourgeois journals feared the question facing the community is whether it can survive. But the American attempts to knock Europe into a block against the Middle East and block all bilateral deals between oil producing and oil consuming countries do not appear to have succeeded and a clause blocking such deals had to be abandoned.

The failure to make Europe toe the line led to Nixon's threatening outburst on 16th march cancelling his European visit. "The European cannot have it both ways. They cannot have the U.S. participation and co-operation on the security front and proceed to have confrontation and even hostility on the economic and political front."

While these developments lead to sharpening of class struggles in capitalist countries, the intensification of the national liberation movement (Arabs), upsetting of Govts. in capitalist countries (Britain), it also leads to manoeuvres on the part of American imperialists and others to keep their grip on the changing situation.

Detente

The growing economic rivalries are leading to contradictions over a wide field including foreign policy and each centre is trying to develop its own version of relationship with the Socialist countries. The detente between the USA and the USSR, between the former and the People's China are important developments understood as changes in imperialist manoeuvres born out of the increased strength of the Socialist world, rising national liberation struggles, weakness of the imperialist camp and its hope that it will enable imperialists to pursue its aggressive designs elsewhere and take advantages of differences in Socialist Camp. The agreement over Berlin, the acceptance of the frontiers created by last war, constitute important developments. But all talk that these developments introduce a new era of peace is misleading and objectively helps to conceal imperialist manoeuvres.

Nhan Dhan correctly wrote: "The imperialists pursue a policy of detente with some big countries in the world in order to have a free hand to consolidate their forces, oppose the revolutionary movements in the world, repress the revolution in their own countries and stampout national liberation movements while never giving up their preparations for a new war."

We must, therefore, guard against the false propaganda of revisionists like the AITUC leaders who propagate that we have entered a new period of international peaceful development.

If Chile showed the treacherous conspiracies of American imperialism while talking of detente, the October war between Israel and Arab Nations showed that it is compelled to manoeuvre before the irrespressible liberation urge of the people and yield ground while saving its client. It still continues to play an obstructive game

in Syria.

The oil war waged by the oil producing countries has introduced another element in the struggle against imperialism, effective use of natural resources by erstwhile colonies against the metropolitan powers, sending wave of crisis after crisis to the imperialist countries.

Correct Outlook

Comrades, it is necessary to understand these developments because without it we can neither discharge our international duty nor carry our own struggle with a correct outlook. There is a tendency in our movement to conduct our struggle without reference to the big economic achievements of the Socialist countries. Is it not a matter of pride to us that while the entire capitalist world is groaning under inflationary burden, the Socialist economies are free from price rise? There is also a tendency to forget that internationally our main enemy is American imperialism—the enemy who carries on massacres in Vietnam, who organises coup in Chile and massacres hundreds of revolutionaries. This international enemy has to be fought on our soil by concretely exposing and frustrating its designs.

American Imperialism At Work

American Imperialism has taken quick steps to regain its lost initiative on the Sub-Continent. By pouring aid in Bangladesh, by pretending to be very friendly and helpful it is trying to create a new image for itself and its agents are busy sowing enemity between India and Bangladesh. Some ractionaries in Bangladesh have become outspoken enough to attack the Govt. for keeping friendly relations with the Soviet Union and are also appealing to religious fanaticism.

Simultaneously, the USA Govt. is arming the Shah of Iran and other Gulf rulers feverishly, satisfying all their demands for phantom jets, and sophisticated weaponry. This is directed against Soviet influence, intended to counter the Arab democratic regimes and assume the reactionary military circles in Pakistan in their anti-Indian game. This old game of making Asians fight Asians is again on. Simultaneously, it is strengthening and completing a chain of military bases from the African Coast to Australian across the Indian Ocean, as in Diego Garcia Island, as well as new naval and air bases in Iran's Coast close to Pakistan.

All these constitute a danger to the freedom of the people of

India and the Sub-Continent. The base at Diego Garcia has raised wide protest from a number of countries, but our trade union movement has not seen the danger. In the interest of our people and the working class of the Sub-Continent we must sharply raise our voice against these American conspiracies and rouse our people against them.

Bangladesh Recognition

We are happy that the Pakistan Govt. has at last recognised Bangladesh. We send our fraternal greetings to the working class of Pakistan and Bangladesh and express confidence that the three proletarian wings will work unitedly for fraternal relations between the three peoples, for proletarian solidarity and for frustrating the American imperialist game to develop tensions in the Sub-Continent and make Asians fight Asians. Such common understanding and action are essential because the imperialists and reactionaries are already busy hunting out new issues to keep the plot boiling. It is our mutual duty to support each other's struggles for democracy and civil liberties, so that the voice of the people prevails in shaping the foreign policy of our countries.

Rising Struggle

The whole of last year, the working class, our CITU and the people have in one place or another been leading mass protests against the burden of high prices, unemployment, food shortages. Big bandhs against rising prices and unemployment in W. Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Tripura were organised in many States unitedly with other organisations. Behind the organised working class and employees are now rallying all sections of the people and the united protests become the starting point of wide democratic struggles. In some States, broad-based anti-prise rise committees are being organised in which trade unions, political parties, employees', women's and students' organisations participate. In States where the left and the democratic parties are not strong, the initiative taken by the organised trade union movement co-ordinates popular protests against Govt. policies and gives them a democratic direction, preventing their distortion by the Right reactionary parties.

The militant struggle of the valiant people of Gujarat against Congress-imposed starvation, high prices and corruption, its unabated continuance for more than two months has not only written a glorious page of popular resistance to Congress rule but

has also underlined the transformation brought about by continued suffering of the people. Every effort was made to suppress it in cold blood. It was maligned as the design of reaction. All leaders were arrested. The leaders of the CITU were detained under the MISA.

Young boys and girls were beaten and tortured by the police. Men and women were beaten in their homes. All major towns were put under endless curfew. The Army was called to suppress the people. Nearly hundred people were massacred.

But the Indira Government reckoned without the new spirit of resistance. The students, the employees' organisations, the State employees all remained firm. The people directed their anger against seats of oppression and exploitation; against institutions which represent richness and exploitation and the Government called it looting.

Bloodbath having failed, and with indignant protests from all over the country against the repression in Gujarat, the Indira Government had to bow down and admit an ignoble defeat before the people. A legislature with an overwhelming Congress majority has to be dissolved because of popular struggle and withdrawal of the mandate. This is the first instance of its kind.

It is an important political victory, victory of a principle. A legislature completely out of tune with the people and wallowing in the cess-pool of corruption has no right to continue, whatever the Constitution might say. This principle has been asserted. The extra-parliamentary force has prevailed over parliamentary process. It is the popular method of asserting electorate's right to recall its representatives.

In March, in Bihar, once again under the auspices of same Students' Committees mass protests and demonstrations were organised leading to police firings and shooting down of 20 people. Once again, curfew was clamped on a number of cities including Patna and atrocities were perpetrated on the people. The people retaliated by attacking houses of ministers, Government offices and property and seats of oppression.

It is good to remember Lenin, "The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which ALL the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and

most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money; there were speculators and adventures, etc. But OBJECTIVELY, the mass movement was breaking the back of tsarism, and paving the way for democracy; for this reason, the class conscious workers led." (P. 356, Vol. 22)

In this background of the food and anti-price rise and anti-unemployment struggle developing into a popular movement embracing the widest spectrum of society, the organised trade union movement must play its role of initiator and guide and see that it is directed in democratic channels. Failure will mean handing over the movement to the spontaneous consciousness or to the demagogic reactionaries.

The New Budgets

Comrades, the budgets of the Central Govt. and the State Govts. show that there is to be no respite from price extortion and food shortages. The mismanagement of the economy in the interest of the capitalist landlord classes has brought the country near to economic disaster. The inflationary crisis in capitalist countries, to whom our economy remains tied, is accentuating the situation further. The rise in oil prices further accentuated the foreign exchange crisis. The high food prices in the world, —since we have to import food because of our failure to commandeer the stocks of the landlords—make huge demand on the dwindling foreign exchange resources and leading the country to beg for more and more foreign loans and more and more foreign dependence. The tall talk of self-reliance has vanished in thin air. The World Bank knowing India's plight has advertised her bankruptcy and announced that India would need foreign aid of not less than 12.1 billion dollars (12,100 million) in place of 5 billion estimated by the Planners for the five year period.

Thus not only high prices, food famine and mass unemployment will continue but the Congress regime has created the menace of further foreign loans and a danger of economic domination. This is what confronts the working class the people hitherto engaged in somehow defending their livelihood against price onslaught. Now the fight for more increased dearness allowance has become meaningless unless the workers are able to defeat the policies which create inflation and also are ready to fight against economic dependence.

Unemployment

Comrades, the struggle against inflation has also brought before the country the question of mass unemployment. Registered urban unemployment has reached the colossal figure of 82 lakhs. Rural unemployment is estimated to have reached more than 25 million. The number of educated unemployed is near 4 million. By June 1973, it was 35 lakhs. Between June 1972-1973, registered unemployment rose by 33.5 per cent. A whole nation is being reduced to the status of destitute.

There is no relief, no relaxation unless the right to work and pending it the right to unemployment wage is legally secured.

The official index of wholesale prices has registered an increase of 27 per cent in 1973 over the previous year, while the increase in the price of necessaries of life in the retail market has ranged between 50 to 70 per cent and in a few cases even 100%.

Every necessity of life—foodgrains, sugar, oil, vegetables, fish, milk, fuel, has gone beyond the reach of the common man. Deliberate marching inflation combined with small and big shortages have placed the people's livelihood completely under the control of landlords, food speculators, blackmarketeers whom the Govt. dares not offend and who are among its patrons. In last two years, general price increased by 42 per cent and food prices by 47 per cent.

The 1974-75 budget estimates the deficit at Rs. 125 crores which is farcically low considering that several important items like food subsidy has been deliberately understated.

It is therefore not surprising in the least that according to a survey conducted by the All India Consumers' Council, within 10 days of the presentation of the budget, even before the new taxation proposals have come into effect, retail prices of mass consumption goods have risen between 20 to 50 per cent.

There is absolutely nothing in the budget which is anti-inflationay. It conceals the real extent of deficit financing; raises taxes on many articles of common consumption like kerosene; imposes imposts leading to increase in railway freight charges on almost all commodities including coal and passenger fares including third class fares—all of which is bound to move prices forward. Besides, the State Governments levely an additional taxation of Rs. 250 to 300 crores.

While fleecing the people through additional taxation and in-

creased price burdens, the budget grants relief to people with high incomes. It grants steep reduction in personal income-tax to top sections under the plea that it would stop tax evasion.

Appeasement of Landlords

Neither the state budgets nor the Central Budget make any attempt to levy any burden on the landlords who are fleecing the people.

Not only no fiscal measures are taken against the landlord incomes, there is complete failure to procure their surplus stocks and people are placed at their mercy. The pitifully low target of 6.5 million kharif grains could not be reached. Now wheat take over is being officially disbanded and the blackmarketing prices of Rs. 100 to 115 per quintal are being agreed to by the Government. The Govt. dares not commandeer the surplus stocks of the landlords to meet the needs of the people. The freedom to wholesale trade to speculate, the high prices sanctioned and the not so good rabi harvest all will intensify the misery of the people and take food beyond their reach.

It is this dependence on foreign loans that compels the Government to pay fantastic rates of compensation to foreign Companies like ESSO in the name of taking over.

It is necessary for the trade union movement to raise the demand for the nationalisation of foreign oil companies and other monopoly concerns without compensation.

The working class must also be made to understand that the food crisis is the direct result of landlord's monopoly of land and so long as the workers do not wage a relentless struggle for abolishing this monopoly and turns land to the landless and agricultural labourers, they will continue to starve and remain at the mercy of landlords and speculators. The present food crisis must lead to a powerful alliance of workers and peasants for ousting the entire land of all those who own wet land above ten acres and dry above 20 to 30 acres and distributing it to the landless and agricultural labourers.

Commandeer Stocks

At the same time it should be realised that there is absolutely no reason why lakhs should starve today. It is official policies of succumbing to the landlord and the wholesaler that is forcing high prices and starvation on the people. All surplus stocks of landlords should be commandeered, exorbitant prices should not be given

and the peasants should be given an extra incentive price. This will put sufficient stocks in the hands of the Government and it will enable supply of half a kilo of cereals per day for every adult.

Along with this we must raise the demands for need-based wage. As you have seen the inflationary measures have made a mockery of dearness allowance. Unless there is a firm guarantee of need based wage, the living condition of the working class cannot be protected. The Government and its henchmen make it appear that the demand is outrageous in present day Indian conditions, and pit the worker against the agricultural worker. The landlords make it a question of city vs village for they fully know that every advance of the working class in cities will encourage the agricultural workers to push forward their demands.

The need based wage is an elementary democratic right of the working class, it alone will protect him against the vagaries of inflation and the nearer the working class reaches it, the near will come of the collapse of this system whose economic standards are based on old colonial standards.

Against these conditions the workers have been waging one struggle after another from Kerala to Bengal, from Bengal to Bombay and Punjab. The textile strikes of Tamilnadu and Bombay, the jute strike of Calcutta, the strikes of agricultural workers of Kerala, Tamilnadu and other States, the strikes of loco and other railway men, show incessant activity of the working class.

An action of the loco workers in NFR against breach of promise by the management and of the Rly. Guards constitute the latest instances of the surge for struggle among the railway workers.

The movement against high prices, for assertion of minimum economic rights has become all embracing. NGOs, LIC employees, IAC employees Doctors, Engineers, Professors and Teachers have struck work, isolating the Govt. and often winning many victories and advances.

A new feature revealed in the course of these struggles has to be noted and the trade union movement must unitedly fight against it. The prolonged character of working class struggles and the loss of mandays often results from the vindictive use of lock-outs by the capitalists.

Dr. Nag, W. Bengal Labour Minister speaking in the State Assembly on 21st March on work stoppages in 1973 said that there was a rising tendency in the number of mandays lost and the major

percentages of such work stoppages were accounted for by "managements' aggressive action by way of lockout." He said as many as 345,480 mandays were lost owing to situation precipitated by non-implementation of settlements and awards by the managements.

Government Imitates Employers

A recent feature is that the Government has started imitating the worst employers and resorting to lockout to starve the workers into submission. The Lockout in the Indian Airlines Corporation with hundreds denied their earned wages was imposed in the style of the private employers. Under the pressure of starvation, the employees were compelled to surrender individually all trade union rights and accept managements' claims to deal arbitrarily with workers' living conditions as if the workers were chattel.

The same methods were tried in the LIC where hundreds were locked out and where services of the labour lieutenants of the Government like those from the revisionists were hired out to break the resistance of the workers.

The terms of settlement which the IAC authorities asked the Union to sign left nothing unsaid.

The memorandum of settlement demands that the workers agree to observe constitutional means and eschew agitational steps and/or concerted action or any other means which may have the effect of interrupting or disrupting the Corporation work, etc.

This is demanded when the fundamental rights are not yet abrogated under the Constitution. What remains of trade unionism if you cannot agitate, if you cannot take concerted decisions and action, cannot bargain concertedly. Since when agitational steps have become unconstitutional? This is a demand to agree to banning of all propaganda, agitation, strike, a demand that each individual worker may individually represent his case but not in union with his fellow workers.

Consistently with this outlook, the authorities claim arbitrary rights to alter the working conditions of the workers. The memorandum lays down "The workmen concede that there are certain fundamental management functions as enumerated below"—The management from time to time shall lay down the duties and responsibilities of each category of workmen and the workmen shall perform all such duties and all duties incidental and ancillary thereto—The establishment strength including both the number

and designation of posts in the various categories and grades shall be determined by the management—The management will promote employees only when it is neccessary to fill up a vacancy in a higher cadre and that too, on the basis of suitability cum seniority.

No worker shall be entitled to take leave as matter of right unless it is sanctioned by a competent authority. Privileged leave shall be admissible on not more than three occassions in the financial year. Any workman may be required to avail such PL as the sanctioning authority may decide on giving him reasonable notice. If leave so offered, is not available of by the workman, he shall forfeit it and his leave account shall be debited accordingly.

What remains of trade unionism and collective bargaining after this?

The Government with nauseating hyprocrisy utters phrases about labour's participation in management while their nominees are doing their best to illegalise all trade unions rights and organised movement.

The trade union movement cannot allow this onslaught to suceed. It will be soon extended to unions in the public sector undertakings and then to workers in the private sector.

New Bill

In the light of this, what importance can be attached to the promise of the New Labour Relations Bill whose copy the Labour Minister seems to have sent to all business executives, but not to the CITU.

If press reports are any indication, the Bill includes new provision for recognition, registration, arbitration and efforts to have one union in one industry. We must be quite clear what these slogans mean for the Government. They do not mean the same to them that they mean to us. The Government looks upon the labour question primarily as a law and order question—this is its basic concept. Everything else provides a facade for keeping labour in control. This aspect we daily see when DIR and MISA are applied to working class struggles and workers are killed during strikes.

When the Government and its spokesman talk of one union in one industry they virtually mean that no union other than that approved by them, or controlled by the ruling party or its allies should have any legal existence. This is seen in their obstinate refusal on the Railways till compelled by repeated strikes, to negotiate with any one except the Federation, recognised by them.

That is why they will not accept a genuine ballot of workers but will always claim powers of verification to tilt the balance in favour of their favourites. And having done so they will demand that no other union can now function or be recognised. One union in one industry has no meaning unless the union follows democratic process, is based on the free will of the workers and not on the patronage of the employers and the Government.

All attempts to put new restrictions on the trade union movement in the name of avoiding the evils of multiplicity of unions will fail. The discontent and anger of the workers at the denial of their basic organisational right, their right to forge a weapon of their choice to enforce their demands, will only multiply in reply to such devices. The honest way will be to deal with unions possessing genuine following, instead of using soft union leaders to create disruption among the workers. This will lead to a rapid process of all genuine organisations working democratically coming together and lead to the bargaining agent. It should be realised besides that in the present day conditions in India, where the basic principle like needbased wage is not accepted. when every workers is not guaranteed a certain minimum at least and differentials in wages worked on that basis, the pull of sectional, categorywise and local conditions is bound to be strong, leading to corresponding organisational forms.

New Struggles

Comrades, We are in the midst of great trade union struggles. On the 9th of April, 4 million State employees will embark upon a united one day strike to protest against State Government failure to do justice to their demands. The State employees' conditions are far worse than the Central employees and their demands including parity of conditions with Central employees are just and our CITU fully supports them. It is to be noted that the employees as part of the people have given prominence to the demand for regular supply of food to people at reasonable prices.

Railway Strike

Comrades, another important development is the proposed all-India railway strike. The strike when it materialises will be a historic landmark in the trade union struggle and will immensely strengthen the struggle of all sections of workers and give a push forward to the democratic movement.

The conditions of railway workers are so harrowing that a

strike would have been justified long ago. But the treacherous reformist leadership which hitherto dominated the Federation saw to it that no resistance was organised.

The railway workers have been discriminated against in the matter of pay and living conditions. They railway wages have been far lower than in other industries. Various categories of skilled or semi-skilled or highly skilled staff do not get a wage corresponding to the minimum wage prevalent in many organised industries, private and public sector.

In spite of these discriminating conditions, with the real wage going down, the productivity of the railway workers has been rapidly increasing. The following figures from the official publication "Review of the Performance of Railways 1973-74" are eloquent:

	Traffic units (000) moved per employee on the open line
1950-51	122
1960-61	147
1970-71	186
1972-72	193
1972-73	200

In short, productivity has increased by 60 per cent since 1950-51. Each employee is contributing fifty per cent more in production effort than before. But his real wage has gone down. This is the meaning of his explanation, of the sweated Labour to which i.e., is subjected.

The same increased workload and sweated hours of work are to be found in workshop, imposed under the so-called incentive scheme. "Workshop repair output increased from about 335,000 equated broad gauge wagon units in 1957-58 to about 469,562 equated broad gauge wagon units in 1972-73, while staff strength came down from about 116,000 men in 1957-58 to about 111,634 men in 1972-73 of which 64,447 men are employed on other than rolling stock repairs...." It means with a reduction of 9 per cent in the staff, the workers are producing fifty per cent more than before.

The railway workers were chafing under these conditions of starvation wages and sweated labour. But the leaders of the recognised Federation refused to champion their cause and acted as a strike-breaking agency. But conditions became unbearable and large sections of workers began to break away from the two

Federations whose leadership was working hand in glove with the Railway Board..

The leadership of the two Railway Federations and the Railway Board united to malign and crush the rising discontent. But then the simmering discontent asserted inside the All India Railway men's Federation at its annual session in September. A demand came for a genuine call for strike action and one of the confirmed strike breaking leaders, Peter Alvares, President of the Federation was removed from the post and George Fernandes elected in his place.

A resolution for strike was passed and the delegates moved an amendment to the General Secretary's report calling that the AIRF should take initiative to call all railway organisations together.

There were prejudices and vacillations in other organisations also. Many of their leaders mindful of the past of the AIRF leaders, and some of them victims of narrow craft outlook wanted to hold off. But the urge for unity in the ranks broke down all resistance and all joined the historic convention of all Railway organisations called by the AIRF in Delhi on 27th February.

The Convention passed a resolution spelling out urgent demands including need-based wage, and immediate grant of a minimum of Rs. 260: It gave the 10th April as the time limit for negotiations. It appointed a co-ordinating committee of all organisations represented and a small executive Committee with two representatives from each organisations including the CITU (Com. Samar Mukherjee, Treasurer of CITU and Com. Nrisingha Chakraborty, Member of General Council represent us on the Committee.)

This unity which was eluding the railway workers for decades is an important and historic development. There is no doubt that much remains to be done to transform the unity achieved at the top into an impregnable unity at the bottom.

It is a matter of some satisfaction to us that our CITU comrades have played their part and an important and vital part in helping forward this unity, in fighting sectional prejudices and overcoming the reformist efforts to continue disruption.

Central Convention

The AIRF leaders also called a convention of all Central employees to explore the possibilities of co-ordinate action.

With the AIRF initiative a new impulse for action was given.

The general atmosphere was such that the revisionist wing of the Confederation and P & T also joined the convention and agreed to a unanimous resolution which though it has avoided the word "strike", calls upon all organisations to complete negotiations by 10th April—the time limit set by the AIRF. This unanimous resolution does help the Central employees though it is a moot question whether the reformist P & T wing will throw its full weight for common action.

However, Central employees' organisations and their leaders are earnestly endeavouring to co-ordinate their action with the railway workers and face the Government with the biggest working class action for need-based wage and other urgent demands.

This is one of the outstanding development that is taking place. The CITU and all its organisations are bound to throw their full strength in support of the struggle of the railway workers and Central employees. Our unions must help this vast section in daily propaganda and agitation, organise solidarity meetings and educate the public about the justness of their demands. It must call all sections of workers to stand solidly behind them and warn the Government against repressive measures.

29

Notes on visit to Hanoi

Placed at the General Council Meeting Vishakhapatnam April 1974

The CITU received an invitation from the Federation of Vietnam Trade Unions to send a delegation to attend the Third Congress of Vietnam Trade Unions. On behalf of our organisation, as decided by the Sectt. of the CITU, I represented the CITU at the Hanoi Congress.

It will be remembered, delegations from the Vietnam Trade Union Federation and the South Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions for Liberation, attended our All India Conference at Ernakulam in April 1973.

Our organisation and our movement felt honoured by this invitation of the revolutionary working class of Vietnam.

I reached Hanoi on 9th February in a Aeroflot plane which carried delegates from the USSR and countries of Europe, Middle East and Latin America and the AITUC delegate from India. They all had emplaned at Moscow.

Hanoi was the venue of the historic Congress. It is difficult to control your emotions when you land on the soil of Hanoi. For Hanoi has been the epicentre sending revolutionary shocks to American imperialism, shaking its foundations. It has been the symbol of world proletarian resistance to American imperialism.

No other city perhaps passed through such severe ordeals as Hanoi which along with Haiphong experienced the most devastating bombing raids by American bombers which spared nothing. The very aerodrome where we landed was blotted out of existence during the course of bombing.

The Railway Station near the Red River is now a mass of tangled metal and cement-with a few cement pillars standing erect, the symbol of the unbending resistance of the people of Hanoi. The bridge over the river was partly destroyed but was as quickly repaired. In the zoo, there stand the remains of an American bomber. The March 8th Textile Factory run by women displays repaired roofs, damaged walls and a whole line of underground shelters. But these are just the last vestings of a destruction that was rained on a devastating scale to bring Hanoi to submission. Hanoi gave its revolutionary answer to this flood of bombs and as heroically repaired the vast damage to residence and working class houses.

To Hanoi came delegates from 28 fraternal countries from proletarian centres to greet the Historic Congress. They arrived on the 9th February and were received at the airport by the President of the Federation of Vietnam Trade Unions, Com. Hoang Quoc Viet, Vice-President, Nguen Cong Hoa, Vice-President Mrs. Truong Thi My, Secretariat member, Le Van; Head of the International Department of the Federation, Nguyen Thuyet and other leaders of the Federation.

The foreign delegates represented the World Federation of Trade Unions, the trade unions of the USSR, People's Republic of Mongolia, Democratic Republic of Korea, Cuba, Albenia, Roumania, Hungary, Poland, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, France and Italy. From India, there were two delegations-Syria, Palestine, Morocco, Iraq and Algeria and International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions were represented. And from Latin America, besides Cuba, there were delegates from fighting Chile and Peru. The trade unions of Japan were represented by the SOHYO.

The South Vietnam Federation of Labour sent a powerful delegation which consisted of working class guerrilla fighters. Fighting Laos and Cambodia still engaged in a life and death struggle with American imperialism completed the team of the fraternal organisations greeting the Congress.

The Conference was to start on the 11th. On the 9th and 10th, we were free to go about to visit places of interest and revolutionary importance.

On the 9th afternoon, we started on an itinerary. When you move in Hanoi, you are surprised. You ask yourself the question: was this the city, are these the people who only a year back were facing the most devastating bombing? They have for the most part

removed the signs of vast destruction and resumed their constructive efforts.

We first went to see a University of feudal times. It was a great place of learning and perhaps founded in 11th century. It was the first University of feudal Vietnam. In those days, it produced very talented men; almost all known literary figures of those days including poets, statesmen, diplomats, were products of this University. It was customary to inscribe the names of those who passed the examination on stone monuments there. They include almost all famous names. Hundreds of such monuments were there but the foreign invaders destroyed them. The practice of inscribing names continued till the 19th Century. Here also, they have kept the relics which were found near Hanoi, which date back the civilisation to 4,000 years. Stone tools, bronze ploughs, and other instruments including potteries formed the rich ancient heritage of modern Hanoi. There are several gates to the University, inviting all to come and learn. There was a hall there where poems were recited by new poets. Modern Hanoi takes just pride in this University of olden times which produced the literary figures and cultural builders of those days.

Next we were taken to Hanoi Zoo. There apart from animals including what we call royal Bengal tigers, the biggest attraction is the remnants of a B42 bomber brought down in December 1972. It is a monument to the 1,000 bombers brought down and a flag is there showing how many bombers and Phantom jets have been smashed by the freedom fighters. The conductor there was explaining all this with great pride and was telling us how more than two dozen bombs from this bomber were buried deep underground and how difficult it was to take them out and defuse them. Only a few have been brought out and defused.

Next we went to Park Unification. It is a grand project, stretching over wide area; with a beautiful lake. The project was conceived and named in 1954, when it was thought that unification was round the corner. It was built by voluntary labour done in spare time.

In the evening in our Hotel, the Vice-President of the Federation, Trang Dan Thieu gave a dinner to us and made a speech. The Vice-President spoke about the Vietnamese struggle and the rehabilitation efforts that they were making. He said the railway station was completely bombed out, airport was completely destroyed. They wanted to destroy the industry, but it was evacuated. There-

fore, they attacked schools and hospitals. Our childern therefore hate the Americans, also our women had to bear the double burden of fighting the war as well as of looking after childern. They also hate the Americans. Our Comrade Ho Chi Minh talked about one in two. Women did that work, both of looking after childern and looking after war. Then he told that in a few months we would be calling a Vietnamese Women's Conference. He said that the Deputy Commander in Chief of South Vietnam Liberation Forces who is a woman, would be attending the Conference. Her name is Nguyen Thi Dinh. She is also Chairman of Liberation of Women's Association. He said that in South Vietnam, there are women's battalions. They are known as long-haired battalions and they have struck terror among the enemy, due to their sudden attacks in the front and the rear.

On the 10th morning, we visited the revolutionary Museum. The Comarde Director explained to us that the French conquest was completed in 1858 but resistance started from 1860 itself. The museum showed how the earlier patriots were tortured, instruments of torture and pillory were all there. One of the earliest resistances of this period was the revolt of the men and women Coal miners. It was because of disease caused by the gases from the oil lamps which the miners had to use under-ground. This led to fighting in many places. There are pieces showing the life of Ho Chi Minh, whose village house is shown. There is a group photo of the participants in the founding of the Communist Party of France at Tours Congress. His signature is there on the foundation declaration of the Communist International and his profession is given as photo worker. He was the first Marxist-Leninist of Vietnam. It was he who taught the Vietnam people that freedom was possible in alliance with the international working class movement and internally, he taught them the importance of the workers' & peasants' alliance. The publications connected with this are shown in the museum, including his pamphlets. There is also a photo of the first Secretary of the Party. He died in prison in 1931. Documents regarding the formation of the Communist Party, recognition by the Communist international in 1935, building up of U.G. Party and U.G. mass organisations, Party pamphlets and literature translation of Lenin's Works, then Marx's Capital, then the first T.U. paper—all these are there. The primitive weapons with which the freedom fighters first fought the French and then the Japanese are

also kept. Knives, sickles, home made guns and so on. The whole story of Dien Bien Phu, story of Bao Dai's exit is shown. There is also a photo of Nixon as Vice-President who went to South Vietnam to bolster the old regime. The uprisings of 1945 throughout the country are shown also with the forging of primitive weapons, etc. Then the barbarities committed by the French, rice was taken to the factories to be burnt as fuel so that people could be starved; lakhs of people died due to starvation. Then Party gave a call to confiscate these rice stocks. It is also shown how people took away the machines from these factories to produce for the revolution. Then the declaration of the Democratic Republic is there and of the Workers' Party. The small attache case with which Ho Chi Minh came from abroad with all his belongings, an attache case which could hardly have contained a couple of clothes is shown. The picture of the cave in which he stayed in the topmost mountain is also there, and the things that he used there. The first orgainsed military unit, its picture is also shown. There are pictures depicting the barbarities in south Vietnam. One of the party leaders was a prisoner in the tiger cage where they were all kept naked and only a coconut fibre vessel was given to them. He sent small rings made out of this coconut fibre as a token of the loyalty of the prisoners to the Party. Then the victory day comes. The way to Socialist China is open, Chiang's 18,000 troops beaten back. Britain's efforts also beatenback. New laws come in, land reforms started—all these are shown. The gifts by patriots and working class of world in support of Vietnam are displayed. 57 T.U. organisations of the world sent banners signed in support of Vietnam. There is a banner in Bengali saying 'Amar Nam Vietnam'. The Director drew my attention to it. Then there is a photograph of Ho Chi Minh planting trees and his favourite saying, To be happy plant trees. Ho always liked the song of unity and there is a photo showing him leading an orchestra and the song of unity being played and the baton with which he led the orchestra is also left there.

After this, we went to see the 8th March Factory, which employs 5,000 workers. It is a cotton textile factory with automatic machines. 75 per cent of workers are women. The Manager, Director, Secretary, almost all are women. They conducted us and madespeeches introducing us to labour heroines, young vivacious women. The name 8th March Factory was given because when it was being projected an international gathering to observe the 30th

Anniversary of the International Women's Day (8th March) was held in Hanoi and the name was suggested in honour of it. It was started in 1965. Within a few months, attacks and bombings started and the whole factory had to be evacuated. The work was done by women employees. Machines saved and production started elsewhere. Then it goes back to Hanoi, again reassembled, again Nixon's bombings take place, then militia from workers was formed to defend the factory. Some parts were evacuated. America wanted to bomb out the main production building. Defence was put up by the workers. The Americans then concentrated on stores building, workers' quarters, but the main factory was saved. Workers' children, families all were saved, but some were killed. The devastation wrought by a 1,000 lb. bomb could be seen even now. Several thousand tons of rubble are there, consisting of cement and steel. Almost everything is laid low in one part. Some parts of the main buildings were also suffered under attack. Blown up roofs are now repaired, gaping holes in walls, have been sealed, parts are rebuilt. Even now there is a system of underground shelters which is 6 km. in length.

After the last bombing in December 1972, the factory again returned, machines re-assembled, and production started. 1973 quota of production is over-fulfilled and the Factory has earned one month's bonus. Parliament has decorated the factory 2-3 times for bravery in defence and production. The woman director told us that even now they have to be ready for attack. Underground shelters are kept ready for use and in the meanwhile production marches up and up. Production of cloth, dyeing and printing of cloth done here. The Director told me that their machine now prints ten colours at a time.

On the 13th & the first half of the 14th, the foreign delegations did not attend the Congress sessions. The Vietnam delegates discussed the documents in these three sessions. The foreign delegates were sent to tour other places and other cities. I along with others went to Haiphong, where we were received by the Vice-President of the Federation and given presents. Haiphong waterside showed little traces of destruction except one or two destroyed ships. Eveything else was cleared. We were told that a six kilometre area near Haiphong was literally ploughed with hundreds of bombs and everything razed to ground. Nothing standing remained there. The area has been cleared and is being rebuilt.

We saw a cement factory near Haiphong where we were received. Every effort was made to destroy it completely. But the workers defended it heroically. Signs of destruction, repairs can be visibly seen. New improvisations to start the running of the factory have been made. Four units have started producing, two with the help of Romanian Government and two already commissioned by the Vietnamese.

The delegates were provided with relaxation also. One day, we were taken to Vietnamese circus; second day, to a cultural programme of songs and dances and another day to witness a football match.

I do not wish to give in detail the proceedings of the Congress, as I have already dealt with them in the Working Class. I wish to emphasize certain important points.

The Third Congress was meeting in the background of the great spectacular victory of the Vietnamese people against American imperialism.

The Paris agreement which compelled the U.S. imperialists to accept withdrawal of the American forces from South Vietnam, recognised the two administrations and three political forces, recognised the Vietnamese right to national self-determination was one of the biggest defeats of American imperialism. It was a big victory of the camp of Socialism, of the world working class on the soil of Vietnam.

The task before the Congress was how to enable the trade unions to play their role in freeing South Vietnam, in completing the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam, secure full implementation of the Paris Agreement and in fulfilling the objectives of the Second Five Year Plan to advance to large-scale socialist industrialisation in North Vietnam.

Ever ready and vigilant against fresh American attacks, the workign class has to shoulder these tasks to reach its goal of unification of the country to establish united prosperous socialist Vietnam.

The Conference started with the inaugural speeches of President Ton Duc Thang, head of the State and Prime Minister Pham Van Dong of the Government heading the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, disclosing the close relationship between trade unions and the Government.

The proceedings of the Conference revealed that the working

class of Vietnam stood as the vanguard of the entire people through its unity, leadership and colossal sacrifices in the cause of the country; that the Workers' Party had already emerged as the vanguard party of the working class through its unerring Marxist-Leninist leadership over a number of years, tactics. The name of Comrade Ho Chi Minh, the first Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist is constantly associated with these achievements of the party which led the people through war and peace, through armed guerrilla struggle, big battles and political, military and diplomatic struggles to victory. Leadership is not established otherwise.

This was seen when the Congress was greeted by the representatives of the armed forces—People's Liberation Army. Their representatives assured the Trade Unions, "loyal to the Party", faithful to the people, we will carry out our assignments. We will defend the country and carry out the tasks given to us by the Central Committee of Workers' Party".

The same faith in the leadership of the working class was expressed by the collective farmers who greeted the Congress. Their representatives said: "The working class and peasantry are twin brothers. Com. Ho Chi Minh taught us peasants can be liberated only when they followed the leadership of the working class. For the last thirty years, we have followed this advice. The alliance of workers and peasants has worked victory after victory during the last three decades. We are now organising the emulation movement (Socialist competition) in our production co-operatives".

This alliance and leadership was forged in the course of armed warfare against French, Japanese and American imperialism.

The speeches of fraternal delegations also emphasised the leading role of the working class, its party and its ideology, Marxism-Leninism. V. E. Bogatikov greeting the Congress on behalf of the Trade Unions of Soviet Union congratulated the people of Vietnam, condemned American imperialists' doings in South Vietnam and said the working people of the USSR and Vietnam are united in Marxism-Leninism and internationalism. He referred to the moral and material help which the USSR was giving to Vietnam including power plants and other material goods.

People's China did not send any delegate. But a message was sent on behalf of the Association for friendship with Foreign Peoples which said:

"The Association sends its warm greetings to the Congress and hails the Vietnam people for defeating American aggressors. It is a big victory. The Vietnam people are defending revolutionary achievements and building economy. Under the leadership of the Workers' Party, people will overcome all difficulties. We condemn the violation of Paris Agreement by Saigon authorities. We are members of one family—also Comrades in struggle. The struggle is bound to be prolonged one; the friendship between struggle is bound to be prolonged one; the friendship between the two peoples is based on Marxism-Leninism and internationalism. We resolutely support your struggle till victory is won. Friendship between the two peoples will continue to strengthen".

Similar fraternal messages were delivered by other delegates all of which stressed the global importance of the Vietnam struggle.

Prof. Dr. Johanns Toepfer in her greetings on behalf of the GDR trade unions said "The Vietnam victory over imperialism won under the leadership of the Workers' Party is an important factor in the struggle for peace, socialism and freedom".

The representative of the Mongolian Trade Unions, said "The Vietnam victory demonstrated that once a country is determined to struggle and is supported by the Socialist Camp and progressive forces, it is bound to win. The struggle of the Vietnam is doing a big service to the people of Asia".

The representative of the Trade Unions of Italy said, "Your victory has obliged the U.S. to revise its world strategy. Your victory has deepened the crisis of world capitalism and strengthened the consolidation of the world working class".

The representative of the French Trade Unions said, "We have a half century of friendship between our two working classes, since the days when Com. Ho Chi Minh was in France. This friendship started and got strengthened during the fight against French colonialism and by the victory of Dien Phu. Subsequentaly, the people of Vietnam had to fight the American imperialists and the French working class lent its full support to their cause.... The Paris Agreement constitutes a big victory".

The CITU greetings have been published in our paper, the People's Democracy and other papers.

The Third Congress became a forum for international proletarian support to the invincible cause of the people of Vietnam. It became a grand demonstration of the unity of the world working

class in the struggle against American imperialism and stressed the important fact that whatever the internal stresses and strains & differences in the international movement, the existance of imperialism, the aggressive attacks of American imperialism against the Camp of Socialism, against national liberation movement, will again and again compel common action in the ranks of the international proletariat.

This objective development in the international situation was summed up by Comrade Le Duan, First Secretary of Workers' Party of Vietnam in his speech to the Congress:

"The Vietnamese working class, the leading class of the Vietnamese revolution, constitutes a part of the international working class standing in the very centre of our era. The Vietnamese revolution constitutes a part of the world revolution, and is directly linked to three great trends of the proletarian revolution in the present era..... that is: the movement of building Socialism and Communism in the world Socialist system; the movement of struggle of the working class and labouring people in the capitalist and imperialist countries; the national liberation movement and the uprising of the forces fighting for national independence with a view to leading the country straight to Socialism, bypassing the stage of capitalist development. The revolutionary cause of our people is a concrete picture combining closely the lofty objectives of mankind in the present era: national independence and Socialism. It is because our people have stood on the common position of offensive of the world revolution, and made full use of the strength of their force supremacy for defeating U.S. imperialist aggressors and their henchmen. On the other hand, the victory of our people's anti-U.S. resistance for national salvation has consolidated more the position of Socialism in the world, strongly stimulated the people's struggle of countries in the Third World against old and new colonialism and influenced the revolutionary trends, made deeper and sharper the general crisis in the imperialist system. It is quite obvious that today the positions of imperialism headed by U.S. imperialism are being weakened, and the offensive position of revolutionary forces in the world is more solid than ever and the alternative of preserving peace is getting stronger than ever before".

The Congress discussed the tasks of the Trade Unions with the working class preparing for the starting of the Second Five Year

Plan and faced with the task of moving from small-scale economy to large-scale Socialist production bypassing the capitalist stage. The working class in North Vietnam has become the ruling class of the country. Its mass organisations, the trade unions have a new role to play—the role of consolidating the rule of the working class by organising Socialist production. The trade unions, it was stated in the various reports, as a link in the system of dictatorship of the proletariat, as extensive mass organisations of the ruling class of the country should actively participate in the political life of the country; in the all-sided development of society, and should draw all the workers and employees into the task of building and developing the economy. Lenin was quoted to say that the State power once being seized, the proletariat has one fundamental life and death question, that is to increase the bulk of social products, and the productive power of labour on a large-scale.

With this in view, the tasks of the trade unions were formulated, discussed and unanimously adopted.

The Third Congress of Vietnam Trade Unions showed how the working class of Vietnam was playing its historic vanguard role in the battle for freedom and Socialism under the leadership of the Workers' Party of Vietnam—the Marxist-Leninist Party. It showed how under the Marxist-Leninist guidance of the Party, the Trade Unions were realising their new role under the dictatorship of the proletariat and fulfilling in an inspiring manner. It revealed the unshakable determination of the working class and trade unions to carry on their battle and build the Socialist base in North Vietnam. And it put forth in the most unmistakable manner the spirit of internationalism that guides the working class of Vietnam. It made an indelible impression that such people and working class are unconquerable.

Our Comrades must know that the Vietnam Federation of Trade unions did their best to make my stay confortable in Hanoi. The courtesy and politeness shown by them, the special care they took of me considering my age and consequent disabilities overwhelmed me. I have sent a letter thanking them profusely. No doubt, all this personal consideration was due to the fraternal feelings they have for the CITU and the importance they attach to our organisation.

I carried with me a few bundles of our literature. The atmosphere among the major foreign delegations was such that it was

difficult to start a meaningful dialogue with most of them. It was my impression that the Soviet and some other delegations did not like our presence very much. I could contact only a few delegations—South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Roumania and Japan were contacted by me and our literature was given to them. The meetings were of short duration as they were held on the day previous to our departure.

The South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodian delegates while expressing their fraternal feelings for our organisations and working class gave an account of the struggle they were carrying on. It was a great thing to listen to their earnest account of the great battles and sacrifices they were undergoing. I reciprocated the feelings of solidarity and told them our organisation would do its best for the cause of Indo-China. I could not meet the Korean delegation as it had already left Hanoi.

I sent word to the Roumanian delegation and offered to go to their hotel. But instead they came to my room. I told them that our organisation was represented at their Trade Union Congress and explained how we worked for unity in the trade union movement. I mentioned the Calcutta Jute strike and the Bombay Textile strike where U.F. with the INTUC was also established. They were formal and said that they stood for relations with all and for united action.

Next I met the SOHYO (Japan) leaders. They had heard of INTUC, HMS, of course AITUC but did not know of CITU. They asked what position I held in the AITUC before the split. When I explained to them that we were carrying on united actions with the AITUC—Bombay and Calcutta strikes—they asked whether we were having united action with the INTUC. I told them we do try-some times united actions result—but the INTUC in the main toes the line of the ruling party, is used for disruptive purposes and we have to fight it. I gave them the instance of jute strike when we tried to have common negotiations. They asked about HMS. I told them it was a declining organisation, many of its unions are joining the INTUC. They asked to which foreign trade union organisation we were affiliated. I said to none, not also to the WFTU. They remarked you are like us. They told me they were not receiving our literature. I told them we have been sending it regularly. I requested them to send their literature regularly to us.

30

All Help To The Valiant Railway Workers

THE railway workers of India have made history. For three weeks they have carried on a heroic struggle of resistance in face of mass arrests, mass dismissals and above all widespread terror against them, their women and children.

Never before in India was there such terror spread over all parts of the country, in all States, in all important towns and cities, never was there more determined resistance so uniformly courageous everywhere, in all States, in all towns and cities.

The brutalities of Indira police know no bounds. A confidential report of the Govt.'s labour department deprecated this inhuman terror. The police have raided the houses of the railway workers, assaulted and tortured their women and children. They have tortured the workers. There are cases of rapes on workers' wives and daughters. Filthy abuses and insults have been heaped upon thousands. And yet the heroic women faced the tormentors courageously and helped to sustain the fighting morale of their husbands.

The barbarities unleashed by the garibi hatao hypocrite who procliam themselves as the knights of parliamentary democracy, will make a Latin American dictator envious. Not one liberty is allowed for the railway workers. Meetings are prohibited, organisation is illegalised. More than 50,000 are arrested; workers in territorial organisations have been penalised for refusing to break the strike. Thousands are summarily sentenced. Thousands are dismissed. In places, Congress MLAs and Congress goondas pretend-

ing to be members of youth organisation have been used for gangster attacks against the workers. The DIR, the MISA and a horde of other weapons and agencies including the army and the territorial personnel have been brought into operation for suppressing the strike.

The terror, this total gangsterism is the semi-fascíst technique which the Indira Govt. has been using in every difficult situation. It is symptomatic of the growth of authoritarianism inside the Congress, which seeks to bury democracy while pretending to defend it.

The battle of the railway workers is the battle of the entire trade union movement, of the entire Indian people. The Govt. attempts to destroy both the trade unions and democratic rights of the people and turn them into docile slaves in the service of the landlords and the monopolists.

The working class, the entire trade union movement and the people have lent their full support to the cause of the railway workers. The Govt. did its best to incite the people against the strikes but the former realised the common bond of suffering, stood by the railway men and displayed a high degree of democratic consciousness. Women's and student's and peasants' organisations have endorsed the cause of the fighting strikers. In a large number of places the peasants of surrounding areas have sheltered the workers who had to leave the colonies to escape police terror.

From whence this determination, this valourous courage of the railwaymen? It derives from the tremendous sense of unity and oneness developed through the NCCRS which has brought together all the railway organisations and all the central trade union organisations together. This unity of more than a hundred railway organisations working under the banner of the NCCRS has inspired the railway workers with full confidence in their mighty strength and confidence of success.

Under the united banner the 17 lakhs of railway workers have carried on a glorious struggle despite terror, despite the false propaganda of the administration and despite the waverings and vacillations of certain leaders who did not believe that the workers were capable of such prolonged resistance. The leadership of the NCCRS has held the flag firmly and supplied a fighting and militant lead.

The six demands raised by the workers speak volumes for the

labour policy of Indira regime that the railway workers have to fight for being considered as industrial workers. The Govt. wants to treat them as departmental slaves subject to its arbitrary whims. It therefore shamefully violates the ILO convention regarding railwaymen.

The Govt. has refused to discuss the basic demands seriously. Instead the Railway Minister prejudices the people by saying that at least Rs. 500 crores will be required to meet the claims of the railway workers.

The Govt. cannot deny that there is discrimination against the railway workers; that they are getting an extremely low wage. The Govt. cannot deny that bonus is being unjustly denied to them. The Govt. cannot deny that the eight hours day convention is violated with regard to thousands of workers. It would have been honest on the part of the Govt. to discuss each demand separately and examine the financial impact of each demand. But the Govt. knows that it will lose its case if it were to do this.

For the railway workers by their hard labour are producing enough to earn all their demands and still leave a surplus for the people only if the Govt. agree to give up its preference and fondness for its rich patrons, the monopolists and traders.

It is known that the railway workers each year contribute by way of interest charges on capital invested, that last year, 1972-73, they contributed Rs. 163 crores to general revenue. It is besides known that every year they subsidise society to the tune of Rs. 250 crores by way of low freights, on several commodities, coal, cement, foodgrains, etc., the benefit of which does not go to the people but to the rates on suburban traffic are kept low in order to spare the capitalist employers from paying additional dearness allowance to the workers. The loss to the railways is not less than Rs. 14 crores.

The Govt. avoids negotiations because it is known that it will stand completely exposed as the protector of monopolists and traders and an enemy of the workers.

None can suggest that the low freight etc. are really meant to protect the consumer. These freights have not saved the consumer from skyrocketing prices of foodgrains, oil, sugar, cloth and all necessaries of life. Besides can one believe the pleas of the Govt. to protect the consumer? The Govt. has recently given a forty per cent increase to the landlords for their produce it has raised cloth prices

by 30 to 40 per cent; it has gifted away Rs.100 to Rs.120 crores by way of cut in tax rates to capitalists; it has allowed traders and speculators in Vanaspati, sugar, cement, foodgrains, all of which are charged uneconomic freight rates to raise prices and to pile up huge profits.

The same government has spent not less than Rs. 162 crores on the atomic explosion and its preparation and provided for Rs. 90 crores for further atomic developments.

Against these huge sums squandered for the benefit of the capitalists and landlords or for exploision, what are the workers demanding? How much their bonus for instance would cost? The grant of 8.33 per cent bonus would not cost more than Rs. 50 to 60 crores whereas the tax relief to the rich is Rs. 120 crores; and the loss due to low freights is Rs. 250 crores; and the expenditure on atomic explosion is Rs. 162 crores. Is anything more needed to expose the mean calculations of the Indira Govt?

Those who have been sowing illusions among the workers that Indira is progressive and the Railway Board was misleading her should at least learn from the events. Some of the AITUC leaders hugged this illusion for a long time. Now at least, they should realise that the bourgeois-landlord Government will show no mercy towards the workers.

Let the entire trade union movement and the people rally round the railway workers and make their cause their own. The railway workers are fighting the battle of the people against terror and authoritarian policies. The entire people must demand an end to repression, release of all arrested leaders and workers, withdrawal of all cases and orders of mass dismissals and bring pressure on the Govt. to negotiate with the NCCRS to do justice to the demands comprising the charter.

The Working Class, Vol. III, No. 10, June 1974.

31

Fight The Wage Freeze

After a lot of propagandist talk about a national wage policy, the Indira Govt. has at last come out in its true colours. On July 6, it issued an ordinance freezing wages and dearness allowances. All additional wages and allowances payable to an employee for one year in pursuance of any wage revision would be impounded in a compulsory desposit account. The ordinance also provides for the compulsory deposit of one half of the additional dearness allowances payable hereafter for a period of two years.

The workers and employees cannot enjoy any wage rise in this period; they have to sacrifice 50 per cent of the D.A. to which they will be entitled because of rising prices.

The Govt. undertakes no responsibility to control prices, keep them at constant level. On the other hand, it is certain that prices will continue to rise. There is besides no guarantee that the workers will be free to same wage increase or DA after a period of two years. These Ordinances may continue like the DIR for years.

The ordinances therefore constitute a shameless attack on the workers and employees' wages and D.A. telling them that their earnings must be reduced because the Govt. is unable to control the prices and profits of the profiteers.

To appear impartial, the Govt. has passed another ordinance limiting the rate of dividends, appearing to strike at the capitalists. However, its real effect is to put more money in the hands of the big tycoon to expand their exploitative activities.

It is sheer hypocrisy on the part of the Govt, to parade the ordinances as an anti-inflationary measure. Have wages and D.A.

been the cause of the rising prices? For years now, notwithstanding the dearness allowances real wages of employees and workers have been going down spreading misery all-round. Helped by official policies, capitalist profiteers, traders, and speculators have been forcing the prices upwards and the dearness allowance is unable to keep pace with them. The rise in D.A. is the consequence of the price rise whose origin is elsewhere and which has now gathered its own momentum. It is plain for ordinary mortals to see that if prices were controlled and the cost of living did not rise, where would be the occasion for D.A. rise. But in their base perversity the Congress rulers seek to present the D.A. and workers' wages as the cause of the price rise and declare the workers and employees to be the guilty party and exonerate the capitalists the speculators and the Govt.

Every claim which the Govt. of India makes is a bogus claim. How much money do they except to immobilise through this malicious attack on the workers and employees? The Govt. has decided to impound the dearness allowance of 18 million workers and employees; 6.1 million in the private sector and 11.9 million in the public sector, consisting of 3 million Central Govt. employees, 4.6 million State Govt. employees, 2.5 million employees in the Public Sector undertakings and 1.6 million employees of local bodies.

By attacking these millions people who are unable to make both ends meet, who are a prey to disease and starvation, and who have not got the wherewithal either to feed their childern properly or educate them, the Govt. hopes to immobilise Rs. 450 crores in one year.

Will it bring the prices down? What chance is there of prices coming under control when there are more than Rs. 10,000 crores in the parallel black-market economy which the Govt. dares not attack because its promoters are among the distinguished partrons of the ruling party?

The whole game is to transfer the burdens of the inflation crisis to the common man; force the common man to reduce consumption of necessaries of life; push him below the starvation line and forcibly redistribute the national income in favour of the monopolists, the capitalists and the landlords.

The steady increase in indirect taxas on all essential commodities of people's consumption; the deliberate policy of resorting to

defict financing as a way of finding resurces for the successive five year plan, the liberal accommodation which the Banks are permitted to give the stockholders of the agricultural and industrial products have been leading to higher and higher prices.

This continuous deficit financing and speculation have created a parallel economy which holds the country to ransom. The inflation has been further intensified because of our country's close economic links and dependence on the inflation-ridden economics of imperialist country.

Every one knowns that the landlords are earning rich returnes through Govt. sanctioned increase of foodgrains and other prices. But the Govt. dares not mop up their excessive incomes as an anti-inflationary measure. On the contrary, it levies additional tax burdens on the rural masses.

The CITU denounces the new measures as the first official step towards a wholeasale wage freeze and wage reduction.

The mass of people including the working class requires immediate relief from the rising prices. They require lowering of the prices of necessaries of life and bring down the general price level.

To achieve this in the first place a determined attack agains the black money economy is required. Its capacity to play havoc with prices must be dstroyed. It is futile to talk of fighting inflation unless deficits financing is done away with and heavy indirect taxation of the Govt. which forms a substantial part of the prices of some necessaries of life and articies of common consumption, is drastically reduced. One of the basis sources of the rise in the cost of living is the price of foodgrains. To control this Govt. must compulsorily procure the foodgrains stocks of landlords and traders at reduced prices while attracting the peasants to sell their produce by offering special bonus rate. It is further necessary to smash the control of speculators, monopolists and landlords over raw materials and drastically reduce the huge profits of the monopolists.

The CITU calls upon all Central Trade Unions organisations of employees and other sections to join together in resisting this offensive on the wages and salaries of workers, employees, teachers, professors in short on the living conditions of the common man. It fully supports the call given by Central Trade Unions and National Federations to observe a week of profest from 9th to 15th August against the new ordinances. Only a united movement will

force the Govt. to withdraw these measures and place the burden of fighting Inflation on the exploiting interests.

Let the united movement raise its voice against this monstrous offiensive against the toilers earnings. Let it develop sufficient strength to defeat the designes of the patrons of monopolists, landlords and black-marketeers.

The Working Class, Vol. III, No. 12, August 1974

32

A Menacing Situation

The Nightmare of a crisis of the 1929 type has been haunting the advanced capitalist countries for some time now. Now there is official admission that these countries are already in the throes of a crisis. The inflationary boom is being followed by production stagnation, decline and rising unemployment.

Against the burdens of inflationary prices against unemployment and the gathering recession, against wage cuts the working class of the capitalist countries has been waging a continuous struggle.

Between 1961-72 550 million workers joined the strike battle. In 1972 alone 43 million struck work while the first 9 months of 1973, the participants numbered many more. This resistance of the working class bars the way to direct attack on wages to solve the crisis at the expense of the workers. This is now one of the biggest headaches of the monopolists who dominate the State and the economy of the capitalist countries.

The various steps of the capitalist states, the austerity programmes, the budget cuts, the anti inflationary measures all in the end lead to decline in production and unemployment. But in today's conditions any increase in unemployment in these countries will have to be compensated by relief at the expense of the State which again means putting huge sums of money in circulation. Without inflation and price rise the capitlist States cannot keep down unemployment and with inflation and price rise they are heading for a crash. This is the dilemma of capitalist society. An American Professor puts it in the following words, "would it not be desirable, in the interests of keeping inflation from accelerating to countenance and even contrive slow U.S. Growth for two or three

years, so that unemployment will remain above the 5-1/2 per cent level? Even if desirable, is such austerity feasible in the present American political situation?"

This spells the bankruptcy of the capitalist society. Less than 6 per cent unemployment is a curse for it and the economy must have more and more of it to keep itself going.

The consequences of the developing world recession are already visible in India with recession and over-production replacing "shortages" and ever-rising "demand".

The situation in India was already grave with inflation having brought about a forcible transfer of value from the lower to the upper classes. The denudation had gone to the exterme in rural areas where masses of agricultural workers and poor peasants were being reduced to destitution, thus cutting the market for industrial goods for mass consumption.

On the one hand, high prices had reduced the purchasing power of the people making it difficult for the country to exploit the full productive capacity of the plants built in recent times. On the otherhand, speculative activities and high prices created an impression of shortage thereby making it appear as if over production in relation to the purchasing capacity of the people had not taken place.

Now, we are witnessing the beginning of a recession in India notwithstanding the refusal of Mrs Gandhi to acknowledge the reality. Thousands of powerlooms in Maharashtra, West Bengal and other States are not working. Handlooms have no orders. The orgainsed cotton textile industry records lack of orders and accumulation of strocks. The Deputy Minister for Industries acknowledged in Rajya Sabha in November that the mills have 2.5 lakh bales of cloth in their godowns. They are valued at Rs. 100 crores. Finanacial stringency, lack of purchasing power, failure to lift ordered stock are the reasons for this state of affairs.

Some Ahmedabad Mills closed their third shift throwing out 5,000 workers. The Buckingham & Carnatac Mill of Madras have reduced their production by 25 per cent. The South Indian Millowners have announced large stock of unsold yarn.

The Steel industry is also faced with accumulation of stocks. The Iron and Steel Controller stated in Bangalore in October that the Centre may have to think of decontrol or partial decontrol within two or three months. He said the steel plants had accumu-

lated stocks amounting to 3.5 lakh tonnes. Hindusthan Steel alone had piled up to one lakh tonnes against allocations. He said "Even when we make allocations, they are not lifted. In the light of these indications, the position of the steel sector is alarming".

Engineering factories in West Bengal and U.P. are throwing out thousands of workers-in many cases without any retrenchment compensation. Heavy Electrical Plant of Bhopal complains that State Electricity Boards are not lifting their orders with result that stocks valued at half the value of the total production, this year have accumulated in the factory. This is the alarming situation that faces the working class and the trade union movement. It presages closures, loss of jobs and wage reduction.

This is a menace which faces the entire working class and employees and it threatens all sections of our toilers-the agricultural labourers, poor peasants. it is due to the capitalist-landlord policies of the Government, the policies which protect the profits of the foreign and Indian monopolists, of the landlords and attacks the incomes of the workers and the toilers.

It calls the entire working class, all trade unions to unite to resist this offensive more, all pervading and perincious, than the wage freeze. The workers and employees have achieved unprecedented unity at the August Convention in Delhi and carried forth the battle in various conventions and above all, strike and bundhs. This unity in action has to be further strengthened to ward off the coming attack. Against the threat of unemployment, the workers must unitedly raise the demand for right to work, unemployment benefit. They must again raise their voice against rising prices, wage freeze and demand drastic reduction in profits, nationalisation of monopoly concens, confiscation of foodstocks of landlords to distribute them among the people at prices within their reach. Raising the demand for need based wage they must demand better living conditions for the agricultural labourers, fair price to the peasant for his produce and drastic increase in taxation against the monopolists, big capitalists and the landlords. They must demand elimination of black market and its operations and confiscation of all wealth earned in blackmarket transactions.

It is only with this programme that the workers can fight the attempts of the capitalists and landlords to make them alongwith the people the scape goats of the crisis.

The Working Class, Vol. IV, No. 4, December 1974.

33

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting Shibpur Howrah, December 11-13, 1974

Comrades,

With feelings of sorrow and great loss I pay homage to the memory of Com. Hare Krishna Konar whose services to the cause of the revolution few can equal. A brilliant Marxist-Leninist, member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M), General Secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha, Hare Krishna Konar passed away leaving the revolutionary movement poorer by his loss.

I pay my homage to the memory of our fallen martyrs, the organisers of CITU and its unions who fell victims to the assassins' dagger in Kerala and West Bengal; to the memory of those who fell victims to police firing. We must specially remember the Bharatpur martyrs who were the first to shed their blood in the struggle against the wage freeze Act.

We all must remember the services of Com. Rajan our devoted leader of Kerala plantation workers and member of our General Council who passed away last month. We send our condolences to his wife and children.

I pay homage to the memory of Comrade Ramaswamy, our active worker at Madurai who showed indomitable courage in defying death when the railway engine overran him while protesting against the use of black-legs during the All India railway strike.

Comrades, you will join me in congratulating those of our comrades who narrowly escaped the assassins' dagger. One among them being Com. Shanti Ghatak, Member of our Working Committee. The repression and brutalities that our comrades, the CITU

leaders and unions had to face during the past few months have no limits. Arrests, imprisonment, tortures and beatings, humiliation and insults at the hands of the police officials, police firings and gangster attacks—these have been our fare for conducting the struggle of the workers.

In Cannanore in Kerala, Comrade Kannan, President of Kerala CITU was assaulted by the police, the CITU office was raided and a number of other leaders including Com. Bharathan, were beaten and jailed. The police used gangsters to attack our workers and our MLA Com. Raghavan was insulted and beaten. It should be remembered that more than 130 people belonging to the CITU and other mass organisations have been murdered in Kerala at the hands of gangsters in the last two years. This is the black record of the Achutha Menon Ministry—the unholy coalition of the Right Communist Party and Indira Congress—a coalition which the Right C.P. wants to expand in all States to spread its pestilential results.

In this background the 19th September united strike to protest against the wage freeze was a magnificent demonstratin of working class unity for which our Kerala CITU and other central organisations deserve our congratulations. The strike was complete; the All India Radio was also paralysed. Never before was the sweep of the strike so big and all-embracing. It drew within its ranks the AITUC and its workers and revealed how the unity of the working class is marching ahead despite the efforts to divide and suppress it.

The CITU hailed the victory of the Vietnamese people against American imperialism embodied in the Paris Agreement. But the treacherous American imperialists notwithstanding their honeyed talk of *detante* agreement on limitation of neuclear weapons with USSR, and professed friendly relations with People's China, are sabotaging the Paris agreement and encouraging military adventures of Thieu and preparing for intervention. They are also preparing for another intervention in North Korea with the help of the South Korean stooge Government.

The CITU must denounce the moves and lend its full support to the fighting people of Vietnam and Korea in their struggle against American aggressors.

The Railway Strike

Comrades, you all know about the historic struggle of the

Railway workers in May last and how the Indira Govt. made every effort to suppress it. The various unions of Rly. workers forgetting their differences, joined in a common battle to defend the interests of the railway workers. You all know how the CITU played its role in working for the unity.

With the workers braving police terror, invasion of the homes by armed CRP, with their women showing unexampled heroism in all parts of India, the railway workers' struggle inscribed a glorious chapter in the history of trade union resistance. This was the first All India strike and perhaps the longest in the world.

In spite of the steadfastness of the workers, some leaders like the AITUC leaders and its Indian Railway Workers Federation got cold feet and betrayed the workers to continue their line of collaboration with the Indian Congress.

Today, thousands of Rly. workers stand victimised and dismissed. The Rly. Minister quotes falsified figures to show that the Govt. is relenting in its attacks and is taking back the workers. More than 20,000 workers are deprived of their jobs. Many thousands have been punished with break in service. And the strike breakers are being rewarded with quick promotions. So manifestly urgent and arbitrary are some of these orders that a number of High Courts—The Calcutta High Court, the Gujarat, Hyderabad and Kerala High Courts— declared these to be illegal and even mala fide. But the Govt. in its contempt for laws has refused to implement the High Court directives and do justice to the affected workers.

It is the duty of the CITU and the entire trade union movement to fight against this victimisation and not rest till all the Rly. workers are given back their jobs. The permanent as well as temporary and casual workers must be restored to their work and Mishra's victimisation campaign must be defeated. We must assure the Rly. workers and their organisations that the CITU stands by them and will continue its efforts till justice is done to them. The report of our General Secretary deals with the work done by the CITU for relief and legal aid to the Rly. Workers and I need not say anything about it.

The brutalities perpetrated against the Rly. workers have become an international scandal and a number of workers' organisations in other countries are realising the real character of the Indira Government. It is because of this that the Government dared

not allow a delegation of transport workers from abroad to visit the country. The Transport unions wanted to assess the post-strike situation on the railways and have first hand knowledge about how the authorities dealt with the strike. The CITU must emphatically protest against this ban on working class leaders while leaders of multi-national corporations are welcomed at State banquets.

New Problems

Comrades, the CITU must take note of the prevailing organisational situation on the railways and help the railway unions to overcome it. As happens after any struggle accompained by victimsation, despondency and despair seize hold of the weaker elements. Fissiparous tendencies quicken and the lesson of unity is easily forgotten. The bond of common sacrifice, sufferings and common cause gets loosened. This gives an opportunity to the authorities to create disruption.

It is a pity that the NCCRS has not yet met in a big representative convention, assessed the strike experience and taken steps to strengthen unity. The NCCRS, the embodiment of the Rly. Workers' unity was considered an anathema by the Administration and now some of its agents are attempting to bury it.

Taking advantage of the present despondency and victimisation, craft and sectarian appeals are being made; opportunist leaders seek to disrupt the unity of all organisations and return to the position before the strike. All this is encouraged by the Rly. Board which wants to see an end to unity.

The workers should remember that the unity is all the more needed to beat off the victimisation offensive. With regard to Loco Running Staff the authorities are sabotaging the agreement to introduce the 10 hours' duty—an agreement reached after the heroic strike of LRSA workers. It is clear that the Rly. Board has no intention of fulfilling its promise made after the strike.

The CITU and its organisations must throw their full weight to protect and strengthen the unity of the Rly. workers and rouse the working class to defeat the victimisation drive of the Government.

Government's Labour Policy

Last eight months have revealed one ugly feature after another of Governments labour policy. At the Visakhaptnam session, I had occasion to refer to the virtual liquidation of all trade union rights in the IAC under the control of a retired military official. I may mention here that the Government is inducting more and more

military officials to run industrial concerns—the aim being to introduce military barrack discipline in factories. This spells ruin for the trade union movement and this trend is to be resisted. The trade union movement besides should take serious note of the fact that efforts are being made to train army personnel so that they can replace workers during strikes. The use of the Territorial Army for purposes of breaking the May Rly. strike is known to all.

The brutal suppression of Rly. workers in May is followed by use of widespread repressive measures in the growing strike struggles. Hundreds have been arrested in bundhs, demonstrations and strikes and cases have been proceeding against thousands. Presecution and prolonged proceeding have become a weapon of systematic harassment of workers and cadres.

The use of goonda gangs against the workers with the police supporting them is becoming an all-India phenomenon. These goondas act as the storm troopers of the employers or the Congress Party.

These attacks are a part of the general Congress onslaught on the democratic rights of the people and the growing erosion of all democratic norms. The scandalous ordinance issued to protect the Congress MPs and the Prime Minister from the effect of the Supreme Court judgement, the misuse of MISA and the detention of hundreds of political prisoners and the cruel treatment to the political prisoners in jails are part of this growing attack on the democratic rights of the people. The T.U. movement has received its full share of this erosion of rights and must discharge its responsibility fighting against these policies of the Congress Government.

Along with these attacks, the Govt. has been taking one measure after another to thrust the burdens of the crisis on the workers and enforce a reduced standard of living on them. While in the last few months it has sanctioned large price increases in foodgrains to benefit the landlords and to the capitalists, it has enforced wage freeze on the mass of workers and employees. Under it the Central and State employees have been denied a number of additional increases in their D.A. and in almost all industries, the Govt. is putting pressure to see that no further wage increase is granted to any section of the workers. Half the increased D.A. is spirited away in deposits, further wage increases have been frozen and in some cases, D.A. itself has been frozen, the total effect being a reduction in the real wage of the workers. Against this act, the working class

and the T.U. movement have started fighting and is starting building its unity to meet this offensive. The successful strike of 9th September in Kerala and the October 30 strike in Maharashtra reveal how the working class is getting into direct action against the anti-labour measures of the Govt.

Not satisfied with the wage freeze Act, the Govt. agents have manipulated the recommendations of the Bonus Commission and have come out with reactionary suggestions. They have denied the right of the Rly. and other workers and employees to bonus and they have also laid arbitrary limitations on the source of relief to the hard-pressed workers. Two other measures attacking the interests of the workers are also in the offing. The Industrial Relations Bill which seeks to attack the right of the workers to strike, to enforce arbitration machinery on them is being canvassed in secret. The Govt. also intends to foist a new wage policy on the workers under which the minimum in organised industries will not be more than Rs. 200. Wage increases will be reduced to a farce, D.A. also will be drastically reduced, all in the name of reducing the inequalities in wages among the workers. The Sukhamoy Chakrabarty's report which is the basis of the so-called wage policy is a weapon to divide different sections of the workers, fool the public with the claim to introduce a scientific system of wage payment. It resorts to the usual trick of talking about the low income in the countryside and the income of the workers in unorganised industries and paints the workers in orgainsed industries as a special favoured class whose emoluments must be curtailed and brought in line with the general level of Indian proverty. The report does not talk at all about controlling the incomes of the higher classes, but only about wage differentials. It thus constitutes yet another weapon in the armoury of the Govt. to attack the workers and may be enforced with vigour under the stress of the developing crisis of the economy.

The Sick Textile Undertakings (Nationalisation) Bill is a piece of legislation which will ultimately benefit the employers. Despite bungling, embezzlement of funds the Companies are being paid over Rs. 39 crores as Compensation which will be premium for their fradulent practices. The Bill further seeks to modernise the mills and retrench thousands of workers. It, therefore, does not give an assurance that all the workers employed in these mills prior to closure would be taken back on duty on same terms and service conditions. It also does not give any assurance on workers' arrears

of wages etc. prior to the take over of managements. The Bill shows how even the slogan of nationalisation is being used by the capitalist in their own class interests.

One can easily understand why the Govt., therefore, uses more and more direct force against the T.U. movement since it is bent upon pursuing a policy of drastically reducing the living standards of the working class and the gains that they have all accumulated through years of struggle, and sacrifices.

In West Bengal, the Government issued notification under DIR to water down the recommendations of the Expert Committee on consumer price index numbers which admitted the index fraud. As a result of this, the workers who would have received Rs. 60 to Rs. 100 per month in the form of additional dearness allowance will receive only Rs. 16 to 18. If the workers resort to strike action in protest against this they will be victims of DIR.

United Resistance

The General Secretary's report gives a detailed account of how a united movement of workers and employers is developing to fight the wage freeze Act of the Government. In this movement, thousands of employees and workers are coming together in conventions, conferences, meetings, demonstrations and strike actions symbolising a new unity of all the affected sections. The CITU unions should realise that it is not only the employees and workers that are under attack, that the professionals like doctors, lawyers, upper and lower income groups are also bearing the strain of this Government effort to pass the burden of the inflationary crisis to the shoulders of the people. These sections also are compelled under the law to deposit part of their earnings with the Government and a number of them have been victims of officials raids by income tax and other officials. The wage freeze act and other accompanying measures affect a vast section of urban people who must be directly drawn into the movement and the entire struggle has to be turned into a huge democratic protest against official policies.

The Government passed off these measures as anti-inflationary measures intended to bring down prices. In actual fact, all that has happened is that while there is hardly any relief to the people in the shape of falling prices, there has been a dircet reduction in the purchasing power of the people and their real incomes. The mass of people has to bear the burden of the inflationary crisis as well as

official measures to counter the crisis. It is quite clear that inflation and counter-inflation in the way they operate are nothing but class measures to solve the economic difficulties of the captalist-landlord economy at the expense of the common mass. The working class should not allow itself to be cheated by those who present inflation or counter-inflation measures as just measures flowing from an increse or decrease in the supply of money. This is not an impersonal phenomenon but a manipulation by the exploiting classes and their Government to transfer value from the mass of people into the hands of the exploiting classes. That is why we find that the people are suffering as much under the inflationary developments as under the supposed measures to counter them. In actual fact, these counter measures have not only attacked the earnings of the working class, they are also creating large-scale unemployment in small industries and leading to closures of a number of these small concerns. The measures to control credit in the name of fighting inflation has affected the holding capacity of small industries which employ nearly 40 per cent of the workers in organised industries. The workers in organised units have to understand that tens of thousands of handloom weavers, power-loom workers and workers of smaller engineering concerns are virtually on the streets partly at least because of the way the Government intends to fight inflation and transfer the burden to the common people.

The working class has learnt to its own cost how the problem of food is being tackled by the Government. Repeated concessions to landlords, the denudation of the small peasants and the agricultural workers have now created a situation in which a few thousands have already died in the villages of India. Many more perhaps are going to die and hundreds of thousands are becoming the victims of slow starvation. A callous Government refuses to admit that hundreds are dying in our villages. But it is also a fact not honourable to the T.U. movement that when such is the condition in the villages, powerful protests form the organised T.U. movement in defence of the peasantry are not emerging in any T.U. Centre. It speaks of a very low class consciousness and a self-centred character of the movement which must be got rid of as early as possible if the working class is to play its role in the struggle for Socialism and ending of class domination, for peoples' democracy and end of Indian poverty.

Political Repression

The weakness of the peasant movement in rural areas, the weakness of political consciousness of the working class have enabled the ruling party to deal with the democratic movement in a ruthless way and perpetrated every kind of atrocity on the fighting people. I have already referred to the large-scale repression against the T.U. movement which was also shared by all sections of the people including the students, the agricultural workers, the teachers and the mass of untouchables. A Government which is ruthless to them in their struggle is equally cruel to them when they are arested and jailed. The treatment of political prisoners in India has become an international scandal and it is no surprise that the Government of India did not vote in the U. N. for a resolution demanding the release of all political prisoners kept by the Chilean fascist junta. Beatings, shooting, tortures—all have reached such a height that in the end the Supreme Court had to warn the Government that even prisoners in jails possess certain fundamental rights which no bureaucracy could override. Add to this the statement made by responsible leaders in Bihar that in certain jails of Bihar, women prisoners are virtually kept naked, the authorities refusing to supply them with clothes, according to jail rules.

It is against this regime of starvation, high prices, and political suppression accompanied by the most widespread corruption that the people have started fighting, demanding immediate redress to their grievances. The movement in Bihar against corruption, for dissolution of the Bihar Assembly, for release of all arrested people, for electoral reform, forms part of this angry protest which people are trying to launch in several States. The electoral reforms has come into the forefront because the utter corrput character of bourgeois-democracy is being exposed before the eyes of the people, under the Congress regime. As you know, in Bengal, there have been virtually no elections and the same attempt to spirit away the people's right to elect may be made in the forthcoming elections in many states. Against these legitimate demands raised in Bihar under the leadership of Jaya Prakash Narayan, the Govt. has come down with ruthless repression, arresting thousands and shooting many. Leaders of political parties have been externed from Bihar, those who led the movement they have been jailed and interned, a reign of terror has been established in Bihar.

There is no doubt that the association of reactionary parties like Jana Sangh with the movement not only supplies a handle to the Government and its ally, the Right C.P., but also befuddles the mind of the people and constitutes a sources of danger to the advance of the democratic movement will be lost if those who are manifestly opposed to democracy and struggle against landlord and capitalist exploitation get the upper hand and get themselves elected in place of the Congress. This danger, the T.U. movement and the working class can never forget and in its vigilance, it must warn the people against it. At the same time, the orgainsed T.U. movement must throw its weight behind the democratic demands and lend its support to them. The weakness of the T.U. movement in Bihar has so far prevented it from playing its due role in this democratic struggle from protesting against the repression directed against the people, from actively endorsing the demand for the dissolution of the Assembly and the release of political prisoners. This weakness has to be overcome in the near future though the task is difficult because the CITU is weak in the State compared with the AITUC and the INTUC, who are opposed to this democratic struggle.

The World Capitalist Crisis

Comrades, this meeting of the Working Committee must take serious note of the world capitalist crisis that is developing fast and its repercussions on India and the livelihood of the working class and our people. The spokesmen of the leading capitalist nations who hiterto were proclaiming that a crisis of the old type could no longer shake up the world capitalist system are now thinking in terms of the economic recession of the 1929 when in the U.S.A., 25% of the working force was unemployed and production had fallen by 40 per cent. The fact that advanced capitalist countries are remembering those night-marish years itself shows how the situation has rapidly deteriorated.

In contrast the socialist economies are advancing rapidly and they neither show the inflationary price rise of the capitalist world nor its recession. Capitalist newspapers have been recently remarking about the steadiness of prices in all Socialist countries coupled with rising growth rate. This is in contrast with the capitalist countries where till recently the growth rates could be kept up only by inflationary price rise at the expense of the working class. The conditions obtaining in Socialist countries are not acci-

dental. There is no capitalist class there to use its monopoly of production or its control of State power in the interest of the exploiting classes. There is no exploiting interest to use the price mechanism to defraud the workers. That is why a continuous growth rate is possible and a rise in incomes is easily obtainable. The production gains of society are distributed among the producers apart from what is kept for socialist accumulation. It is, therefore, not surprising at all that every Socialist country is free from inflation, free from unemployment, free from a declining growth rate and shows a continuous rise in the real incomes of its people.

Inflation, rising unemployment and recession in advanced capitalist societies directly flow from the State monopoly capitalism that obtains in these countries. Since the end of the second world war, the power of monopolies and now multi-national monopolies has grown immensely. They hold these countries completely in their grip and they manipulate the entire economy and the State apparatus in their own interests. When they cannot carry on genuine productive activity, they go in for huge military budgets, nuclear weapons, war abroad like the war against Vietnam and artificially try to create a sense of prosperity and demand. This always means high prices and in the end the crash comes as it is coming now with the USA showing nearly 6 million unemployed and with the European countries also showing unemployed from half a million upto 2 millions.

The crisis is basically the result of the contradiction between the developing productive forces and their monopoly control which is reflected as the contradiction between the purchasing power of the working class and the people and the productive capacity of society. The monopoly domination prevents these societies from utilising the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution which consequently only leads to huge unemployment. Simultaneously, the rivalries between these imperialist countries have accentuated, leading to further accentuation of the crisis. Existence of the Socialist world, the virtual collapse of the old colonial system, all have tremendously intensified the crisis besides making it difficult for the imperialist countries. It is because of the collapse of the old colonial system that 10 oil producing countries are able to create a first-rate oil crisis which further exacerbates the crisis of the system.

These developments are leading to a wave of working class

struggle in all the western countries. Reactionaries in the USA are talking of a Red takeover in Western Europe. In Italy, the pro-fascist forces organise provocations. In England, the unstable situation saw two general elections in the recent period. In Italy, ministries are rapidly changing and American imperialists are intervening to prevent an alliance of democratic forces, in France, there is a huge strike wave of the working class affecting railways and communications also. In Japan, the working class has been carrying on persistant resistance to win its demands. This is just the beginning of the crisis and the future promises to be full of conficts and struggles for the working class. One thing is quite clear in these countries it is not easy for the capitalist class to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the shoulders of the working class.

Our economy is in a large measure linked up with the economy of the Western countries. Our export-import trade which is directly connected with our employment, with its ups and downs of the situation abroad and we have to understand how the situation is likely to affect us. During the last 2-3 years, when our own economy was stagnant and also the economy of the Western countries was showing rapid ups and downs, to a certain extent our economy and our employment was supported by the boom conditions obtaining abroad. You perhaps all have read in the papers how the Government have been advertising the rise in our exports and claiming credit for itself. In reality, the inflationary boom conditions obtaining abroad were giving us a temporary help. Even though the monetary value of our exports have been rising rapidly, there was not a proportionate rise in the quantity of our exports. But now these conditions are rapidly disappearing and there is a fall in the value of exports. If these tendencies continue and if some of our important industries like the textiles and others lose their markets rapidly, then it is bound to affect our employment and our wage structure. Already there are signs that there is slackness in the demand for textile exports, there is a lowering down of the demand of our engineering and marine food exports, there is a lowering of the unit value of a number of our exports—all these create a situation of concern for us that might lead create a situation of concern for us that might lead to a closure of a number of our factories some of whom will close because they have no orders, others might close because they cannot get imported raw materials and other accessories necessary for their production.

The latest Report of the Reserve Bank on Currency and Finance also refers to recessionary expectations in the economy. It talks about conditions of stagnant and declining demand in the case of capital and intermediate goods such as iron and steel, construction materials, machinery and transport and consumer goods.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Gandhi's denial the recessionary tendencies are already in evidence. As I have said the immediate burden is borne by the workers in small and unorganised industries. Thousands of powerlooms in Maharashtra, West Bengal, have ceased to work. Thousands of handloom workers in Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu are without work.

Thousands of coir and other workers are working short time. Similarly thousands of workers in small engineering factories all over the country are thrown out of jobs or laid off without any compensation.

These lay offs or closures sometimes last for a few days only but they inflict intense sufferings nonetheless.

The big industries also are going in for temporary closures or cutting down of production. In October more than 25 cotton textile mills in Ahmedabad closed their third shift, throwing out 5000 workers. Some of them resumed working after reducing cloth prices and clearing stocks. But some have yet to reopen.

The RBI report says that the adjustment so far has been made in the reduction of stocks of finished goods and of trade dues, rather than in any significant cut back in production of prices. But how far the situation can last, how far they will continue production at the present level—none can tell.

In fact the situation is getting worse everyday.

The Steel industry is also faced with accumulation of stocks. The Iron and Steel Controller stated in Bangalore in October that the Centre may have to think of decontrol or partial decontrol within two or three months. He said that the steel plants had accumulated stocks amounting to 3.5 lakh tonnes. Hindusthan Steel alone had piled up to one lakh tonnes against allocations. He said "Even when we make allocations, they are not lifted. In the light of these indications, the position of the steel sector is alarming."

Engineering factories in West Bengal and U.P. are throwing out thousands of workers—in many cases without any retrenchement compensation. Heavy Electrical Plant of Boards are

not lifting their orders with result that stocks valued at half the value of the total production this year have accumulated in the factory.

The figures of unemployment are mounting high. The registered unemployment in August 1974 has reached a record level of 87 lakhs a rise of 10 per cent in a period of one year. The actual rise will be much more. The figures of educated unemployment have also reached a phenomenal level of over 40 lakhs.

This is the alarming situation that faces the working class and the trade union movement. It presages closures. loss of jobs and wage reduction.

It is a menace which faces the entire working class and employees and it threatens all sections of our toiler—the agricultural labourers, poor peasants. It is due to the capitalist-landlord policies of the Government, the policies which protect the profits of the foreign and Indian monopolists, of the landlords and attacks the incomes of the workers and the toilers.

It calls the entire working class, all trade unions to unite to resist this offensive more all-pervading and pernicious than the wage freeze. The workers and employees had achieved unprecedented unity at the August convention in Delhi and carried forth the battle in various conventions and above all, strike and bundhs. This unity in action has to be further strengthened to ward off the coming attack. Against the threat of unemployment, the workers must unitedly raise the demand for right to work, unemployemnt benefit. They must again raise their voice against rising prices, wage freeze and demand drastic reduction in profits, nationalisation of monopoly concerns, confiscation of foodstocks of landlords to distribute them among the people at prices within their reach. Raising the demand for need-based wage they must demand better living conditions for the agricultural labourers, fair price to the peasant for his produce and drastic increase in taxation against the monopolists, big capitalists and the landlords. They must demand elimination of black market and its operations and confiscation of all wealth earned in blackmarket transactions.

It is only with this programme that the workers can fight the attempts of the capitalist and landlords to make them along with the people the scape goats of the crisis.

34

Against Crisis Burdens Against One Party Dictatorship

In the near past, no May Day was heralded by such glorious and historic victories against the class enemy as this year's May Day. The complete victory of the Cambodian people over American arms, the mighty victory of the NLF against the USA dominated puppet armies are the revolutionary gifts to the world working class from the soil of Indo China.

While imperialism is defeated in the battle-field it is facing a situation of break down on the economic front. More than 11 million people are unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries of USA, UK, France, Italy, W. Germany and Japan. The situation is reminiscent of the great recession of 1930 when capitalist production fell by 40 per cent and the economy broke down. It is known that out of the class battles arising out of the crisis came Nazism to save German capitalism.

Karl Marx had shown that crisis was inevitable in capitialist society. They expressed the contradiction between the relations of production and the developing productive forces appeared as the contradiction between the lower purchasing power of the people and higher production—in capitalist language fall in demand. For years after the second world war the capitalist spokesmen had said that modern capitalism was free from the old cataclysm of the crisis. Now it is again shown capitalism has not changed.

The capitalist way is to cut production, retrench, cut wages, put extra load on the workers so that profits are maintained. After drastically cutting down production prices rise, then they again

resume increased production. The sole aim is high profits—products are not saleable if they do not give them big profits. How this fall in demand is the result of profiteering is seen from the fact that in October last Ahmedabad textile mills accumulated stock of cloth which was equal to two months production. A few months prior to that the Government had allowed them to raise cloth prices by 40 per cent. With the accumulation of stocks, prices were reduced by 25 per cent and the stocks were sold out. There is no absolute over-production. Only over-production at a certain high price level. Unless this is realised and the arguments of the capitalists are countered, the trade unions are either forced to accept this recession and accept new burdens or they lose their bearing and act as if capitalist recession does not exist and lose their link with the affected masses, by involving them in actions at a wrong time and of a wrong type.

This crisis is drawing within its vortex all other sections—employees, teachers, professors, lawyers, peasants, agricultural workers and small employers. Every one of them is threatened with ruin to maintain the profits of the monopolists and big capitalists.

To fight against the burdens which the Government seeks to impose on the working class is to fight fight for the entire people. The struggle against high prices, inflation, taxation, job security is becoming a struggle of the entire people, but the working class must learn to conduct it as such. Now the struggle is one for overthrowing the basic policies of the Congress—the policy of maintaining landlordism and denying land to the peasant, of relying on foreign capitalists and monopolits—the capitalist path. That is why the battle is becoming furious.

The Government, however, is not only adopting economic means to get out of the crisis. It is enforcing its economic policy with the aid of violence. The crushing of strikes, gangsterism against our trade unions in West Bengal, murders, jailings under the MISA and DIR, the life sentences on our Burdwan and 24-Parganas comrades are the political measure to solve the crisis at the expense of the people. In Rajasthan also 7 leaders of Kota have been sentenced to imprisonment for life. They were reinforced by the wage freeze Act, an authoritarian measures, by the arbitrary fixation under the DIR of the rise in D.A. due to jute workers. These are signs that collective bargaining will soon be rendered a complete farce.

The rigging of the elections in West Bengal, followed by similar

practices in some bye elections in other States, the prolongation of the Emergency under the plea that internal situation is critical are all signs that the ruling party is intent on establishing a one-party dictatorship. This is the capitalist way of solving the crisis. The capitalist landlord Government of an under-developed country is unable to continue parliamentary democracy. It inevitably attempts to go in for one-party dictaoriship. No wonder Indira Gandhi hastened to congratulate Shri Mujibur Rahaman on his assumption of dictatorial power.

This is the danger that the working class, the trade union movement has to fight when they fight against the burdens of the crisis. Very few trade unions are aware of this and therefore are unable to discharge their responsibilities.

This same economic situation poses danger to the country from American imperialism and the CIA. A 1974 CIA report openly stated that the food situation in countries like India would soon place the USA in a position of complete power over the life and death of millions of people. The American machinations on the Sub-Continent are increasing and they seek to help the reactionary forces in India.

Unless the trade union movement, especially our CITU unions teach the working class to take the land in this struggle against one party dictatorship unless it uses its organised wellknit strength to mobilise all other sections especially the rural masses the battle will be lost. There are people who wish to side-track the mass discontent along non-class channels, in non-party channels. But the working class cannot forget its class and its banner. The organised trade union movement which was capable of organising the mighty railway strike of 1.5 million railway workers is capable of uniting all sections for the immediate fight. It is possible if it relies on the left and democratic forces in the country and lends its help to organise them. The unity of left and democratic forces must be its watchward.

Here we again come to the grass roots work of the trade unions. Now that the danger of one party dictatorship is there, are the trade unions justified in leading the day to day demands against the lay offs, closure should they concentrate only on the general economic and political aspects of the crisis, or only propagate on policy changes? No. This is precisely the time when the immediate issues can be linked with policy issues easily. But the immediate issues

must be championed. Why? Because under the stress of the crisis the most backward sections of the masses are entering the arena of economic conflict. They are in the beginning conscious only of immediate demands—lay offs, etc. Whithout this, they are unable to join the common struggle. They must be brought in and their consciousness elevated. In effect, in time of crisis the economic demands enable the unions to rouse the vast unorganised sections and bring them into the battle. The struggle against the burdens of the crisis in every form must continue. At the same time forms of resistance and organisation suitable to the present situation must be discussed and evolved. With the aid of these the struggle must be raised to the level. Of policy issues demanding a policy of transferring the burdens of the crisis to the monopolists, big capitalists and landlords, demanding nationalisation of foreign and Indian monopolists concerns, job security for industrial workers, employees and rural workers; in the alternate unemployment payment at the expense of the State and the capitalists and landlords, along with other demands.

All these questions are bound to be discussed at the coming session of the CITU which will no doubt give a call for strengthening trade union unity which has already reached a new level in the National Campaign Committee Against Wage Freeze to fight against the crisis and mobilise the entire people against Government's policies.

The Working Class, Vol. IV, No. 9, May 1975

35

Presidential Address

3rd Conference of CITU (Bombay, 21-25 May, 1975)

Comrades,

In the period between our last and present session we have lost some of our most valued and esteemed comrades.

I salute the memory of Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed of imperishable memory, founder of the Communist movement in India, founder of the trade union and kisan movement of Bengal. I salute the memory of Comrade Harekrishna Konar, member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M), General Secretary of the Kisan Sabha, an outstanding revolutionary.

I pay homage to the memory of Com. K.G. Bose, that indefatigable champion of the Central employees, the leader of their all-India movement and active leader of the CPI(M).

We salute the memory of hundreds of martyrs of our movement who have fallen victims of gangster terror in West Bengal and Kerala—sons of working class and leaders of the trade union movement—sons of toilers and working people and leaders of democratic movements. We remember Com. Ramaswamy who fell fighting for the cause of revolutionary workers.

They came from the ranks of the working classes, the students, teachers, peasants, employees—all of whom were martyrs to the same cause for the cause of democracy and socialism.

We dip our red banner in the name of our fighting workers and cadres in all States—Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, who fell fighting for the cause of the workers.

We send our warm message of solidarity to the hundreds of our comrades, trade union leaders, leaders of democratic and kisan movements, and political prisoners languishing in the prisons of West Bengal, Kerala and other States.

Hundreds have been arrested during the course of strike in States and are undergoing prolonged persecution.

We assure all of them that the CITU will work for release of all irrespective of their organisational and political affiliations.

Comrades, above all, we assure our Kota comrades who have been recently sentenced to transportation for life that we will not rest till justice is done to them and they are released.

We denounce the savage sentences passed on our fighting trade union and kisan comrades of Burdwan and 24-Parganas in West Bengal. Recently, thirty comrades have been sentenced to transportation for life and Comrade Monoj Paul of Burdwan has been sentenced to death.

We demand an end to this terror, we demand that the withdrawal of life sentences passed against others.

Comrades, on behalf of all of you, I offer our warm greetings to the fighting people of Vietnam and Cambodia for their epochal victories against American imperialism. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of Cambodia have fought the battle of Asian humanity inflicting this moral defeat on the foe of all peoples.

Comrades, these two historic victories of the Indo-Chinese people inspire the entire fighting millions of the world with great confidence. They are victories scored for the entire peoples of the world. Future generations will be grateful to these two peoples for paving the way for the final rout of U.S. imperialism.

Never before a people small in number, ill-equipped and working in the midst of backward conditions, inflict such a defeat on a world power armed with the latest devices of destruction. But then we are living in an epoch which is the turning point in world history—and epoch which is destined to see that final exit of imperialism and the triumph of socialism.

Comrades, the victory has been won by the people of Vietnam, the people of Cambodia by sheding their blood, by undergoing unheard of sacrifices, by preparedness to sacrifice everything for the

cause of freedom. It has been won in open battle.

It shows detente or no detente, American imperialism does not forget its murderous mission and the fighting people cannot be victorious unless they vanquish the enemy with arms.

The victory of the people of Vietnam and Cambodia is a victory of the international working class, of the world people. The help rendered by the Socialist countries to these struggles of Vietnam, the help rendered by Socialist countries, especially People's Republic of China to the Struggle of Cambodian people have played a vital role in facilitating the rout of American arms.

Secondly, the political and moral support of the working class all over the world, and the democratic forces in the USA who opposed the continuation of war have made a significant contribution towards it.

Comrades, let us also not forget the emergence of New Portugal which recently overthrew the fascist dictatorship and ushered in a democratic regime. We are confident that the complexities of the situation inherent in a transitional power will be soon over the and the people of Portugal will firmly march forward safeguarding and expanding democracy.

Comrades, we send our warm fraternal greetings to the working class and the people of the USSR, People's China and other Socialist countries. We send our greetings to the working class of the USA, Britain, Italy, France and Japan who are waging a battle against the burdens of the capitalist crisis.

We express our deep sympathy and solidarity with the working class and people of Chile and Indonesia the victims of fascism. We send our greetings of solidarity to the Arab peoples fighting against Israeli imperialism to the courageous fighters for Palestinian freedom.

The situation of Pakistan and Bangladesh must cause deep concern to us. We are vitally concerned with the working class and democratic movement in these two neighbouring countries of ours. In Pakistan, American imperialism is again arming the ruling class the direct effect of which is the suppression of the democratic movement of the country and the popular movements in Baluchistan and Frontier Province. The working class of Pakistan stands suppressed. We express our solidarity with it and the democratic movement. It is the common task of the working class of all these three countries to see that US imperialism does not interfere with

the affairs of the Sub-Continent; and see that it does not carry out its policy of making Asians fight each other. The supply of arms to Pakistan is intended to pressurise India to toe the American line. It also helps the military warhawks and Bhutto in Pakistan to divert attention from the internal problem and suppress democracy.

Comrades, the developments in Bangladesh are equally alarming. The one party system introduced by Mujibur Rahaman constitutes a forntal attack on the democratic aspirations of the people and lays the foundation of an authoritarian regime. It is betrayal of the people of Bangladesh who will have to go through fresh trials and ordeals to reach the goal of democracy and socialism. There is no doubt that reactionary forces have raised their head and constitute a challenge in Bangladesh. To defeat these pro-imperialist forces it was necessary to take the people into confidence and mobilise them for a fight. But the reliance on corrupt bureaucrats and vested interests has compelled Mujibur Rahaman to attack democracy and the people. This was inevitable because the ruling bourgeoisie are unable to solve the problems posed by the economic crisis without suppressing the liberties of the people.

The developments in the three countries show that the bourgeois-landlord classes in underdeveloped countries are unable to maintain parliamentary democracy, even the facade of democracy with formal freedom to opposition parties. The process in India is moving in the same direction and it is no surprise that Mrs. Indira Gandhi should have congratulated Mujibur Rahaman on his assuming dictatorial powers.

These developments together with the growing intervention of the USA in the Sub-continent must be taken note of by the working class. They represent a danger to the democracy of the people and the freedom of our country. Especially full of danger is the USA's determination to build its bases in Diego Garcia and transform the Indian Ocean into an American controlled area. This together with the unhindered supply of huge arms to Iran reveal the American designs clearly. If the working class does not warn the people against danger and fight it will be failing to discharge its duty.

Recent disclosures have revealed how the American Intelligence Agency, the CIA organise murders, uses traitors to upset democratic regimes and ensalve countries. The machination's of this agency in our country go on without interruption. Indira

Gandhi's Government mentions the CIA only for political advantage but does not take any real steps against it.

Comrade, it is pertinent to ask the question how far our unions are aware of this danger and how far they are rousing the workers against it. We regard American imperialism as the common foe of all people, of the world working class. Today when our country is in the middle of an economic crisis, when because of the pro-landlord policy of the Government we are compelled to import food from abroad under PL-480 the danger of American mechinations and pressures is immense. If our unions and the working class do not take a lead in rousing the country against it, who else will? In every country where the battle against imperialism is being successfully fought the working class has taken the lead.

In our country many central trade union organisations turn a blind eye to this growing menace. The AITUC leaders dominated by Right C.P. policies sing the virtues of detente and assure us that a new era of peaceful relations has opened. Under this circumstance any laxity on our part will be a grievous and criminal failure.

Comrades, before I turn to the economic and trade union situation facing us, I must draw your attention to the perilous political situation, the continuation of the emergency under one pretext or another, (the new excuse is arming of Pakistan and American moves in Diego Garcia), the use of DIR and the MISA against democratic movements, the shameless abuse of the powers vested under the Constitution, the use of armed goonda-gangs against the trade union and democratic movements and the complete rigging of the last Assembly elections in W. Bengal clearly show that the ruling party is determined to establish a one-partly dictatorship in India. It is not accidental that Indira Gandhi should congratulate Mujibur Rahaman on the assumption of dictatorial powers.

Our CITU had seen the danger earlier, but many other central trade union organisations and political parties had failed to see it till recently. The ruthless repression directed against the Gujarat movement, the repression against the Bihar agitation led by Shri J.P. and the rigging and terror during some of the recent by-elections are all leading several parties to realise the danger of one party dictatorship.

The shadow of this danger is already there as pointed out later on the trade union movement. Unless the working class takes the

lead in fighting it, unless it rallies all other sections, it cannot be met. Experience of all countries shows that democracy cannot be saved unless the working class heads the struggle. And unless this is done there is no hope for ending capitalism and taking state power and bringing in socialism. The working class will continue to remain a slave if it fails to plunge into the battle against the drive for one party dictatorship in our country. Our CITU unions while fighting for the economic demands, for food and against high prices, against attacks on trade union rights must ceaselessly try to mobilise all democratic elements and forces against the Congress rule—the most important being the peasant and agricultural workers. Our unions must ceaselessly bring together all left and democratic parties and forces to meet the onslaught of the Congress regime. The organised trade union movement can neglect this task at its own peril. It will itself be defenceless unless it has the backing of its powerful ally, the peasant and the agricultural worker.

Comrades, the present economic situation enables the trade unions to emerge as the champions of the interests of the common people. The collaspe of rationing, the shortage of food, the high prices affect all sections and enables the working class to champion their interests. Our actions bring under one umbrella varied sections of the people—workers, students, teachers, employees, agricultural workers, etc. Similarly, of land to the tiller is bound to attract other sections, as every one will soon realise that abolition of landlordism and land to the tiller will expand the market for industrial goods and be an effective weapon of meeting the crisis. And our demand that in the present dire economic situation, the foreign monopoly concern should be confiscated will definitely find acceptence as a measure of national salvation.

Comrades, while concentrating on the present, we must reassert our devotion and loyalty to our fundamental goal Socialism, end of the capitalist-landlord system. We want present democracy to be expanded into People's Democracy. We struggle for state power, we fight for ending exploitation and ushering the Socialism. For us, there is no Socialism unless the working class and it allies hold state power and unless the means of production, distribution and exchange are socialised, private poverty in the means of production is abolished. Without this, there is no end to our proverty and exploitation. All our sufferings, privations, jails and

tortures, our martyrdom will be for nothing if we forget this inspiring goal of ours.

Comrades, the economic situation in our country runs almost parallel with the crisis situation in the advanced countries, revealing almost the same characteristics and feature.

During the last three years, and especially during the last year, the working class had to face repeated economic attacks accompanied by repression and atrocities. The attacks on trade union rights, the wage freeze Act, the lay offs and closures—all were instruments to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the woking class.

Unprecedented unity was forged in the course of this battle; new milestone in united resistance were reached. At the same time, there were certain lags in comprehending the full nature of the economic and ideological offensive unleashed by the ruling classes. The offensive was not realised as a full fledged class offensive of the exploiting class, each incident and step during the struggle was not understood as a battle against the main class policies pursued by the Congress Government. Each issue was fought as it arose but full realisation that we have entered a period of fighting the basic policies was not there. It is partly because of this that the reformist and revisionist leaders are often able to create confusion, oppose criticism of official policies, plead an alibi for the Indira Government and pass on the responsibility to the bureaucracy only.

The Characteristics of the Crisis

The same characteristics that we have witnessed in connection with the world capitalist crisis are to be found in India. There are an inflationary situation with prices continuously rising, unemployment rising rapidly to monstrous proportions, chronic underproduction in industries, stagnant or falling production and continuous attacks against the wages of the working class and incomes of all toilers while growing concentration of capital and wealth directly and indirectly helped through State policies. There is a difference also. The agrarian masses suffering under the double yoke of feudal relations and capitalist market are reduced to complete destitution.

Stagnant production with some small spurt in between in the midst of rising prices has been a continuing feature of the capitalist path in our country for a few years now.

These are having disastrous effects on our living standards, on job security. And we have not seen the end of all this. Economic

protents point out to bigger assaults and greater trials in the near future. Every measure of the Government from wage freeze to budget proposals, from credit squeeze to taxation is intended to throw the burden of the crisis on the working class and the people. None except the top sections of exploiters and the rich owners including the landlords escape it. Workers, employees, lawyers, doctors, engineers, peasants and agricultural workers, shop-keepers and small producers and small industry owners all alike are forced to accept new burdens to enable the monopolies and big capitalists to reap new profits.

It is not realised by the organised trade union movement how jobs of the workers have been attacked; under one pretext or another tens of thousands have either been laid off or sent home with factories ordering closure. And this has happended because high prices have affected demand; at the same time, prices are not coming down.

While Indira Gandhi assures the country that there are no recessionary tendencies, thousands of workers lose their earnings just because there is recession in demand.

Since November last, the organised textile industry as well as the powerloom and handloom industry are going through a period of temporary closures or lay-off. The real situation in organised industry would have been laid bare completely had the electricity cut not come to its rescue in certain centres. Otherwise, the employers would have had to resort to a general lay off for want of demand.

In October, Ahmedabad mills closed their night shift throwing out of jobs 5,000 workers. At about the same time, Buckingham Carnatic Mills of Madras announced a 25 per cent reduction in their production. In Ahmedabad, the closure lasted for two months, i.e. till the accumulated stocks were cleared by reducing the prices by 25 to 40 per cent.

It should be noted that the Government had permitted the millowners to raise cloth prices by 40 per cent only a few months back while it attacked the wages of the workers and employees.

The West Bengal press reported on 5/11, lay-off and retrenchment have already been started both in organised and unorganised industries in the State particularly in cotton textile units. A large number of workers are rendered jobless in this industrly.

In Nadia and other districts, where powerloom industries

have been concentrated several powerloom units were either locked out or closed, throwing thousands of workers out of employment. The credit restrictions which penalise the small producers undermined their capacity for holding on large stocks as well as continuing production. In the same month, in Ichalkaranji a centre of powerloom production in Maharashtra about 45 per cent of the 5,000 powerloom workers were laid off. The output of powerloom fabrics which was already reduced by 40 per cent following a crisis in the industry was cut further by 10 per cent, on account of sustained fall in prices and poor off-take.

Large-scale accumulation of handloom cloth was reported in November from several centres. Hundreds of handloom workers were thrown out of employment in Kerala. In Andhra, in March handloom cloth stocks worth Rs. 17 crores were reported to have accumulated. The powerloom crisis continues. In April powerloom owners of Bhiwandi, biggest powerloom centre near Bombay were unable to sell their products though they were working only one shift in place of three. They were thinking closing all the shifts till the stocks are cleared. This mean unemployment for thousands.

It is no wonder that with high prices, famine and destitution in the country both the urban and rural masses are incapable of purchasing enough cloth. The cry of no purchase appears bizare when three-fourths of India goes naked.

Government's 'anti-inflationary' cut in expenditure on purchase of railway wagons protends to affect the job of hundreds of people. It is now feared that the reduction of railway wagon purchase will result in the closure of smaller manufacturing units and a drop in production of 25 per cent of the installed capacity in the larger ones. This will lead to large-scale lay-off by the wagon building units.

In West Bengal 50,000 bidi workers have been affected by Government's new excise order and the U.P. 50,000 brass workers of Moradabad were affected by the slump in the exports to the USA. Small units have closed down and most of the workers have taken to rickshaw pulling. Add to this tens of thousands who were laid off because of electricity shortage. In U.P., Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, West Bengal, tens of thousands have had to forego their earnings because of electricity rationing. The shortage is not just due to natural causes, but mostly due to corruption of the bureaucrats, failure of maintenance etc. Corruption is an integral part of the

capitalist-bureaucratic set-up.

The situation continues to deteriorate and as late as the end of March, West Bengal was witnessing lay-off of about 10,000 workers on an average per day. Many units have already intimated to the State Government under the existing law that they have to go in for heavy retrenchment.

Engineering and textile industries are more affected than others. Hind Motors is reported to be planning retrenchment of 5,000 workers while it has been daily laying off three to four thousands workers in rotation. This may have a chain reaction on ancillary units many of which have already resorted to long lay-offs.

In the textile mills also a similar situation prevails consequent on lack of demand for clothings in the market.

The wage-freeze has done its job. It has not brought down prices, but only incapacitated the workers from purchasing necessities like cloth. It has accelerated the crisis and the recession.

Comrades, in the month of April the crisis has deepened further and it now appears that we are face to face with the worst recession since 1939 crisis—with mass closures and retrenchment in the offing and mass ruination of peasant producers due to sudden fall in prices. The situation is further compounded by the power famine which is directly due to capitalistic bureaucratic planning and bungling. But the workers, the small employers and small producers are its main victims.

By April several thousand textile workers in Kanpur were laid off due to electricity shortage. But press message said that even if the power availability was increased to two shifts as had been demanded by the mills the chances were that more textile mills in U.P. would fall sick. It was feared that out of 27 organised textile mills in the other towns of U.P. as many as 10 would fall sick if the demand for fine and medium cloth did not improve. They were unable to keep up even one shift working and most of them had accumulated outstanding arrears.

The drastic reduction of the purchasing power of the people led to a sharp decline in the sale of shoes and other leather products, exercise books for students and other items of common consumption.

If there is still some doubt about who is affected it should be removed by the fact that beedi sales went down by 20 per cent in

U.P., daily labour wage rates went down from Rs. 5 to Rs. 3.50, there are now lakhs applying for menial jobs and hundreds of families are shifting from pucca houses to mud hut tenements.

The correspondent adds, "Sharp drop in the demand for mill-made cloth has also spread to the handloom and power sector and even to the khadi sector which has resulted in a sharp decline to the demand for years".

In Tamilnadu, the virtual shutdown for power brought industrial production to a standstill with 1.5 million workers laid off. The closure due to electricity, screen the closures consequent on lack of demand in many cases.

In Bombay, thousands of silk mills workers are threatened with unemployment.

In the jute industry, mills have already started reducing production by 15 per cent. This may be the general rule leading to mass retrenchment. Many jute mills are likely to close down for lack of export orders. The result is that the equipment for production of carpet-backing installed in the late sixties at an estimated cost of Rs. 100 crores is rendered practically idle.

Comrades, this indeed is a serious situation. The working class of India had not faced a similar situation for years. We all should know what it means in the context of the mounting figures of unemployment and the fact that employment in private organised non-agricultural industries showed an absolute decline in 1974 compared with 1973. The employers and the Govt. both are trying to reap the maximum benefit out of it. The employers often talk of wholesale closure of factories to extort financial concessions from the Govt. at the expense of the people, (demand for abolition of export duty on jute goods or at the expense of the workers' retrenchment, wage cuts, etc.) The Govt. spokesman especially in W. Bengal pretend to play the role of mediators and using the scare of wholesale closures ask the workers to accept retrenchment or work by rotation, i.e. distribution of unemployment. These are the usual tricks of capitalist Government which has not been forced to accept the responsibility for unemployment wage. The working class should not fall a victim to the false proposal of Congress Labour Minister.

It is reported that at a recent meeting of the trade unions convened by the West Bengal Labour Dept. to discuss the jute situation, the Govt. spokesman made suggestions for more pro-

duction, working of night without additional remuneration, working all the seven days without additional wage, less pay more work was the formula. When he was asked why he was asking for more production when foreign orders were low and stocks had accumulated he explained that more production and less pay would reduce the cost of production enabling the employers to sell in the foreign market. The meaning is plain. The capitalists want their guaranteed high profits at the expenses of the workers. They are not prepared to lower their profit to make the jute goods competitive abroad.

Possibility of further deterioration

In October the Iron and Steel Controller complained even when we make allocations they are are not lifted. Soon it was advertised that stocks have been lifted and everything was alright. All that seems to have happened was that the stocks have been transferred to different stockyards. In January, it was reported that the Hindustan Steel Limited stockyard in Delhi was holding stocks of about 30,000 tonnes almost double of what it possessed normally. Similarly, the Delhi Small Scale Industries Corporation had 4,000 tonnes of steel stock which was much more than the normal holding. Similar was the position in several cities.

While the Government was advertising that there is no slackening of the demand, the Bokaro Steel Plant decided to reduce production of pig iron and steel ingots following heavy accumulation of stocks. Official reason given for accumulation is just shortage of rail wagons.

At the end of February, press reports showed that the wagon industry had 25,000 wagons, nearly two years production on hand. This coupled with the drastically reduced railway expenditure for wagon purchase was feared to result in closure of small units and 25 per cent reduction in the production of big unis. In Chittaranjan, over 20 per cent of its capacity is lying idle.

In his speech to the Central Advisory Council of Industries at the end of march, Mr. Pai, Minister of Industries and Civil Supplies said that a recent study had revealed that in only ten industries capacity utilisation was above 70 per cent and about 2 industries showed utilisation between 50 per cent and 70 per cent.

Such is the economic situation-the recessionary climate which foreshadows further assaults on our jobs and living standards.

Are there prospects of improving the situation in the near

future? Present trend and facts belie such expectations. The stagnation—recession trends will continue and deceleration may gather speed not withstanding Indira Gandhi's assurances to the country.

The Government itself does not seem to have much confidence in what it preaches. It has to admit that at best the situation will continue to stagnate. The Economic Survey for 1974-75 says, "Thus far there is no evidence that the highly unsatisfactory trend on industrial production since 1966 is to be succeeded by a new more dynamic phase".

Exports and World Capitalist Crisis

Comrades, all these years, our movement has confined itself mostly to wage questions and other issues which directly affect us. We have not gone beyond these and tried to under stand how Government's policies regarding exports and imports affect our jobs and emoluments, now the Government manipulates its exports policy in the interests of the capitalist class describing it as defence of national interests.

When the foreign market is flourishing, the capitalists are enabled to make huge profits without of course any compulsion to improve the conditions of the working class. When the foreign market is in doldrums the capitalists are subsidised at the expense of the taxpayer for their exports and are encouraged to attack the living standards of the workers. All this is prescribed as meeting a national need to earn foreign exchange.

The inflationary conditions in the Western world boosted India's exports in the midst of a declining production trend. Now that the Western world is getting deep in depression and the demand for Indian exports facing drastic curtailment, Indian economy will be faced with big upsets.

Now these conditions are fast disappearing. The Finance Ministry is preparing to subsidise some of these exports, expecting a fall in some of them in 1975-76. Jute, cotton textiles and several other goods are likely to face stiff competition and show fall in exports. The Economic Survey admitted, "Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that a severe recession in industrial countries may have some adverse effect on the growth of our exporters and hence industrial production. The OECD has predicted that, for the second successive year, major industrial countries will not experience any substantial growth in 1975.

This means that there will be hectic activity to promote export

and the cry is already being raised to make out exports competitive in the world market which means cut down the working class wage and emoluments to the maximum possible or reduce the number of employed workers by including modern sophisticated machinery.

The trade union movement must insist that this pampering of the capitalists must end and they must be made to reduce their profits and disgorge some of their huge profits of recent times to subsidise exports if necessary.

This dependence on exports is an expression of the dependence of our economy on the Western countries. We are forced to export necessaries of life to meet our import obligation and foreign payments.

The working class must also realise that the policy of the Congress Government to keep our economy linked with the recession-ridden western world is dangerous to its interests. The demand must come that we should have stronger trade relations with the socialist economies, including the economy of people's China. The stable economies of the Socialist world free from crisis offer a guaranteed and developing market.

Public Investment

Comrades, it is not realised that official deliberate measures of checking inflation has resulted in a slow growth of employment and increased unemployment. In an underdeveloped country the rate of increased employment depends to a very large extent on increased planned investment of the Government. The working class and democratic opinion have repeatedly demanded that the Government should stop useless expenditure and deficit financing and exercise control over economy and prices. But at the same time, they have demanded that through proper taxation of the monopolists the big capitalists and the landlords production activity should be enhanced and public sector role in expanding production should be futher expanded.

To confiscate the resources belonging to these sectors and turn them to public purpose would have served to check inflation as well as promote employment and production. The Government not wanting to offend these classes drastically reduced its own investment in the name of fighting inflation.

The country's capital outlays and other investments totalled only Rs. 859 crores in terms of 1965-66 prices as against Rs. 1404

crores in 1972-73. The result has been that industries dependent directly on Government departmental expenditure, wagons etc. have been crippled becasue of reduced purchases, Industries contributing to the implementation of different projects private industies connected with them have also been affected. That is partly the reason for several lay-offs.

The budget for 1975-76 does hardly improve the situation. The total (Central and State) plan size for 1975-76 will be Rs. 5060 crores which in financial terms represents an increase of 23 per cent over the 1974-75 plan of Rs. 4844 crores. Considering that prices have risen by more than 25 per cent last year, the increased expenditure does not represent any advance on the previous year when public investment had reached the lowest level in recent years.

This is how matters regarding employment and unemployment are decided behind the backs of the workers by budgetting allotments. The time has come for the working class to raise its voice of protest for the trade unions to unmask before the workers this story of deception and cheating. The time has come to demand the nationalisation of all foreign and monopoly concerns, and utilisation of their resources for extending planned public production. Of course, it is clear that no good will come out of the public sector if it continues to remain the hunting ground of the corrupt bureaucrats and ministerial lackeys. Measures will have to be taken to see that it functions as a genuine public sector in the service of the people and not in the service of the capitalists as at present.

Monopolies Thrive

The policy of the Government is all along to foster the interests of the monopolists and big capitalists. Nothing could be more devastating than this tribute to the Indira Government from G.D. Birla, one of the notorious top monopolists. A PTI message dated 18th March from Gwalior said, "Eminent industrialist G.D. Birla ridiculed the habit of the business community to criticise the Government for the sake of criticism only. Appreciating the present policy of the Government, Mr. Birla said that he did not feel that the Government in practice was tough towards monopoly houses which he said were criticised only in speeches. Both big and small sections continued to get equal treatment in respect of licenses." Will the leaders of the Right C.P. who head the AITUC that they will revise their opinion about Mr. G.D. Birla and include him among the progressive forces.

Mr. Birla of course was speaking the truth. The anti-monopoly outbursts of the Indira Gandhi spokesmen are the facade to promote the intersts of the monopolies. They are being asked to invest in all spheres under the excuse that there is paucity of capital. Every device is used to open new avenues to them.

Besides why shouldn't Mr. Birla be pleased? Between 1951 and 1970, the assets of Birlas rose from Rs. 51 crores to Rs. 617 crores, the assets of Tatas rose during the same period from Rs. 95 crores of Rs. 711 crores. (This of course did not prevent Mr. J.R.D. Tata from complaining at a recent meeting that the private sector was being gheraoed.) While during the year 1973-74 people were passing through harrowing conditions, the working class had to fight for every naya paise, how were the capitalist faring? Profits of 353 non-Government non-financial companies during 1973-74 recorded a significant rise of Rs. 56 crores to Rs. 280 crores after tax against a fall of Rs. 14 crores in the previous year according to Reserve Bank Bulletin, December 1974. Taking into consideration the rise in tax and interest charges, the actual increase would be of the order of Rs. 94 crores.

Gross profit i.e. total surplus value or unpaid labour increased by Rs. 100 crores from Rs. 596 crores to Rs. 690 crores, while salaries and wages of lakhs of workers etc. increased by Rs. 91 crores.

New Freedom

This Government is now giving up the pretence of controlling monopolists or private capitalists. It is opening new avenues to the monopolists. The most blatant advocates of monopoly capital are Mr. Pai and Mr. Ray, West Bengl Chief Minister. Both are echoing the desire of Indira Gandhi. It is now being decided to sell the public sector to the private tycoons in the name of securing public particpation in the public sector. Through Mr. Pai besides the Government is promising to the capitalists decontrol of prices, a guaranteed high profit rate—at least 16 per cent—which means barbarious exploitation of the workers. Here the Garabi Hatao has turned full circle. Instead of a guaranteed minimum wage to the workers, they are giving a guranteed high profits to the capitalists. Congress Socialism is marching ahead.

Soft Pedalling Foreign Capital

The Fifth Five Year plan announced Govt's determination to develop our country's self-reliance. Where is that cry gone? The mixed economy is in need of more and more foreign debts. Besides,

the Govt. is accepting food imports under the American PL-480. The dependence of the country's economy on foreign debts increases and with it the danger to our economic freedom.

what is most dangerous is that multinational corporations—the biggest foe of democracy, national independence and working class are also being shamelessly wooed. It sems there are more than 200 branches of these corporations which are not industrial concerns but economic empires. They bring down governments, instal puppets to ensure their own designs. The Allende Government in Chile was overhtrown by conspiracy of these corporations. The Indira Government while talking now and then about CIA activites is permitting this important agency of the CIA and American imperialism to endanger the freedom of our country.

Let me quote what a writer in a well-known daily wrote recently: "It has been revealed that a CIA research report written in August 1974 on the world grain shortage stated that the situation in developing countries like India could give the U.S. a measue of power it has never had before, possibly an economic and political domination greater than that of the immediate post-world war two years. Washington could acquire virtual life and death power over the fate of the multitudes of the needy." (J.D. Sethi, Amrit Bazar Patrika).

The working class in its own and national interest denounce the Congress policy of wooeing the multinational corporations and warn the people against it.

No Relief from High Prices

Ten months back the Government introduced the notorious wage-freeze Act in the name of countering inflation and high prices.

What are the results of this policy of attacking the workers, salary earners and professional? What is the result of taking away more than Rs. 500 crores from the workers' and employees' pockets.

The Government is advocating that prices have started falling. But do the people know about it? Have they got any relief? Are food and other necessaries of life within easy reach of the workers and other toilers?

The fact is that food articles have registered a decline in wholesale prices of 7 per cent between the end of September 1974 and February 15, 1975. The decline in general price index also

comes to about 5 per cent.

Notwithstanding this fall prices are higher by 18.8 per cent in December 1974 than what they were a year ago. The Economic Survey also does not promise a halt in price rise, it only promises a slowing down of the rate of growth of prices : "Taking all these factors into account, one can expect that in the coming months the rate of growth of prices will slow down as compared to the corresponding period of the last year." The wage freeze was just an instrument of robbing the workers, passing on the crisis burden to their shoulders.

Against the Landlords

However there will be no lasting and permanent relief from the chronic food famine and blackmarket price unless the working class directs its fire against the pro-landlords policies of the Indira Government and defeats them. In alliance with the vast mass of agricultural workers and peasants the working class must demand a smashing of the land monopoly of the land lords and redistribution of land to the tiller. Without this agrarian revolution there is no salvation either from high prices or from food famine, from the peasants' impoverishment. Immediately the demand should be put for the commandeering of landlords stocks at prescribed prices, attracting small peasants' produce by offering attractive price and bonus and complete state trading in wholesale foodgrains trade. It should be the task of the trade unions to educate the working class and rouse it to fight the landlord domination of our economy.

High Taxation

Comrades, it is not only through high prices that we, the workers and the people are made to bear the burdens of the crisis. The enormous taxation of the Congress Government which escalates the prices of all commodities is another weapon of the unscrupulous rulers. We witness the same phenomenon in advanced capitalist States. In 1974-75 alone total additional taxation of Rs. 935 crores (in a full year) was levied by the Central Government.

The most significant feature of these taxation burdens is that they rely mainly on commodity taxation which gives a boost to the price spiral.

This levies a heavy burden on the people raising the price of every commodity and service. The taxes and duties on petrol form 375 per cent of the basic import price of crude, raising the cost of

transport. It has been estimated in 1972 that the indirect taxes of the Central Government formed 50 per cent to 75 per cent of the total ex-factory cost of several commodities of daily use. They formed 50% to 75% of the price cost of cloth; 75% of the cost of suger; 60% to 70% of cement and 50% to 60% of steel.

The taxation of the Central and State Government constitutes robbery of the people, again helps in transfering value from the poorer to the richer classes and their state and Intensifies inflation.

Wage Freeze

The first step which the Government took to fight inflation was to curb the purchasing power of the workers. But this time the attack had to be broadened and crisis burdens had to be directly palced on a vaster section of the people. Employees, doctors, teachers, professors, engineers all who earned their bread by their honest efforts were drawn into the net. To make it appear that the Government was impartial, some restriction was placed on declaration of dividends also. But in this year's budget this fig leaf has been removed and the wage freeze measures stand out as class measures of the capitalist class to attack all its employee—all whom it exploits.

This has for the first time, made all these sections realise that they are being ground down in the same capitalist mill. It has led to widespread joint actions and protests of the the workers and employees about which we have read in the general report. The Delhi Convention of September was an unprecedented demonstration of unity. The CITU unions must carry forward this unity and invite all other sections—the professors, teachers, doctors to join together in a common battle, We must all hope soon we all—workers, employees, professors and teachers, Central and State Government employees will come together in a common organisation to wage our battle against the policies of the capitalist-landlord Government. The present organisational division between workers and employees and others is an artificial division created by the ruling classes and the sooner it ends the better. The wage Freeze Act and other accompanying measurs affect a vast section of urban people who must be directly drawn into the movement and the entire struggle has to be turned into the movement and the entire struggle has to be turned into a huge demonstration of protest against official policies.

Credit Squeeze

One of the important sections which is threatened with is the section of small industries who are being completely ruined under the Government's Credit squeeze policy. This spells disaster for tens of thousands of workers because the small scale industries employ 40 per cent of the total labour force engaged in organised industries. From these sections voices are being raised against credit squeeze of the Government which is paraded as an anti-inflationary measure.

Comrades, the so-called anti-inflationary measues of the Govt. have fallen heavily on the peasant producer. Like the working class he has become the direct victim of the crisis and the official measures to pass on its burdens to the people.

The credit squeeze and several other measures of the Govt. have brought disaster to the countryside. In the first place, the so-called graded levy of foodgrains has become a refined instrument of extorting the produce from the small peasants leaving the landlords safe. Secondly, the credit squeeze and manipulations of the cotton and jute purchasing corporations have ruined the small cotton and jute growers—in some months, prices crashing down by 40 per cent. This disastrous fall while it runied the cotton peasant did not benefit the people or the poor man's cloth. It added only to the profits of the traders, the speculator and the millowner.

And finally, Govt,'s discriminatory taxation and excise against Khandsari producer have runied them and led to unemployment of thousands of workers.

Discrimination Against Central Employees

Comrades, our CITU must take special note of the fact that the Central and State Government employees, our valiant railway workers and defence workers have been made the special victims of the Freeze Act. They were entitled to get in cash at least half additional D. A. due to them under the terms of the Pay Commission. But though four to stx increases in D.A. are due, since July 1974, the employees have received almost nothing. Neither cash nor deposit. The Central and various State Governments are illegally trying to impound the entire D.A.—an act of high way robbery. Some State Governments like the West Bengal Government have offered miserable amounts of Rs. 4 to 8 adding insult to injury. The Government of India recently offered a bogus and defrauding compromise which the fighting leaders were justified

in refusing.

We solidly stand by the Central and State Government employees, by the railway and defence employees in their just struggle. We demand that the Central and State Governments desist from the illegal withdrawal of the DA. We send our warm congratulation to the fighting 30,000 State employees of Tripura who waged a heroic strike in March.

Comrades, many wokers are anxiously inquiring whether their deposited DA is safe in the hands of the Government, whether they will get them back. We cannot say. It seems no proper accounts are kept either by the management or by the Government authorities. We should not be surpirsed if a fraud is committed on thousands of workers. Considering the level of morality of the Congress Ministers and Congress regimes, any thing is possible.

Comrades, shall we presume that the wage freeze Act will cease to exist by the end of July as promised, that henceforth our DA will be freed and our accumulated deposits will be a vailable to us to meet our daily needs?

We should not entertain this dream. The wage freeze Act is not a temporary measure. It is a permanent enactment and will continue to remain so unless the working class succeeds in getting it revoked. Like the Emergency which was specially proclaimed during the Indo-Pak War, it will continue to remain as a permanent fixture. The economic conditions I have described, the need of the capitalists and landlords to throw burdens on us, the recessionary conditions, the Government's partiality for the capitalists and landlords, all these make it clear that Indira Government will not give up its vicious grip over our earnings. The freeze Act or some other substitutes will be found to defraud us of our DA, our wages.

We must from now on demand that the Freeze Act and other accompanying legislations must be withdrawn and should not be allowed to continue. That demand must be voiced from every platform. If the Government is ill advised to continue the Acts, it must be resisted by the full strehgth of the united workers, employees and professionals.

Unorganised Industries

Comrades, here I must remind you of our duty towards the workers in small industries one of the most heavily exploited sections. There are thousands of small concerns and factories all over the country. Perhaps in Maharashtra alone more than a lakh

of engineering wokers work in concerns which are not registered as factories. Calcutta may boast of many more. Thousands of workers in such factories have either been laid off or retrenched due to the crisis. There is no lay-off compensation for them nor retrenchment benefit for them. Their wages often are not more than Rs. 3 per day without any DA and hours of work not regulated. Recently the Maharashtra Government laid down new minimum rates for engineering industries but the employers refuse to implement them.

Comrades, the workers in these unorgainsed industries must be orgainsed, to secure their legitimate demands; the State must be compelled to accept its responsibility in subsidising lay-off and retrenchment compensation where necessary and the ESI services.

Conditions are still more horrible in the scheduled employments under the Minimum Wages Act. These include industries like bidi industry which employ nearly 2 million workers of which only 2 lakhs are covered under the Factory Act. Wage rates in these employments range from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 3 per day, only a small section through its organised strength being able to secure higher rates. The Congress Government have betrayed these workers. The Minimum Wages Act authorises them to revise the wages at an interval not exceeding five years. But the Tripura Government did not raise the wages of the bidi workers for 21 years; in West Bengal there was no revision for 13 years. It is officialy admitted that among the employments carried under the Act minimum wages have not been revised for more than five years in 94 employments and for more than ten years in 34 employments.

The Congress Governments use the Minimum Wage Act to protect the employers. When the workers through their struggle as in Calcutta and Gujarat are able to secure Rs. 7 and Rs. 9 respectively per 1000 bidis, the Congress State Labour Ministers solemnly fix the national minimum at Rs. 5/-.

Facts however reveal that a large number of concerns some of them the biggest are working below capacity. That the overall rate of surplus has hardly increased compared with last year. And that perhaps a major part of the surplus has been ensured by raising the price of the product and by reducing the real emoluments of the workers.

The CITU unions must help orgainse those sections who are often closely linked with the agricultural workers and peasants.

Their struggle will galvanise the rural masses and help found their movement.

The Public Sector

Comrades, perhaps in no other country has the Public Sector been so discredited as in India. It has become a synonym for inefficiency, corruption, anti-national deals with foreigners, waste of public money and low production and enormous losses. It is only this year that the Government has started announcing that some concerns are utilising more than 70 per cent of the capacity and profits for a number of them. How far these profits are genuine and how far they have been arrived at by just inflating the prices one cannot say.

But one can easily understand the lack of public spirit in the sector considering the treatment given to the workers. Had the workers been invited to participate on terms of equality the public sector would have given a different story. But then bribery, corruption and favouritism would have had to end.

The vital condition for proper functioning of the Public Sector is the integrity of the officials and the confidence of the workers. In India, both are lacking. The workes are treated as slaves, as feudal retainees. One has only to look to the standing orders which seem to have been prepared on the model of a prison code rather than a public sector undertaking. The workers can be dismissed at will by the management without any procedure. The standing orders of the Bhilai Steel Plant which is run whith the technical and financial aid of the Soviet Union lays down "Where a workers has been convicted of a criminal offence in a court of law or where the General Manager is satisfied, for reasons to be recorded in writing, that it is inexpedient or against the interest of security to employ the workman, the workman may be removed or dismissed from service without following the procedure laid down in Standing Order No. 31." Even if the manager thinks it is just inexpedient to employ the workman he can be dismissed. Here it is really a mixed economy. Technical help from Socialism with standing orders from capitalism. What advance have trade union rights make under these orders?

The Bhilai Standing Order 28 asks the employees to avoid habitual indebtedness, adding insult to the injury when the wage is miserable and DA is frozen.

How much freedom of organisation? Standing Order No. 29

considers holding of meeting within the premises owned by the company without the permission of the management as misconduct which is punishable.

Collection or canvassing for the collection of any moneys within the works premises without the written permission of the Management or distributing or exhibiting in or about the works premises any newspapers, pamphlets, handbills, posters without the written permission of the management is misconduct.

This is a charter for only stooge unions. No union not liked by the managementcan collect funds, subscription, issue leaflets or posters. Fundamental rights are alright in the Constitution book but not in the Socialist aided Bhilai Plant.

The Standing Orders of some other undertakings do not allow a worker to act as election agent in the Assembly or Parliamently elections; do not permit him to contribute to any periodical without the permission of the management. (It seems if you feel like writing poetry, you must seek the permission of the management). How can the workers feel that they were working for the public Sector with these atrocious standing orders? The only way to run the public sector efficiently is to do away with the prison-house conditions, ensure minimum economic guarantees, end the bureaucratic set-up and establish over-all control and supervision of workers over its functions.

Comrades,

The working class realises that in the present bureaucratic and capitalist set up the public sector concept becomes a mockery. We cannot support this idea of public sector. We stand for public sector with complete trade union rights for the working class, free from bureaucratic management and functioning against monopoly.

Discrimination against Women

Comrades, in our last Conference we decided to fight against the wage and other discrimination in relation to women workers. Our plantation and bidi unions have already taken up the question.

The discrimination against women must be taken as a serious challenge to our movement. It violates the basic principles of equal pay for equal work.

There is a woman Prime Minister at the Centre. There is a woman Chief Minister in Orissa. But the discrimination continues. The bond of common womanhood stands paralysed before the bond of class interests.

To mention only a few wage discriminations in 1972-73 in the Kerala Tea Plantations men were sanctioned a daily wage of Rs. 3.44 whereas women were given only Rs. 3 per day. In Assam, men got Rs. 2.95 whereas women got Rs. 2.75. In coir industry, men got Rs. 4.46 while women got Rs. 3.10 only.

In the bidi industry, in Calcutta, men were paid Rs. 5 per 1,000 bidis in 1972-73 whereas women were paid only Rs. 1.75. After the 1974 strike men got Rs. 7 per thousand whereas women are paid only Rs. 3.50 per 1,000 bidis.

The Government of India ratified the ILO Convention No. 100 concerning equal remuneration for men and women in 1958. Though sixteen years have passed since then, women workers continue to get less wages than men for the same type of work. The CITU reported this violation of the Convention to the Director General of International Labour Organisation.

We also pointed out that it is the India Government's deliberate policy to fix lower wages for women. Wage Fixation Committees appointed by the Government have recommended unequal wages for women in plantations, building and construction and other industries. In the Central Public Works Department of the Indian Government the principle of equal remuneration is violated. The minimum wage Advisory Committees in States and at the Centre have also recommended unequal wages and the Governments concerned a have accepted them.

The Labour Ministry of the Government of India has no qualms in admitting that the Indian Government does not formally accept the principle of equal wage. justifying the unequal treatment of women it says in a communication : "The traditional pattern is a differentiation of wage rates for men, women and childern." What happens to the Convention solemnly signed? What happens to the equlaity among sexes proclaimed in the Constitution? They are just show pieces for foreigners to look at. No civilised Government will repudiate the principle in this shameless fashion. But everything is possible for the Garibi Hatao mountebanks.

It seems our exposure of the Indian Government before the ILO has compelled it to advertise a legislation promising equality of wages to women. Considering our experience regarding Congress promises, we cannot believe that any progressive legislation is likely to emerge. Most probably it is an advertisement for the

International Women's Year, to be forgotten after the year is over. In any case, our agitation and strength to enforce equality must continue.

Unemployment

Comrades, in our last Conference, we had warned that unemployment in our country was not a passing phenomenon, that situaion would continue to deteriorate so long as the Congress continues to impose the capitalist path on our people. I have already referred to the vast number of retrenched and laid-off.

The tortuous growth of the economy is converting a large mass of people into destitutes. The growth of employment in the organised sector, public and private, was only 1.5 per cent between April and December 1973. What else can one expect with the economy crawling at the rate of 0.7%? The last year will show further deteriortion with an expected rate of growth of only 3.5 per cent. We have already seen how thousands have been thrown out on the streets.

The number of applicants on live register has therefore continued to swell. Within a year of our last Conference, the number of unemploymed rose by 10 per cent and reached the staggering figure of 83.55 lakhs by June 1974. The Economic Survey seems to derive some satisfaction from the fact that the rate of unemployment growth was not as high as between July 1972 and 1973 when it reached 33%.

By August 1974 the number of registered unemployed had reached 8.7 million.

In recent months since then, the number must have mounted rapidly. But through change in designation and other devices the authorities are artificially keeping it down.

By June 1974 the number of educated job seekers inceased by 5 lakhs to 40.32 lakhs. The bulk of increase in the number of educated job seekers was accounted for by Bihar (1.27 lakhs) : West Bengal (0.7 lakhs), Tamilnadu (o.6 lakhs) and Maharashtra (0.5 lakhs.)

Comrades, this quest for a scientific national wage policy was started in the name of doing justice to the lowest 30 per cent of our poeverty-striken population. You all remember that great watchward with which the Fifth Five Year Plan was started. Now-a-days, you do not hear about improving the conditions of the unfortunate 30 per cent for they have been the first victims of the crisis and plan-

holiday. All that remains is an attack on the earnings of the other sections.

According to the estimates made by eminent economists the figure for rural unemployment including under-employed will reach 40 million. Thus the total unemployment in India including under-employed may reach 50 millions. This means 25 per cent of the working population of 183.6 millions according to the 1971 census is without employment. This is just breakdown of the social order and not a mere passing unemployment problem.

Aware of the rising anger among the unemployed, the Congress State Governments and the capitalists seek to divert it into fratricidal channels. Instead of granting relief and assuring the citizens the right to work, the Congress ministers raise the slogan of jobs only for the sons of the soil, a demand for the expulsion of workers from other States. Bengali workers to be thrown out from Assam; Oriyas to be thrown out of Bengal, Tamil and Kerala workers to be thrown out from Bombay and so on. Not only the Shiv Sena in Bombay but Congressmen elsewhere also raise this reactionary slogan. If India is attacked is it the duty only of the workers in the border States to defend it? It only shows that the capitalist-landlord Government despite the glib Congress talk about national integration is unable to protect the unity of the country.

Comrades, the trade union movement has hitherto neglected the question of unemployed. And there is every danger of the unemployed youth being used against the working class a la Adolf Hitler. West Bengal already shows that the danger is real.

To move millions of our rural and urban unemployed, from the pangs of hunger and the infamy of destitution we must demand immediate unemployment relief and the right to work to be inscribed in the constitution as a fundamental right. A government which is unable to guratntee employment has no right to exist. We must moblise the entire strength of the employed workers in defence of the unemployed.

Government Schemes to Relieve Unemployment

Comrades, to attack the minds of the educated and rural unemployed, the Central and State Governments announced fantastic relief schemes claiming to produce equally fantastic results. With the parliamentary elections approaching, the number of such schemes go on multiplying. While the CITU supports every genun-

ine measure of help to the unemployed, it cannot but observe that most of the schemes have ended in cheating the unemployed, in feathering the nest of a few contrators and bureaucrats. They have also shown utter callousness of the Government towards the question.

This is seen from official figures. Official statistics presented to the Lok Sabha reveal that while the Government had advertised a target of half a million jobs it claimed less than 20 per cent achievement. The employment generated was only 92,000, after spending nearly 50 percent of the planned outlay of Rs. 70 crores. Under another employment promotion scheme, it is estimated to have created jobs for 68,159 people. Compare this figure with the figure of 40 lakhs educated unemployed and millions in the rural areas.

The audit of the Rural employment scheme of Orissa also reveals corruption, cheating, falsifiction of accounts and looting of the public funds. Though the scheme (1971-72 and 1972-73) involving an expenditure of Rs. 3 crores was supposed to give jobs for at least 1,000 persons in each district for ten months in a year for a period of three years, employment however was provided only for a brief period.

Works which were reported finished were found to be hardly finished. Works were treated as complete when the alloted money was squandered. The volume of work done was less than reported and funds were not used for the purpose intended. Names of labours did not appear on the muster rolls. Only names of their leaders, i.e. the contractor and the number of labours. So one can imagine who got the money. Only those leaders signed the receipts of payments.

This is the usual story in almost all States and this is how rural unemployment schemes work.

Nonetheless, the rural landlords and Congress Government made demagogic use of these schemes and seem to rouse the sympathy of the rural masses. They often play the village against the city and drive a wedge between the working class, the city toilers and the mass of oppressed agricultural labourers and peasantry.

In Maharashtra, emboldened by the neglect of the peasantry by the trade union movement, they have announced a scheme whose main burden is to be borne by the city's poorer sections, the sections of the working class and the middle classes. The Congress Govern-

ment alien to all sense of shame virtually exempts the big capitalist farms and landlords with an income upto Rs. 36,000 from the tax but catches the income-tax paying city clerk or worker to impose the new tax. Even those in the cities who are not liable to pay income tax have to pay the new professional tax as it starts operating with salaries of Rs. 400 per month.

The class bias is quite clear. The State Ministry packed with landlord interests has seen to it that the rich farmers, capitalists and landlords have virtually to pay nothing. These forces are virtually exempt from all income tax. They have been the main beneficiaries of the more than Rs. 1,500 crores spent on agriculture. Yet, they are exempted. The city indutrialists and monopolists are also allowed to escape lightly. Thus the two main agencies that are responsible for rural desitution and unemployment have got scot free. Make the toilers fight each other—that is the line of the Congress—bourgeois-landlord clique.

The CITU must denounce the move to tax the toiling city masses with new burdens. But the trade unions and the working class must realise that an effective fight cannot be put up without an understanding and support of the rural masses. The Government is emboldened to attack us because of our neglect of the rural masses. This is the price of self-centred economism. Our agitation must make it clear that we stand for relief to the rural masses at the expense of their rural exploiters. There is no doubt that the money raised for the new unempoyment guarntee scheme is only an election fund of the rural rich for the next elections and the masses will remain chested as before.

The Workers' Resistance

Comrades, on an average more than a million and a half wokers are engaged in strike action since 1966, a whole decade. No other section of the Indian population has been waging such a presistent struggle against economic conditions against the misdeeds of Congress rule.

Comerades, last three years have been years of continuous struggle. In 1972, the los of mandays in strikes and lockouts was 20.5 million; in 1973, when we met last it was 20.6 million; in 1974, the year of the valiant fight of the railway workes it was 31.2 million, the highest on record, the railways contribution is 4.5 million days.

This increasing resistance was the reply of the working class to

continuous attacks on its standard of living inflationary price sprial, fraudulent cost of living index and pilferings in the market with its shortage of commodites.

The railway workers, the Central and State Government employees the L.I.C. and other employees, the valiant jute workers of West Bengal, the cotton textile workers of Tamilnadu and Bombay and Delhi, the heroic mine workers of Raniganj, Dhanbad, the workers of Durgapur, the plantation and industrial workers of Kerala, the workers of Bharatpur, Kota and Jaipur all have played a valiant role in this great fight. Comrades, behind these strikes is the story of courageous fight against police persecution, victimisation, goonda terror and hireling murder gangs. Several have laid down their lives in this struggle.

These struggles have often enabled us to defeat the offensive and even advance our interests. In spite of the crisis, many sections have won important victories and advanced the cause of unionism.

Comrades, even then because of inflation our real wages have gone down considerably. It is known that between 1961-71 there was hardly any increase in real wage even according to official statistics. The rising strike wave mainly tried to restore the fall in the intervening years. The wages of workers in unorganised industries are estimated to have fallen at least by 30 per cent.

However, the situation that we are facing now, we will be facing henceforth is something different than what we are accustomed to. The question of defence of our wage and living standard have got directly linked with momentous political questions and political developments. The political developments that are shaking India, the manoeuvrings of the exploiting classes are now directly affecting the conduct of our daily struggles and if we miss this, we will be completely outmanoeuvred.

What is the political significance of the Wage Freeze Act? Is it just a temporary legislation to be withdrawn and forgotten? The Wage Freeae Act was follwed by the fixation of the Jute workes' DA by DIR order. Legislation, executive order to fix the wage or DA, to give it in part or to withdraw it completly at the sweet will of the Government—this is something new. This is the beginning of the end of trade unionism, of collective bargaining, and suppression of class struggle of the working class. This is the policy of policing of the workers wage—the beginning of open authoritarianism in the trade union movement.

The right of collective bargaining and struggle was already taken away. This was already seen in the Air Lines strike, in the Air India International strike where open demands have been made for the liquidation of trade union organisation.

The Wage Freeze Act however is a crude measure. It is going to be soon replaced by a national wage policy—an enactment which will place all demands regarding wages in the hand of a Government appointed authroity.

Mr. Ramanujam INTUC General Secretary has made it clear that the National Wage Commission would act as a watch dog to restrict workers' wage rather than do justic to them. "All agreements and awards in industrial units and industries governing wage and all contracts ensuring the workers of higher wages should become final only after securing the clearance of such a national wages/Income Commissioner. The Commissioner's function would be both supervisory and correctional so that unjustified disparities in wages of workmen demonstrably for the same kind of work as well as disproportionately high wages are reduced." The emphasis on restrictions and reduction of wages—the strike breaking stooge has spoken his master's mind.

The new policy is called an Income and Wages Policy but as is the experience of all capitalist countries, it will only be a wage control policy. It is being given a thin scientific veneer with talk about national incomes, differentials, etc. Under it, the minimum wage in industries will not be more than Rs. 200. With this minimum the Government will consider that it has discharged its responsibilites and any further increase will be made dependent on so many factors including the state of national income and the wages of workers who are unable to organise and defend themselves. Wage increase will be reduced to a farce. Neither workers' needs, nor the profits of the industry nor the quality of the work put by the worker will decide it. The principle of full neutralisation of rise in cost of living, will not be accepted. It will be denied to the majority of the workers who will have to bear the full blast of officials inflationary policies. In the name of relating wage incomes to productivity, intense exploitation of workers will be ensured before miniscule increases are granted. All this is being done in the name of reducing the inequalities as if the basic inequality of present-day society is the difference in the earnings of workers and not between the earnings of classes, not the differences between

wage of the worker and the monopoly profits of Tatas, and Birlas.

The Sukhamoy Chakrabarty's report which is the basis of the so-called wage policy is a weapon to divide different sections of the workers, fool the public with the claims to introduce a scientific system of wage payment. It resorts to the usual trick of talking about the low income in the county-side and the income of the workers in unorganised industries and paints the workers in orgainsed industries as a favoured class whose emoluments must be curtailed and brought in line with the level of the most ill-paid section in India.

These mountebanks do not talk about raisining the wages of the low paid workers to reduce disparities. They only tell-of reducing existing levels.

A scientific wage system can be based on the minimum need-based guaranteed wage—if this is not possible of immediate attainment everywhere, a time-bound period can be prescribed for reaching the minimum level. Only on the basis of this minimum can there be fruitful discussion about differentials based on skills, etc. This will of course mean that the profits of the capitalists must be at the disposal of society.

New Industrial Relations Bill

The third weapon being forged in the armoury of authoritarianism is the new Industrial Relations Bill. It intends to provide for a virtual banning of strikes and foist compulsory arbitration on the workers. But there is more to it than the restriction or banning of strikes.

The Bill will be mainly concerned with laying provisions for choosing the bargaining agent, i.e. who should represent the workers in negotiations with the employers—the question of trade union recognition. It does not strike these hypocritical democrats, those who manage the Government and their yesmen the INTUC and AITUC leaders that the democratic way of choosing the bargaining agent is to take a ballot of the workers in case of dispute. That is precisely what they want to avoid to see that their stooges are given the status of recognised unions.

The ground is being prepared both by the employers and Central Ministers including Mrs. Gandhi by their propaganda talk about multiplicity of unions. Growth of stikes, it is alleged, is not due to the worsening of workers' conditions but because of multiple unions. The workes are of course considered to be cattle

prepared to undergo privations for months without any grievances. It is now being hypocritically argued that negotiations cannot be successfully carried on unless only one union is given the exclusive right to represent the workers. Is the Government really concerned with the multiplicity of unions? Then it must denounce itself the policy it has purshed and denounce the capitalist class. Had it not been for continuous repression of the fighting unions and patronage extended to corrup leaders and organisations, there would have been no cause to complain about multiplicity of unions. But the ruling party followed a systematic policy through grant of recognition, of encouraging its own party unions. The multiplicity of unions today arises mainly from this policy of the Congress party, its refusal to recognise genuine fighting unions. Under these conditions the propaganda against multiplicity of unions has only one objective to secure by law for the Congress party and its allies the sole monopoly of running the trade unions and illegalising all others.

Comrades, this is the main purpose of the new proposed legislation —a diabolical design. The cry for one union, one bargaining agent in the mouth of the Prime Minister is but one step short of the cry for one political party in the country. It is a preparation for that authoritarian development a la Mujibur Rahaman whose exploits have been praised by the Prime Minister.

It cannot be said that our CITU unions or our allies have realised the danger being prepared for them in secret by the Government in collusion with the opportunist leaders of the AITUC and INTUC. The utter treachery of which the AITUC leaders are preparing for the working class must be denounced internationally. It is a matter of infinite shame and revulsion that the WFTU consisting of fighting workers' organistions from France and Italy, from the Socialist countries, should allow their affiliate in India to act as a traitor to the cause of the trade union movement and collaborate with the capitalist landlord classes.

Comrades, we have stated that cases do occur when conflicts seem to arise from inter-union differences. But these generally occur when the Government and the management sign anti-working class agreements with servile union leaders behind the back of the workers, bypassing the genuine representative organistions. At the same time, is it not known that of late there has been a growing trened for unity ? that on several occasions, the CITU,

AITUC and INTUC, HMS, UTUC all have joined hands in common cause. Did the attitude of the Government or the management change when all the unions stood together? What happened in the last jute strike of West Bengal when all unions stood together is well known. The Government and the management joined hands to strave out the workers and break the soildarity of the workers by organising the defection of the INTUC leaders. What happened during the railway strike, more than 100 railway unions stood together. Why does the Government continue to refuse the NCCRS which includes all railway unions?

Comrades, we have made our position repeatedly clear. We stand for one union in one industry; freely chosen by the workers and not imposed by the exploiting classes or their Government. Till such time as the mass of workers come to have faith in one union functioning democratically with Committees elected democratically, we continue to coopperate with all other genuine organisations. The CITU stands for recognition of unions on the basis of secret ballot and also demands that all agreements entered with the leadership should be endorsed by the mass of workers.

Comrades, the two years since our last Session have witnessed a tremendous growth of authoritarian trends in official policies towards the trade union movement. One Official union one official wage, no strike—these ae the watchwords of the new trend. The instrument of execution is the goonda gang.

This trend is a reflection of what is taking place in the country, what is happening to the country's democracy.

Political Repression

The weakness of the peasant movement in rural arreas, and the weakness in the political consciousness of the working class have enabled the ruling party to deal with the democratic movement in a ruthless way and perpetrate every kind of atrocity on the fighting people. I have already referred to the large-scale repression against the trade union movment which was also shared by all sections of the people including the students, the peasants, the agricultural workers, the teachers and the mass of untouchables. A Government which is ruthless to them in their struggle is equally cruel to them when they are arrested and jailed. The treatment of political prisoners in India has become an international scandal and it is no surprise that the Government of India did not vote in the U.N. for a resolution demanding the release of all political prisoners kept by

Chilean fascist Junta. Beatings, shootings, tortures all have reached such a height that in the end the Supreme Court had to warn the Government that even prisoners in jails possessed certain fundamental rights which no bureaucracy could override. And to this the statement made by responsible leaders in Bihar that in certain jails of Bihar, women prisones are virtually kept naked, the authorities refusing to supply them with clothes, according to jail rules.

It is against this regime of stravation, high prices and political repression accompanied by the most widespread corruption that the people have started fighting, demanding immediate redress to their grievance.

The mighty movement in Kerala against the anti-popular policies of the Achutha Menon Ministry in which our CITU is taking a prominent part, is a part of this developing protest. Against it, the Congress-Right Communist Ministry has unleashed unheard of repression arresting thousands, beating hundreds, raping women in police lock-up. More than 130 of cadres belonging to CITU and other democratic organisations have been murdered in Kerala by hirelings of the Ministry. The people are demanding resignation of the ministry and dissolution of the Assembly.

The movement in Bihar against corruption, for dissolution of the Bihar Assembly, for release of the all arrested people, for electoral refrom, for withdrawal of MISA, DIR and Emergency forms part of this angry protest which people are trying to launch in several States. The electoral reform has come into the forefront because the utter corrupt character of bourgeois-democracy is being expossed before the eyes of the people, under the Congress regime. As you know in Bengal, the elections have been completely rigged and the same attempt to spirit away the people's right to elect may be made in the forthcoming elections in many States. Against these legitimate demands raised in Bihar under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Government has come down with ruthless repression, arresting thousands and shooting many. Leaders of political parties have been externed from Bihar, those who led the movment have been jailed and interned, a reign of terror has been established in the State.

There is no doubt that the association of reactionary parties like Jana Sangh with the movement not only supplies a handle to the Government and its ally, the Right C.P. but also befuddles the mind

of the people and constitutes a sources of danger to the advance of the democratic movement. For the whole purpose of the movement will be lost if those who are manifestly opposed to democracy and struggle against landlord and capitalist exploitation get the upper hand and get themselves elected in place of the Congress. This danger, the trade union movement and the working class can enver forget and in its vigilance it must warn the people against it. At the same time; the organised trade union movement must throw its weight behind the democratic demands and lend its support to them.

Comrades, the working class and the trade union movement has been facing a growing attack against its liberties for a longtime. Our movement in West Bengal has been facing a semi-fascist terror with complete extinction of all liberties in some parts of West Bengal. Recently, it was the turn of Sri Jayaprakash Narayan to face the Congress goonda gangs aided by the revisionist collaborators. It is clear that unless all the democratic orgainsation join together for civil liberaties the Congress Government will extingusih them in no time. The CITU and its unions must take initiative in organising this fight for the protection of civil liberaties.

Fully supporting all democratic causes and movments the CITU unions can never forget that only the growing unity of left and democratic forces can defeat the Congress oppressors. Our entire efforts must be concentrated in this direction.

To be able to do this, we must persistently wage a battle against the alarming economic situation that faces the working class and the trade union movement. It pressages cloures loss of jobs and wage reductions.

It is a menace which faces the entire working class and employees and it threatens all sections of our toilers—the agricultural labourers, poor peasants. It is due to the capitalist-landlord plicies of the Government, the policies which protect the profits of the foreign and indian monopolists, of the landlords and attacks the incomes of the workers and the toilers.

It calls the entire working class, all trade unions to unite to resist this offensive more all-pervading and pernicious than the wage freeze. The workers and employees have achieved unprecedented unity at the August Convention in Delhi and carried forth the battle in various Conventions and above all, strike and bundhs. This unity in action has to be further strengthened to wad off the

coming attack. Against the threat of unemployment the workers must unitedly raise the demand for right to work, unemployment benefit. They must again raise their voice agaisnt rising prices, wage freeze and demand drastic reduction in profits, nationalisation of monopoly concerns, confiscation of food stocks of landlords to distribute them among the people at prices within their reach. Raising the demand for need-based wage they must demand better living conditions for the agricultural labourers, fair price to the peasant for his produce and drastic increase in taxation against the monopolists, big capitalists and the landlords. They must demand elimination of black market and its operations and confiscation of all wealth earned in blackmarket transactions.

It is only with this programme that the workers can fight the attempts of the capitalist and landlords to make them along with the people the scape-goats of the crisis; of the ruling party to introduce one-party authoritarian rule in the country.

36

Concluding Speech

3rd Conference of CITU, Bombay, May 21-25, 1975

Comrade,

We have had discussions for three days, four days I think. We discussed several topics, several resolutions and we discussed also the General Secretary's report. All of us would like to know in the end the results and the achievements of our deliberations. The first thing we have to learn and which we should learn through the resolutions we have passed, is in connection with the mighty victory of the people of Vietnam. What is the particular lesson to which I wish to draw you attention? It is one in mastering which all of us have shown a certain amount of weakness, because of much adverse propaganda.

Lesson of Vietnam Struggle

The success of Vietnam once again shows that socialist camp when united is irresistible and that no power on earth can defeat the United Socialist camp (Cheers). Whatever differences there might be today, in the end historical reality asserts itself. Last year when I was in Vietnam, I asked a Vietnamese leader where exactly the differences will lead. He said "Don't worry. So long as American imperialism is there, the Socialist camp will have to continually unite and unite and unite and fight"! (Cheers). That is the great confidence the people of Vietnam had. They made it clear at their last T.U. conference that they were emerging victorious becasue of the help given by the Socialist camp, because they were taking their stand on the offensive of the working class against imperialism and they had no doubt that this offensive will succeed. On that basis they said that their victory was ensured. That is real faith in

proletarian internationalism, in the victory of the world working class. We must master this lesson; we know there are fights, we know there are epithets hurled against each other; but we also know that history is more powerful than epithets, that Leninism is far more powerful than the epithets, far more powerful than the present day quarrels and that the unity of the world proletariat will be asserted again and again despite revisionism, despite dogmatism. That is the main lesson which we have to learn from the Vietnam struggle.

The next point that I want to refer to is that we wanted to assess at this conference the tremendous experience that the CITU has accumulated during the course of the last four years, during the course of united struggles that we have been successful in launching and leading.

First, I must tell you that the tremendous respect that the CITU today enjoys, the great influence that it exercises over wide masses of working class, the name it has earned as a fighting organisation, is not only due to our correct line but is much more due to the tremendous courage and self-sacrificing spirit of our CITU comrades, of the rank and file workers, of our union leaders who have been in the thick of struggles all these four years. If you look around, you will find that in this gathering we have comrades who are implicated in murder cases, have several criminal cases against them, comrades who have been sentenced to transportation for life and comrades who may be even sentenced to death tomorrow. And many have already fallen victims to the gangsters and bullets. It is these people and the fighting working class and the self sacrificing cadres of our unions who have made the CITU what it is today. And this courage and self-sacrifice, wedded to a correct policy of class struggle, to a policy of uniting our class and putting our entire strength against the government and against the employer, that has been the source of our achievement and we must go on record paying tributes to all our fighting comrades. It is they who have made the CITU what it is today.

CITU—Fulcrum of Struggle

Thanks to these, the CITU pursuing its policy has today become the main centre, fulcurm of the struggle for trade union unity in the country. Two years back when the UCTU was started the correlation of forces was quite different. We were one of the forces. To day we stand as the unifying force and large organisations which

are not affiliated to the CITU, which were not very favourable to the CITU only a couple of years back, organisations of working class and the employees, organisations of officers, all of them today see in the CITU the main fighter for the unity of the working class and the employees.

The role of the CITU has been enhanced by our struggle for railway workers' unity, our stand for struggles during the railway strike, our refusal to surrender before vacillation and our consistent support of the railway workers, before the strike, during the strike and after the strike. It is because of this today that wide sections of the employees are looking upon the CITU as fulcurm and defender of their unity and that casts great responsibility on our shoulders.

We are not just one of the central organisations, the coming together of which makes for unity. It is our responsibility to see that the other trade union organisations which are not affiliated to any central organisation are brought together. Our task is to see that once these organisations are brought together, all of them are activised, so that the struggle for unity is carried on. It is no joke and no exaggeration to say that it has come to be accepted by a number of trade union organisations that without the CITU, unity cannot be an active force. That makes us realise how every struggle of the working class has to be managed, has to be conducted with great vigilance, so that the entire struggle marches forward. Today a big set back for the CITU, loss of its influence through mistakes, is not only a disaster to our organisation, it brings disaster to the entire trade union movement in India, speicially when the Government is out to crush us. That is why problems of conducting mass movements, problems of understanding the change in the moods of the masses, broblems of understanding what exactly the masses want today, what they will want tomorrow, all these, assume supreme importance and that is why we tried to raise those questions in the General Secretary's Report.

These problems, as I have said, have been raised in the General Secretary's Report. Before I deal with them, I want to make one observation and that is that our prime task today is to see that we continue to maintain this position of the leading force in the struggle for unity and that we continue to throw our full weight in the struggle against recession. We should, therefore, try to develop as quickly as possible a broad front for fighting the consequences

of recession, we should see that the initiative for unity, that our recent activities and fights have given us, is maintained and expanded. That is essential if we have to carry on our fight for unity. Because, today, more than ever, an all-India united action, all India unity is necessary due to the all-pervading nature of the recession and the all-pervading nature of the problem posed by it.

Tactics of United Actions

What are the main points, comrades? We are summarising the situation after four years of united struggle activity. Comrade Ramamurti raised specific questions. In all these struggles we go forward, but sometimes it happens that in spite of betrayal, the reformists continue to maintain their influence. Why? No doubt, we are going forward. But in a situation in which the main framework for reformist sabotage is collapsing and the masses are going forward for action, are facing lathis and bullets and the worst types of brutality, how is it that after a strike, they return sometimes to the same old leadership, not perhaps in full strength, but at least in substantial strength? We as revolutionary Trade Unionists, what are we after? Do we or do we not want to change the correlation of forces between reformism and revolution in the trade union? And if we want to change it, then the test of any united struggle in the end is, how far we are able to change it? That is the specific point Com. Ramamurti has raised to which very few people gave answer. Betrayal by reformists in one or two struggle does not completely change the organisational affiliation of large numbers of workers. The political influence of the various bourgeois parties is not eliminated in one struggle. But these are the points that have been raised and these are the points that should have been answered. We do not know how we agitate and progagate in the course of a united struggle and how the reformists agitate.

We can no longer be satisfied with joint actions; we must be able to pin point the change in consciousness and organisation. What is required is more consciousness, more organisation, lessening the influence of the reformists; it requires countering of the reformists in different ways to see that the struggle is carried on in a militant manner in the present situation, which is a very difficult situation for the working class. What is our experience of the united struggle? Have we committed any mistakes—this was another question Com. Ramamurti raised.

Make Local Experience Known To All

If we had been able to exchange our experience, then our discussion would have been more fruitful. But it seems that while we do big things, we do not draw general conclusions from them. Therefore in the discussions we only go on narrating piece meal what we do, but do generalise the great experience that we gather. For instance, West Bengal. Tremendous experience. No other trade union movement has got such experience of fighting various battles under varied conditions, and no other section of the CITU has, in my opinion, successfully met these varied conditions of terror, of illegality, of formal legality. The experiences of the CITU section, which is a major section, of the trade union movement in the State of West Bengal is very important and require to be understood by the units which are just coming up. Otherwise, they also will go through all the earlier mistakes which we committed so many times. In our discussions we attempted to make a new departure, but did not succeed. Because till now we have not raised such problems, we have not asked people, our comrades, to give attention to these and generalise their own experiences. That was our failure, the failure of what we would call the central leadership of the CITU.

So, the problem of United Front tactics that has been raised is how to act now, when the reformist leaders are changing their tactics to sabotaging from within. Now they often do not oppose the strike in the beginning, they wait for the weakening of the struggle, for the opportune moment to sabotage. Take the railway strike, take the dock workers' strike, take the jute strike, take the Bombay Textile strike. They themselves initiated some of these strikes. The Dock workers' and Port workers' strike is an illuminating example. We are not there as a big force at all, even to pressurise them. But the radicalised working class is there. If the same compromise they had accepted without a strike, the workers would have repudiated them. But a two-day strike, half-day's negotiations and demonstration giving outlet to working class militancy, and they were able to betray. These are the things that we have to study, comrades. The reformist leaders are trying to adjust themselves to the rising anger and radicalisation of the working class and they are changing their tactics. How quickly we change our tactics to meet them and to save the workers from disruption—that is one of the points that is raised, which we should have

properly discussed.

Tasks During Recession

The next point I wish to deal with now is the main question which is dominating our mind, the question to which we have devoted some time here, the question of recession and the tactics of our struggle regarding recession.

Today what is the position? It is coming like an avalanche. And already thousands and thousands of workers are on the street. One can say that in the earlier part of the crisis a year back, what was attacked, directly or indirectly, was the wage and the earning capacity of the workers. But during the last year what is being directly attacked is the worker's job itself. The worker now is defending his job, his right to remain at his work, his right to earn. To lay the main emphasis on wage freeze was correct a year back. Today along with defence of wage, defence of job has become paramount. Today for thousands and lakhs of workers the rallying slogan is "defeat the conspiracy of the employers and the Government to deprive us of our jobs." Show us now the way to save our jobs. We are prepared to fight to the last. That is what the workers will say. And we have to admit that till now we have not been able to protect the jobs of the workers. We ourselves often accept the excuses of the ruling classes—electricity breakdown, lay-off, under-utilistion of capacity; every excuse the ruling class gave was half accepted by us and not connected with the developing crisis. Had we done so, we could have realised what was coming.

And now you find thousands on the streets, whether they are textile workers or jute workers; they are today on the street. The main brunt of the crisis is being borne by the working class. And the weakness of the Trade Union movement, including ours, is this that when an attack against jobs is made, we hold out and fight, but jobs are nonetheless attacked. The position that has been reached now is that a united resistance, except in factories where retrenchement notices are given, a united struggle against unemployment has hardly been put up. They declare lay-off, and it is accepted. As if there is no appeal against lay-off. It is precisely in this situation that we realise that during the period of such monstrous attack against jobs, only traditional methods of withholding work do not suffice. Various methods of fighting and bringing pressure on the employers are to be used.

It is absolutely correct that during recession when an attack

comes, the workers have to fight, they must forge proper weapons, including strike. In western countries sitting inside factories, not vacating despite lock-out notice, and such other forms are being resorted to. In West Bengal, our tea garden workers are running two gardens closed by the employers. What we have to ask is that in the situation when the masses will go through various moods, shall we restrict ourselves to one particular form of resistance? We have to fight no doubt, but the movement and the form must be of our choice.

So the main point we have to see is the protection of workers' job, along with the defence of his wage. By protecting and standing by the workers, we can launch our offensive. It is wrong to say that in recession only defensive demands are taken. That is a very wrong understanding. In accordance with your strength, you raise various demands and you organise various types of action. Today, even in Europe, they have to do it. Several forms of resistance are being developed, when they find that the employers are preparing to resort to closure. Under threat of lock-out, the organisation encourages only strategic sections of workers to go on strike, with the result that the entire factory comes to a standstill. The rest do not formally go on a strike and are legally prepared for work. It happended in France. The entire game of the employing class to throw out for a few weeks thousands of workers was frustrated. They supported those that were on strike, at the same time they said they were ready to work. This is a very serious and intensified form of class struggle. It is not attenuated class struggle. It is not a lesser form of class struggle. In the end, it will put the strongest pressure on the employers. Already the resourcefulness of workers had led in India to forms of struggle like work to rule, working according to designation, and so on. When a weaker section or a section which does not feel confident about immediately going on strike resorts to such forms, it results in bringing pressure on the employers. The only point is that the best form, in the interest of the working class and of bringing pressure on the capitalist class is utilised.

Prepare to Face Repression

The next point is that apart from the forms of struggle, we must realise that we are now entering a very difficult period of trade union resistance. What happens when the ruling class becomes more cruel, we have already seen in relation to West Bengal and if

that type of repression or even fifty precent of it is let loose in some other States, we must realise that it will be very difficult for our cadres and our unions to maintain their existence itself. Because the West Bengal working class and the West Bengal trade unions had a militant tradition of their own, a tenacity of their own, they were able to weather many a storm, and meet the challenge of repression. And it is really a tremendous achievement, to be able to keep our present strength and continue to fight. But this type of terror is likely to be unleashed all over India in some way or other, because the ruling classes want to solve forcibly the problem of recession at the expense of the working class and the people of India. That is why our earlier experience and achievement of united resistance will not be enough to meet the present situation. The problems that we are going to face are far more serious. First, we will be facing problem of defending the working class when 20% or 30% of it in an industry is already on the street. We will have to pay the price of our earlier weakness, which we have been trying to overcome since the foundation of CITU but which we have not overcome at all, namely, the lack of link, the absence of link, of the organised trade union movement with the unemployed mass. The unemployed mass does not look upon the organised trade union movement, including the CITU, as its champion. Because barring passing some resolutions, and perhaps some demonstrations, we have not been able to do much for the unemployed. A factor which has accentuated the Western capitalist crisis, is the fact that there is a strong link there between the unemployed and employed workers. And therefore, the bourgeois enconomists complain that the Phillip's curve does not operate. Phillip's curve means more unemployment should lead to a fall in the wage. But because the trade unions are organised and the unemployed are also organised, actually even during the crisis itself, sometimes wage concessions have to be made and this is accentuating the crisis. But in our country we will be entering a period in which those who were at work yesterday are on the street today. And in this condition we will have to carry on the fight for those who are employed.

New Possibilities of United Mass Actions

Definitely, it is going to be a very difficult situation, but the situation is certainly not favourable to the ruling classes; because they must continue the attack against the working class, and various other sections and perforce make it possible for them to

unite in common resistance. Inspite of the adverse situation, inspite of today's lack of link between the employed and the unemployed, because the general drive of the Government and the capitalists is against the entire people, we will succeed in organising resistance of our entire class and of the people against each blow of Government. Sometimes we may be forced to retreat one step but our organisation and our counter-blow will grow stronger if we pursue proper tactics. And by that we mean wider type of mass actions.

Unemployment cannot be fought factory by factory, strikes will be there, but sufficent weight of public opinion, of economic pressure etc. cannot be fought factory by factory, it has to be gradually developed into a general struggle of the class. Wider and wider struggle against the economic policy from which this unemployment flows is necessary. Our resolutions properly put those demands in the forefront; we put forth the demands for right to work, and then we put the demands for certain basic changes. We know those basic changes are not going to come within the existing framework. The idea is to take the existing consciousness of the worker, of the common man and to make him see that basic issues of policy are involved, if his job is to be protected, if unemployment is to be fought. Our understanding of the recession and the fight against it is not that of simply a trade union fight. It cannot be only a trade union fight. The CITU will succeed in fighting against the recession, if it succeeds in converting the working class struggle against the recession, into a general popular democratic struggle against it.

Link with the Peasantry

We are lagging behind and the ruling class is going ahead. One of the weapons of the ruling class to corner the working class is to tell the peasantry, that the workers are earning much more than what the peasantry or the agricultural workers get. The basic weakness of our trade union movement including the CITU though the CITU is conscious of it, is its lack of link with the peasantry and the agrarian mass. You see in this city of Bombay how the ruling class plays the rural mass against the workers. In the name of giving employment to the rural unmeployed, the ordinary textile workers, the engineering workers, the clerk, the middle class employee is being taxed instead of placing the entire burden on the landlords and capitalists. And you cannot fight against it. The person who has to fight against it along with you, is not there, the agrarian

workers. First they used the "sons of the soil" slogan. Now they use the "village versus the city" slogan.

Both these exploit the weaknesses of the trade union movement viz., first the lack of class consciousness of a large section of workers who feel that they are either Maharashtrians or Bengalis. Internationalism on May Day is alright, but otherwise I am either a Bengali or a Maharashtrian or an Assamese. In Assam, they will raise a few slogans against the Bengalis. The same thing is being done by Labour Minsiter Dr. Nag in West Bangal; every time there is a job the sons of the soil slogan is being put forward. The same course is being pursued here in Bombay.

The second weakness, divorce from the peasantry, is used to corner the workers.

You must bear wage-freeze, you must bear wagecut, the agricultural workers are turning into destitutes. You have no business to get more wage.

These are the two slogans with which the Government, and the ruling class are intending to fight you ideologically, when you carry on the fight against the recession. That is why we have to take serious note of the slogans and arm the working class with proper understanding and at the same time try to link ourselves with the agrarian masses, with whatever help we could get from the kisan oranisations.

All these difficulties notwithstanding, we have got the confidence that our fight will be successfully carried on. The ruling classes will continue to attack the people and the people are bound to resist. The only point is, we must study the mood of the people, study the mood of the working class and see that we are able to give effective expression to the spirit of resistance that will be developing from time to time. We have to understand that a new type of conflict is developing, because the way out of the recession for the ruling class is politically connected with the drive for one party dictatorship. The tremendous repression directed against the CITU is a part of the drive for one party dictatorship. Various legislations that are being enforced like the wage freeze, the national wage commission, the method of dealing with strikes, all these if you gradually link them together, form part of the drive for one party dictatorship, about which we have already spoken in our resolution. Every step which the Indira Gandhi Government is taking in the trade union sphere is an integral part of this drive. We now find

it is being openly suggested that all unions except those favoured by the ruling party should be eliminated and industrial peace maintained, by completely suppressing the genuine working class orgainsations, and the workers' freedom to organise.

As part of the attempt to impose additional burdens and solve the recession at the expense of the people, democracy is being attacked; that democarcy we have to save, and we have to fight for. That is why we attach great importance to the fight for civil liberties and democratic rights. We combine with all those who are prepared to fight for civil liberties. For us it is a question of life and death and that is why we have to bear in mind that our struggle against recession a part of the people's struggle against one party dictatorship. In the measure that we succeed in our struggle for saving jobs, fighting for the wages of the workers, keeping our organisation intact, in that measure will we also succeed in saving Indian democracy and defeating the drive for one party dictatorship.

Tov rds United Struggles

Because the recession is an all-pervading phenomenon, the fight against recession is the fight of the entire working class and the people. In spite of all that has happened, the CITU has to repeatedly urge for unity of all the central organisations, for united action of all central organisations, because we know that the other central organisations carry influence over a considerable section of the working class, without whom a united fight, an effective class fight is not possible. That appeal for unity and a broader united front must continue simultaneously.

Because it is now becoming a broad struggle of the people against the capitalist path itself, against the path of capitalism imposed by the Government, we must, the CITU must, also develop links with all democratic protests which are developing against the Congress policy—protests which may be half hearted, protests which may have a lot of confusion in them, but nonetheless protests, which objectively fight the Congress Government. Take, for instance, the movement launched by J.P. There are two kinds of wrong understandings about the movement. Some are so much charmed by JP that they appear to think that JP can deliver India..There are others who say "We are confirmed Revolutionaries. We never look at movements like JPs." Both are wrong tendencies. The CITU, as the organisation of the fighting workers, must

show proper respect for the masses who fight. At the same time, it can never give up its own ideological positions. We, who yesterday passed a resolution on Vietnam saying that Vietnam way is our way, cannot say that JP's Total Revolution is also our way. We stand by class struggle, we have got a conception of class struggle, we have got a conception of worker and peasant alliance. Anything which deviates from these will not take us to the goal of revolution. Nor do we think that the ruling class will yield to the people peacefully. So, we say, we have got our own path, we have got our own concept of workers' and peasants' alliance, we have got our own objective to work for and we do not compromise on those basic principles, whoever comes and whoever asks us to compromise. (cheers).

All Sections In a Common Battle

That is one part of the truth. The other is that thousands of people are fighting, fighting the Congress Government; students are fighting, sometimes kisans are fighting, people are going to jail, why? Just because JP asked them to go to jail? No because of the tremendous discontent against the Congress rule. We are not able to focus it, the left parties are not able to focus it, and an old national leader becomes the centre of the discontent. Objectively these masses who are fighting, are fighting for a democratic cause, are fighting against the Indira Congress Government. Some of the demands are also correct demands. What should the working class do? Shall we tell them that until and unless you accept the path of VIETNAM, we have nothing to do with you? No. While we continue to have our own understanding and teach the people our own way, every democratic protest of the mass which leads forward the struggle, must be supported by the working class. The CITU has been giving support to those demands. YES, dissolution of the Bihar Assembly is a correct demand. Many of the demands which are put forward by JP are correct demands. Many of the demands they put forward in DELHMARCHwere also correct demands. There is need-based wage also. We are supporting these demands, partial demands, as an advance in the democratic struggle, without accepting the ideology of JP or without accepting his conception of alliance. He gives certificate to the RSS saying that they are a patriotic organisation. So these are the differences. The hard reality is that certain sections of the masses are also involved. Their discontent is initially being roused on democratic demands;

there is also the danger of its getting diverted. A new kind of electoral front is emerging and the masses stand in the danger of being cheated. We believe that a real alternative to the Congress Government is an alternative developed on the basis of the unity of the Left and Democratic forces. While we support the democratic demands we look to the future also. The CITU as a working class organisation, has got its international outlook, it has got its understanding of the VIETNAM struggle, it has got its understanding of the revolution that is to come in India also. It does not surrender its idelogy to anybody. Nor simply on the basis of its ideology does it neglect any mass movement. No mass movement, genuine movement of the mass, can be treated with contempt or indifference, just because this or that leader leads it. That thing we leave to the Right Communist Party and the AITUC. We, as a serious working class organisation, know that several potests against the ruling Congress Government are developing in this country and we want to gather all these streams into a common flood, so that New Delhi is overwhelmed. And therefore, we have utmost sympathy for the masses that are fighting; we support the demands raised by JP at the same time we maintain a critical attitude. We draw lines, we have got our own independent stand, we have something to tell to the working class. At the same time, every democratic movement, whatsoever leads it, will have our support, sometimes from outside, sometime from inside, whatever occasion is there. That is the stand of the CITU that we take towards every democratic protest, that is the stand we take towards the JP movement.

Period Of Tremendous Opportunities

Comrades, we must remember, therefore, that in spite of immediate difficulties, we are entering a period of tremendous opportunities. In spite of the fact that tremendous difficulties will be created by the ruling class and the Congress Government in our way, the entire trend of events, the entire minds of the masses will be oriented towards more and more furious struggles, towards more and more fighting the policies of the Congress Government. It is not simply an economic battle and it is developing into a political battle. With the lines clearly drawn, with the slogans clearly given, the fight against the Congress Government is inevitable. Therefore, we will be entering a new period in which championing the cause of trade union unity and championing the cause of the working class will be directly linked with championing the

cause of Indian democracy, and ousting the Congress Government. The link will more and more get direct and we have the privilege to carry on, enforce and strengthen the link still further. I only want to tell you that we,who have gathered here represent the trade union movement, represent the advanced section of the working class in India. The working class, as we have found from the experience of Vietnam, from the experience of all the previous successful socialist revolutions has to fulfil its mission as the real leader and organiser of the entire peoples' protest, of the democratic and socialist revolution. We are entering the period in which the success or defeat will be judged by how far we are able to organise these protests, how far we are able to centralise the popular discontent around us. To a certain extent it has happened, perhaps without our knowledge but because of our immense numbers. If you today look at the country, you will find that the movement which has really an all India character is the movement of the united trade union and the united working class, which is emerging as a big force. We should see that through our united activity it emerges as a great force, capable of leading the immediate popular discontent in India. That is the task which, we, as trade union leaders, leaders of the working class have to fulfil, if this entire recession and the battle that will emerge out of this recession is to lead to fruitful results, if the entire discontent is not to be frittered away, or side-tracked in some reactionary channels. We, the leaders of the CITU and our trade unions must be in a position to use our trade union strength to develop popular and people's protests, democratic protests; that is the task before us. I, therefore, expect and am confident that in the coming months when so many challenges will be thrown on us and once again we will be called to face increased repression, our CITU will come out successful, whether it is challenge thrown in West Bengal, whether it is challenge thrown in Kerala or Tamil Nadu. The same fighting spirit that has enabled us to build up the CITU, the same fighting spirit that has enabled our comrades to face the gangster death squads and transportation sentences, the same fighting spirit will guide us to develop the strength of the CITU, so that it becomes invincible and we are able to win the battle of the people against recession and turn the table against the ruling class and the Congress Government.

37

Presidential Address

General Council Meeting (18-21 August 1977, Calcutta)

Comrades,

Our General Council is meeting after an interval of two years. We were faced with the emergency rule immediately after the Bombay Session of the CITU. It was not possible to convene a General council session under the circumstances and the Working Committee could meet only twice during this long period.

With the lifting of the Emergency our unions and the working class were engaged in the all important electoral and political battle. The delay in convening the council meeting was due to circumstances over which we had no control.

Comrades, you will join me in paying tribute to the memory of our Comrade A.K. Gopalan who passed away in March this year. His death has removed from our midst a stalwart revolutionary figure, a person who had no life apart from the life and struggle of the masses. It will take years to fill the void created by his death. The kisan movement which he led personally for years has lost its tallest and the most beloved figure. No less is the loss of our trade union movement which counted on his help in times of acute struggle and crisis. In him the CPI (M) has lost its most beloved mass leader.

Comrades, I offer my tribute to the memory of those who were martyred during the emergency rule.

Rajan & Vijayan of Kerala and Snehlata of Karnataka tortured & killed by the police stand witnesses to the ghastly murderous regime of the emergency period. Several others died in jails due to inhuman treatment. The life of our Comrade Bhairav Bharti was extinguished by a callous administration which denied him medi-

cal treatment in time.

Comrades, in several states our CITU cadres had to face heavy and wholesale represssion. In Rajasthan entire cadre of CITU in factories was rounded up on the first day of the emergency. Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal saw a large number of arrests and many leading cadres had to go under ground.

I welcome all our fighting cadres and leaders back to the fighting front. They have added to the prestige of the CITU and helped in deepening the loyalty of the working class to our organisation.

New Situation

Comrades, the defeat of the forces of authoritarianism, of the imposters who imposed the emergency rule, creates a new situation which our CITU and its affiliated unions must take note of.

The Working Class which along with the people had lost all its trade union and democratic rights, with strikes and meetings banned, and even union committee meetings prohibited has after the elections regained partially at least its rights and is in a much more favourable position to defend its interests. Thischange in the situation—the qualitative change from complete suppression of all rights, should not be under estimated. Without it, as the experience of the emergency struggle shows, it is next to impossible to defend ourselves. This is a victory which the working class has gained along with the people and it has to be consolidated and expanded.

The Janata Government

The Janata Government has taken a number of important steps against the consequences of the emergency rule; the lifting of the emergency, the restoration of the freedom of the press, the release of large number of political prisoners constitute important steps towards demolition of the authoritarian structure. But the task is half-done. the MISA still disfigures the Statute Book. Large number of political prisoners are not yet released. The MISA was used in Kashmir to gain an electoral advantage. The 42nd Amendment Act is yet to be repealed. The criminals who unleashed so much repression against the people, at whose behest not only tens of thousands were jailed, but many were murdered in cold blood are not yet brought to book. Instead of quick trials prolonged inquiries are ordered. Such elaborate enquiries are generally ordered when the authorities do not intend to punish the criminals. To put Indira

Gandhi, her son and the members of the caucus on trial must be regarded as an important part of the fight to demolish the forces of authoritarianism.

Demand Political Changes

The trade union movement, our CITU and its unions must demand not only complete restoration of democratic rights but also their further expansion to prevent a repetition of the 1975 events. Article 352 of the Constitution empowering the President to declare emergency should be repealed; the right to recall should be embodied in the Constitution to assert the supremacy of the people over the Parliament and the elected representatives; steps should be taken to see that the 'Fundamental Rights' of the people are put beyond the mischief of any political party or Government and that no one is allowed to tamper with the distribution of power among the different agencies of the Government under the Constitution. The concentration of power in the hands of the Central Government should be drastically reduced and wider power for the States should be given and their autonomy should be strengthened. Proportional representation, reduction of voting age, removal of right to property from the list of Fundamental Rights and enshrining the right to work and living wage in the Constitution must be ensured.

Without these the fight against authoritarian dictatorship will not be complete and it cannot be uprooted from its soil.

Our trade unions must ponder over the fact that the provision of the Fundamental Rights' under the Constitution proved illusory and the rights were just withdrawn without any ceremony. It once again proves the historic truth that rights provided under a bourgeois class constitution are unable to protect the working class and the people when they become inconvenient and dangerous to the ruling classes. Only the struggle of democratic forces can defeat their erosion. The constituational declarations have proved to be deceptive. That is why changes in the Constitution basically shifting the balance in favour of the working class and the people are necessary.

Democracy Vs. Dictatorship

The working class and the trade union movement have to understand that the attempt to establish dicatorship was not an accidental phenomenon. International experience teaches us that the trend towards dictatorship is inevitable under bourgeois democ-

racy and that on every occasion when the economic situation gets beyond control, the capitalist ruling class—the monopolists—attempts to resort to open dictatorship.

The defeat of the Congress at the Centre and the States has put a temporary halt to this trend. The victory of the opposition, of the Janata, the Left alliance in West Bengal and other parties opposed to the Congress open the way to undoing the mischief of the 19 months of emergency.

But the elections have not ended the domination of vested interests nor has it finally settled the question of democracy vs. dictatorship.

In fact, the question cannot be settled unless the monopolists, the big capitalists and landlords are deposed from their economic power, Democracy is not safe unless the grip of foreign monopoly capital over Indian economy is removed. Unless the people and the working class are able to control their economic life by socilalisation of the means of production, the issue between democracy and dictatorship will not be finally settled.

Nevertheless, the defeat of the Congress Party, the victory of the democratic forces, the formation of the Janata Party Governments and the Left Government headed by the CPI(M) in West Bengal place the people in a highly favourable position to deal vital blows at the forces of authoritarianism.

However, the working class, the trade union movement and the people cannot relax their struggle against the forces of dicatorship leaving it to the Governments. The coming months must see a constant and intensive battle to root out the consequences of emergency and one-Party dictatorship and expand democracy on the basis of the programme given above.

Trade Union unity hence means cementing the forces of all unions, all central organisations of workers and employees to carry on a fight for expansion of democracy and rooting out the forces of dicatatorship it means fight against the Congress caucus, against those who compromise with it, against a policy of slowing down the process of democratic advance. The trade unions must put their combined might ot press forward this struggle and provide a solid class basis, a solid foundation for developing the unity of the left and democratic forces in the country which can consistently carry forward this struggle.

Our CITU must undertake common campaigns for these po-

litical objectives so that the struggle is not allowed to relax. Without our initiating such campaigns and actions, the battle against the authoritarian forces will not be continued with vigour and there will be a tendency to rely on the government to do the job of the popular movement.

Offensive against the workers

Taking advantage of the emergency the employers resorted to widespread closures, lockouts, retrenchments, and lay-offs. More than five lakh workers lost their jobs for some period or other and several thousands lost them permanently.

The number of registered unemployed reached 10 million. The workers could not resort to any action without threat of legal reprisals.

The employers at the same time increased workload, intensified labour and made the working day a day of agony, of toil and sweating. Heavy work was extracted from the workers in private and public concerns alike. The production per miner in coal mines was raised by 30 to 40 per cent. Similarly, work-load was increased in cotton textile and jute industries. In the latter thousands of workers were retrenched while the bhagawala system was introduced to extract maximum work minimum pay.

The Congress Government surpassed the private employers in its attack, it introduced the Compulsory Deposit Scheme to rob the workers of the increased D.A. and wage; it amended the Bonus Act to deprive them of their legitimate share. It shamelessly went back on the agreement with the LIC employees to deprive them of their bonus. It saw to it that all wage increases were frozen. Its officials manipulated the cost of living indices to cheat the workers of their D.A. instalments due under previous agreements. It besides retrenched, retired and dismissed thousands of Central and State employees-carrying on a political vendetta against union leaders and members. It threw out of job thousands of Port and Dock workers in Calcutta, Goa and other ports.

At the same time, all the claims made about the gains of the emergency turned out to be false. The bankrupt Government could not control prices which continued to remain at the high level and started rising again from March 1976.

Behind the back of the Indian people, protected by press censorship, the Congress Government invited the multinationals to "stabilise" the staggering economy. It offered them exploitation of

cheap, Indian labour and high profits and agreed to have junior partnership for Indians.

Never before did the working class and the people suffer so much. Never before was the peasant taxed so much, his land and effects so freely sold for realising his debts. Never before was he humiliated and treated like cattle when he was forced to undergo compulsory sterilisation.

This was how the burdens of the crisis were thrown on the common man.

In contrast to these burdens on the people, the monopolists, big capitalists and landlords thrived during the emergency and during the years preceding the emergency. The assets of Birla, Tata, Mafatlal and other monopolists increased rapidly during these years when the people were passing through excruciating misery.

The Economic Crisis

Comrades, these were the results of the deep rooted economic crisis that has beset the Indian Society under the so called mixed economy.

During 1975-76, one million tonnes of steel and 10 million tonnes of coal had piled up for want of internal demand. When the workers raised their productivity and produced more there was no one to buy. Fifteen million tonnes of foodgrains were stored in Government godowns, but it could not be said that the mass of poor peasants and agricultural workers, masses of city urban poor were able to have two square meals a day. In fact the overall rate of consumption was going down. Once mose those who produced more were unable to feed themselves with the product of their labour. The jute, the cotton textile, the handlooms employing lakhs of workers and a number of other industries, were in doldrums. The number of sick cotton mills exceeded 100 and they were followed by sick tea gardents, sick jute mills and sick engineering concerns. These were the gains of the emergency.

The large increase in agricultural production in 1975-76 did not benefit the mass of peasants nor did it expand the market for industrial goods—for consumer goods in rural areas. "The demand for these consumer goods-which could reasonably have been expected to find markets in the rural sector of the economy did not increase appreciably. While hopes were high that substantial increase in agricultural production would give an impetus to rural demand for say, textiles, the fall of agricultural prices at farm level

seems to have acted as an inhibiting factor. The failure of textile prices to fall in spite of the sharp decline in the cotton prices in 1974-75— seems to have been a contributing factor. In the event production of cotton cloth fell down by 11 per cent in 1975-76."

This speaks volumes for the class bias of Congress policies. The food grains producer who was blessed with a record harvest was defrauded by lower prices with the result that he could not purchase the estimated quantity of cloth. The procurement policy of the Congress Government was manipulated to force him to sell his stock at the lowest price to the trader.

And it is on the basis of this defrauding that the Congress could boast of a partial fall in prices during 1975-76 and claim success for its policies. The so called check to rising prices was based on the ruination of the peasant masses.

Crisis Continues

The crisis conditions continued in 1976-77 inflicting unbearable sufferings on the people. The class policies of the Congress Government made the workers, employees and peasants the scapegoats of the crisis. The Economic Survey indicates an industrial growth rate of 10.6 per cent in 1976-77 as compared with 6.1 per cent in 1975-76. But increased production in both years did not lead to increased purchases and exchanges, but accumulation of stocks. More than a million tonnes of steel lay accumulated in stock-yards which are overful with none to buy.

The Government was forced to export steel at fantastically low prices incurring heavy losses to the country. At one time there were huge accumulations of coal also. Textile, engineering and various other industries are now heavily dependent on foreign markets. Despite this, in most of the industries, substantial production capacity lies unutilised. The Survey itself speaks about growth in inventories of industrial products which were faced with demand recession such as steel, fertilisers, coal, engineering goods, chemical, cement, paper and textiles. The increased production in many industries does not really reflect the growth of the internal market and is not an indication of an upward trend in the economy.

Simultaneously many important and vital industries not only do not show any rising trend, but show a decline. It has been already mentioned that cotton textile production fell by 11 per cent in 1975-76. In 1976-77 also the same trend continued. "In contrast to this emerging trend in production in 1976-77, the incidence of

sickness among industrial undertakings has persisted. In particular in major industries like cotton textiles, sugar and engineering, a significant number of units faced considerable difficulties resulting in closures. Some of the industries had to carry unduly high levels of inventories." The figures of accumulated stocks, however, are not given in the Survey though earlier surveys used to give them. But according to the Chairman of Coal India Ltd. Lt. Gne. Garewal, the total pit-head stock of coal mounted upto 13.5 million tonnes on March 31, 1977.

Sufferings of Workers

This bald statement does not convey the depth of the crisis. During 1975-76 and 1976-77 several lakhs of employed workers had to put up with permanent or temporary loss of jobs. Thousands of jute workers were permanmently retrenched and increased workload was imposed on those at the job. There was more than 10 per cent retrenchment in the nationalised textile sector, large numbers were retrenched by the coal mining authority. Besides these, hundreds of concerns, including small industrial concerns, were permanently closed down.

Comrades,

In Kerala during the emergency, the economic and unemployment situation worsened beyond measures. The coir, cashewnut, the bidi and handloom industries threw out thousands out of work. The acute unemployment situation led to illegal emigration, thousands seeking jobs abroad on the lowest pittance, virtually accepting the status of bonded labour.

Today also thousands of coir workers are totally or partially unemployed. The cashew nut workers are in the same position finding perhaps work for only 80 days in a year. The handloom workers are in distress, with the problem of unemployment facing the mass of workers.

The wretched coalition government would not lift its finger to give relief to the workers. Much relief can be given if only the government undertakes monopoly procurement of coir husk and ensures its equitable distribution. But this would affect the enormous profits of the merchants. How can the coalition agree to this?

The economic crisis and the capitalist path have now created a dangerous situation for the entire country. They have made the country growingly dependent on western countries and the markets provided by them.

Reliance on Exports

The only way out is exports and more exports-even when your own people are starving, naked, without house and shelter. The capitalist economy can survive only if you produce cloth, sugar, fish, etc. in huge quantities for foreign markets, if you utilisé your skill, engineering, technical, in electronics, in the service of foreign paymasters rather than your own people. Exports have become the basis of survival. The figures of rising exports were paraded by the Congress Government as great Indian achievements, betokening to the maturity of India as an industria—lised country. On the contrary, they are a witness to the country's inability to consume the products of its own labour, due to poverty, to the dependence of the enconomy on the Western Capitalist markets. They are not the triumphs of a flourishing economy selling abroad to enrich its own people, its economic life. They represent deprivation and denial to the mass to keep the capitalist economy going.

Competitive Export

This makes the economy vulnerable to the ups and downs of the capitalist market and enables it to exercise dominating influence on the Indian economy. It further means that Indian exports must be competitive on the old market i.e. they must be produced or priced as cheap as those countries with the advanced technique, or with the low price goods of countries under the influence of imperialist countries—all of which means in the end the prices of labour must be cut down. A large number of our goods have been often sold on the world market below the cost of production—steel for instance—and the country has to pay huge subsidies to the exporting capitalists amounting to crores of rupees. In 1975-76 the subsidy according to the revised estimates amounted to Rs. 274 crores. In 1976-77 it increased to Rs. 300 crores. The Janata Government has countinued the subsidy following in the footsteps of the Congress Government.

The working class and the people have to bear this huge burden and pay the price of the crisis and finance the dependence of the economy on the Western capitalist countries. The working class is also faced with further attacks on its living standards.

Notwithstanding some reassuring statements from Mr. Mohan Dharia, the Commerce Minister, the Janata Party Government is unable to strike a new path. The Finance Minister Patel declared in his Budget speech: ...It is necessary that exports should continue

to incrcease at the rate they have been growing in the past two years. Such an increase is essential for acquiring greater manoeuverability with regard to enconomic management. Government is committed to providing a stable policy from the conducive to continued expansion of our exports."

Certain important changes in the policy and status of Indian big capitalists, follow from its emphasis on exports. It is in the first place leading to further dependence of the country on the west, a greater integration of our economy with the capitalist market. Secondly, this is already leading to the demand for further concessions from foreign multinational companies and private foreign capital and their acceptance by the Government. Thirdly, it is leading to relaxation of controls over Indian big capital, further concessions to the private sector, the collapse of the anti-monopoly Acts; opening of new avenues to the monopolists and big houses, export subsidies to the export houses and so on.

Above all, in the desperate effort to caputre foreign markets, this is leading to joint ventures abroad, export of capital, subcontracting with foreign monopoly firms in third world countries. This is creating new economic interests, new economic allies. The content of the entire process, of exports imports, of offering concessions at home and seeking them abroad, is the striving for collaboration and partnership with foreign monopoly capital.

These are very srious developments endangering the independence of the economy, creating new vested interests in alliance with foreign capital.

Danger of increased exploitation

At the same time these developments directly affect labour, because the main condition of partnership in joint ventures in India and abroad—is supply of cheap labour and its guarantee. This was freely promised by Indian capitalists and the Congress Government. Further influx of foreign capital in the country or joint ventures abroad only promise accentuated exploitation of Indian labour and growing opposition to improvement in living standards.

Already tens of thousands of Indian workers are being lured abroad by Indian contractors on low wages, to be exploited there like bounded labour. The present Government has not taken steps to stop this exploitation and looks upon it as one of the ways of adding to the foreign exchange of the country.

A deep game

Comrades, we must understand the deep game of the multinationals in the present situation. The Congress Governemnt made a show of controlling foreign capital by laying down certain conditions and calling for majority of shares in Indian hands. But such conditions do not affect the running of the concerns. For by controlling a majority of equity shares in one country the local burgeoisie is not in a position to control or restrict the activities of the huge multination machine—a machine which cannot be controlled even by the powerful USA Governement. Acceptance of the condition of the majority of equity shares only means sop to the national feelings in underdeveloped countries and a bait to the local bourgeoisie.

More of multi-nationals

There are now more vigorous efforts to woo the mult-nationals. There are proposals to invite multi-nationals to start a steel plant with six million ton capacity, employing only two to three thousand workers. There are similar proposals about estabilishing an aluminium plant with their help. Attempts are afoot to enlist collaboration of West Germany and Japanese multi-nationals for projects connected with the Bokaro Steel. Besides there are proposals that multinationals should start giant concerns and export the entire product. This, it is said, will give foreign exchange to India for nothing and add to employment. In reality this is a proposal to loot both Indian labour and foreign markets.

Already in our country the multinationals are oppressing our people and refuse to accept either the trade union rights of the workers or obey the instructions of the Government. The multinationals durg companies, Pfizer, Glaxo have unleasahed victimisation of trade union leaders, ordered lock-outs to starve the workers, defying the Government and public opinion.

Fight the entry of Multinationals

The stanglehold of multinationals means danger to the independence of the country, support to forces of forces of reaction and dictatoriship in the country and intense exploitation of the working class and the people. Comrades, the CITU and the entire trade union movement must fight this disastrous policy and demand immediate change.

We must demand an end to the present export policy which makes our jobs and wages dependent on Western capitalist coun-

tries and their markets. We must demand an economic policy based on the expansion of the home market. making Indian industry self-reliant. We must unitedly demand a ban on the entry of multinationals in the interests of our people, our country and the working class. We must demand nationalisation of foreign monopoly concerns, of Indian monopoly concerns, if the power of big money to control our economic life is to be broken, if its power to impose economic misery on us is to be done away with.

It must be further realised that there is no escape from the present situation, from un-employment and mass misery unless the land monopoly of the landlords is broken and the peasants and agricultural workers are freed.

End Monopoly domination—Capitalist Path

The experience of the present crisis, of the last decade again tells us that the trade union movement by itself cannot eliminate the basic ills of society unless it champions the cause of the entire society against big money and big landed property Unemployment, wage reductions, insecurity of jobs are the inevitable accompaniments of the domination of the monopolists and the capitalist path and the united trade union movement must raise its voice against this domination. The goal of socialism cannot be reached without eliminating the domination of the vested interests and placing the means of production in the hands of society.

Our Weaknesses

Comrades, here I must refer to a basic weakness of our trade union movement. Our trade unions start replying to the offensive of the employers only when it reaches the factory, when it is at the stage of final assault. At the preparatory stage, when the policies are being decided, when full prepartions are being made, the movement generally does not take notice of them or at best lodges some verbal protest. The attack becomes real only when it reaches the factory or industry, exhibiting the level of factory consciousness.

Besides the trade unions hardly intervene, utilising their strength when official policies are on the anvil, polices which affect the jobs and living conditions of the workers and employees. These policies decide the fate of the workers behind their backs and at best the trade union movement fights the final effects of these measures. Official policies relating to export, imports, industry, taxation and excise, vitally affect the well being of the workers. But they are

generally never discussed before the workers, are hardly opposed and the strength of the labour movement never utlised in time to influnce or change them. The role that the State and the Government plays in saving the employers and the capitalist system is thereby concealed and the workers are rendered the helpless victims of official policies. This is nothing but the crudest type of factory consciousness, the elementary trade union consciousness. The trade union movement will not be able to defend the interests of the workers if they remain unperturbed by official policies and do not bring the workers into action to counter them.

We must untitedly speak with one voice on such matters. We must take common stand and project labour's interests when official measures are on the anvil. We must have a common front in conferences and meetings when policies are being discussed. And we must unitedly carry the fight against reactionary policies to the mass of the workers and draw them into active resistance. The united struggle of the trade union movement and the employees' associations is a sufficiently powerful force and the authorities will not ignore it easily. This will raise the trade union consciousness to a higher level and enable the mass of workers to look beyond the factory and day to day grievances.

Left Victory in West Bengal

Comrades, the victory in West Bengal of the Left alliance headed by the CPI (M) constitutes a very important part of the victory of the democratic forces in India. It has its unique features. Here the known Left forces with their Left programme have triumphed over other parties, including the Janata Party, whose local leaders adopted a reactionary line. The victory came in the background of five years of ceaseless terror against the people and our CITU unions : you know that offices of three hundred of our unions were occupied by congress goondas; and thousands were uprooted from their localities.

Persistent fight put by the CPI-M, CITU Unions and the other Left forces against this terror at last fructified in this electoral victory. It is a victory of those forces whose consolidation on an all-India plane will orientate the nation's policies in a new direction. The West Bengal minstry represents a big triumph of India's Left forces and will be the rallying point for their further consolidation. The workers of West Bengal and our CITU unions have played a key role in securing this victory. A large number of our General

Council and Working Committee members have been elected to the Assembly. Our Vice-President Com. Jyoti Basu heads the Ministry. Another Vice President Com. Sudhin Kumar heads the Food Ministry. Our Working Committee member Com. Kesto Ghosh heads the Labour Ministry. Our General Council member Com. Md. Amin heads the Transport Ministry and another member Com. Radhika Banerjee heads the Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry. Also our Com. Parimal Mitra holds and Ministry of Forest. We greet them and our M.L.A.'s and wish them success.

The West Bengal Ministry is bound to be our important instrument of fighting the forces of authoritarianism. It has already set the pace by releasing political prisoners, by releasing Naxalites and by assuring the workers and the people that the Ministry will guard their fundamental rights. Its statements about strikes and gheraos stand in sharp contrast with those emanating from other sources. It has taken back all State Government employees, victims of the previous regime.

Notwithstanding the limited power under the Consititution the Ministry will ceaselessly work to fulfil the demands of the masses, of the workers, peasants and employees with the help of the orgainsed trade union movement, of the CITU, will succeed in overcoming the resistance of the vested interests. Only the combined forces of the people, of the working class and the Ministry will overcome all obstacles and secure relief for the people and the expansion of their democratic rights. The CITU will do everything to see that the workers and the Ministry move in unison to defeat the vested interests and uproot the plan of the agents of authoritarian forces.

Comrades, no contingent of our working class has gone through such fiery ordeal of repression and terror as our West Bengal workers.

They kept the flag flying in the midst of terror and expanded the influences of the CITU. And finally they succeeded in defeating the forces of terror and routing them at the polls. We congratulate them for the great victory of theirs.

During these years the steel workers of Durgapur, the workers of Jaya Engineering, the Jute and Engineering Workers have passed through unbearable suffering imposed by victimisation, repression, retrenchment, closures lock-outs and wage reduction. Today after electoral victory the entire working class is pulsating with

new life and vigour to reverse the injustices of the emergency period, to reassert the right to bonus and jobs. The CITU and its unions have to lead the workers in their struggle; they have to mobilise their full strength to secure their urgent demands. It is at the same time the bounden duty of the working class and our unions to fight and defeat the conspiracies of the caucus agents against the ministry, against the rule of democracy in West Bengal. We cannot win our immediate demands in isolation from the struggle against the forces of dictatorship. If the latter gain the upper hand both economic demands and freedom to fight for them will be lost. The working class and the trade unions must take a lead in ensuring success for all the measures of the ministry concerning democratic rights and demands of the people. In particular the trade union movement must throw its full weight behind ministerial measures to benefit the peasantry—steps for securing land for the peasantry and wage for the agricultural workers.

Let it be known that without full mobilisation of our strength on every issue vital to us and our people the ministry will not be able to use its power effectively.

Comrades, we consider the victory of "Janata party" as a victory of democratic forces over the forces of authoritarianism. However, we find that the policy declarations and statements of the government fall short of the expectations of the labour movement and are often indistinguishable from the policies of the Congress Government. Ministerial statements often decry strikes and gheraos but maintain silence on the harrowing conditions of the workers on lay offs retrenchment and unemployment. The trade union movement has hearitly welcomed the decision to reinstate the railway srikers and those victimised under the MISA. But the Railway Minister has yet to implement the assurance for 10 hours work for Loco employees. The private employers have stubornly refused to reinstate the workers victimised under the emergeney and even some government departments are yet to implement the decision. The trade union movement welcomed the decision to scrap the CDS but was shocked by the government's refusal to pay in cash instalment due to them under the scheme. It seems that the Janata Party Governement abides by the discredited theory so dear to the Congress rulers which hods the workers pay packet responsible for inflation and high prices. This class theory was again disproved during the course of emergency when more

than 1500 crores of workers' money was impounded but prices continued to rise. The real cause was the increased money supply in the hands of the exploiting classes—the industrialists, the big capitalists, the traders exporters & landlords. The economic survey presented by the government also tells the same truth and yet the Central Government continues to hug this discredited theory of wages chasing prices. We welcome the recent decision of the government to give cash instalment to the workers. We hope this represents a change in out-look and is not due to certain fortunitous circumstances. We are happy to note that the labour ministry has carried on successful negotiations with the Port and Dock Organisations conceding some of the urgent demands of Port and Dock workers. At the same time we find brutal firing taking place against coal mines in Madhya Pradesh, and the inability of the government to check the closure the lock-out drive of the employers for instance in the Jute indsutry.

Some official spokesmen and capitalists agents alike concentrate attention on the developing strike-struggle and call for "discipline" but conceal the owner's offensive through lockouts. The government till now has not accepted the workers' demand for bonus though accepted in the Janata Party manifesto. At the same time the budget made a concession of not less than 200 crores of rupees to the capitalist investors and perhaps a concession of 200 to 300 crores to the exporting capitalists.

Index and Rising Prices

We welcome the appointment of a committee to go into the question of the compilation of the cost of living index but we strongly oppose the attempt to impose a new D.A. formula on the workers and bypass the principle of full neutralisation. We cannot be a party to any formula which automatically imposes a cut in real wage on any section of the workers.

Comrades, we cannot but sharply crticise the inablity of the Central Government to control the prices of necessaries of life. Prices of edible oil, tea and several other necessities have gone beyond the means of the common men, causing acute sufferings to the people. All that the people have had till now is appeal to hoarders and good and verbal promises of action. But the prices continue to rise or remain at the same high level undermining the confidence of the people in the Government. The discredited caucus and its sychophantic followers are lying in wait to stage a

come back utilising the failure of the Govt.

Control of prices, capacity to bring them down has become the acid test of the Govt.'s efficiency and sincerety. The same people who voted en mass for the Janata Party are getting impatient and angry every day.

It is true that part of the difficulty arises from the consequence of the policies pursued by the Congress Govt. But the new Government has been elected precisely to remove these consequences. There is however no sign that it is moving in a new direction and laying the foundations for a sound price policy.

On the contrary its own measures and policies and its faulty economic understanding have intensified the price situation and spiralling of prices. Its defict financing which despite its denial is estimated to amount to more than 1000 crores of rupees, and its export policies have contributed to the present uncontrollable sitution. And finally its unwillingness to take over wholesale trade in essential commodities to secure equitable distribution at controlled prices has left the people helpless before the forces of the market.

Though many Janata party leaders firmly believe in the public sector, there are others who are opposed to interference with the Private Sector. That's why a decisive step to break the wholesellers machinations is not taken and wholesale trade in essentials is not nationalised.

The trade union movement definitely demands taking over of the wholesale trade and calls unon the farseeing elements in the Janata Party to support this demand.

Difficult Situation

Comrades, it will be realised that we are face to face with a difficult situation even though we are able to exercise our democratic rights and carry on our struggle without interference from arbitrary legislation. The problems of wage rise, adequate D.A., retrenchment, unemployment, lay-offs and work-loads all demand immediate attention. The workers have suffered too much under the emergency and every resistance to these demands has to be overcome quickly. There must be continuous mobilisation of our movement to see that the labour policy of the Janata Govt. does not go aganist the interests of the workers. We cannot accept any restriction on our right to direct action when the employers continue to attack us.

We call upon the Central Government to fulfill the promise regarding bonus made in the Janata Party's Manifesto. The party has declared before the electorate that bonus is a deferred wage. It must now ensure 8.33% bonus for all, scrap the present Act. The Govt. should assume powers to stop lay-off, retrenchment and reinstate the dismissed workers. The Private employers have not implemented the government directives and they must be compelled to do so. Bilateral wage negotiations should be started immediately, with the Govt. using its full power to secure justice for the workers.

Sufficient finances should be made available to take over sick mills and concerns and run them as nationalised units. In consultation with the trade unions, the Govt. should announce a viable scheme for immediate unemployment relief.

All in Trade Union Unity

This brings us to the supreme importance of all in trade union unity. Unless the labour movement exercises its full strength to shape the policy decision of the Government, it will not succeed in defending the interest of the workers. The CITU calls upon all Central Trade Union Organistions, all organisations of employees, of central and state Govt. employeees and also associations of teachers and professors to join together to press for a common labour policy and safeguard the interests of all sections. The mighty awakening in the trade union movement the great strikes made by the State and Central Government employees association which now have the power to move lakhs; the strength shown by the associations of the teachers and professors all show that the trade union movement is a powerful force sufficiently strong to shape the policies of the Govt., to counter all anti-working class laws and defend common interests. It is our desire that all these organisations should immediately come together to take stock of the situation, present a common front on the question of demands and legislation and declare to the employers that the labour movement is one and indivisible. In this common task the only condition we lay down is loyalty to the working class and the agreed demands. We would therefore like to revive the CITU on a much bigger scale and make it all embracing like the historic anti-wage-freeze convention in 1974.

Comrades,

The trade union movement, the CITU and the entire working class cannot forget the role of the INTUC and AITUC leaders

during the emergency period. In the most shameless manner the leadership of these two organisations openly supported the emergency, the Congress attacks on the people and the working class, the banning of strikes, and imprisonment of thousands. They acted as the hirelings of the enemies of the people, of the capitalist class. They agreed to work in the Apex body, agreed to exclude orgainsations like the CITU which opposed emergency and with verbal formal protests supported all the infamous measures against the working class—denial of bonus, increased work load, lay-offs and retrenchment. Verbal criticisms they made, but that was to save their face. But they openly supported all the political measures to suppress the workers' demands.

Revisionism and reformism led to treachery and conspiracy with the ruling party to crush the working class and the people. When we had to leave the AITUC, there were many who perhaps felt a bit hesitant but we knew where the AITUC leaders intended to drag the movement. It is the bounden duty of the CITU to fight these policies while working for the unity of the movement.

The CITU and the trade union movement must unequivocally denounce the atrocities on untouchables—their murders, burnings of their houses and rapes of their women-committed with impunity in the villages. The Belcchi atrocities, have set a wage of horror in the country. These outrages are a continuation of the state of affairs that existed under the thirty years of Congress regime. They were intensified during the emergency, but press censorship prevented the people from knowing about them. Democracy in India will be a farce, a fake, if the untouchable masses are denied not only equality but also the right to live, the right to protection of the law. These outrages often arise because the agricultural labourers coming from this section demand more wages, or the peasants dare take prossession of the land distributed to them. They are part of the class struggle which the working class is waging against the landlord oppresors. The upper caste rogues must be defeated and silenced by the might of the mass movement. The Janata Government has the responsibility of taking effective steps and should not content itself with wordy declarations like the Congress Government. It is outrageous that the Bihar Janata Government should have come out with an atrocious account of Belcchi happenings portraying it as a fight among two gangs, thus screening the landlord harijan murderers.

Industrial Relations

Comrades, certain questions again have been raised in recent times after the formations of the Janata Govt. in the centre and we must express our stand in relation to that. The labour ministry has appointed a committee to go into the question of industrial relations. All previous legislations have failed because they mainly concerned themselves with restriciting the workers' freedom to strike rather than ensuring the minimum rights and demands. The idea of industrial peace generally meant one sided restriction on the workers movement without guaranteeing them minimum living conditions. If industrial relations are to be amicable, legislation must be based firstly on the understanding that labour is the oppressed party and the weight of the Govt. must be thrown on its side; further there should be effective curbs on the arbitary power of the capitalist to hire and fire the workers and to dictate economic conditions. Secondly, such legislation to be successful must be based on legal provision for minimum economic conditions like need based wage, violation of which should be met with drastic and severe punishment. Without legally enforcing minimum conditions and living standards, industrial relations can never be amicabe. Besides, it is absolutely necessary that the Govt. should be able to hold the price line and thus remove a perpetual source of discord. In the alternative there must be a binding legal provision for neutralisation of the rise in the cost of living and finally it is necessary that the trade unions should have full freedom of organisation and action without any attempt on the part of legislation to restrict it. Any legislation which adopts the trick of considering the workers and employees as equal partners and putting strikes and lookouts on the same plane is sheer deception and will only aggravate the situation. Unless the legislation deprives the employers of their arbitrary powers of retrenchment, dismissal and suspension, it will be considered to be one sided anti-labour device.

Workers' Participation in Management

The Congress Government propagated the idea of workers participation in management as means of giving equal status to the workers. The pitiful results arising from it are there for all to see. Plant level committees have been hardly established any where including the Public Sector. The Private Sector has virtualy ignored the entire scheme. The Public Sector could not go beyond the establistment of a few Floor Committees discussing at best only

some problems affecting the particular department. On the railways there are hardly any committee worth the name.

It the Janata Government want to go ahead with Workers' Participation it must base itself—entirely on new premises. There must be a desire to invite genuine participation and give equal status to the workers in running the industry. Every aspect of the industry including its finance, its purchasing policy, raw materials, equipment etc. must be put before the workers and their views sought in final decision. This cannot be achieved just by putting a worker or two on the Board of Directors. There must be equal number of directors on the Board from the workers side and with equal powers.

It is further necessary that the unequal status between the employer, the management and the workers should be removed. The standing orders, in concept of discipline, the arbitary powers of the management for hiring and firing—all these reduce the worker to the status of a slave and there cannot be equal partnership so long as this status lasts. Besides in the Public Sector the worker is virtually a prisoner with Industrial security force hovering round him.

Finally it is necessary that certain minimum living economic conditions like need based wage should be guaranteed to the worker before he is called upon to contribute his best to running the industry. It is futile to talk about workers' participation with a starving wage and with a status of a slave.

The previous government did not want to change any of the conditions and only talked about workers' participation. In effect its policy amounted to a call for workers' collaboration to intensify their own exploitation and slavery. This is really the meaning of workers' participation when advocated by the capitalists or their government. They do not want the workers to be equal partners in running the industry as a social asset but seek their help to perfect their own exploitation. That is why they are only keen to discuss how to increase workers' productivity which increases their profits. The CITU rejects in total theclass-collaborationof this type and will warn the workers against this type to participation.

Wage and Income Policy

Once again there is a talk about wage and incomes policy. The wage and incomes policy of the Congress Govt. had the aim of reducing the wage bill and was not a policy of bringing down

higher incomes in relation to the wages or levelling of wages in relation to higher incomes. The wage and incomes policy to be genuine must have as its aim reduction of the income disparities as between classes as between higher and lower sections. But the Congress government had no such aim. Its spokesmen busied themselves with the idea of reducing the disparities in wages, that is disparity between worker and worker which meant reducing the wages of those whose earnings were slightly higher than the average. The capitalists class, high salaried sections and others were to be left with their big incomes. The disparity between their income and the workers was not to be reduced. Only the disparity between worker and worker was to be reduced at the expense of those earning above the lowest wage.

A genuine wage and income policy must include, guarantee of need based minimum wage and education of income disparties between classes. The Janata Party manifesto states that the wage and income policy should reduce income disparties and bring the ratio of lowest and highest incomes to 1:10. This is sound principle; Needbased wage and reduction of income disparities between classes must form the basis of a sound and just wage and incomes policy.

Sick Mills and New Proposals

More than hundred textile mills, and large number of Engineering concerns and Jute Mills have joined the rank of sick mills. This has entailed sufferings and loss of jobs for tens and thousands of workers besided leading to huge wastage of society's resources. This is what private ownership of Industry has achieved for the country.

It is the minimum duty of the government to take over and nationalise all these concerns and run them in the Public Sector for the benefit of the society. Any shirking of this responsibility means letting down the people and being a party to inflicting misery on them. It is therefore astonishing to find a Janata Minister saying that the Government will not take over any more sick mills and run them. Some ministers have gone further and asked the workers to run these concerns themselves. This is cruel joke on the workers who are being called upon to run capitalists concerns dominated by capitalist market and price making. Nobody on behalf of the workers ever claimed that they were better organisers of capitalism than the capitalists themselves. The proposal amounts to making

the workers responsible for their own exploitation in the interest of the capitalist economy. It is the duty of the government to nationalise these concerns without any compensations to the big shareholders and run them with the help of the workers. The workers of course will do their best, to help the nationalised concerns but they cannot be asked to run a factory which is at the mercy of the capitalist market. Only the government can intervene in the market to curb the capitalists and speculators. Similar is the proposal that the Bhilai workers should set up a cement factory in the workers' sector with the help of the bonus money that they may get. The proposal amount to confiscation of workers funds for government's manoeuvre against the crisis. These proposals amount to evading government responsibility to manage the economy.

Discarded Suggestions

Suggestions that workers should run the factories in times of crisis or they should contribute share capital and thus enter into partnership with the capitalists have been made from time to time in advanced capitalist Countries and the workers have ridiculed them. No share in equity capital, no partnership will save the workers from wage slavery. It is only when the means of production and distribution are socially owned that the workers will cease to be exploited as a wage slave.

International Solidarity

Before I conclude I would like to draw you attention to one of the most distrubing events of the recent period. During the emergency India was experiencing a wholesale attack against democratic rights and forces of authoritarian dictatorship were enslaving the people. During the period the advanced section of the world working class movement was not only silent but certain sections openly supported the Congress party and described its attack as an attack against the forces of Facism. Comrades, it is difficult to believe that from the trade unions which express their determination to fight for peace, democracy and socialism, not a voice of protest was heard against the dictatorship in India. It is doubtful whether even now the truth is being told to the workers in these countries about the torture chambers in India which had nothing to learn from the Chilean torture camps. No doubt the leaders of the AITUC did their best to mislead the international movement, but the responsibility of the latter is no less. We earnestly hope that the trade unions of these countries will re-examine their policies and

avoid in future such gross mistakes which weaken and jeorpardize our common movement. We on our part will continue to hold firmly the banner of proletarian internationalism to defend the countries of socialism and the world working class movement against the American imperialism and the danger of fascism and never forget the solidarity of the working class of the world.

On behalf of all of you, I greet the working class and people of the socialist countries, the revolutionary working class and people of Vietnam, Kampuchia and Laos, the anti-racist liberation fighters of Africa, the freedom fighters of the Arab land and the working class of the advanced capitalist countries engaged in a bitter struggle against unemployment and economic crises.

38

New Industrial Relations Bill

The introduction of the anti-working class, anti-union Industrial Relations Bill in Parliament in the wake of the passage of the 45th Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha glaringly exposes the limitations of the Janata leaders' concept of democracy. The 45th Amendment Bill is designed to eliminate the Emergency framework institutionalised by the 42nd Amendment Act. The anti-trade union Bill in reality institutionalises the Emergency provisions and policies in relation to the trade union movement. No wonder Shri Madhu Limaye who recently resigned from the Secretaryship of the Janata Party lodged a powerful protest against this reactionary and betraying piece of legislation which no democrat or trade unionist can support.

The new Bill was rightly denounced by our MPs, the MPs of the Forward Bloc, CPI and some Janata MP's as a piece of reactionary legislation. The entire trade union movement—the CITU, AITUC, BMS, HMP and HMS, INTUC—has unanimously condemned it and expressed the united resistance of the trade union movement to it.

All legislations which purport to deal with "industrial relations", but refuse to recognise the existence of two unequal classes, one of whom has to fight for its livelihood against the money-power of the other, end in putting one-sided restrictions on the oppressed and exploited classes and help the process of exploitation. 'Industrial relations' is a non-class expression to hide the ugly reality of class struggle, of the necessity for any genuine democracy to throw its full weight behind the oppressed to curb the exploiters. The first task of democratic Government, therefore, if production

is to go on uninterrupted, is to ensure through legal compulsion, such minimum conditions as need-based wage, decent housing and living conditions for the workers and end their slave status by eliminating or curbing the arbitrary rights of the employers to hire and fire.

The Janata Government, of course, does not believe in any such policy or outlook, though its Election Manifesto stated :

"The Janata Party believes that economic policies should subserve the interests of workers in the agricultural and industrial sectors. The party will ensure minimum wages for all categories of workers. Such minimum should be sufficient for the maintenance of the workers and his family." It further added : "A wage and price policy must ensure that income disparities are reduced. Steps will be taken to see that minimum incomes rise rapidly so that the difference between the minimum and maximum income is reduced to 1:20. It will strive to further reduce the difference to 1:10, within a decade by a policy of income redistribution that raises floor levels and discourages bloated incomes."

BETRAYAL OF PLEDGE

This is a correct policy to maintain industrial peace, keep production uniterrupted and rouse the workers' interest in production.

But instead the Janata Party, like its predecessor, the Congress Party, like all bourgeois-landlord parties in other countries, is concentrating attention on the forcible maintenance of industrial peace to help the employers to perpetuate conditions of misery and exploitation. Instead of a need-based wage, it is legislating to ban the workers' strikes, to suppress their struggle for needbased wage and living conditions. The legislation is a betrayal of the solemn pledge given in the Election Manifesto which the top Janata Government leaders are determined to treat as a scrap of paper. One is overcome with sickness and nausea in witnessing the role of some ex-trade union leaders now functioning as Cabinet Ministers. And one recalls the honourable role of Shri V.V. Giri who as Labour Minister tampered with an award which went in favour of the bank employees.

The trickery of all modern labour legislation consists in its pretensions to treat both labour and capital on an equal footing, with the Government pretending to be a third independent force. The Janata legislation indulges in this chicanery. Since hypocrisy will

stand exposed if it only restricts and bans strikes, it makes eleborate provisions to restrict and ban lockouts. But every worker knows that in practice lockouts are not banned, but sanctioned, while strikes are prohibited. The famished workers fighting for their minimum demands for existence and the profit-hunting capitalist coercing thousands through a lockout are put on the same footing.

An employee who goes on what is described as an illegal strike shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months. An employer who illegally locks out thousands to starve them into submission will also be imprisoned maximum up to three months. What more do you what? Isn't the Janata Government impartial, doesn't it hold the balance even between the worker and the employer? The Labour Department may reply; but while the worker is to be fined a hundred rupees, the poor employer will be fined two thousand rupees. Isn't that enough?

The pretentious objective of the new law is to delineate a legal framework that will "promote cordiality and peace in industrial establishments, protect the legitimate rights of employees and the legitimate interests of industries (read capitalists) so that industrial harmony and cooperation may lead to increased production and productivity, increased flow of goods and services and consequent improvement in the standards of living of the people and a greater measure of social justice." A very laudable objective. How to achieve it? By no means by legislating for minimum living conditions but outright banning of strikes of a vast number of workers and making them slaves of compulsory arbitration and their fate dependent on the arbitrary will of a bureaucrat or sychophant judge. To quote the statement of objectives and reasons : "A distinction will be made between establishments or undertakings that cater to essential services and others. In the former, there will be compulsory reference of disputes for adjudiction, of arbitration failing bipartite negotiations and conciliation. In these cases there should, therefore, be no need for any work stoppage either in the form of a strike or lockout...."

WHOLESALE BAN ON STRIKES

Strikes are therefore banned in the following : (1) any establishment of, or connected with, the armed forces, of the union or installations connected with the defence of the country against war or external aggression; (2) any railway service or any other transport service for the carriage of passengers or goods, by air, water or

land; (3) any service in the International Airport Authority of India constituted under the International Airports Authority Act, 1971; (4) any service in or in connection with the working of, any major port of dock; (5) any section of an industrial establishment or undertaking on the working of which the safety of such establishment or undertaking or the employees employed therein depends; (6) any postal, telegraph or telephone service; (7) any service in, or in connection with, the working of any public sector undertaking engaged in the purchase, procurenment, storage, supply, or distribution of foodgrains; (8) any industry which generally supplies or distributes power, light or water, to the public directly or indirectly; (9) any system of public conservancy or sanitation; (10) banking; (11) all atomic energy installations including power stations; (12) production, supply and distribution of coal.

Practically the majority of the Indian workers are to be deprived of the right to strike as in the days of the Emergency. No previous Government dared to come out in an ordinary legislation with such a comprehensive list for wholesale banning of strikes in industries. Nor did any previous Government extend the ban to banking. But the Janata Government led by Shri Morarji Desai has earned this badge of shame while paying homage to the fundamental rights of the people in connection with the 45th Amendment Bill.

But this is not all. Section 157 of the Bill further arms the appropriate Government to add to the list of strike-banning industries by putting new industries in the list of essential services.

It has been the demand of the trade union movement that all sections of workers should be granted protection from arbitrary dismissals, retrenchment, lay-offs etc., under a common act. The Supreme Court itself had struck down the restrictive meaning of industry as interpreted under the previous Acts and made it applicable to almost all activities involving employers-workers relationship. The framers of the Bill had to take notice of it and widen the definition of industry, though here also they sought to arbitrarily exempt some activities. Hospitals and educational centres—teachers, professors and nurses are not to get any protection for job security. "Having regard to the nature of the work performed in hospitals, the need to maintain, in educational and training institutions and in scientific and research organisations, an atmosphere different from that in industrial and commercial undertakings and to meet the special needs of organisations en-

gaged in charitable, social and philanthropic services, such institutions and organisations are being excluded from the provisions of the Bill.

The professors, teachers and others are supposed to be satisfied with plain living and high thinking without any guarantee for minimum living conditions. The doctors and nurses are angels spreading the message of human kindness—why should they bother about how much they are paid or whether they have any place to live in? The Janata Government feels embarrassed to declare hospitals, educational institutions, etc., as essential services and ban strikes in them. It has therefore introduced a separate Bill to deal with these workers. The Bill bans all strikes in educational institutions, hospitals, etc.

However, in the wake of the Supreme Court decision, the defintion of industry has been widened to mean any systematic activity carried on by cooperation between an employer and his employees (whether such employees are employed by such employer directly or by or through any agency, including a contractor) for production, supply or distribution of goods or services with a view to satisfy human wants or wishes (not being wants or wishes which are merely spiritual or religious in nature), whether or not...such activity is carried on with a motive to make any profit.

Normally this should benefit larger numbers of workers if it is not accompanied as under the Bill, with the threat or actual banning of strikes and paralysing all resistance of the workers.

What protection does the Bill offer against layoff, retrenchment and closures? In spite of its pompous wording, there is hardly any protection. Layoffs, retrenchment, closures are now made dependent on the whims and consent of the Government and even a blind man can see where the sympathies of the present Government lie.

AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES

In relation to layoffs, Section 82 states no employee, etc., shall be laid off by his employer except with the previous permission of the Government. The Government's consent must come within sixty days of the application for layoff; if it does not come the employer can presume consent and go ahead with layoff.

The same provision applies to retrenchment. No employee working in an establishment in which not less than one hundred persons are employed and who has been in continuous service for

a year in such establishment can be retrenched without the permission of the Government. The Government is not bound to consult the workers or the trade unions. It may on its own grant such permission and the employer can then legally retrench thousands.

All these provisions which seem to restrict the powers of the employers will in practice invest their layoff and retrenchment offensive with official sanction and legality. This is one of the most scandalous parts of the Bill. Retrenchment and layoffs are not the vital concern of the workers, but just a matter between the Government and the capitalist! This is nothing but introduction of authoritarian practices to deal with the workers' struggle. This is how democracy and the authority of the trade unions is being sacrificed in the name of a comprehensive Industrial Relations Bill.

IMMOBILISING TRADE UNIONS

These notorious clauses are accompanied by provision of comprehension for those laid off, retrenched or thrown out due to closure.

The Bill provides that changes in matters relating to employment or conditions of labour applicable to any employee cannot be made except through procedure laid down under it.

The employer and the recognised trade union (negotiating agent) must negotiate. Their negotiations may last for not more than sixty days. In case of failure the dispute goes to the Conciliation officer who is to work for a settlement—the time-limit again is sixty days. Failing settlement the conciliation officer will forward his report as soon as possible to the appropriate Govenment which may take another sixty days to consider whether a reference is necessary to the Labour Court or Tribunal.

A Court of Enquiry shall submit its report within a period of one hundred and eighty days; the Labour Court shall announce its award ordinarily within a period of one hundred and eight days. The actual period is likely to be much more. So for a whole year at least the trade union movement must stand still when a recalcitrant employer refuses to accept the urgent demands of the workers.

All strikes during the pendency of any conciliation proceedings are illegal; they are illegal if declared fourteen days after the conclusion of such proceedings. Strikes during the pendency of any proceedings before an arbitrator, labour court, tribunal or National Commission are illegal. They are illegal if undertaken sixty days after the conclusion of such proceedings.

Besides, no person employed in any industrial establishment shall go on strike in breach of contract without giving to the employer a notice in writing within six weeks before striking and within 14 days of giving such notice.

This is the scheme of the Bill. First, arbitration wherever it suits the Governments or the employers, prolonging negotiations as long as possible and delay and disrupt the working class action and organisations. The arbitrator's or Labour Courts' decision is final, though the workers are not prevented from going on a strike after the award. But then it will mean that the award being binding on the workers, the full powers of the Government will be used to crush the strike.

vious Government had dared to impose compulsory aribitration on the trade union movement. The arbitration on the trade union movement. The arbitrators drawn from the services or the Judiciary will be far from impartial and very rarely will their verdict meet the genuine demands of the workers.

And finally Section 120 of the Bill arms the Government when it is a party to an industrial dispute to change an award if it will be inexpedient to give effect to it on that the Government has a right to change an award if it favours the workers.

The workers' right to strike is further sought to be restricted by the provision that the proposal for strike must have the support of 60 per cent of the workers in a strike ballot. It means that the right of 59 per cent to go on strike will be vetoed by a minority. Besides, the notice of the strike can be given only by the negotiating agent, i.e., a recognised uion, which bans any other union having more influence with the workers from proposing direct action. This is one more hurdle against the right to strike.

Section 90, besides, provides that the Registrar shall have general power of supervision, superintendence over a strike ballot and he shall decide any dispute pertaining to a strike ballot.

The induction of the Registrar into the strike ballot is yet another authoritarian provision for Government control over the trade union movement. This power of the Registrar will be used to falsify the result of the ballot by unscrupulous officials.

Section 77 further empowers the Government to prohibit a strike in any industry where a dispute has arisen when the Government thinks it is necessary to do so in public interest.

It will be seen that strikes are not only banned in essential

services, they are being virtually eliminated in other industries through several provisions.

With the working class deprived of its effective weapon what chance is there to bring a recalcitrant management to the path of settlement? The restrictions imposed on the employers regarding unilateral change in conditions of work, and the compulsion to go through negotiations, conciliation, etc., will not really enhance the bargaining capacity of the workers. With the fear of direct action removed, the conciliation and arbitration proceedings will remain formalities, with the employers' attack at best delayed by a few months.

The Bill provides for imprisonment of three months for an employee who commences an illegal strike'. The workers' leaders (in the language of the Bill), one who instigate to take part in illegal strike) are to be imprisoned for a term which may extend to six months. This is Janata Gandhian democracy with a vengeance.

Formally, an employer who introduces an illegal change, etc., is punishable with imprisonment which they extend to one year. But we have yet to witness the miracle of an employer being sent to jail for illegal action against the workers. In any case a Government whose head urges extra-constitutional consideration for the Raja of Challapalli is not likely to jail any employer.

The Bill provides for punishment for unfair practices on the part of employers and trade unions and employees. The list of unfair practices on the part of the employers is fairly exhaustive and includes victimisation of trade union workers. Considering however the ternor of the Bill and its anti-working class bias it is easy to see that enforcement will be lacking and the employers will merilly continue their old ways including outright victimisation of workers for trade union activities.

Unfair practices on the part of employees and their organisations include slowing down of production, demonstration at the residence of the employers or the managerial staff, refusal to work overtime, refusal to negotiate collectively in good faith, threats to non-striking employees or the managerial staff, picketing of non-striking employees, physically barring them from entering the work place.

This is an atrocious list really intended to ban strike activities, picketing, demonstrations, etc. i.e., another way to illegalise strike. It is made to appear as if only certain types of violent and coercive

activities are objected to. The fact is that it is intended to ban normal picketing, etc., accusing the workers of intimidation.

The employer will be allowed to get away with unfair practices while the workers and their organisations will be penalised for their legitimate activities.

UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE

As if all this was not enough, the Bill makes further inroads into the freedom of the trade union movement. Uncessary restrictions and new condtions are laid down for registration of unions. Under the existing Act seven employees can form a union and get it registered. Now a minimum of 100 or ten per cent are required for registration. All trade unions registered under the the 1926 Act have to compulsorily re-register under the Bill when it becomes an Act. The Registrar is being given wide powers for interference and trade unions are to be harassed by demanding a spate of statements, documents, etc.

The Bill dictates that a trade union carrying on its activities in one industrial establishment shall not have more than two office-bearers who are not persons actually employed in the undertaking. It further dictates that a person cannot be an office-bearer in more than four trade unions. Militant and honest leaders are called upon to help several unions and Bill unwarrantedly interferes with the workers' right to choose their office-bearers.

In passing it should be noted that the Bill designates the organisation of the employers as a trade union of employers obviously to protect their exploiting role. It makes it slyly appear as if an industrial dispute is a fight between two trade unions and not between the capitalists and the workers.

It is still more shocking to find that the Bill dealing with hospital and educational establishments does not describe the organisations of nurses, doctors, professors and teachers as trade unions; they are called associations. The Tatas and Birlas have a right to form trade unions, but the professors and nurses must have no such right. They can only have associations.

The Bill runs into a hundred pages will its complicated clauses. And yet the workers are prevented from engaging lawyers under the Bill. Can idiocy and stupidity go further? It seems that the framers of the Bill do want the workers and trade unions to make proper defence of their interests.

RECOGNITION OF UNIONS

The trade union movement has been demanding proper and honest provisions for recognition of unions. The employers and the Congress Government in the past favoured the INTUC unions whether that had the requisite mass following or not. Many of these recognised unions entered into anti-working class agreements accepting retrenchment or wage cuts—all without consulting the workers. The workers who repudiated these agreement made by the recognised union was binding on them under certain Acts.

The trade union movement has therefore been demanding that recognition should be decided by a secret ballot of all the workers.

This demand was pressed by the trade union movement minus the INTUC at the tripartite conference but the Janata Government has turned it down. "The Bill provides for the determination of a negotiating unit (recognised union) by the appropriate Government.... It will be for the appropriate Government to determine, inter alia, in the light of the state of unionisation in the industry and certain other matters whether such determination will be done through a secret ballot or through verification of membership." The workers' right to choose their own union for negotiation is to depend on the whims and the arbitrary decision of the bourgeois-landlord Government and its bureaucrats. The Government is free to foist through the so called process of verification any union on the workers and the agreements made by this union are legally binding on the workers.

The result of verification depends on the will of the officials. They adopt questionable methods, doctor results, falsify them to favour organisations which are favourites of the ruling party. This was how verification functioned under the Congress. This is how it will function under the Janata; that is why the central trade unions have refused to cooperate with the Labour Ministry for ascertaining the strength of central trade union organisations by verification.

Under the Bill if a union has the support of not less than sixty-five per cent, it will be the sole negotiating unit (recognised union). If a union has the support of more than 50 per cent but less than sixty-five per cent it will be the chief negotiating unit and if there are others who have the support of not less than 20 per cent workers, the latter will have the status of an associate unit.

The sole negotiating unit, the chief negotiating unit will have

plenty of rights to negotiate on behalf of the workers including right to receive information to the finance and economy of the industrial establishment.

But will the workers really gain by these provisions? The recognition of these unions will not be decided by a secret ballot, but by the verification done by the bureaucrats. Instead of genuine representatives of the workers, favourites of the employers and administration are likely to get theprivilege of recognition.

UNITE IN HUGE PROTEST

In conclusion it might be stated that the new Industrial Relations Bill is a reactionary, authoritarian piece of legislation to help the capitalists and curb the trade unions. A Government which conceives of such a Bill cannot be trusted to defend the democratic rights of the people. The Janata Government leaders very relunctantly withdrew the MISA. They have retained the provision for preventive detention in the Constitution. Some of them are not unhappy that the two Congresses combined to defeat the provisions regarding referendum, Emergency, etc. And now this Bill marks yet another stage in the unfolding of their anti-democratic outlook. All this brings grist to the mill of the authoritarian forces.

The democratic forces must combine with the entire trade union movement to defeat this Bill and throw it on the dung heap. All cental trade union organisations and their unions, all federations of workers and employees must combine in a huge protest agitation to fight this all sided attack on the freedom and liberty of the trade union movement and its right to strike. The Janata Government will not be allowed either to enchain the trade union movement or enslave the workers.

(The Bill-placed by Janata Govt. in 1978)

39

The West Bengal Elections and the Working Class

The CITU greets the victory of the left allinace in West Bengal which has inflicted a crushing defeat on the Congress.

The victory is a part of the great upsurge of the Indian people against the misrule and tyranny of the Congress regime which has resulted in a victory for the Janata Party in several States. Yet it is a victory which has got special importance for the future struggle of India—the struggle for expansion of democratic rights and elimination of all dangers of authoritarian dictatorship. The CITU holds that the future of Indian democracy depends on the growing strength of the left and democratic forces. The West Bengal victory represents these very forces and will tremendously strengthen the left parties and democratic forces all over India.

The left alliance headed by the CPI(M) was confronted not only by the Congress but also unfortunately by the Janata Party. The massive vote for the left alliance constitutes not only a rejection of the anti-unity policies pursued by the State Janata leaders, but also expresses a positive radical mood of the masses.

This was but natural. West Bengal was the first to undergo semi-fascist terror and had to face it for five long years before others experienced it after the emergency.

The terror in West Bengal's industrial areas was unprecedented. More than 300 trade unions affiliated to the CITU were occupied by gangsters; hundreds of CITU trade union workers were killed; hundreds were not allowed to work at their jobs; and twenty thousand workers and employees were forced to leave their localities.

This was followd by the most crushing burdens during the emergency—mass slaughter of jobs, closures, denial of bonus and impounding of DA.

The employees were equally the victims of this terror of victimisation and economic penalisation. During the emergency, in the rural areas goonda gangs and jotdars ruled supreme defrauding the peasants and agricultural workers.

No wonder that in these conditions the people of West Bengal should place their faith in the alliance headed by the CPI(M) who braved the terror for five long years, and continued to champion the cause of the people during the emergency.

The CITU greets the working class and orgainsed employees of West Bengal who have played a magnificent role in this historic victory. In industrial areas the alliance has won almost all seats. More than fifty leaders of the CITU, including members of the Working Committee and General Council have been elected defeating their Congress, Right C.P. or Janata rivals. We greet our colleagues and comrades for their magnificent victory which was possible only because the link with the working class was kept alive despite the semi-fascist terror.

We greet our Comrade Jyoti Basu, Vice-President of the CITU, who now heads the West Bengal Ministry.

We greet our Comrade Krishnapada Ghosh, member of our Working Committee who now heads the labour ministry of West Bengal. The victory was complete because the working class received tremendous support from the rural areas—the mass of the peasantry.

The working class led by the CITU must master this lesson of unity and endeavour to strengthen and deepen it. The battle for democratic rights has yet to be won and it cannot be won without the alliance of all democratic forces.

The formation of the ministry led by the CPI(M) places the people and the working class in a very advantageous position to carry forward their struggle. The Ministry is committed to the task of restoration of democratic rights, and immediate relief to the people. There is absolutely no doubt that it will fulfil its mandate. It has already set an example to other Ministries by ordering unconditional release of all political prisoners.

It is the sacred duty of the working class to mobilise support for the ministerial measures to give relief to the people. The strength

in legislatures is not enough to over-come the resistance and conspiracies of the vested interests. It must be supplemented by the orgainsed strength and might of a vigilant working class.

The working class must mobilise its full strength in support of the Ministerial measures for the relief of the peasants and other oppressed rural sections and overcome the resistance of rural vested interests.

The working class must mobilise its full strength in support of measures in the interest of employees and middle sections.

Since the days of the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal the working class has suffered as never before. Mass retrenchment, increased workload, lay-off, mass unemployment, impounding of DA, denial of bonus, wage freeze and rising prices—all have intensified working class misery beyond measure. The working class awaits urgent relief and has full faith that the new Ministry will initiate measures to ensure it.

Every move of the Ministry is bound to be opposed by the big capitalists and their agents and the united and organised strength of the working class is required to defeat their opposition. Besides many of these demands are within the competence of the Central Government whose labour policy prejudicially affects the interests of the workers as is seen in connection with bonus and denial of cash instalment from the CDS. The Ministerial efforts to secure change in these polices must be fully supported by the workers.

If these policies remain unchanged, if the big capitalists and employers continue to deny minimum demands the workers will have to go in for action. They will have to coordinate their action with the Ministry's efforts to secure them their demands and thus strengthen and consolidate the electoral victory won.

Enemies of the people, provocateurs and Congress agents will definitely attempt to exploit the working class misery to undermine the popular victory, create dissensions and stage a comeback. This political danger has to be fought at all costs. On no account shall there be a return of Congress to power or to the terror days of 1972. That should be the watch word of the working class. Every thing must be subordinated to the elimination of the danger of dictatorship and expansion of democracy. Only by guarding and expanding democracy will the working class and people be in a position to safeguard their economic interests and secure urgent

relief.

While hourly defending its interests against the capitalist class and harmful policies of the Central Government, the working class must so conduct itself that the enemies of democracy are not strengthened in any manner.

The Working Class Vol. VI No. 11, July 1977.

40

The Problem of One Union in One Industry

Of late the capitalist press, the employers and their agents have come out as the champions of one union in one industry and mourning the existence of multiplicity of unions. Their love for workers' unity however soon express iteself. Its aim is not to strengthen the resistance of the working class to the capitalsit exploitation, but to malign and slander the working class and trade union leadership. For their argument is that strikes are taking place because of inter-union rivalries. They want to establish an alibi for themselves and to present to the people that when hundreds of thousands of workers go on strike, it is not because they have some grievances or some urgent economic demand, but just because one or the other trade union leader asks them to stop work for sake of this or that union.

Unfortunately, even the present Union Labour Minister, who has a good record, has fallen victim to this and has referred to inter-union rivalries leading to strike.

Workers not Plaything of Leaders

There is no doubt that in factories and industries parallel union exist, they own allegiance to different central organisations and that their leadership has different political associations also. But this does not mean that the mass of workers is just a plaything of the leadership of these unions. The workers go in for action only when they feel the pinch of the economic situation. In any case those who voted against the Congress in the last elections and voted the present government to power must be deemed to have sufficient

intelligence to realise when they should go in for action.

At the same time it is true that cases do occur when conflicts seem to arise because of inter-union rivalries. But this is only an appearance because these arise only when the management makes use of patronised or favoured union to thrust down an adverse agreement which other unions resist. The so-called inter-union rivalry which is paraded as a cause of unstable industrial relations is nothing but the use by management of its favourite unions against the workers.

Industrial relations legislation during the British days and under the Congress rules have played a role in obstructing the process of workers' unification round a single union of their choice. The aim of these legislations, apart from restricting and banning strikes, was to promote the growth of unions of the hue and colour acceptable to the ruling classes.

The "laudable" aim was passed off as fighting the danger of Communism by which the authorities meant militant class-conscious trade union movement.

The aim of Congress legislations has been to promote blatantly partisan union of Congress, and give them a status of recognition immediately after their formation. Old established unions were repressed or dubbed as rivals. The new unions, enrolling big membership by agreement with the owners, were presented as the really representative unions and given the right of recognition. This new leadership, working under the theory of trusteeship, considering the workers as illiterate children, did not think it necessry either to consult the workers or follow their wishes in making agreements. The result was a growing chasm between the workers and the recognised unions in many places. Such chasm did not develop where the recognised union was really representative of the workers.

Besides the conditions for recognition laid down by the private employers and even under the legislations were often such that a recognised union was unable to defend the workers' interests vigorously. Collective action had to be avoided at all costs—how could then the workers defend themselves?

It is these factors that sustained the necessity for multiple unions, for militant fighting unions who could respond to the wishes and needs of the workers.

It is not realised how at each step a fighting union representing

the majority of the workers had to fight for its very existence, against police repression, victimisation of its office bearers and members. It is only on rare occasions that it secured recognition and the right to represent the workers.

Their cry against multiplicity of unions has only one meaning. They want only one docile union to operate so that they can strike any bargain with it to the detriment of the workers.

The trade union movement refutes the entire agrument about inter-union rivalries leading to strikes and also exposes the design to establish the monoploy of a docile union in the name of one union in one industry.

The trade union movement has its own sound class reasons for advocating one union in one indsutry. The trade union movement stands for unity of the working class and its efficiency depends on its strength among the workers. The larger the number of workers under the banner of one union the greater its capacity for collective bargaining, for disciplined strike action and fighting disruption. This logically must find in the willing coming together of all workers in an industry in a single union and of all such unions under one single central organisation. That will be the maximum realisation of working class strength putting the workers in the most favourable position both in relation to the employers and the government.

Monopoly Of Recognition

After years of trade union movement this unity is still lacking and we find there are several unions in an industry and even in factories. Many of these are just nominal unions brought to the fore by the employers to counter a strike or demands, but many others have a sizeable following and cannot be easily ignored when a setlement is on the anvil. And on several occasions these unions are impelled to come together and forge unity to resist a common onslaught against them. The authorities and employers did their best to check the rise of new unions by conceding the monopoly recognition to some, boycotting others, threatening the workers who join them with dismissals. But this monopoly of recognitions, except in a few cases, did not help to rally the workers behind these unions on the other hand, the partisanship of the employers for them gave them a bad name.

We have to understand the problem of multiplicity of unions as part of the peculiar growth of our trade union movement, a

certain historical development that has taken place in the eight decades of the trade union movement and we cannot simply wish it away or decide to abolish it by legislation or by agreement among the leaders.

The causes of this development are related to the policy of repression against the trade union movement in the British period, to the total absence of trade union rights—all of which discourages the growth of mass unions—unions with mass following embracing the majority of workers in a single union. Only in certain exceptional cases such mass unions arose and remianed powerful, if they were not suppressed. But ever since they could not secure the allegience of 50 per cent of the workers leaving a majority of workers beyond the influence of the union.

The Unions therefore only remained focal points of resistance, the organs of workers unity during strikes, but otherwise remained very weak and ineffective organisations.

This naturally led to the rise of a number of unions in the same factory and the same industry. The formation of unions by the followers of various parties was rendered possible because of this situation otherwise all of them would have had to work inside a single union.

Another factor which encouraged the formation of seperate unions was the attitude of the leaders of some unions to debar those who differed with them—workers included—from participating in the union, running the union bureaucratically and arbitrarily and forcing the dissident and discontented section of the workers to seek the leadership of another union.

Lack Of Democratic Functioning

The lack of mass activity of unions, the absence of democratic functioning, of live participation in the decision making process by the workers—all these have contributed to this development. Besides there has been a tendency to look after only certain sections of the workers though the union calls itself an industrial union. This means it functions as a craft or sectional union leading to the formation of a craft or categorywise union.

Weak unions. and discruption of the trade union movement, were designed by the employers and they had no scruples in starting rival unions to combat the influence of a popular union.

The trade union movement has grown along these lines. More than eight decades of this development has created barriers, differ-

ent loyalties, sense of pride in organisations. These unions have fought prolonged battles, their leaders and mass have faced jails, victimisation and terror and starvation fighting under their banner. Their crime was they were not recognised and they defended the workers. In many places this has opened a wide chasm between the recognised union and the non-recognised.

It is in these circumstances that we have to discuss the problem of one union in one industry, which is a problem of engendering the genuine living faith of mass of workers in a single union and leadership, of building all in unity of the workers in that industry.

The trade union movement and its leaders have started tackling the problem of this unity in the last few years. The offensive of the employers, the callousness of the Congress Govt. both brought to the forefront the question of effective resistance which could be organised only by uniting all organisations active in the industry. Of late, the T.U. movement has shown its capacity to overcome its inner differences and join together in common battle to defend the working class. The fact that unions belonging to the INTUC, UTUC, AITUC, CITU could come together on occasions of strikes affecting industries like jute, cement and others shows that when the masses are active the unions despite their political differences come together to defend them. Over the last six years this urge for unity, for common action has been growing at a rapid rate, confounding those who shed crocodile tears over the multiplicity of unions.

A historic and classic instance of this unity was the establishment of NCCRS under the initiative and leadership of the AIRF. The great and historic strike of the railway workers would never have been possible if each union had remained in its shell. This mighty unity forged by the workers and their organisations of their own free will drew the wrath and barbarous repression from the Congress Govt. But it struck a big blow for unity, for one union in one industry. Those who criticise multiplicty of unions and union rivalries did not praise the NCCRS for eliminating them and standing united. Instead of praise, the NCCRS leaders received jail and imprisonment.

Path Of Free And Voluntary Unity

The practical activity of the trade unions and their leaders have shown the way to reach the desired objective of one union in one industry. It can be through joint action, mutual help and solidarity,

common suffering, common resistance and strike whenever required and formation of organisations like the NCCRS expressing the all-in unity of the workers. This is the path of free voluntary unity for one union. Legislation or just agreements between union leaders will not achieve anything.

An important, almost fundamental condition of success in this venture is the guarantee of democratic functioning in all unions and organisations like the NCCRS. It is only widespread democratic functioning that can create the faith in one organisation. Many unions have undemocratic constitutions arming the President, or General Secretary or the executive with arbitrary powers. This obstructs the process of mutual faith and unity.

While working for creating a proper climate for one union, we can suggest some immediate measures to hasten our progress towards unity. (a) Immediately the question of recognition should be settled by ballot, i.e. by secret ballot of the workers in the factory or concern or when possible in the industry as a whole. If any one union gets an overwhelming proportion of vote (percentage to be fixed), that union alone will be recognised for purposes of collective bargaining. The other unions will have the right to continue their activities, recruit members and represent individual grievances, but not made binding agreements on behalf of the workers.

(b) When no union gets overwhelming percentage of votes, all unions getting votes above a minimum percentage will be represented on the co-ordinating committee of these unions, each union having representatives on the basis of its strength and this committee alone will have the authority to enter into collective agreement on behalf of the workers.

(c) No agreement entered into by recognised union or by a co-ordinating committee is considered valid unless put before the mass of workers and ratified by them.

(d) Unions with right to collective bargaining must guaranatee democratic functioning of the organisation and have appropriate constitutions. If the working class goes along this path, it will be possible to acheieve the objective of one union in one industry much sooner than the opponents of the T.U. movement think and an invincible force could be created in the cause of he working class and the people.

The Working Class, Vol. VI No. 12, August 1977.

41

Wages And Incomes Policy

Since the dawn of capitalism, it was noted that its progress accumulated misery at one pole and wealth at another. In contrast to the writers of subsequent years the writers of the earlier period saw in this gross inequality—not injustice, but a natural law, a divine dispensation ordained by God.

"The wealth of a nation corresponds with its population and its misery corresponds with its wealth. Diligence in some compels idleness in others. The poor and active are a necessary consequence of the rich and active".

"Legal constraint (to labour) is attended with too much trouble, violence, and noise,....whereas hunger is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but as the most natural motive to industry and labour, it calls further the most powerful exertions".

Commenting on these, Karl Marx said "If the Venetian Monk found in the fatal destiny that makes misery eternal, the raison d'epre of Christian charity, calibacy, monastries and holy houses, the protestent prebendary finds in it a pretext for condemning the laws in virtue of which the poor possesed a right to a miserable public relief".

With the emergence of the organised working class movement and revolts, the rise of socialist thought it became impossible for the apologists of the capitalist order to declare poverty to be a natural law. They had to take note of the misery, of the mal-distribution of national income, of the total inequality involved in it and suggest remedies to rectify it. However, henceforth, consciously or unconsciously their efforts were directed to cover the fact that this misery, this inequitable distribution is the inevitable social law of capitalist

society, of the law of capitalist accumulation.

Bourgeois economists, liberal politicians, reformist labour leaders all at one time joined hands to assure the sufferers that there was nothing wrong with the capitalist order. Just some mistakes in distribution which can be corrected through state action. In the period following the post world war great reliance was placed on using the taxation machinery of the Government to effect a more equitable distribution. During the first world war drastic taxation was introduced to expropriate for the State 90 to 100% of excess profits of the industrialists. This was considered to be opening great possibilities to appropriate the surplus of the haves and to transfer it to have-nots.

However subsequent years showed that inequality continued to increase, unemployment continued to grow and rapid concentration of economic resources and power took place in the hands of monopolist giants. Inequality increased with each year. True the workers of many Western countries are enjoying a higher standard of life but it is based on the robbery of the world by the monopolists of these countries. And besides along with the increased living standards for these on work, there are lakhs and lakhs who continue to be unemployed for years living on doles for a few months and for the rest just beggary. In the recent crisis the number of unemployed in these advanced Western countries reached 14 million—and it has not gone down drastically even now. The intense period of the crisis saw nearly 10 million unemployed in the USA. The number is now officially stated to be 6 million which is considered to be an underestimation.

It is not as if the organised movement did not secure any advance in securing concessions for the workers. The provision for unemployment relief and benefit in these countries has been forced on the capitalist government. But it is a safety device to keep the system from being blown up rather than a serious measure to remedy the inequality in incomes.

All the devices of the State acting as the great leveller came to an end because it was forgotten the State represented the organised power of the capitalist class; that it would not jeopardise the basic interests of the class it represented and that it would not violate or change the basic laws of capitalist society which it is committed to defend. The taxation, and price policies, the currency and exchange policies, the financial policy all must turn to the needs of the

monopolists in these countries and therefore must create growing inequalities, as is happening. All that could emerge from the hypocritical talk about eradicating poverty through redistribution of income by the State, was the bogus conception of Welfare State. It only meant that the capitalist State would spend more sums on housing, health, education etc. without basically changing the wide gaps in income between the capitalists and workers. These sums would be spent with greater zeal when economic stagnation is on, the aim being to revive industry for capitalist profits.

The fact is that all claims to cure the basic ill of capitalist society by paying attention to distribution are fake claims. For in any society the distribution of incomes as between classes as between haves and have-nots is determined by the distribution of means of production. The owners of the latter necessarily control all the surplus leaving only sufficient to satisfy the bare necessities of life—with some additional concessions when the exploited organise resistance. The distribution is decided in the process of production. Wage of the workers means the distribution allotted to him. Profit, interest, rent—the income distributed to capitalists managers, landlords. The small proprietors income is again determined by how much he is robbed of by those who handle or control the production. The tenant's distribution is determined whatever the landlord leaves him. This distribution is further modified to the detriment of the common man by official policies in relation tc prices, taxation exports, imports and finance. These policies of a capitalist Government are directed to protect and strengthen the interests of the ruling classes, monopolists, capitalist, landlords and shift the balance in incomes further towards these classes. The fact that the Government appropriates money from the capitalists also by way of taxation should not mislead anyone. The money is appropriated not by an independent interest, not by a supraclass organised but by the organisation of capitalist class itself to keep its rule going. It has nothing to do with remedy the inequality of incomes.

Any one who ignores these basic realities and talks of an income and wages policy only abets the game of the exploiting classes. Such talk is intended to rouse false hopes and conceal the truth that no change in distribution of incomes as between haves and have-nots is possible unless the incomes of the class which controls the means of production are attacked, in fact unless then.

It is obvious that India with its choice of the capitalist path, its compromise with landlords and outmoded land relations should show the mal-distribution of incomes. The problem of mal-distribution drew pointed attention after the end of the first two plans. The earlier inequality of incomes was laid at the door of the British government and it was stated that under the British rule there was too little production and hence poverty. But poverty appeared to increase with the success of the first two five year plans and no explanation was forthcoming. The problem got recognition by admitting that the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer.

This process was of course connected with the basic fact of Indian economy— concentration of means of production in a few hands. Notwithstanding the spate of land reforms Acts, land concentration continued to be high with 6 per cent of the owners owning 36 per cent of the land. Monopoly of land was accompanied by monopoly of other resources. Monopoly of monetary resources led to usury of the worst type and the three agents-landlords, moneylenders and the traders filched no less than Rs. 1,000 crores from the peasant in some of the earlier years. The traders exploitation was the result of the growing subjugation of the peasant to the capitalist market.

What chance had equitable distribution here. The process of distribution here, determined by the ownership of means of production, was a process of filching.

But Indian conditions produced yet another result. In India it was capitalism which was making room for itself at the expense of pre-capitalist relations and formation. The process has been extremely halting and slow inflicting the most powerful sufferings on the people. Because India is still going through the process of mass eviction of people from their means of livelihood to make way for capitalist production. The development of capitalist relations together with the taxation and inflation policies of the Government has accentuated the process of mass evictions of peasants, artisans, of separation of the small producers from the means of production. The slow growth of industry in India displaces more persons than it absorbs and only accentuates the process of separation of the producer from the means of production. This process was further intensified by the mass eviction of peasants by the landlords in the wake of the land reforms Acts.

This is why the Indian countryside has become a vast ocean of destitues—with no income.

Inflation, wage policies, repression, manipulated living indices — all brought about reduction in the real wage of the workers—especially the vast mass in unorganised industries.

The same year saw an enormous concentration of wealth and capital in the hands of a small minority. The total assets of India's twenty large houses (besides owning assets of more than Rs. 100 crores) rose from Rs. 3,516 crores in 1972-73 to Rs. 4,966 crores in 1975-76 (41 per cent), their net worth to Rs. 2,012 crores from Rs. 1431 crores in 1972-73—a rate of 40.6 per cent. (Ref. Economic Times)

	Assets in 1966 Crores of Rs.	Assets in 1975-76 Crores of Rs.
Birlas	458	1056
Tata	508	975
Mafatlal	93	284
Singhania	67	224

This growing mal-distribution was not brought about by objective economic law; it was accelerated by a class design; by the need of rapid capital formation at the expense of people's livelihood. The people had to pay for promoting capitalism, and keeping in existence outmoded land relations—it is out of their meagre earnings dictated by the distribution of means of production, that the finace for the capitalist path had to be mobilised. The financial robbery involved in this was to be achieved through monstrous public taxation, deficit financing leading to inflation, public debts Indian and foreign—and export import policies. Taxation in India, instead of being an instrument of reducing inequalities of income, has become a weapon of placing vast resources in the hands of the capitalist state for the benefit of the capitalist landlord classes—a weapon of robbing the people.

To take the growth of excise duties alone its progress has been as follows:

	In crores of Rupees
1950/51	63.43
1973/74	2602
1974/75	3231
1975/76	3824
1976/77	4093
1977/78	4550

Excise on sugar increased up to 36 per cent; on cement nearly 22 per cent; on iron and steel 14.5 per cent, on cigarettes 50 per cent; on textiles 14 per cent.

The monstrous character of this taxation can be best summed up; in the words of Karl Marx "Modern fiscality whose pivot is formed by taxes on the most necessary means of subsistence (thereby increasing their price), thus contains within itself the germ of automatic progression; over taxation is not an incident but rather a principle. The destructive influence that it exercises on the conditions of labourers concerns us less, however, here than the forcible expropriation resulting from it, of peasants, artisans, and in a word, all elements of the lower middle class."

The second instrument of robbery—and thereby increasing inequality of incomes between the have and have-not classes was deficit financing which led to the super inflation of recent years. This financial instrument is nothing but indirect and invidious taxation on the meagre earnings of the people. If during the First Five Year plan there was deficit financing of Rs. 532 crores, during the 4th Plan it rose to Rs. 2060 crores. The first budget of the Janta Government itself concealed a deficit financing of Rs. 1,000 crores. The cumulative effort of these doses of deficit financing has been a continuous rise in prices, taking ordinary means of life beyond the reach of the common man. With pulses costing Rs. 5.50 per kilo and oil costing anywhere from Rs. 11 and Rs. 15—what chance has a poor man today. What chance has distribution of income today. This however is not an accidental phenomenon. The finance for further capitalist development can be raised only by robing the people.

In this process, intensified by the manipulation of the capitalist market—lakhs are not only forced to a reduced income, lakhs are

dispossessed and reduced to the status of desitutes and pauperised.

Another instrument of ensuring mal-distribution is the system of public debt. India's foreign debt—State debt—as well as private foreign capital ensures intesified exploitation of the people—his is known. But the internal public debt also secures substanital income for them who hold this debt and this takes place at the expense of the common man. As Marx said : "The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding, and this turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The state creditors actually give nothing away, for the sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands as so much hard cash would...As the national debt finds its support in public resources which must cover the yearly payments for interest, etc. The modern system of taxation was the necessary complement to the system of national loans." This is how the distribution of income in India is orgainsed. First the income of the people depends on what the owners of means of production will pay consistently with their greed for profit, apart from the concesssions forced on the strength of the orgainsed movements and secondly on what will remain of it after the capitalist state had reached it through taxation provisions, deficit financing, public debt etc. Any one who forgets these basic realities and pretends to deal with the problem of income distribution is just cheating the people. Certain professors who act as the pimps of the present order seek to confuse the issue, screen the classes involved and present it just as a problem of rectifying the incomes inequality between individuals. And certain others in the name of equality seek to reduce the incomes of those who have wrested concessions from the exploiters, to equate them with those who have not been able to advance at all.

This stagnant growth has inevitably intensifed the problem of distribution, compounding the poverty and misery of the people. According to the most conservative estimates 2/3rds of the Indian people are living below poverty line. The rural areas of the country now constitute a vast ocean of destitute—pauperised peasants and artisans deprived of all means of livelihood and unable to find

gainful employment and a decent wage. In the cities the number of unemployed—registered unemployed now exceeds 10 million with the number of educated unemployed exceeding 4 million. And the real wage standard of living of the workers and the employees have gone down. A large unmber of workers draw a wage below Rs. 200 per month, and is not protected by any law.

The occasional spurts in industrial and agricultural production do not lead to relaxation of misery and easing the burdens of poverty; on the contrary, they accentuate the miseries of the have-nots. The huge increase in agricultural production in 1975-76 for instance did not benefit the mass of peasants, nor did it expand the market for industrial goods—consumer goods in the rural areas. As the Economic Survey admits, "The demand for these consumer goods which could reasonably have been expected to find markets in the rural sector of the economy did not increase appreciably. While hopes were high that substantial increase in agricultural production would give an impetus to rural demands for say, textile, the fall of agricultural prices at farm level seems to have acted as an inhiting factor.

The peasant was not only unable to buy cloth, he was unable to have a square meal despite a bumper harvest. The production of 120 million tonnes of foodgrains in 1975-76 did not abate the stark starvation in rural areas. The accumulation of foodgrains in government godowns was an expression of the inability of the mass of people to purchase two square meals a day.

Like increased agricultural production, the country could not afford increased industrial production. The rise of industrial production in 1975-76 and 1976-77 led to widespread of accumulation of stocks and compulsory exports. At one time, more than a million tonnes of the steels were accumulated and the government was forced to export steel at fantastically low prices. There were huge accumulation of coal also. Textile, engineering sugar and various other indsutries are now heavily dependent on foreign markets.

This is the situation today. The problems have to be basically tackled. But neither the Congress nor the Janata Government has any such intention.

HIGH WAGE ISLAND

Theory of The Intellectual Slaves of Monopoly Capital :

Faced with the crisis, the rise of inflation, and the constant working class resistance to indirect wage cuts, the Congress Government indulged in hypocritical talk about the national wages and incomes policy.

In the beginning it crudely talked only about a national wage policy and every one could understand that the working class was to be attacked. Attacked by the trade unions that the Government sought to protect the bloated incomes of the landlords, the monopolists and the capitalists, the Congress Government changed its tune and talked of "a national wages and incomes policy".

But once again, in its very formulation the Government made it clear that it had no intention to remedy the monstrous inequality of distribution of incomes between classes—monopolists, landlords and capitalists on the one hand and workers, employees, peasants and agricultural workers on the other.

The first offensive in this campaign against the earnings of the workers and employees was waged by the Planning Commission during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's regime.

Hypocracy Unlimited

Shedding lots of tears over the condition of the people living below the poverty line, expressing its determination to fight this great inequality, the Planning Commission declared that the earnings of the employees like the LIC and Bank employees constituted a high wage island and could not be tolerated.

The intellectual slaves of the capitalist class could hardly find any other enquality. They did not notice the contrast between the monstrous incomes of the big landlords and the low wage of agricultural workers who worked for them; nor the contrast between the tens of millions of rupees income of the capitalist and the wages of his worker; nor thought about the contrast between the income of the Bank and LIC employees and the incomes of the director and super-directors of these organisations.

They descended upon the earnings of the employee, compared thus with the earnings of those living below the poverty line and declared them to be too high.

The hypocritical, falsified and unjust character of the high-

wage island cry is obvious. Its class-meaning-an excuse to lower the wage bill of the capitalist class-is quite clear. If these people were really guided by a desire to lower income disparities they would have pointed their accusing finger at the monopolists, at the Tatas, Birlas and Mafatlals or the big landlords and traders and contrasted their incomes with those of the workers, employees, agricultural workers and those living below the poverty line. But their urge for fighting inequality stood paralysed before the incomes of the tycoons.

Who is Responsible For Rural Poverty ?

It would appear from the reference to the agricultural workers or those living below the poverty line as if the employees are responsible for their condition. There is no doubt that millions in our country, more than 75 per cent of the people in the rural areas, are living below poverty line, eking out a miserable existence. Their sufferings and misery are so prolonged and intense that had they been organised and conscious, the bourgeois-landlord system would have been overthrown long ago.

Who is responsible for their plight ? The bourgeois-landlord rulers of the country, the Congress party which led their rule and the Planning Commission experts who supported this iniquitous class system. Who is responsible for the fact that even the minimum wage legislation for agricultural workers, in itself a totally inadequate legislation—remains unimplemented and the worker is forced to accept any wage from Rs. 2.50 per day to Rs. 3.50 per day? Who is responsible for the deprivation of the small peasant who is denied a fair-price for the produce? And who is responsible for the continued land monopoly of the landlords, for the robbery of the share-croppers and eviction of peasants.

The Congress party and the ruling classes are the criminals who should be arranged before the bar of public opinion for forcibly keeping millions of people in abject slavery. But their spokesman have the temerity to suggest that the wage of the employees should be lowered in the name of rural masses. The condition of the latter can be immediately improved if the land monopoly and low wages in the rural areas are smashed. The freezing of the employees' wage will not add an iota to the income of the rural masses. The savings will be grabbed by a few capitalists for "capital formation", for profit making.

The bourgeois-landlord classes and their government do not

want to touch the incomes of the exploiting classes but attack the earnings of the employees. They reveal themselves as the common exploiter of the employees and the rural masses.

How High The Island ?

High wage island indeed. How much do our employees-the clerks and others under the benign rule of the capitalists and landlords get? It would appear from the high wage island argument as if they are flowing with milk and honey,

How many of the capitalists and landlords, directors and super-directors of the companies and corporations, business manager, traders and others are prepared to accept the same salary as the employees and work at their posts? The perquisites sanctioned for some of them exceed many times the salaries of the employees.

And finally, are the Congress or Janata ministers prepared to accept these salaries and work at their posts remembering those who live below poverty line?

Are the members of the Planning Commission prepared to deny themselves a rupee more than the employees' wage remembering our poor countrymen?

All managerial, directoral and ministerial posts will go a-beging if this ceiling is imposed and besides there will be none left to look after the Planning Commssion.

Purchasing Power of Money

What are these people talking about when they refer to high wage islands? They are of course appalled by the fact that a mere clerk should get Rs. 1,000 and above in the Ram Raj of the bourgeois-landlord classes after years of service. It was sinful for a "shudra" to practice penance during the days of the great Rama. In modern times it is sinful for a clerk to have a salary of Rs. 1,000.

Have these people never heard that mere quantity of money does not mean anything? It is the purchasing power of money that decides whether the man is well-paid or ill-paid. Do they not know that prices have risen ten times since the days when Rs. 1,000 represented a good command over goods and services? With the present level of prices is the employee able to meet the minimum needs of his family? Can he educate his children properly with the rising cost of education? Can he afford to send his son or daughter to any specialised course in college or university? Can he meet any extra-ordinary expenditure on illness, hospitalisation or can he

afford to decent housing.

Between 1972 and 1976 the index of wholesale prices (base 1961.62=100) rose from 130.4 to 376.3. The all India Consumer Price Index for Industrial workers (base 1949=100) rose form 126 in 1961 to 402 in September 1977; and the Consumer Price Index numbers for urban non-manual employees (base 1960=100) rose from 103 in 1961 to 291 in June 1977, compared to 1939 the cost of living index has risen above 1200 which should show that the real wage of the employees has risen very little. It is known that only 75% of the rise in the cost of living is neutralised so far as a large number of employees are concerned.

Fruit of Struggle

Besides one has to remember that the present meagre scale itself has not fallen like manna from the heavens. It is the product of organised struggle waged by the employees over a number of years. It is the product of struggles in which humdreds have suffered, lost their jobs, their families were reduced to penury but they fought for others. It is the product of class struggle heroically waged by the employees. Their struggle were on an incipient effort to reduce income disparities. And what the employees have gained is part of the product of their own toil and not a gain from other peoples' labour.

Now their opponents want to penalise the organised movement, slander its efforts to raise their standard of living. But had they not fought it would have been in the same position as the rural masses in a state of slavery.

There is no doubt that every effort should be made to raise the living standards of the rural masses. The organised trade union movement and the employees fully support all measures directed against the exploitation of the rural masses. The trade unions lend full support to their organisation and struggle. It is the Congress government and the ruling classes that have attacked their struggles, their organisations, repressed them and paralysed their resistance disarming them in their fight for better conditions Having forced a low living standard on them the representatives of the ruling classes want the employees' and workers' standard also to be lowered. It is to be noted that the attack on the most down trodden sections like the harijans continue under the Janata regime also. The landlords are not deterred by the Janata victory at the centre or in the states.

The argument of high wage island, therefore, is nothing but an excuse to reducee the employees' living standards and further extra profits for the capitalists and landlords.

Attack on Workers' Wage

In the advanced capitalist countries the capitalist class and its spokesman often utilise the existence of some ill-paid sections to harp upon the inequality of incomes inside the working class and use it as an argument against the claims of the advanced trade union movement. It never entered the grey cells of these wolves that this type of inequality can be met by raising the wages of the ill-paid section.

In India, the Congress rulers soon extended the attack from the employees to all sections of organised workers. The workers wage was compared with the wage of the agricultural worker. Wage differences among workers of different regions and different industries were also used to show inequality and by implication demand a reduction in the wage of those who were earning more, as compared to others.

Chakravorty Report

The Sukhomay Chakravorty Report was a blatant effort in this direction. In the first place, following the lead of the Planning Commission it was silent on the question of the incomes of tycoons and landlords. It was especially dangerous to refer to the profits of the capitalists and concerns; because then it could be easily proved that corporations and industry were in a position to pay higher wages.

It made no reference to the necessity of need based wage, leave aside a living wage, for the workers but openly championed a minimum wage of not less than poverty line. Its minimum wage for a family of five was to be Rs. 200 per month in 1974. This is far below the starvation line and yet this was supposed to be an advance because many workers were getting less than this.

Besides, the real purpose of this minimum was to show that the other advanced workers were getting much more than the minimum and therefore their wage should be reduced in the name of a national wage policy.

Two other items in the statement regarding the objective of wage policy make it quite clear. They are "To rationalise inter-occupational, inter-industrial and inter-regional wage differentials and reduce disparties in a phased manner. (2) To eliminate pro-

gressively unjustified wage differentials between the organised and the unorganised sections."

Once again the same trick was resorted to. Compare the higher wage in organised industry with that in unorganised or in rural areas and demand reduction of the higher wage in the name of discipline, removal of unjustified differences.

The high-level island of the employees is now extended to the wages of the industrial workers and a reduction in the total wage-bill of the capitalist class is demanded to give them more profits.

Class Chicanery

Of course the report does not think of eliminating disparities by raising the wages of those who get less than what the advanced workers are getting.

This was a crude piece of class chicanery which could be exposed easily because it did not even refer to the incomes of the capitalists, landlords and the like.

One may again join issues with these people on the question of disparities. Is there any concern which is paying the workers without making a profit? The workers are getting paid out of the production created out of their own toil and labour. If the spokesmen of the capitalists want disparities to be removed let them accept two principles-need-based wage for all and equal pay for equal work. This will standardise wages for equal work. But this is precisely what the cpaitalists do not want.

So long as they do not accept this principle, the workers will continue to fight for a need-based wage and there will be disparities. Those who are organised are able to withstand repression and are successful in their struggle will have to be given higher wages; those who are weak in resistance will be denied their dues.

The disparity in many cases is precisely due to the fact that in many places the organised trade union movement has defeated the bosses and wrested a better wage from the employers. In other cases, the workers have been repressed or failed to unite. The latter have to be helped by the advanced sections of the movement to reach the desired wage.

The capitalists are frightened because the success of the trade union movement in wresting a higher wage level inspires the unorganised the backward sections to fight for similar conditions. This exactly what should be. The Congress government wanted to cut this source of inspiration by launching an attack on the ad-

vanced wages under the pretext of ensuring equality in conditions.

All these however show that the trade union movement cannot properly defend itself and advance unless it matches the ideological offensive of the capitalists with its own clear class stand. It must intervene on matters of economic policies and counter the machinations of the ruling classes on each occasion.

Such questions as on Incomes and Wages policy are vital questions and trade union opinion should be fully mobilised to fight such anti-working class policies.

A Correct Policy

The working class demands a correct policy on the basis of a time-bound programme for need-based wage (a) full neutralisation of rise in the cost of living and (b) equal pay for equal work. It demands minimum wage as the minimum to be attained and calls for a policy of raising living standards above this minimum. It demands that the agricultural and other toilers should be included under this programme. The peasant should be ensured a direct income by ensuring fair price for his produce, cheap input and credit.

At the same time, it demands that the aim of a proper wages and incomes policy should be to reduce the disparity in the incomes of the exploiters and exploited classes. The raising of the standard of living of the workers and others is one part of the policy. The other is to take away the huge incomes from the exploiting class which can be best done by removing their ownership of the means of production.

Janata Promises

The Janata Party in its election manifesto came very near to these principles.

Its Manifesto stated : "The Janata Party believes that economic policies should subserve the interests of workers in the agricultural and industrial sections. The Party will introduce legislations to ensure minimum wages for all categories of workers. Such minimum wages would be sufficient for the maintenance of the workers and his family".

Its national wage and price policy is based on the following : "A fair wage must be the minimum wage. A wage and price policy must ensure that income disparities are reduced. Steps will be taken to see that minimum incomes rise rapidly so that the difference between the minimum and maximum income after tax is

reduced to 1 : 20. It will strive progressively to further reduce this difference to 1 : 10 within a decade by a policy of income redistribution that raise floor levels and discourage bloated incomes".

This is quite clear. No reference to high wage island, or unjustified high wages and wage differentials but a clear-cut line that the floor incomes should be raised and the bloated incomes—of the capitalists etc.—should be reduced.

Declaration Stowed Away

However it seems that the Janata Government is not prepared to follow this declaration in practice. Otherwise it would not have refused to honour the bonus agreement with AIIEA—an agreement which was illegally annulled by the Indira Government. The Janata Government besides is solemnly committed to remove the injustices of the emergency period. The annulment of the agreement which struck at the basis of trade union negotiations was gross injustice of the period. The annulment of the agreement which struck at the basis of trade union negotiations was gross injustice of the period. But the Janata Government refuced to rectify it and do the right thing to the employees till awarded by the Supreme Court. Why? Because the Janata Government has the same class outlook as the Congress government on economic questions—the same class bias when faced with inflation and high prices. The finance department regards the workers' pay packet the main villain of the inflation pieace; it follows that it regards the employees' earnings as a high wage island.

At the same time the government did not hesitate to make concessions worth Rs. 200 crores to the capitalists in its first budget. It has also not hesitated to grant heavy relief to the sugar magnates by way of reduction of excise duties without reducing the price of levy sugar.

Bhoothalingam Committee

That the policy makers in Central government have every intention to go back on the clear-cut declaration of the Janata Party election manifesto is again clear from the terms of reference of the Committee on Wages and Incomes Policy (Bhoothalingam Committee). It is to be noted that the All India trade union movement is not represented on the Committee. Only a representative of the Ahmedabad Labour Organisation-close to Shri Morarji and Patel—has been taken on the Committee.

The terms of reference avoid all mention of the big incomes of

the capitalists and landlords—the disparity in incomes between the exploiters and exploited classes. The Janata Government has completely adopted the position of the Congress rulers and wants to deal only with the wage differentials etc.

Among the terms of reference of the Committee are questions relating to fixation of minimum wages, maximum wage for different categories of workers, wage differentials and criterion for determining them, linkage between wages, incomes and prices, a review of arrangements with regard to dearness allowance, etc.

Under the guise of a wage policy here is an attempt to police wages and earnings. Instead of calling for need-based wage, the term of reference demand a ceiling on wages (maximum wages). Even the notorious Indira Government did not so blantantly call for a ceiling on worker's wages.

The entire effort will be to play with differentials, etc. and call for reduction of wages in the name of a wage policy. And without the least sense of shame and scrupules the Finance Department excludes the incomes of the monopolists, big capitalists and landlords from the purview of the committee.

Departure Noted

The Janata Party's statement on Economic Policy had to note this departure of its government from the accepted line and comment. "We note that the terms of reference do not expressly cover the question of minimum wage for agricultural workers and income disparities and limitation on personal consumption."

The employees and workers should be prepared in advance for the inevitable results of this outlook. The mention of "review of arrangements with regard to dearness allowance" constitute a warning that the present arrangement will be changed to the detriment of the worker's interests. Also in the Janata Party's statement of economic policy there is a warning to the industrialists against giving bonus to the workers : "These surpluses should not be thrown away by way of indiscriminate distribution of dividends and bonuses....." The statement of policy forgets that the Janata Party had accepted bonus as deferred wage. Now like the Congress it puts bonus and dividends on the same plane.

These are forewarnings of attacks to come if the trade union movement does not exercise vigilance and use the combined strength of the employees and workers' organisations to counter the effects of reactionary policies.

Trade Unions United

Fortunately the trade union movement is both united and aware of its responsibilities. The trade union convention which met in New Delhi in September this year-the AIIEA had taken the initiative to call it-not only unitedly raised the demands of the workers and employees, but also clearly enunciated a wages and incomes policy on behalf of the movement. Several trade union centres led by the Janata Party members fully supported the resolution and there is no doubt there will be united opposition from the trade union movement if the Government chooses to launch attacks on workers' rights and gains secured over a number of years. This unity must be preserved and strengthened. The labour movement must stand as an indivisible force with rocklike steadiness to ward off all attacks under what— ever pretext they might come. With this unity they will succeed not only in defeating fresh onslaught but also in pressing the Government to move in the desired direction.

If the mercenaries of the capitalist-landlord ruling classes wish to fight the employees and workers as a privileged class, by raising the cry of high wage islands, or high wages-the latter can counter the attack by putting forward proper incomes and wages policy directed against the exploiting classes and protecting the workers. employees, peasant and other toilers. Educating the people in this policy will strengthen the ties of the employees and the workers with the people and give the movement a broader base.

One thing should not escape notice. The reference to people living below poverty line shows that the ruling classes seek to divide the most down trodden from the organised movement in nefarious game of divide and rule. They also seek to alienate the democratic public opinion from the trade union movement by talking about the rural masses.

The need for the trade union movement to forge ties with the rural masses, to champion their demands and inspire them in their organisational efforts is now all-important. The workers and employees will not be able to defend their gains if the main rural masses continue to remain in semi-feudal misery. Full support for the movement for agrarian revolution, for ending the land monopoly of the landlords is called for in the immediate and ultimate interests of the organised trade union movement. Its fight for socialism cannot be successful without liquidating the semi-feudal land relations from which the rural masses suffer.

42

Wage And Income Policy

Any serious effort to lay down a wage and income policy must address itself to the task of removing disparities between the landlords, monopolists and big business on one hand and the masses of workers, peasants, agricultural workers, middle class employees etc. on the other i.e. between the haves and have nots, between the exploiting classes and the exploited. This means substantial lowering of incomes of the former and substantial raising of the incomes of the latter.

The Janata Party in its Election Manifesto came very near to acceptance of this principle when it stated "steps will be taken to see that the minimum incomes rise rapidly so that the difference between the minimum and maximum incomes after tax is reduced to 1:20. It will strive progressively to further reduce this difference to 1:10 within a decade by a policy of income redistribution that raises floor levels and discourage bloated incomes. " In regard to wages it stated " the Party will introduce legislations to ensure minimum wages for all categories of workers. Such minimum wages would be sufficient for maintenance of the worker and his family. A fair wage must be the minimum wage."

To implement this it was necessary to break up land monopoly of landlords and redistribute the land gratis to the landless and poor peasants and nationalise the monopoly concerns and big business more and more and all other measures for remedying economic disparities and to distribute national income. It is through increasing the pruchasing power of the poor agricultural labourers, workers, peasants and middle class employees that sense of belonging could be created for greater participation for national

development.

The approach of the Bhoothalingam Committee was contrary to all these. There is no proposal for change in the earnings of job security for a vast mass of rural population who remain unemployed for a better part of the year. It is satisified with whatever the Planning Commission says about mass of peasants who continue to be denuded due to fall in prices of agricultural products. Its suggestion regarding 'ceiling on incomes' of the propertied classes only means that the monopolists, big bussiness and landlords would be allowed to have their incomes and run their own business as before under a pretense of Govt. control through two methods viz. 1) a deposit with interest which can be withdrawn for investment and 2) channelise it in approved forms of saving as presented by the Govt. This farcial control is to be accompanied by real restrictions over workers and employees' wages.

The Committee pays lip-sympathy to price control etc but beyond a mention about the existing inadequate arrangements it does not give any concrete proposals regarding measures for an effective price control which may bring in redistribution of national income or for national development. It also talks of the problems of increase in unemployment in small scale industries or help to self-employed persons, but does not go beyond mentioning the problem.

But the Committee mounts an attack on the wages of the employees and workers in organised industries. That is why it devotes pages after pages in an assiduous effort to reduce the wage bill of the capitalist class in the name of the wage and income policy.

The Committee prescribes a national minimum wage of Rs. 100 - per month while the aim is to raise it to Rs. 150- within a period of seven years. This is less than the minimum wages fixed under the law in almost all States. It is an assurance to the landlords to reject all demands to wage increase in the name of equality and removal of disparities. In a sense it is more reactionary than the notorious Sukhamoy Chakraborty report which had at least suggested a minimum wage of Rs. 200/- per month for 1974 and this was a poverty lines wage.

The Committe puts the entire question of wage in a distorted manner. It forgets the monstrous inequality of class incomes whereas it talks of equality in respect of wages. The new euphemism for wage-freeze is called as 'wage restraint'. It also forgets that the

wage policy in the context of a wage and income policy is not of wage differentials but is a question of adequate wage for all sections considering the labour they put in. Any serious effort should mean raising all wage levels on the basis of a time bound programme for need based wage in all industries—the rise in the lower wages being higher. This is what the Committee precisely refused to do.

It is not hurry to remove the differentials in the salaries of State and Central Government Employees. But in the name of remedying the disparities in wage the Committee has mounted an open attack on what it calls "High wage Islands" i.e. salairies of LIC, Bank employees etc.

It suggested that normally the spread between the lowest and highest wage in any unit should be 4 to 5 times. But it does not state that the lowest wage must be a need based minimum. Had this been done, it might have met the need of legitimate differentials.

Its un-principled character is revealed when the Committee accepts much more higher spreadover in respect of salaries of the officials in the Public and Private Sector. In the Public Sector it is admitted that the ratio between post-tax salary of the lowest and the highest is 1:9. It wants a still larger spreadover on the ostensible ground "to attract persons of the requisite calibre to these posts."

In the private sector while the salary differentials go upto 1:16 the Committee justifies such higher differentials than public sector saying that "risks are greater and managerial talent is scarce", though it concedes that the present gap should be slightly narrowed down.

When some standardisation is immediately necessary and possible by upward revision of wages, the committee avoids decision and refers it to another Committee. This is how it deals with the suggestion for standard pay for similar public sector and departmental undertakings, though it is known that the wages and emoluments, in the latter are far below the former.

The State Govt. employees have been demanding parity with the Central Govt. employees in respect of wages and allowances. There is valid basis for this. But the Committee is in a hurry to remove this disparity. It's generous proposal is that Third Pay Commission scales be commended to the states for adoption within about five years.

One of the principles suggested by the Committee is that wage

increase in units where workers are in receipt of wage far above the majority of enterprises should be slowed down till the workers in the units having relatively low wages are enabled to come up. It has been overlooked that the workers in some enterprises in a group of industries have, by determined united struggle, been able to break the colonial wage system while others are still remaining in the old strucutre. Hence this proposal is, in reality an open call to prosperous concern to garner more profits by denying wage increase although the workers might have earned it through their labour and organisation.

Even this principle can be commended to the working class provided the minimum is a need based agreed minimum wage and uniform working and service conditions are prevalent every where otherwise such a proposal would mean that workers of prosperous concern are being cheated in the name of over-coming wage differentials amongst the workers, in a group of industries.

The Committee suggests that "wage revisions in future should be linked to increases in productivity". Such a principle is not acceptable to the working class as the present share of wages does not reflect the producitivity of the workers and the share of the value added by workers in the earnings of the workers have been steadily going down. To make all wage increases dependent on increased productivity is to perpetuate the present system of over work and less pay.

Then there is an open suggestion to police wages in a thoroughgoing authoritarian manner and impose the aribitrary decisions of the Govt. on the Trade Union movement virtually illegalising all strike actions. The Committee suggests setting up of a Bureau of incomes and prices which should decide each year the guideline within which collective bargaining should be conducted and also suggests compulsory reference of the dispute to an "independent appellate body in the event no agreement was reached." This means that henceforth wage settlement will not be a matter between the workers and the employers but a matter for dictatorial decision by the Govt.

The formula on Dearness Allowance suggested by the Committee is a negation of the principle of full neutralisation for all sections. It would virtually lead to wide-spread indirect wage cuts. Full neutralisation must necessarily be an integral part of a wage and income policy whose aim is to reduce income disparities and

distributive justice.

The Committee also rejects the wage linked slab system which had the merit of linking DA with wage and lends support to the per point system which delinks D.A. from wages. The Rs. 1.30 per point formula is a fraud on the workers intended to deny adequate compensation. For Rs. 1.30 per point at 200 CL will only give full compensation to workers drawing a wage of only Rs. 200/- per month. For all the rest it would mean a wage-cut. It also is an instrument of making the workers bear the burden of official inflation.

The Committee refuses to mention that the Supreme Court of the country had declared bonus to be deferred wage. It also refuses to mention that the Janata Party's election manifesto accepted it as deferred wage and did not relate to profit. The Committee advanced all spurious reasons to deny bonus to all Govt. services including Railways, Post & Telegraph, Public utilities, financial and other institutions. The Committee calls for stopping extention of bonus to new areas. And finally the committee calls for a new compulsory deposit scheme when it suggests that talks should be opened to replace bonus by long term benefits like pension etc. The need for the hour is more cash to bolster the deficit budgets of workers and employees, to meet the rising expenditure on every item.

The Committee's report therefore cannot be called as a serious attempt towards framing a wage and income policy. In the rural areas, the mass of agricultural workers and peasants would continue to be defrauded while the landlords would continue to pay them low-wages as earlier. In the urban area, the capitalist class who have the reigns of economy, would continue to dictate terms for the wage increases to the workers and middle class employees. There is no effective suggestion to reduce the disparities both in the cities and rural areas. Nor can it be claimed that the suggestions of the Committee can help national development and harness national resources. On the other hand it sacrifies the advance of national interest to the narrow interests of the possessing classes.

Thus the apprehension of the Trade Union movement have been proved correct. It is therefore expected that the trade union movement would resist unitedly any atttempt on the part of the Govt. to impose Bhoothalingam Committee report on the working class.

The Working Class, Vol. VII No. 12, August 1978

43

All Hands For West Bengal

The Working Class and people of West Bengal are passing through a monostrous ordeal imposed by cruel nature. A crore and half of our people, the fighting peasants and workers, employees, students and professors-all the victims of devastating floods, unprecedented in the history of West Bengal. Men, women, childern and infants stand exposed, shelterless, to the ravages of nature.

It is only their supreme courage and their determination to cling to life and defeat the onslaughts of nature that enable them to withstand the vengeful test of three weeks of incessant rain, the flood.

But the spirit of man's resistance against nature triumphed and West Bengal could escape with a loss of life, small compared with the widespread watery devastation.

But there need be no surprise at this gritty resistance. It is the same mettle that stood determinedly before the onslaught of semi-fascist terror, the atrocities of landlords, and the goonda attacks of capitalist hirelings and only recently inflicted a crushing defeat on the tormentors.

Our fighting workers of Durgapur, Raniganj, our jute, engineering and railway workers, students and employees have played a vital role in rendering aid to the stricken people during the rampaging floods. This was in the best tradition of our movement, our solidarity and unity, our oneness with the people. We salute the memory of those herioc six comrades of ours who sacrificed their lives while saving others. Their names will remain ever enshrined in our memory as a glorious example of courage, self sacrifice and love for our people.

Now with the receding waters the struggle to save West Bengal enters a new phase the phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction. It is a matter of great pride that all members of our General Council and leaders and cadres of our unions are already in the field to help forward the process of rehabilitation. All workers in whichever industry they may be working, must consider it their pirme duty to assist in every possible way this urgent task of West Bengal's rehabilitation. Fortunately West Bengal is governed by the Left Front Ministry headed by the CPI(M). The Chief Minister himself being the topmost leader of the CITU, the entire ministry is devoted to the interests of the people. Helped by the latter there is no reason why people should go through unending suffering. There is now hundred per cent guarantee that every help secured and given, every rupee collected will reach the people and none will dare to profit at the agony and sufferings of the people.

West Bengal is rolling in agony. Its sufferings and agony are the sufferings and agony of the entire working class and people of India. Following the floods a cruel winter is threatening the shelterless millions.

To protect them, to rehabilitate them, to soften their sufferings and shorten their agony is the duty and privilege of the working class of India, of the entire people of India. Class unity looks meaningless if at this crucial juncture the entire working class of India, the full strength of CITU unions does not rise as one man to help the toiling people of West Bengal. National unity again looks meaningless if the people of India do not rally to the rescue of West Bengal.

Everything is needed to soften the impact of the calamity. Money, medicines, clothes, flood, childern's food, housing material, in fact every article necessary for human existence.

The entire working class must demand that the Central Govt. should rush adequate aid to the millions of flood victims. The aid given is too little to meet situation.

All hands must work for West Bengal. All factories and establishments, all places of work, every one must contribute for the relief of West Bengal. Let the call go in all factories, all cities, all states, all the establishments to contribute at least a day's wage of the workers and employees for the people of West Bengal. Let our unions inititate this call and appeal to the entire public to contribute. Collect money, collect clothes. Let there be a flood of help to

West Bengal to defeat the ravages of nature's flood.

Let the working class above all remember that the man in utmost need is the peasant of West Bengal. Robbed hitherto by rapacious landlords, defrauded by jute traders, exploited to his bare skin by every agency, the floods have deprived him of his shelter and crop and are holding him at ransom. The peasant shall stand up again and overcome his difficulties, that must be our cry and every one must endeavour to implement it.

The Working Class, Vol. VIII, No. 3, November 1978

44

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting
Kota, Rajasthan, 6-8 June 1978

Comrades,

Many changes have taken place since our General Council and Working Committee met in August last year. Then we were still in the process of celebrating our victory against the forces of dictatorship, the rout of the Congress. We hailed it as the victory of the people. At that time the forces of authoritarianism were on the defensive and virtually on the run.

But within the last ten months they have assumed a new offensive pose and are bold enough to justify the imposition of Emergency and all that it implied. This new found strength of these dangerous forces led by Indira Gandhi is based on its growing confidence secured by its recent striking electoral successes in a number of States and the defeat it has inflicted on the Janata Party in a number of bye-elections in the North where they had met the worst reverses in the Parliamentary and Assembly elections.

Danger of Authoritarian Forces

The fact has to be recognised that the forces of dictatorship have not only lost their mass base but perhaps have improved it during the last one year of Janata rule. The anti authoritarian forces have not succeeded in growingly isolating the challenge of Indira Gandhi, not succeeded in eroding its mass base revealed in the worst days of its reverses.

Today Indira Congress controls three important State Ministries—of Andhra, Karnataka and Maharashtra. In Andhra and Karnataka it has inflicted decisive defeats on the Janata and in

Maharashtra it could steal into power because of the stupidity and the machinations of the reactionary section of the Janata leadership. However as in the Parliamentary election its vote in the Assembly elections is a big vote and it has swept the poll in Vidharbha.

These successes together with its strength in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha put the Indira Congress in a position to take a challenging position and justify its dictatorial ambitions and rule. Its leader in the Lok Sabha unashamedly justified the Emergency with its wanton attacks on the democratic rights while moving a vote of censure against the Janata Government.

This open advocacy of authoritarianism and dictatorship constitutes the platform of Indira Gandhi embelished though it is with protests against the atrocities against Harijans, and minority community, the advocacy of the demands of weaker sections. And yet people in huge numbers have voted for her. The Azamgarh Parliamentary election in which she inflicted a crushing defeat on the Janata nominee is a case in point and shows unless there is a radical change in the situation, her progress will gather momentum every day.

Obvious Reasons

It is obvious that large sections of the suffering masses are blind to her political platform, unable to understand what she means when she justified Emergency and are carried away by her pretended concern for the underdog, for the Harijans and others. Large number of them had remained loyal to her even during the Parliamentary elections. Now they are active in defending her. For this calamitous change which again threatens India with dictatorial rule, the credit must go to the many shortcomings, failures, misdeeds and even infamies of the Janata Governments—at the Centre and the States. The monstrous atrocities against Harijans continue unabated by the landlords, the staunch supporters of Janata Party who are responsible for their escaping all punishment. The Home Minister is not known to be an ardent supporter of equality for untouchables and many of his reliable followers are known to be notorious Harijan baiters. The gruesome happenings in Agra where the Harijans were hunted down by the police of Ram Naresh Yadav and the upper caste for the crime of taking Dr. Ambedkar's photo in a procession to mark the culminating disgrace of this policy.

Equally notorious has been the attitude of these Governments

towards the working class and its struggles. I will deal with its proposed economic measures and legislation a little later. Here I only wish to refer to the high handed and brutal manner in which it handles strike. Kanpur, Bailadila, Pantnagar, Bokaro cry out against the policy of shooting down of scores of workers just to intimidate and terrorise them. The U.P. Government alone has 42 firings to its credit. The Governments concerned have neither expressed regrets nor punished those who have been guilty of these murderous assaults, on the contrary they have lent full justification to the villaineous demands of the bureaucracy and the police. Like the Congress the Janata Governments are relying exclusively on the bureaucracy, believing what they tell against the people and justifying what they do against the people. That is why the process of alienation of Janata Party is getting momentum every day.

Comrades, it is not necessary here to deliniate how the Janata Governments and their policies are alienating the peasant masses, the students, the teachers etc. But let it be known that these vast sections are getting estranged and are desperate over the performance of the Janata Party Governments.

I only wish to refer here to the ban imposed on certain history text books by the present Government. It is nothing but a complete surrender to reactionary Hindu ideology and misuse and abuse of political power by the present Government. It is worthwhile to refer this issue to the Shah Commission and seek its verdict. It is a matter of disgrace that such measures of thought control should be introduced without protests from the Chandersekhars, Dandavates and Fernandes who are wedded to a secular outlook. Comrades, it is not enough to interpret or analyse the situation. Our CITU must intervene to change it so that the danger of dictatorship is fought, so that the people frustrated by Janata policies do not flock to the authoritarian banner of the Indira Congress.

For Constitutional Reforms

The CITU and its unions have therefore to intervene on behalf of the workers and the people on all occasions and reveal to the people the birth of an alternative force fighting authoritarianism and the economic policies of the Janata Government. Our unions demand dismantling of the 42nd Amendment Act, new changes in the Constitution to prevent emergence of dictatorship and we press the slow-moving Janata Government, which has still

kept the MISA on the Statute Book, to effect these changes. It will be an act of betrayal if the Janata Party and the Government fail in this.

Unmask Indira

The Indira Congress is opposed to all this and we unmask its role. Our CITU is willing to join hands with all to secure these reforms on a broad platform for civil liberties and democratic changes in the Constitution doing away with the arbitrary powers of the President to declare Emergency. We are glad that the demand for a referendum on the question of basic changes in the Constitution has been accepted by the Janata Government which when enacted will be a potent weapon in the hands of the working class and the people to fight the emergence of dictatorship.

Promote United Actions

Comrades, however, we have to simultaneously wield the weapon of untied mass actions of working class and the employees to effect a change in the situation. Such united actions in defence of the economic interests and often against the measures of the Janata Government will rally all sections of workers, raise their strength and class solidarity and show to the people that there is a third force capable of defending their interests. This will prevent the trek of frustrated people to the camp of Indira Gandhi and checkmate the march of authoritarian forces. The high importance of our common actions must be therefore realised.

Comrades, our struggle for unity of the trade union movement and united actions has secured considerable success. Com. P. Ramamurti, our General Secretary is discussing these in his report.

Comrades, the desire for united actions and struggle is growing apace and our CITU which has patiently worked for it must feel satisfied over the development. The only care we have to take is to see that we do not delink the united mass action for economic demands from the struggle against the growth of authoritarian forces. This is what some participants wish. If we fail to be vigilant we will be just preparing the way for an Indira take over.

Comrades, I must draw your attention to a serious development affecting vitally the trade union movement in our country. The multinational drug companies and Indian monopolists—among the drug manufacturers are shifting the entire burden of recent changes in the Government's drug policy on the medical and sales representatives. The leaders of the Federation of Medical

Representatives Association of India are being attacked and victimised. Glaxo Laboratories, whose Chairman of the Board of Directors is Mr. Bhoothalingam,terminated the services of 6 active workers during the Emergency. Now the company has dismissed J.S. Majumdar, the General Secretary of the Federation... The services of Com. P.K. Ganguly President of the Bihar State unit of the Federation has also been terminated. Simultaneously the concerns are attempting to create disruption by attacking the leaders through their paid agents. What is Shri Bahuguna doing? Is he unable to control the multinationals and Indian monopolists. Will the multinationals be allowed to oppress Indian workers under the Janata Government. Comrades, we all must denounce these developments and support the Federation of Medical Representatives Association of India.

Role Of Kerala Coalition

Comrades, our Working Committee must denounce the repression launched by the coalition ministry of Kerala against the electricity workers. The minister is arrogantly demanding withdrawal of strike as a condition of negotiations, though the workers had postponed the action several times in deference to him. The demands are simple and were virtually agreed to by all. But now the ministry is jailing hundreds of workers and charging them with the slanderous accusation of sabotage. The main obstacle to the settlement is the opposition of the AITUC union leadership which has lost its credentials with the workers. The AITUC leaders should cease to play the double game. They call for joint actions elsewhere but suppress the workers through this ministry. The Right C.P. leaders must also ponder whether their advocacy for a left and democratic front will have any credibility if their ministry represses workers' strike in Kerala.

Comrades, we convey our warm greetings to the students of Pantnagar University, to the members of SFI in Pantnagar and Gwalior for the courageous and brotherly role they played during the days of repression at these two places. This solidarity and unity should be developed on all occasions when either section is engaged in fight. It is the special responsibility of our trade unions and the working class to help our fighting students in their struggles.

Sixth Five Year Plan

Comrades, the draft of the Sixth Five Year Plan is before the working class and our organisations. It deserves serious considera-

tion on our part as it enunciates and embodies the policies which the Janata Government intends to follow over the next five years, policies which will determine the country's progress, and our wages and jobs. We cannot but say that the draft of the Sixth Five Year Plan is a disappointing document, and constituties an anti-climax to the tall claims made by the Janata Party in its manifesto and also to its strong criticism of Congress policies. It is based on the same postulates of the earlier plan of Congress Party and represents unwillingness to touch the vested interests and introduce any institutional changes for the benefit of the common man.

The Congress planning at least started with the objective of growth rate of not less than 5%, but the Janata Party in the name of realities starts with a growth rate of only 4.7 per cent which means that the actual growth rate will be less than even 3 per cent. Is it necessary to start with lower growth rate? Is there one instance in the world where a growth rate of 4.7 per cent has given even a substantial relief to the people concerned much less changed the basic conditions of their life or made a dent in the struggle against poverty. The low growth rate became necessary because India can not have a higher growth rate without breaking the land monopoly of the land grabbers and nationalisation of the monopoly concerns who hold the economy in their grip, but like the Congress Government this is precisely what the present Government do not want to do. They may curse the Congress as much as they like but they themselves are accursed to follow the policies laid by their predecessors. The main point in this document therefore is the refusal to attack the vested interests and thereby inflict a tortuously slow growth on the economic progress condemning the people to increased poverty.

Miserable Rate Of Growth

Spurious arguments are resorted to show that this miserable rate of growth is the deliberate plan to secure distributive justice. This invention of a hiatus between higher growth rate and and distributive justice—is the work of those who want to serve the vested interests. In backward countries which do not end their pre-capitalist economic relations, industrial economic growth is extremely slow and increases misery of the people but the remedy is not to slow down growth but to secure a proper basis for distributive justice by ending the land monopoly and the monopoly in the means of production.

The planners try to impress by a tremendous show of figures. The total investment in public and private sector is to be 1,16,000 crores of rupees. Taking into consideration the likely rise in price level the real investment will not be as large as it appears to be. Secondly public sector investment is to be of the order of 69,000 crores of rupees which might be considered a somersault on the part of those who had hitherto opposed the public sector as totalitarian and demanded more freedom for private investment in the name of democracy. But economic realities can not be ignored. India's private sector needs a public sector in its service. This is not love for public ownership but the hard reality that without public investment the private tycoons can not be sustained. And secondly a very large part of this public sector investment is going to be in the rural areas which as our three decades' experience shows is going to benefit mainly the big landlord. A substantial part of the finance in the public sector expenditure namely Rs. 13,000 crores have to come from additional taxation of the central and state governments. Notwithstanding tall talk about reducing the taxation on the necessaries of life, this additional source of finance will fall heavily on the common man. A beginning has already been made in the present budget which has enhanced the general rate of excise duty. In the plan itself commodity taxation and excise duties have been justified as necessary to restrict conspicuous consumption but their role in India has been to restrict the minimum necessary consumption of the common man and that heritage of the Congress rule will continue under the present plan also. In the matter of raising resources the planner scrupulously avoid mention of deficit financing and do not regard it as a source of additional finance. This will be claimed as a great achievement, as a fulfilment of the promise given in the Janata Manifesto. But all this is eyewash. The government will be forced to reduce tha size of the plan or resort to deficit financing of a higher order; if it wants to avoid either of these alternatives, it will have to resort to drastic institutional changes. This latter course is not possible for the Government. As a matter of fact the last two budgets of the Janata Party relied on deficit finance of not less then 1,000 crores of Rupees per year and this trend will continue.

More Foreign Aid

Further the plan provides for a gross inflow of foreign aid of more than 8,000 crores of rupees which really means that more than

10% of the public sector expenditure is to be financed by foreign aid. It only means that the dependence of the economy on foreign loans and aids will continue to deepen and there is no break with the Congress tradition on this vital question.

The planners rely on higher earnings from public sector undertakings as one of the important sources of finance. There is absolutely no doubt that most of the public sector undertakings are being run inefficiently and given proper management they can contribute a lot to raise additional resources. But is this possible under the present set up? Firstly the tradition is that the public sector must serve the interests of the private sector and therefore its pricing policy has been adjusted to swell the profits of the latter and not to ensure surplus for the former. Secondly the bureaucratic, anti working class management of the sector with its corruption will never be able to produce the required surplus. This is possible only if the working class is given equal rights to supervise and conduct the affairs of the public sector undertakings. But about this there is no word in the document though off and on it talks about the involvement of the people in the fulfilment of the plans. The conclusion is inevitable that in the final analysis the major sources of additional resources will be high taxation of the people, high prices and deficit financing.

Where From Resources

One agrees with the Commission that increased resources have to be raised from those who have accumulated massive wealth in rural areas benefiting from the expenditure incurred by the State. The Commission observes in view of the massive investments proposed to be made in agricultural and rural works on various accounts, earnest efforts must be made to recover a part of the increased rural income for our investment in the public sector. "In view of the evidence of unequal distribution of rural assets (especially land) the equitable way of doing this would be through properly structured taxes on agricultural income or progressive surcharges on account of revenue". We are totally opposed to taxing the ordinary peasants but we fully agree that the land monopolists must be made to pay for the benefits that they are receiving but will the Janata Government dare to do it? The Congress Government also talked a lot about it but dared not take the measure. This may therefore result in taxing everybody including the small peasants so that the burden of the bigger fellows is

lessened. The vague reference to surcharge on land revenue raises this fear since the executive exemption limit for such surcharge is not stated.

Fantastic Claims

The draft makes fantastic claims about the likely achievements at the end of the 5th year. In the first place it cliams to be a document primarily oriented towards meeting the unemployment problem but it refuses to accept any responsibility for creating a specific number of jobs. The commission proposes new investments and redistribute purchasing power to create a climate for employment leading to millions of jobs. This is making nonsense of planning. The Congress Government at least talked about plan for definite number of jobs though it never realised its objective but the present planners talk only about the climate for employment. They however make the fantastic claim that between 1978-83 conditions will be created for providing jobs for 30 million people joining the labour force between 1978-83 as well as for the sunstantial number of the already unemployed thus clearing the becklog of unemployment. The figures with Planning Commission show that if the present trend continues there will be atleast 22 million people unemployed in the country by the end of the Plan. This itself is an under estimate as the number of unemployed exceeds this figure even now. According to the Industries Minister there are 45 million unemployed at present. But since there will be no institutional changes and since we will continue to be in the midst of crisis of our economy, the number of unemployed will exceed by far 22 million and very few of the new entrants of 30 million will be absorbed in employment. It is claimed that the total employment potential will be 49.3 million. Of this 22.8 will be in agricultural and allied sectors as a result of the planned growth and irrigation capacity (12 million heactares) and in animal husbandrry and forestry. New labour absorption in mining and manufacturing may be about 9.4 million persons on account of high growth rate particularly in the small industry sector and the big power programmes, the construction component of the whole plan and the planned expansion of infrastructure and social services, particularly in the rural areas. About 17.1 million persons may be absorbed in other sectors including services. These are unwarranted claims.

Ruined Rural Sector

In the first place the small and village industries are in ruins

and whatever help may be given to them it is difficult to imagine that they will go on providing employment for millions of people. Secondly the larger industrial units including those under the control of the Government are introducing modern sophisticated machinery and retrenching thousands of workers. Thirdly lack of export trade is leading to retrenchment in various sectors including mining as admitted by the Mining Minister in connection with Bailadila Mine. It is equally fantastic to say that additional employment for 23 million people will be made in agriculture which already is overpopulated.

What is the basis of this optimism? The basis is the expenditure on the minimum needs programme of 4180 crores of rupees in place of only 800 crores over the years 1974-75. It is expected that this pumping of money into the rural areas will add to the purchasing power of millions of people thereby giving a fillip to the consumer goods for goods of small industries and raise their employment potential rapidly. These are wrong assumptions. Firstly a substantial part of the money spent will be appropriated by the bureaucrats and the gentry in the rural areas. Only a trickle will reach the rural mass and it will be unable to set a chain reaction for increased demand throughout the economy. Such solutions are manufactured only in the chambers of the planners and they are doctored solutions to support the theory that institutional changes are not necessary.

On the contrary this huge expenditure in rural areas which, if properly guided will certainly benefit the most down-trodden section in India, is going to be a windfall for the landed gentry. It is meant for them and to no one else. India's experience of the last three decades shows that the benefits from irrigation, drains, bunds etc. are grabbed by the upper strata leaving the peasant in the lurch. The Planning Commission quotes the Reserve Bank report that 10% of the rural population own only 0.1% of rural assets and the top 10% own more than half of total assets including land. Unless this reality is changed all claims to distributive justice will prove false. Unless this realit ychanges all the benefits accruing from pumping money to the rural areas, from building irrigation works and dams, will be going to the land monopolists, to this 10% and the have-nots will be denied bare facilities. The Janata Party in its Election Manifesto had stated that landlordism should be abolished. The Planning Commission does not say a word about it

because it can now go now against the declared policy of the Government. The Planning Commission in consonance with official policy now relies on the discredited land reforms of the Congress and only talks about distribution of surplus land already declared. It says that the estimated surplus land on 31st July 1977 was only 5.37 million acres. If this surplus is accepted the land monopoly will not be disturbed. Between 31st July 1977 and May 1978 nearly an year has passed and the Janata Government has distributed only 1.29 million acres. The lack of courage to apply a drastic remedy to the present land concentration will only help the land monopolists, increase rural poverty and unemployment. It is astonishing that the document when it claims to increase jobs by million does not at all refer to the income or wage of those who are to be employed. Apparently a job means a job at whatever wage whether it is starvation wage or otherwise. Provision of decent wage is not to be the accompaniment of a job. By this reasoning lakhs of bonded labourers in India are not unemployed but employed and the Commission should be satisfied with their condition.

Labour Policy

In this document of nearly 300 pages there are hardly two pages devoted to the working class and its role. It is a most astonishing performance for a Commission which calls for the involvement of the people in fulfilling the plan. Of course there is no mention for increase in wages for the workers, no mention either of bonus or adequate D.A. Absolutely no mention of a need based wage, the common demands of the working class have not therefore been incorporated in the Plan. There is hardly any reference to working class participation in management. This is deliberate because official policy in the name of rendering justice to the peasant attacks the working class as a privileged class. This is exactly following the 20 point programme of Indira Gandhi which did not have even one basic commitment to the working class.

The draft says that incomes policy should cover wages, profits and the incomes of self employed. This bye-passes the first essential of incomes policy that the wages of the workers must correspond to his minimum needs and that only on the basis of minimum earnings of the common man can we have a proper incomes policy and that incomes must be directed towards removing the disparities in incomes between the exploited and the exploiting

classes. The reference to Bhoothalingam Committee itself shows what is in the minds of the Planning Commission.

While prattling about rural orientation the Planning Commission makes very scanty reference to the low wages of the agricultural labourers, the denial of legal minimum wage and the necessity to raise the wage much higher.

Its industrial policy is again a hotch potch of opportunism and false claims. The Planning Commission does not seem to be aware that we are passing through a recession and something basic will have to be done to pull the economy out of it. The under utilisation of capacity in many industries is due to this economic crisis and the lack of purchasing power of the people. Besides no nation could make rapid strides with industrial advance of only 5% to 7% per year. Because of the poverty we are becoming more and more dependent on the charity of foreign agents and foreign monopolists and imperialists are making use of it to subjugate our economy.

Its export policy is more or less in conformity with the demands which MacNamara made on the then Congress Commerce Minister in 1976. Like the Congress Government the Planning Commission also presents their acceptance as Indian policy. We ourselves feel that on many occasions exports subsidies are nothing but looting of public treasury. But what is being done now is to submit to the pressure of certain foreign agencies. We are throwing our country open to foreign goods in the name of utilising our foreign exchange resources. Self reliance seems to be a casualty under the Janata Party. This Plan is no plan for removing the curse of unemployment, for making a dent in the rural poverty of India or establishing small industries, or for industrial expansion. A plan based on the maintenance of land monopolists,the grip of Indian monopolists over industry and the growing dependence on foreign loans and more overtures to multinationals is going to multiply the misery and unemployment of the people notwithstanding the hypocritical claims made on its behalf.

Comrades, the entire trade union movement has unanimously condemned the retrograde recommendations of Bhoothalingam Committee. They prove that the boycott of the Committee by the united trade union movement was justified. The terms of reference and the composition of the committee guaranteed partisan conclusion to ensure an attack on the living standards on the workers and

employees and justifying denial of their immediate and urgent demands. Comrades, we on several occasions formulated the principles on which a national wage and incomes policy should be based. In August last the CITU General Council passed a resolution on this question adumbrating the basic principles. In the September the All India Convention of Trade Unions held in Delhi again reiterated the principles on behalf of the trade union movement.

Wage And Income Policy

The working class and the entire democratic movement demands wage and incomes policy on the basis of a time-bound programme for need-based wage, (2) full neutralisation of rise in the cost of living, and (3) equal pay for equal work. It demands minimum wages as the compulsory legal minimum to start with and calls for policy of rapidly raising living standards above this minimum. In the cities therefore it demands, apart from direct wage increase, such additives as bonus etc. which at present partially fill up the gap between the present wage and need-based wage; that is why it insists on bonus for all categories of workers and employees. These partially help to erode the present income disparities between classes.

It further demands that the agricultural and other rural workers should be included under the programme. The peasant should be further ensured a decent income by ensuring fair price for his produce, cheap inputs, and credit. The increased wage for agricultural worker and other rural workers will partly redistribute the surplus between them and their employers; the guaranteed price for the peasant will enhance his income at the expense of moneylenders and traders and once again lead to redistribution in favour of the havenots.

It should be openly stated that the aim of a proper wages and incomes policy should be to reduce disparity between the income of the exploiter and the exploited classes. The best way to achieve it is to end the land monopoly of the landords and nationalise all monopoly concerns.

Janata Promises

The Janata Party in its election manifesto came very near to acceptance of these principles. Its manifesto stated: "The Janata Party believes that economic policies must subserve the interests of workers in the agricultural and industrial sections. The Party will introduce legislations to ensure minimum wages for all categories

of workers. Such minimum wages would be sufficient for the maintenance of the worker and his family. Its national wage and price policy is based on the following: "A fair wage must be the minimum wage. A wage and price policy must ensure that *income disparities are reduced.* Steps will be taken to see that the minimum incomes rise rapidly so that the difference between the minimum and maximum income after tax is reduced to 1:20. It will strive progressively to further reduce this difference to 1:10 within a decade by a policy of income redistribution that raise floor levels and discourage bloated incomes."

This is quite clear. No reference to higher wage island, or unjustified wages and wage differentials, but a clearcut line that the floor incomes should be raised and the bloated incomes of the capitalist and landlords should be reduced.

The Janata Party's statement on Economic Policy had to note the departure of its Government in relation to the Bhoothalingam Committee from the accepted line and commented: "We note that the terms of references do not expressly cover the question of minimum wage of agricultural workers and income disparties and limitations on personal consumption."

A Miserable Minimum

The big landlord-capitalist outlook of the committee prominently protrudes itself in the very first recommendation, regarding national wage to be aimed at should Rs. 150 per month at current prices. This grand goal is to be achieved "at any rate within a period of seven years." To begin with the poor wretch who hires himself out must be satisfied with Rs. 4 per day or Rs. 100 per month. This may be considered to be the national wage and incomes policy as proposed by the committee.

Is comment necessary? Can a wage of Rs. 100 per month be considered a wage at all? And a committee which suggests a period of seven years to reach Rs. 150 per month, can it be described anything else than a mercenary instrument of the vested interests? Virtually the same wage is suggested for landless labourers, i.e. a wage of Rs. 100 per month. This is far below the legislated mininum. But every one knows that the weight of bureaucracy and official policies is exercised in favour of the lowest minimum and the committee's recommendation if accepted will have the effect of drastic reduction of wages of agricultural workers, without any rise for anybody. It is an assurance to the landlord lobby of Charan

Singh and Company, to the massacre organiers at Pantnagar, that they can reject all demands for wage increases in the name of equality and removal of disparities.

A wage of Rs. 100 per month is far below the poverty line. It is no wage. It is just enslavement. It is the wage at which bonded labourer in India are hired or purchased by their enslavers. The Bhoothalingam Committee solemnly suggests this wage. According to it, besides further progress must be slow; it should take seven years to reach a minimum wage of Rs. 150.

The Janata appointed committeed is obviously more reactionary than the Chakravarti committee appointed by the Indira Congress Government. That committee at least proposed minimum wage of Rs. 200 per month for 1974 and this according to it was a poverty line wage.

Rural Masses Cheated

For a vast mass of rural population therefore there is to be no change in the earning or job security under this new wage and incomes policy. There is to be no relaxation from the monstrous income disparties in the rural areas—the disparity in the incomes of the agricultural worker who is unemployed for a better part of the year and—the landlords,the capitalist farmers and the traders.

The mass of peasants are disposed of in an equally callous fashion. The committee is satisfied with whatever the Planning Commission says in this connectiion: "The draft sixth plan has suggested various measures for the eradication of povery and unemployment in the rural sector which includes redistribution of land surplus, implementation of tenancy reforms,organising the poor masses and creation of additional jobs...etc."

The redistribution of land gratis to the landless, the break up of the land monopoly of landlrods, occupies a very important place in any serious effort to redistribute national income, remedy economic disparties and implement an equitable wages and incomes policy.

Is the committee serious about it? Absolutely not since it endorses the planning Commission which repudiates all action on this vital question.

Incentive For Profit-Robbery

The mercenary character of the commmittee is to be seen from its attitude towards the huge incomes of the business community. Any one genuinely interested in reducing disparties would sug-

gest that the effective way to deal with the bloated incomes is to put under social control and ownership the means of production, which produce these incomes. But the Bhoothlingam Committee wants to devise ways which will not remove the incentive to accumulate these marauding incomes. A national wage and incomes policy according to the committee must supply proper incentive to those who rob others of their fruits of labour. "The advantage of such a scheme is that it would not erode the incentive for work and enterprise (read for profit-robbery) to the same degree as personal taxation."

The Bhoothalingam Committee remembers the necessity of an incentive only when it deals with the profits of the big capitalists. But it does not think that the mass of ill-paid workers require any incentive in the shape of bonus. They are born to work for others any way. The only incentive that can be offered to them is the policemen's baton and threat of dismissals.

No Control Over Tycoons

What are the suggestions of the committee regarding the incomes of the possessing classes—the big capitalists, traders and landlords? It says, "that the only method of trying to enforce a ceiling on incomes is by 100 per cent personal income tax on the excess over ceiling." But the Committee says this does not work. It says, agricultural incomes continue to be totally exempt from all taxation. It does not however suggest that they should be drastically taxed. It therefore suggests two remedies. One—the entire excess income should be deposited with the government. The government will have the use of funds but they will remain the propery of the individual who will have the right to withdraw the amount for investment in his own business. He will also have the freedom to withdraw any amount for other purposes. The scond suggestion is to have the excess income earners channelise the excess income into approved forms of saving which may be presented by the government from time to time.

What do these suggestions amount to? The tycoons must be allowed to have their own incomes and run their own business as before under a pretence of government control. At best it means channelisation and choice of investment to be decided in the common interests of the capitalist class and not in the individual interest of a person. They will continue to earn interest and profit from these deposits with the government and will be free to invest

them, in their own business. It is only a pretence to control the incomes of these classes. This farcical control is to be accompanied by real restriction over workers' and employees' wages. This lip homage to control big incomes is intended to conceal the partisan character of the committee. If certain capitalists treat these provisions seriously as an attack on them, it should be understood as a division of labour intended to boost the "Impartial" character of the committee.

The central part of the committee's recommendation is of course restriction of the wages of the workers and the employees. The committee resorts to every spurious device and class chicanery to justify it in the name of removing wage disparities.

Penchant For Equality

The committee indulges in nauseating hypocrisy when it talks about disparties in wages and forgets the monstrous inequality of class incomes. It shows no compunction in suggesting a Rs. 4 per day as national minimum while showing solicitude for the millionnaires whose incomes it does not want to touch lest they might lose incentive for their robbing proclivities. But it develops a penchant for equality when it looks at the wages of the former.

These recommendations have a direct relationship with the Janata Party's understanding of the phenomena of high prices and inflation. The Janata Government and the Finance Minister regard the workers' and employees' pay packet as the main cause of inflation and are determined to reduce it in the name of controlling inflation and prices.

Distorted Outlook

It would have been foolhardy for the committee to suggest and outright wage-freeze taking the organised strength of the trade unions into consideration. The Committee therefore does not suggest "wage frerze" but openly calls for restraint. Wage increase should be planned "and such planning would involve a certain measure of restraint." This is euphamism for freeze and cuts as will be seen later.

The Committee puts the entire question in a distorted manner. The main question in relation to wage policy, especially in the context of wage and incomes policy is not the question of differentials, but question of adequate wage for all sections considering the labour they put in. All sections of workers are suffering from miserable living conditions and the skilled workers are far from

getting adequate return for their labour. Today when high prices, housing shortage, lack of education facilities, mounting medical bills, rising expense of education dog all sections of workers, a wage policy in the context of a wage and incomes policy, must address itself to raising all wage levels, on the basis of a time-bound programme for need-based wage in all industries—the rise in lower wages being proportionately higher. Besides it should be noted that the wage differentials in India are not excessively wide. On the contrary they are too narrow. There has been a tendency to narrow down the gap by denying the higher categories their due. Another factor to be noted is that the differences in many cases are due to the fact that in some parts the workers have succeeded in securing their legitimate demands through struggle. In others, they were either not organised or not successful in their fight.

Open Discrimination

The Committee suggests that the spread between the highest and lowest wage in a unit should normally be 4-5 times the lowest wage. This is not based on any principle. There is no suggestion that the lowest wage should be needbased wage so that a spread of 4 to 5 times may meet the needs of legitimate differentials. Its unprincipled character is further seen from the fact that the committee accepts a much higher spread over when it comes to the salaries of officials in the public and the private sector. It says that the ratio between the post-tax salary increase of the lowest and the highest in these sectors in now round 1:9. It wants a still larger spread over when it says the question whether there should not be some upward revision of these salaries in those ranges, in order to continue to attract persons of the requisite calibre to these post needs examination."

In the private sector while the salary differentials go up to 1:16 the committee justified higher differentials than in the public sector saying that the risks are greater and the managerial talent is scarce, though it concedes that the present gap should be slightly narrowed down.

Avoiding Decision

This logic is applied to every urgent demand of the employees and workers. The State Government employees have been demanding parity with the Central employees in matters of salary and allowances. On what basis are the differences permitted? There is no valid basis. But the committee is not in a hurry to

remove these differentials. It says standardisation is not possible. But some harmonisation is necessary. It makes the generous proposal that minimum wage determined by the Third Pay Commission may be commended to the State for adoption within about five years.

When some standardisation is immediately necessry and possible by an upward revision of wages, the committee avoids decision and refers it to another committee. This is how it deals with the suggestion for standard pay for similar public sector and depart mental undertakings. It is known that wage and emoluments in the latter are far below those obtaining in the public sector and under standarisation, they will have to be increased.

Employees Attacked

In the name of not repeating the so-called disparities the committee bluntly suggests that the growth of wages in high-wage islands should be lower than in industry-though the rate there is already under restraint. It suggests lower wage levels for new recruits, the present salary being treated as personal pay. This is a fine way of remedying disparities. Lower the pay of the NGO, LIC and Bank employees and call it a national wage and incomes policy.

Call For Wage Restraint

For the industry in private sector the committee lays down many insidious provisions—one of these being that the differentials between the highest and the lowest wage should not exceed 4-5 times. Two other provisions (1) similar payment for broadly similar categories of workers (2) units having relatively low wages should be enabled to come up faster than those already in receipt of wages far above the majority of enterprises, constitute a call for freezing the wages of the units which can afford higher wages and which the workers have earned through their labour and organisation. No where in the world such conditions are laid down. In all civilised countries the employers are bound to pay the minimum laid down by law or decided by mutual bargaining. The rest is a matter of each concern, of collective bargaining, of what profits the particular concern is making. Here a prosperous concern is being given a blank cheque to deny wage increase because in some other concerns the workers are getting less.

The trade union movement will certainly be prepared to accept uniformity of conditions, if an agreed minimum uniform wages is

accepted by all concerns and uniform conditions are prevalent everywhere. But it is not prepared to be cheated by prosperous concerns in the name of overcoming wage differentials among the workers.

Insidious Principle

The Committee further introduces the insidious principle that all further wage revisons should be essentially linked to increases in producivity. The trade union movement has opposed this principle because the present share of wages does not reflect the productivity of the workers; on its basis the employers are making enormous profits and to tie down all future increases to further increases in productivity is to call for extension of sweated labour. The present norms of productivity are not agreed norms. They are imposed on the workers. Too much is extracted from them and too little is given to them. To make all wage increases dependent on increased productivity is to perpetuate the present system of overwork and less pay.

Policing The Wages

Then there is an open suggestion to police wages in a thoroughgoing authoritarian manner and impose dictatorial decision of the government on the trade union movement virtually illegalising all strike actions. The bureau of incomes and prices is to determine each year the guidelines for industry within which collective bargaining will operate. It will decide how much it is convenient for its capitalist masters to spare and lay it down as the arbitrary limit within which collective bargaining must be carried on. If there is no agreement the wage dispute should be referred to an independent appellate body whose award should be legally binding.

This is virtual illegalisation of the trade union movement. In the first place, an arbitrary limit will be set for collective bargaining. Then arbitration will be imposed and no strike will be allowed. This is the new wage policy—new wages and incomes policy of H.M. Patel's creation. Why not be more straight-forward and issue an ordinance saying henceforth wage settlements will not be a matter between the workers and the employers but a matter for the dictatiorial decision by the government?

New DA Formula

With unashamed effrontery the committee suggests a dearness formula which must impose indirect cut in real wages on the majority of the working class. The demand of the trade union

movement is for full neutralisation for all sections so that the existing real wages is at least maintainted and not continuously eroded by the ravages of inflation, and high prices. The Congress authorities did everything to baulk the workers and employees of this demand since the whole purpose of inflationary policy was to effect an indirect wage cut.

Full neutralisation must necessarily be an integral part of a wage and income policy whose aim is to reduce income disparities and distributive justice. In its absense the real wage must go down, share of wages in income produced must get lowered and profits of the employers must increase.

The Committee therefore not only repudiates the principle of full neutralisation for all sections but suggests a formula which will lead to widespread indirect wage cuts.

The Committee rejects wage-linked slab system which had the merit of linking DA with wage and lends support to the per point system which delinks DA from wages. It further lends support to the arbitrary calculation of Rs. 1.30 per point rise in DA for all wages. The Rs. 1.30 per point formula is a fraud on the workers intended to deny adequate compensation and inflict a wage-cut. For Rs. 1.30 per point at 200 CL will only give full compensation to workers drawing a wage of only Rs. 260 per month. For all the rest it will mean a wage cut—an erosion of real wage. It is an instrument of making the workers bear the burdens of official policy of inflation.

What can you expect from this mercenary hand picked committee about bonus for all? The Committee is determined to give bonus a bad name, and find every excuse to run it down, to deny it to those demanding it and to lessen its quantity as much as possible.

The committee refuses to mention that the Supreme Court of the country had declared bonus to be deferred wage. It further refuses to mention that the ruling party's election manifesto accepted it as a deferred wage and did not relate it to profit. Relating bonus only to profit it says it is suitable only for industries producing for market in reasonably competitive conditions. All this spurious reasoning is advanced to reach the following conclusion. "Thus it is unsuitable in government services and similar activities, including the Railways, Postal & Telegraphs, public utilities, financial and other institutions."

Another urgent demand of lakhs of workers is denied now as part of the wage and incomes policy. The question of questions is what will Sarvashri Madhu Dandavate and George Fernandes do now? When they were not in the government, they supported the demand for bonus to railway and other workers. Now will they humiliatingly bow down before the ICS crowd? Shri Dandavate has assured the railway workers after the publication of the report that their interests were safe in his hands. We welcome the assurance.

Not satisfied with this the committee calls for stopping extension of bonus to new areas. And finally it uses untruthful and unscrupulous argument against bonus. It perpetuates and accentuates "disparities in the earnings of workers who do the same work. It tends to create tensions between workers themselves (This must be calculated as the discovery of the 20th Century and ICS Bhoothalingam must be acclaimed for his inventive capacity).'

Another CDS

And finally, the Committee calls for a new compulsory deposit scheme when it suggests that talks should be opened to replace bonus by long term benefits like retirement pensions, etc. The need of the hour is more cash to bolster the deficit budgets of the workers, to meet the rising expenditure on every item. The need is all the greater because of Government's refusal to give full compensation against the rising cost of living. And yet the Committee callously calls for some kind of compulsory deposit scheme.

The trade union movement and the employees' organisations understood the Committee as a class weapon and boycotted it. The apprehensions of the trade union movement turned out to be correct. It is now more than ever necessary for trade unions and employees' organisations to come together and start a nationwide campaign against the committee's recommendations. The government has to be warned that labour will resist with all its might if government implements its recommendations. The 28th of June must be observed as a day of protest and all central organisations and federations should meet in the near future to chalk out a common plan of action.

United action of the working class and employees will not only defend their economic interests but also help in preventing the trek of wide sections towards Congress(I). If the trade unions and left forces do not defeat the reactionary designs of the Janata Govern-

ment and its committees, the initiative will pass on to Indira Gandhi who blatantly stands for emergency and dictatorship.

Industrial Relations Bill

Comrades, in consonance with the changing positions of the Janata Party government in relation to labour, its attitude on the industrial relations bill has undergone a reaetionary change. Nothing remains of the united trade union opinion expressd at the first conference called by the Labour Minister. Gradually the opinions of the trade unions have been thrown on the scrapheap and there is surrender before the demands of the labour-baiters—the employers and the bureaucrats.

Alarming reports had already appearared in the press regarding the reactionary provisions contemplated under the bill. Now a note of the Labour Ministry under the pompous Basic Principles confirm the worst expectations. And if even a partial attempt is made to implement these obnoxious principles, the bill will rightly earn the title of a black anti-labour bill and those in the ministry who support it will earn undying infamy in labour circles and the trade union movement.

It seems, to bye-pass the Supreme Court's defintion of industry, two laws are to be enacted one dealing with industrial workers and other with workers not so defined.

The whole idea is to deny proper protection to the second category, though the Supreme Court held that they were entitled to have it.

Reactionary Approach

The new approach, like the traditional bureautcatic outlook, putting strikes and lockouts on the same footing exposes its class bias. The famished workers fighting for their minimum demands for existence and the capitalists coercing through a lockout are put on the same footing. This is the labour ministry's sense of justice and equality. Surely the wellmeaning Shri Varma should give a fresh look to those who draft such openly class biased proposals.

Paralysing Strikes

The entire purpose of the legislation is to paralyse working class organisation and actions, so that the employers can rest in peace. This idea is expressed as follows: "The attempt of the proposed legislation will be to lay emphasis on the necessity to exhaust all means of settlement like negotiations, conciliations, etc. before either party decides to resort to direct action." Every anti-

working class and anti-strike legislation has started with this principle and accepted formally the workers' right to strike. This note does the same but in typical Congress tradition lays down several provisions to make the right to strike illegal and inoperative.

Under the Industrial Relations Bill a distinction will be made between essential industries and others, which means that strikes in the former will be virtually banned or the right to strike will be made inoperative by laying down heavy conditions.

The new bill seeks to ban all strikes of those not defined as workmen-this may include hospital staff, teachers, professors, educational instituations, employees of charitable institutions. It is stated in relation to this second law "But if negotiations and conciliations fail, either Party or the appropriate Govt. will have the right to refer the dispute to arbitration or adjudication. In view of this provision any strike in such establishments will be treated as illegal since it jeopardises services that are essential to the community."

The category of essential services or industry will not be scrapped, but a list of such industries will be prepared and workers in these establishments must loose all right to strike and submit themselves to the compulsory arbitration of Govt. notorious for labour-killing in indsutrial disputes.

For the ordianry worker and his union direct action is to be made more and more difficult. Firstly, dispute must go through a prescribed period of 60 days of bipartite negotiations. In case of failure another 60 days will have to be spent in conciliation proceedings. If conciliation fails the conciliater will try to persuade the parties to accept arbitration or adjudication. The period of this persuasion is not given. If he fails, he will report failure of negotiations to the Govt. On the submission of the report, Govt. will declare whether the dispute is such that it should be referred to arbitration, or adjudication. There is no time limit for such declaration. This means that if the Govt. so wishes it will impose compulsory arbitration and ban strike.

If the Govt. does not refer the dispute to arbitration and the union wants to go on strike, it will be obligatory on the part of the union to give notice. The union besides must hold a ballot of all the workers and the strike will be legal only if 60 per cent of the workers vote for it. The Registrar of the trade union will have the general

power to supervise the strikeballot and settle disputes regarding a strike ballot.

This is the most low-down chicanery to deprive the workers of the right of direct action. Every hurdle is created without formally banning the right to strike. And there is absolutely no guarantee that negotiations and conciliation will be fair and based on any minimum economic criteria accepted by the workers. The provisions amount to giving arbitrary right to the Govt. to prevent a strike by appointing an arbitary arbitrator and adjudicator.

The induction of the registrar for supervising the strike ballot is a highly mischievous provision to rig the results in favour of the employers. Labour officials are often bought by the management and in this case they will be bought to falsify the ballot result. Besides managements' hand-picked men can easily create a ballot dispute seeking registrar's intervention.

Pliant Unions Favoured

In the name of contorlling multipicity of unions difficulties are being created in the way of registering new unions. This is only to help the monopoly of some of the pliant unions favoured by the management. It is totally unnecessary to prescrible that a union should have 10 per cent membership before it can secure registration. The question of multiplicity of unions is an internal question of the trade union movement and Govt. should have nothing to do with it.

The provision limiting the number of outsiders in a union is an authoritarian intervention in the internal administration of the Union. The bourgeois-landlord Govt. has absolutely no right to dictate to the trade unions how to select its office bearers. Besides it is thoroughly arbitrary to legislate that no persen can hold office in more than four unions. Such provisions are not laid down even for directors of companies, notwithstanding the tall talk against the big business houses. Militant and honest leaders are called upon to lead several unions and there should be no interference in the right of trade unions to choose their own leaders.

Besides the provisions banning more than two outsiders from holding office is a vicious provision to tame the unions. Under it workers victimised for trade union work are declared outsiders. A victimised Rly. worker cannot organise a railway union. A victimised textile worker cannot organise textile or other workers. It means only those who are able to save their jobs without opposing

the management while working for the union can remain office-bearers. It is a device to culture submissive trade union leadership.

Shameful Performance

It is thoroughly shameful for the Labour Minister that his department should prepare a note which attacks the right of workers to choose their leaders and impoes a submissive leadership on them. Whey blame Indira Gandhi if you wish to emulate her in anti-Labour policies?

The most hypocritical part of the law is that it virtually rejects the solemn commitment of deciding recognition of unions by secret ballot. The Labour department demands a ballot of all workers for a strike; but it does not stand for a compulsory ballot for deciding the negotiating agents. It leaves it to the sweet will of the Govt. "The negotiating agent could be selected either by verification through check off or secret ballot." The Govt. will decide according to its convenience and the convenience of its favoured organisation. In short, recogntion will be dependent on official patronage. This is Janata brand democracy.

This is hypocrisy unlimited.

If it is decided to hold secret ballot it is provided that an organisation getting the support of 65 per cent of employees will be accepted as the sole baragaining agent. Where an organisation gets 50 per cent but less than 65 per cent it will be declared as chief negotiating agent and others getting more than 20 per cent will have a place on the negotiating table.

In other cases the workers will elect a negotiating committee, etc.

The acceptance of provision for minority representation on the negotiating Committee is good. But there is no provision that all agreements should be referred to the mass of workers for confirmation.

The new approach declares gherao to be an unfair practice, and where the management and workers have accepted an agreed norm, go slow will be an unfair practice.

The Labour department's approach document is the culmination of the growing anti-labour policies of the Janata Central and State Governments. It is a pity that the various mass orgainsations led by Janata Party members have not succeeded in preventing this development. But we warmly welcome their bold association with us and others to fight these manifestations of a reactionary policy.

WFTU And Viet Nam Congress

Comrades, before I sit I must congratulate our General Secretary on the valuable work he has done at the Conference of the WFTU in Prague and at the Conference of Trade Unions of Viet Nam. His reports and speeches fully represent our views and our deep sense of solidarity with the working class of the world.

On behalf of you I thank both the WFTU leaders and the leaders of Viet Nam Trade Unions for the warm welcome to our General Secretary. His visit has cemented our ties with the working class of all countries. It is our earnest desire to develop these ties and forge fraternal bonds of probletarian unity with all workers.

Greetings To Viet Nam

On behalf of all of you I offer my warm revolutionary greetings to the working class and people of Viet Nam. These fighting people who defeated the vaunted armed might of the USA at great sacrifices have to now defend themselves against former friends and allies. They are victims of pressures and allegations. But we are sure they will overcome the present difficulties and forge ahead with the task of building a prosperous socialist Viet Nam. Socialist Viet Nam will survive all trials and we express our solidarity with it.

45

Presidential Address

4th Conference of CITU. (Madras April 11-15, 1979)

Comrades, I greet you all-fraternal delegates and delegates to this Fourth Session of our All India CITU Conference.

The interval between the last session of the CITU in Bombay and the present one has witnessed the passing away of many of our valuable comrades.

Com. A.K. Gopalan, that great fighter and leader of the CPI(M), the beloved President of the All India Kisan Sabha, is no longer in our midst.

The intervening years have also seen the passing away of leaders of international prominence like Com. Mao-Tse-tung, Cho-En-lai and others. Comrades, these years have also seen a huge number of martyrs who died to defend freedom, democracy and socialism, who fought for the cause of world communism. Foremost among them stand the great fighters of Chile who have heroically faced death fighting the fascist junta. The same death-defying courage has been shown by the African fighters struggling against the white South African racial maniacs.

On behalf of all of you I offer my tribute to the departed leaders and homages to martyrs of the international movement.

Comrades, we all honour the memory of those who were tortured to death in our jails during the feareful days of Indira imposed emergency; and all those who fell victims to police firing during the trade union and other democratic struggle—workers, peasants, students, employees and others.

Comrades, you remember that in our last session in Bombay all

of us joyfully celebrated the final victory of the immortal Vietnamese people against American imperialism; we also recognised the valuable help by people's China to the people of Vietnam.

Today the same Vietnamese poeple, who singlehandedly fought American conspiracies against Asia, are attacked by the armies of the People's Republic of China. No words, however harsh and strong, can condemn this wanton aggression by a big nation against a small heroic people.

We all condemn this aggression which is being supported or justified by all the imperialist Governments. It certainly suits them. We all demand immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam. We offer our full support and sympathy to the people of Vietnam in their struggle against aggression and we have no doubt that those who defeated the American aggression will be able to come out triumphant through the present ordeal.

I convey my warm greetings to the working class and people of the socialsit countries who in spite of many difficulties have been registering one success after another in enriching the life of their people. The socialist world today stands in striking contrast to the world of capitalistm with its poverty, unemployment, economic crisis.

The economic crisis of 1973-74, from which the capitalist world has yet to recover, revealed the basic instability and weakness of capitalist society in spite of its advertised affluence and prosperity. The working class of the capitalist countries has to bear the burdens of the crisis—the burden of inflation, high prices, wage restrictions, high taxations and unemployment. In England and other countries—France, Italy, it has been carrying on prolonged strike struggles in defence of its standard of living and the effects of State monopoly capital domination. We wish them success in their struggle.

I offer my greetings to all the peoples and countries of Asia and Africa who were liberated a few years back and are waging a fight to maintain their political and economic independence and in certain parts waging liberation struggle against racial domination of the white imperialist minority. In all these struggles, the fighting people are making tremendous sacrifices. The African people who are waging a grim battle against South African racial domination have produced new marvelous individual courage and sacrifices. It is a story of innumerable young and old men sacrificing every-

thing for the cherished goal of liberty, freedom and equality.

IMPERIALISM

In the midst of the deep seated economic crisis of the capitalist world and the backward conditions in the under-developed world, the advanced imperialist countries are piling up more and more in preparation for a nuclear war. Nothing could be more heinous than the diversion of resources for the cause of human destruction. We, therefore, uphold and admire the socialist countries for their consistent battle against war and for the preservation of world peace. The military strength of the Soviet Union and the WARSAW countries constitutes a great support to the maintenance of world peace and one cannot but condemn those who equate the WARSAW Pact with NATO Alliance. While we stand for peace negotiations we do not believe that American imperialism is serious either about detente or world peace.

Comrades, American imerialism is very actively organising a military build up and neo-colonial conspiracies and fully exploiting the division in the socialist camp and the Sino-Soviet differences. It has succeeded in splitting Arab unity and has blatantly helped Israel in the name of peaceful settlement between Egypt and Israel. It supports the Rhodesian white minority rule and the racist fascist of South Africa. It intervenes blatantly in European elections. In Italy, it intervened to prevent the inclusion of the Communist Party in the country's cabinet. It hypocritically talks about protection of human rights while denying them to the Negro minority in America. It supports military dictatorships in a number of countries— Chile for instance—and gives financial and military help to dictatorial regimes in underdeveloped countries.

In India it exercises constant pressure on the government to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and accept its tutelage on nuclear development. Its refusal to supply uranium to the Tarapur plant, its prevarications and double-dealing on the question constitute its favourite blackmailing tactics.

However, it is not having everything its own way. The people are fighting its machinations and its support to reactionary governments. In Iran, the people have thrown out its tool, the Shah. In Afghanistan also a progressive Democratic Government has taken power despite its machination. Everywhere, its efforts to dominate the economy of backward countries are meeting resistance.

Comrades, we welcome the emergence of the new revolution-

ary government of Kampuchea, a government representing the wishes of the people, protecting their democratic rights and defending the sovereignty and independence of the country.

PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

Comrades, we must offer our deep solidarity and sympathy for the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh,now under the heels of military dictatorship. The barbarious regime of Pakistan has come down on the workers, banning strikes and introducing public flogging against those who dare fight for democracy. A number of workers were sentenced to long terms of imprisionment for going on strike. Number of journalists were sentenced and flogged because they dared fight for democracy. Now the Government in the name of Islam is introducing medieval punishments for ordinary crimes. We know that the working class and people of Pakistan will courageously face this challenge and win back their democratic rights. We note that Pakistan's military dictator has openly called for USA intervention in the sub-continent.

In Bangladesh, though an election has taken place, we know, it is a farcical election to reinforce the rule of dictatorship. Our sympathies are with the people of Bangladesh who courageously fought the repression of the Yahya Khan regime and successfully faced atrocities of the Pakistani Army. Mujibur-Rehman was removed by the hand of the imperialists and it is again the same hand that is responsible for imposing dictatorship on the country.

FORCES OF DICTATORSHIP

It is no accident that all the three countries of the subcontinent were under dictatorship of one type or another between 1975 and 1977; while the emergency dictatoriship has been lifted in India, the other two countries continue to be governed by it. Since their inception these countries have hardly had a genuine parliamentary democartic Government. The working class of our country must deeply ponder over the situation and understand that deep economic forces are working in all the three countries to bring about or maintain a dictatorial rule; that the bourgeois-landlord classes of these countreis are unable to maintain the parlimentary from of government for any length of time, especially when the economy is under crisis. This class interest require growing suppression of the mass movement and therefore suppression of all democratic rights. With a stagnant economy and maintenance of pro-capitalist relations, relief through economic development and concessions

following it, are very few and, therefore, main reliance has to be placed on containing of the mass movement which continually rises because of exploitation. Therefore, a battle must go on in these countries between the forces standing for dictatorship, as it has been going on in India for some time.

The forces vitally interested in preserving and expanding democracy are far more numerous than the minority interested in dictatorship. Granted unity in their ranks the democratic forces will prove overwhelmingly superior to the forces of authoritarianism. The forces of dictatorship have no chance when offered by a united democratic movement. The economically exploited masses are impelled to fight for the expansion of democratic rights and confronting the ruling classes. Dictatorship gets a chance only when the left and democratic forces are either too weak or divided. A successful fight against the forces of authoritarianism is a vital and integral part of the struggle for a people's democracy and socialism.

The emergency, has revealed to the working class and to the people to what length dictatorship can go in suppressing the rights of the common man. The rule of law totally disappeared and anybody could be arrested under the MISA. Tens of thousands filled the jails, many were tortured and killed secretly. The Government openly claimed the right to deprive the citizens, both of liberty and life without any questioning by any court. Strikes of working class were banned. Trade Unions' rights were virtually abolished. Right to organise disappeared and the Constitution was illegally amended to suit the needs of dictatorship. The entire country was enslaved to one party and the bureaucracy ruled the country, arbitrarily without any limitation of law.

The working class must be determined to prevent the recurrence of the emergency and the loss of liberty of the people. It must remember that under it every democratic, political and economic right was taken away and the employers were given a free hand to retrench or lock-out the workers or reduce their wages, bonus, dearness allowance, in fact, to complete the process of working class enslavement. Emergency meant loss of democratic rights and economic enslavement to the capitalist employers.

But the question is how is it that the working class was unable to prevent its imposition, how is it that it failed to give continuous running battle against the emergency rulers? It was because the

working class was too much immersed in its economic battles, because it could not unite because of political division, because a strong section of the trade union movement was completely tied to economism and allied with the ruling party and let down the people. Reformist and the revisionists of all shades misled a section of the working class into believing that the emergency was directed only against the reactionaries and not against the people. It is they who were collaborating with the Congress Government and justified its nefarious dictatorial regime. The working class must not only forge its unity but also refuse to be victim to any collaborationist ideology. Historical experience shows that in the face of dictatorship and fascism, a country or a nation is able to defeat this menace only if the working class unites its resistance and enables other classes to join the battle. In the present situation in India when the forces led by Indira are again trying to regain ground, the working class must remember this lesson learnt from past mistakes and be fully prepared to offer united resistance to the aspirations of the dictatorial party.

Indian economy is afflicted by continuous stagnation and crisis; the major victims of which are the mass of peasants and agricultural workers, the industrial workers in organised and unorganised industries, and the employees.

The first four five year plans up to 1965-66 showed a compound real income growth of 4.11 per cent while the decade up to 1976-77 show the rate at 3.74 per cent.

The economic survey 1978-79 says that G.N.P. in the current year increased by 3.5 per cent as compared to 7.2 per cent in 1977-78. It gives the following figures of annual growth rates.

Annual growth rates		*1970-71 prices per capita net national*	
1972-73	1.1	1972-73	3.6
1973-74	5.0	1973-74	2.9
1974-75	0.8	1974-75	1.0
1975-76	8.9	1975-76	6.8
1976-77	1.2	1976-77	0.6
1977-78	7.2	1977-78	5.2

This under-developed country which requires a massive rate

of growth to come anywhere near eliminating poverty and unemployment is already suffering from increasing stagnation. The recently published results of the rural labour enquiry 1974-75 reveals the dire straits to which the mass of rural labourers have been reduced. The enquiry shows that the proportion of agricultural labourer house-holds with land increased from 9.57% to 12.43% i.e. rose from 67.33 lakhs to 102 lakhs. This is a result of the measures taken under the Congress Land Reform Act to ensure land to the tiller; it shows more and more small peasants are either losing their lands or are unable to eke out a living on their land and are forced to hire themselves out. With all the schemes of the ealier Congress Government to protect him, the small holder is being daily fleeced by the market, the price mechanism, the procurement authorities, the land-lord, and the money-lender. He is therefore forced to part with the greater part of his produce to all these agencies and hire himself out at the cheapest rate. The proportion of farm labour house-holds without land increased from 12.22 per cent to 12.88 per cent between 1964-65 and 1974-75.

How is this mass of workers placed in relation to jobs? The estimated number of full days worked by men of agricultural labour house-holds for wage employment in the various agricultural operations declined from 208 in 1964-65 to 185 in 1974-75, that by women from 138 to 129 and that by childern below 15 years from 167 to 145. Thus, for all categories, there is unemployment for the major part of the year. What is worse, unemployment is increasing and opportunities of employment are decreasing while the Government and the land-lords are advertising the magic effects of the green revolution. While bumper crops are being harvested and Government godowns are full of food grains, the agricultural labourer has neither work nor the wherewithal to purchase food grains produced by him. What is the wage of these partially employed agricultural workers? According to a document of the planning Commission, "Money wage earnings of agricultural workers have risen from Rs. 1.76 per day in 1961-62 to Rs. 4.95 in 1976-77, perhaps a magnificent increase according to the Congress standards. The real wage earnings in 1976-77 were actually below 1961-62 level i.e. below Rs. 1.76 per day at 1961-62 prices." The following figures tell their own story.

year	Money Wages (in Rs.)	Real Wages (in Rs.)
1961-62	1.76	1.66
1966-67	2.63	1.38
1971-72	3.10	1.55
1976-77	4.95	1.64

It should be noted that in 1976-77 when the 22 point programme was in full swing, a programme which was claimed to benefit the agricultural labourers and poor peasants—real wage of the agricultural workers was lower than 15 years back. The same Planning Commission's paper comments, "It may be mentioned that whereas average daily wage earnings in rural areas increased during ten years (64-65 to 74-75) from Rs. 1.43 in agricultural operations and Rs. 1.82 in non-agricultural operations, to Rs. 3.24 in agricultural and Rs. 4.09 in non-agricultural operations, the consumer price index of agricultural labourers increased from 143 in 1964-65 (1960-61=100) to 368 in 74-75. There is a 12% decline in the real wages of male workers in agricultural operations, 7% decline in case of female workers and 2% decline in case of childern. The corresponding decline in real wages is higher in non-agricultural operations 15%, 23% and 12% respectively."

This means that during the ten year period, the entire mass of rural workers, agricultural and non-agricultural, have been experiencing a monstrous wage-cut and driven to the point of destitution—while at the same time their job opportunities were curtailed. This is how the crisis of agrarian relations is affecting the rural mass and driving them to desperation. The stories of monstrous atrocities against untouchables are not unconnected with this imposed destitution and massive wage-cut. The untouchables belonging mostly to the land less class have to bear the main burden of the agrarian crisis, apart from the burden of cast oppression. It is no wonder, therefore, that their resistance evokes the most inhuman offensive of landlords connived at by the authorities.

Is it any surprise therefore that the Government of India's economic survey last year bemoaned "that rural consumption of cloth does not seem to have increased adequately inspite of increases in rural income." Whose incomes increased during these years or

during the year 76-77 ?Not the income of the poor peasants and agricultural workers. The hope of the bourgeois-landlord class, that the green revolution and increased agricultural production would automatically expand the market in the rural areas, have been belied because the main beneficiaries of increased agricultural production are the landlords and the rich farmers.

GROWING DISPARITIES

In fact, there has been a growing disparity in incomes in the rural areas along with the progress of the green revolution. The Draft Five Year Plan 1978-83 quotes the findings of the Reserve Bank Enquiry as follows:

"According to the Reserve Bank data the concentraion ratio of assets, mainly agricultural land owned by ruraL households, was 0.65 in 61-62 and increased to 0.66 in 71-72, the poorest 10% of rural house-holds own only 0.1% and the richest 10% own more than half of total assets in 1971-72 as well as in 1961-62. These data show that up to 60's the land reform measures had no visible impact on the distribution of the rural property. But the inflationary developments since 1971-72, have led to further appropriation of the rural mass and further concentraion of assets and pruchasing power in the hands of fewer people. The fact that the real wages of agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers have gone down by as much as 20% in some case shows to what monstrous level rural inequality has gone. What chance, therefore, is there for an expansion of market for industrial goods produced by the working class in the cities? The land relations and peasants' exploitation exercise a complete veto over the industrial development, consequently over the employment of industrial workers in factories. The trade union movement and the working class do not realise the fact that their fight against attacks on their standard of living will be ineffective if they do not fight aginst the inequalities in rural areas.

These semi-feudal land relations have already slowed down the industrial advances in India. Indian industries cannot develop their full capacities if the rural market gets increasingly contracted and this is precisely what is happening. In the absence of a mass market in the rural areas, industries are forced to cater to the needs of a small minority. To quote the Draft Plan again, "pattern of industrial development that is forged obviously reflects the strucutre

of effective demand, which is determined by the distribution of incomes. An unduly large share of resources is, thus absorbed in production which relates directly or indirectly to maintaining or improving the living standard of the higher income groups. This means that the further expansion of industry is limited by the narrowness of the market. As a result, further import substitution of consumer goods or capital goods cannot, at the current level of demand, effect any great impetus in continuing the industrial growth."

ATTACK ON WAGES

The stagnation in industry has now become chronic and must be regarded as an integral part of the economic crisis arising out of the capitalist path of development. It has already led to closures of thousands of small industrial concerns, that take-over to more than hundred textile mills by the Government and closure and retrenchment in big industries like Cotton Textile and Jute. These years of crisis also show a concerted attack on the workers' living standard, and attack which was herocially resisted by the working class, nontheless which was continuously pressed with aid of repression and draconian anti-working class laws. The organised trade union movement, no doubt succeeded in compelling the employers and the Government to agree to bonus, dearness allowance and wage increases under presures of strikes but nontheless, the Government and the employers circumvent these concessions by manipulating the cost of living and inflicting an unprecedented inflationary price rise on the people. The result is that, by and large, the real wage of the worker has hardly risen though his monetary wage has gone up. At best, one can say that the working class has fought herocially against the attack on his standard of living and yet had to bear the burdens of the crisis. The emergency by tampering with the bonus and the dearness allowances, by further extension of compulsory deposit scheme and banning of strikes made a direct effort to impose the crisis burdens on the working class by employing dictatorial methods. The total wage condition of the working class can be gauged from the following.

According to the document of the Planning Commission earlier referred to, "the average annual wage earning" of the workers between 61-76 have fluctuated as follows:

Year	Wage earnings at current prices (in Rs.)	Wage earning at price 1960-61 consumer price index (—100) (in Rs.)
1961	1413	1359
1966	2045	1354
1971	2761	1438
1976	4374	1453

The document says "the real wage earnings, taking into account the increase in consumer price index of industrial workers since 1961 have, however, risen only marginally by about 7%". This marginal rise however is calculated on the basis of the fraudulent cost of living index duly prepared by the Central Labour Department which was exposed on a number of occasions by the CITU. Comrade Pandhe who was a member of Index Committee thoroughly exposed the fraud committed on the workers in his minute of dissent. The document further says, "the real annual wage earn ings rose marginally during the Third Plan; by about 0.5%; went down by 2% in the period of three Annual Plans rose by 1% in the Fourth Plan and by 2.66% on an average during 3 years ending 1976-77". To secure this increase, the working class had to fight bitterly and had to face banning of strikes under the emergency, prolonged starvation and lockouts and police firing costing the lives of innumerable workers. Yet there are many mercenaries of the capitalist class who denounce the workers and their movement as a movement which demands too much of the national cake.

Matters are still worse with regard to those whose earnings are less than Rs. 400 per month.

Year	Per Capita earning money (in Rs.)	Index No. of the Real earnings (1961-100)
1961-	1540	100
1966	2112	95
1971	2852	101
1975	3171	66

The precipitous fall in 1975 is attributed by the document to the fact the the number of workers in this category declined from 31,61,000 in 1972 to 2,17,000 in 1975. It is suggested that this fall is apparent because of the exclusion of those from the category who began to earn more than Rupees 400. Nontheless, it is quite clear, as the earlier trend also shows, that the real wages of those earning below 400 were going down and they hardly rose at any time. The document comments "both annual survey of the industries data and the Payment of Wages Act data, however, indicate that in spite of increase in money earnings of workers after 1971, there has been a considerable erosion in the real wage earnings of industrial workers, particularly between 73 and 75 because of sharp increase in the consumer price index of industrial workers from 236 in 1973 to 321 in 1975". Obviously, partly at least, these are the achievements of the emergency period which came in the wake of rising inflation. Mrs. Indira Gandhi advertises the gains of the emergency period for the country. The Labour Office figure show the gains the working class achieved during the emergency.

INCREASED POVERTY

The Draft Plan 1978-83 observes "attempts have been made to measure the existing expenditure on poverty in India and depending on the norms used, 40.60% of the population live far below the minimum acceptable standard. According to a recent estimate, using norms of the caloric consumption, the percentage of population below the poverty line in 1977-78 may be projected at 48% in rural areas and 41% in urban areas. The total number of poor so defined could be about 290 million, about 160 million of these fall below 75% of the poverty line."

These same years saw an enormous concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a small minority namely the monopolists. The total assets of India's 20 large houses (Houses owning assets of more than 100 crores of rupees) rose from 3576 crores of rupees in 1972-73 to 4966 crores of rupees in 1975-76 (41.2%%), their net worth to Rs. 2012 crores from Rs. 1431 crores in 1972-73 i.e. at a rate of 40.6%. Big landlords, speculators and foreign capitalists were the other partners of the loot forcing down 60% of the Indian people below the poverty line. This loot continued and increased during the emergency.

With an economy in crisis, with a rural mass without purchasing power and with an enormous loot by the landlords capital-

ists and foreign multinationls what chances were there for the workers to improve their living conditions radically without a complete change in the ownership relations. The mass of workers must realise that without waging a struggle to end the land monopoly of the landlords and distributing land to the tiller there can be no scope for growth of industry and employment in the industry. Without completely eliminating the exploitation carried on by foreign capital and nationalisation of all Indian monopoly concerns, we cannot have the basis for eradicating unemployment in industries and poverty of the workers and the Indian people. These steps together with the real power in the hands of the people alone will open the way to socialism and abolition of all exploitation.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Comrades, the problem of unemployment in cities and villages alike is becoming the central point of the economic situation. The number of registered unemployment has reached the huge figure of 121 lakhs; at the beginning of the decade it was just 51 lakhs. This galloping increase which shows no sign of abatement is the inevitable result of the capitalist path of development embarked upon by the ruling classes.

The slow growth of industry under the capitalist path impose a very slow growth rate of employment. According to the figures suplied by the Director General of Employment, Government of India, the total employment in the public and private sector increased from 1,78,33,000 to 2,10,86,000 in the period between 1971-77. The annual growth rate comes to just 2.7%. What is still more striking is that employment in the private sector has been completely stagnant. In large private sector undertakings, it was 60,18,000 in 1971 and 62,21,000 only in 1977.

The small industries about which the previous Government like the present Government talked so much, revealed the same tale. In 1971 the number of employed was 7,16,000 in 1976 it was 7,21,000.

Between 1971-77, employment in the public sector increased by 30 lakhs but a major part of this increase i.e. more than 11 lakhs was under community, social and personnel services. This includes the administrative services of the Central and the State Governments, the ruling class apparatus to maintain their rule; compared with it manufacturing under public sector showed an

increase of only 5.5 lakhs.

But, it is not only slow growth rate of employment that is responsible for the monstrous rise in unemployment both in the rural and industrial areas. The slow growth of industry under the capitalist path displaces more persons than it absorbs and only accelerates the process of separation of the producer from the means of production, depriving them of the source of livelihood and occupation. The Draft Plan 1978-83 observes, "less than full employment of rural labour force is attributable not only to seasonal employment of farm labour—but also to the progressive displacement of craftsmen and artisans by competitive modern industry. Urban unemployment likewise covers not only workers laid off by declining industries, new entrants to the labour forces and migrant workers of the surrounding areas, but the whole mass of the self-employed persons and casual workers in the "informal Sector" eking out a precarious livelihood."

The total failure of industry and present-day economy in relation to employment is admitted in the Planning Commission Report in the following words:

"Betwen 1971 and 1978 when the labour force increased by 35 million non-agricultual activities absorbed only 9 million, about half in the organised sector and half in the informal sector. The general pattern of man power deployment in the country is that only 10 to 11 per cent of the increased labour force finds employment in the organised sectors while the rest drifts into part-time employment in rural areas or the informal sector of urban industry and trade or becomes chronically unemployed." In the last eight years alone, at least 20 million people have been added to the list of unemployed partial or chronical to this calculation.

This is the bizarre truth about Indian economy now administered by the Janata policies; only 13 out of 100 new entrants have any chance of getting a job in the organised sector which includes besides factories, banks, insurance companies, commercial establishments and government services. The rest 87% must shift for themselves and grab whatever comes in their way.

The future of the working class is absolutely bleak unless this situation is changed. No wonder with these realities, the authorities systematically under-estimate the extent of actual employment in the country. However, even the lowest estimates could not but reveal the gravity of the problem. The Bhagwati Committee esti-

mated the number at 18 million in 1971. Since then, the number of registered unemployed in the cities has doubled reaching 121 lakhs. Other estimates for the same year varied between 21 to 29 million, Dr. Amartya Sen, the well-known economist, estimated the number at 42.4 millions. This is nearer the reality today.

What chance has a new worker from the urban or rural areas to get a job under these circumstances? The majority of them are destined to or on the border line of destitution. Need we then wonder that crimes and anti-social activities are increasing, that cities are infested with goonda gangs and young working class children from the slums are used in trafficking in illicit activities, illicit liquor and drug traffic.

The fruther progress of our people, of the trade union movement, of our effort to improve wage and living conditions is hard to achieve unelss the working class takes this problem seriously and fights for its solution. Let every worker remember that from amongst their sons and young relatives only 13 out of 100 can get a job in the organised sector and 4 to 5 can get on in the factory.

That is the way trade union movement must unitedly raise the demand for right to work to be made a fundamental right under the Constitution. The Government should accept the constitutional responsibility to provide jobs for all and pending it, immediate relief for those willing to work. The 45th Amendment Bill moved by the Janata Government should have included an amendment to add the right to work to the list of fundamental rights. The fact that the Government failed to do it only revealed its class limitations and outlook. The right to work is being resisted because it will definitely mean greater social control and social ownership and put severe curbs on the big landlords, monopolists and big capitalists.

We must put up immediate concrete demands, suited to local conditions to give work to the unemployed and provide relief. Local authorities, municipalities, Corporations and panchayat committees should be drawn into the task of organising relief.

It has been a weakness of our trade union movement that it has failed to take up the question of the unemployed and make it an integral part of its struggle. This callous attitude towards a section of our class and towards the younger generation has already, weakened the common struggle for better livelihood.

NEW DANGER

Now, a new danger has already arisen. The capitalists, the vested interests and their agents are endeavouring to pit the unemployed against the employed with a slogan not higher wages but more jobs are required.

The employed workers' demand for better wages is pitted against the creation of more jobs to mislead the unemployed. As I have already pointed out the cause of the growing unemployment is the present system with its slow industrial development and pre-capitalist land relations; the basic cause that impose unemployment on the people also imposes low wages on the employed. If this common bond is not stressed in practice by the trade unions, the unemployed are likely to be misled by such slogans.

It has to be noted that violence against strikers has started in the name of the unemployed. Its organisers were the chambers of commerce and the indsutrialists. During the Bank Employees' protest during January-February this year in Ahmedabad processions were organised to intimidate the employees and terrorise them. The participants pretended to speak on behalf of the unemployed. This is a warning signal, which must be heeded.

It is a matter of utter disgrace that the Janata Government of Gujarat permitted this intimidation and did little to bring offenders to book.

Comrades, when the working class and its united trade union movement has yet to move concertedly in-defence of the unemployed in the rural and urban areas, the ruling class, the Government, and the capitalists have already moved in to divide the workers, to undermine their unity and pit workers against workers. Instead of accepting the right to work which entitles all workers from all regions, of all castes and faith to get a job, their remedies seek to divide workers by regions and castes in the names of sons of the soil or local preferences, preference for weaker sections. They seek to make one section fight another and increase the competition for restricted jobs and set the government as the arbiter of the fate of all. The Janata Government has not yet forsaken these dubious policies of the previous Congress Government.

Rousing regional and provincial feelings, the ruling classes make it appear that the problem of unemployment in a State will be solved if only workers from other States are prevented from seeking jobs beyond the borders of their States. And these are the

people who talk loudest about national unity, about India being one, about Bharat Mata and even want to impose one language on the people because you are completely one.

It is only the West Bengal Left Front minstry which is taking a correct Indian and also a class stand and directs that jobs should be given according to the order of registration at the employment exchanges. In alomost all other States employment on the basis of registration is being opposed. In Tamil Nadu, one party tries to rouse chauvinism against workers in Kerala, in Bombay also the Shiv Sena rouses chauvinism against workers from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In the State of Andhra, the mulki agitation rouses regional feelings among job-seekers, setting them against each other and diverting attention from the common fight. In a number of States the State Governments use various devices including pressures on the employers to pit the local workers against the workers from other States.

With the transfer of administration of employment exchanges to the States, the State Governments have imposed restrictions by orders against recruiting "outsiders" in order to give preference to the sons of the soil The State Governments of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh have imposed various restrictions on recruitment through employment exchanges, presumably to keep out "outsiders." A number of these restrictions are considered to be in violation of the Constitution.

It is also noted that the central authorities also create problems leading to outburst of local feeling. Often there is discrimination against local people and talent by employers and the central authorities. This seems to have happened in Assam in connection with the recruitment by Bongaigaon Refinery and Petro—Chemical Limited.

It was alleged that despite the central assurance that all posts in BRPL carrying a salary of upto Rs. 500 would be recruited in Assam, persons registered in the Delhi Employment Exchanges were taken in. The recruitment to BRPL jobs in New Delhi was strongly resented and recruitment at local centres was demanded. The thoughtless and discriminatory action of the Central authorities played into the hands of the local chauvinists.

The trade union movement has to take these realities into consideration, the local grievances as well as the general unemploy-

ment existing all over the country, has to work for unity among all job-seekers. The more it is able to convince employed and unemployed workers of the correctness of the demand for right to work, the more unity will we be able to achieve.

But the struggle against unemployment is not only impeded by regional considerations but it is also obstructed by caste differences. The old Hindu caste structure under which some castes are considered to be in the lower order and some in the upper order still persists. The tribals and the untouchables constitute the most ill-treated and worsely discriminated sections among the various castes. Because of these, there are what is called backward classes. There is discrimination in regard to jobs against muslims also. These various castes are also distinguished by different economic status, educational advance etc. Unable to solve the problem of unemployment in a genuine way, the Government and the authorities offer reservations of jobs and posts to exploited castes and sub-castes and create illusions that this will solve the problem of their poverty and unemployment. Such patronage is intended to mislead the most down-trodden sections and firmly tie them to the policies of the bourgeois landlord Government. Under Indian conditions, it will be, of course, wrong to totally oppose reservation and certain special concessions to the most down-trodden sections but at the same time the trade union movement will have to intervene and tell all sections to stand together more unitedly to fight the monstrosity of unemployment and poverty. It will have to convince the mass of down-trodden sections that official concessions may offer some palliative but without a complete overhauling of the present economic social system, there can be no genuine radical solution. The problem, therefore, is two fold, one to bring about the unity of the employed and the unemployed and also to bring about the unity between various sections of the unemployed divided by region and caste. Unless trade union movement earnestly devote itself to this task, the ruling classes may divert the anger against unemployment into fratricidal channels.

SMALL INDUSTRIES

In this connection, I may state that the promise of the Janata Government to secure jobs for everybody on the basis of promotion of petty production and small industry, is misleading. The Janata party's promise of prosperity based on revival of small industry is an illusory dream and a prescription for low productivity and

poverty. It is an attempt to escape the problem of nationalisation of means of production—nationalisation of the monopoly concerns and big industry and placing them under social control; it is at the same time an attempt to escape liquidation of the present land relations, the root-cause of peasant's poverty.

Only the socialist countries headed by the Soviet Union succeeded in solving the problem of unemployment. They did it, with political power in the hands of the working class and its allies, by socialising means of production, liquidating all pro-capitalist relations and then by rapid industrial progress whereby industry could absorb all those displaced from petty production. The ruling party which in this year's Presidential Address discovered that its government shared basic values with the USA, of course, is not prepared to learn from the experience of the socialist countries.

It is certainly correct and necessary to give protection to cottage and small scale industry and agriculture in the transitional period to ensure that they are not blasted out of existence by unthinking and unfair competition from big industry and to secure a smooth transition to modernisation; it is equally necessary to use the immense labour resources of the country by using labour intensive methods to create resources. The trade union movement should support all genuine measures to protect small scale production.

But, it is wrong and reactionary to assign and promise a permanent place to small and petty industry in future Indian society. It is equally reactionary to suggest that a society free from poverty and unemployment can be based on the primacy of cottage and small industry and reduction of the role of big industry.

The primacy of cottage industry is a prescription for the perpetual poverty of India for perpetual unemployment and other evils. The so-called decentralisation which present advance of big industry as nothing but evil, which confuses evil effects flowing from the capitalist ownership of this industry to its bigness, which does not see in modern industry big human triumphs in science and production is a backward looking utopia. It only helps to sanctify the existing order based on freedom of big property.

It is known that the productivity of cottage and small industry is extremely low while socially-owned industry can use the latest achievement in science and technology in the interest of the people; that the former imposes day to day drudgery on the workers to

qualify for a miserable pittance of earnings. The miserable production capacity of cottage, Handloom and small industries makes it impossible for the producer to escape poverty. The endeavour of working class and all progressive forces should be to liberate these producers as quickly as possible from the present hell and set them on the high rate of modern technique. Transitional measures so essential today to save them soften the rigours of the hell but afford no escape from it. India's future lies in socially-owned big modern industry.

Some leaders of the Janata Party off and on talk about taking over or nationalisation of big establishments owned by certain monopolists. It seems to be just pressure tactics for some purpose and not genuine concern for nationalisation. Recently one Minister talked about taking over of the TISCO owned by the Tatas. All these statements are again qualified in the Congress way by saying that the suggestion is based on pragmatism and not on ideological considerations which shows that they need not be taken seriously.

The CITU stands for the nationalisation of all monopoly concerns and will support all genuine measures taken by the Janata Government in this direction. It, however, demands that nationalisation should not lead to bureaucratism but there should be real participation of workers in the management of the concerns. And secondly, nationalisation should not mean handing over or selling the concern to foreign multinationals as seems to be happening in relation to BHEL, notwithstanding the loud mouthed protests from the management and the apologia of the Industry minister.

Comrades, we all must congratulate the West Bengal Left Front Ministry headed by our esteemed Comrade Jyoti Basu on the introduction of a system of unemployment relief for industrial workers in West Bengal. Though the scheme at present gives relief to a small section of unemployed, it announces the acceptance of a vital principle. There is no doubt that had the Centre had released adequate funds to the State Government, the Left Front Ministry would have produced a full-fledged scheme for unemployment relief. It has already widened the scope of the scheme this year.

Comrades, the problem of rural unemployment is such that it can no longer be ignored by the government. Some State Governments have come out with schemes of partial relief and employment. The Maharashtra Government scheme for guarantee of jobs is one such scheme and it is amazing that the Central Government

took a long time to advise the President to give-his consent to it.

There is no doubt that if the trade union movement unitedly takes the question, it will be in a position to secure substantial relief for the rural and industrial unemployed.

PRICES AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Comrades, Janata Government has been making the claims about declining prices, about success in controlling prices. It would appear as if the Government has succeeded in bringing down prices from the giddy heights reached during the inflationary years 1973-74 and 1974-75. The fact is that not only there has been no relief under the Janata Rule but prices are higher than they were during the inflationary year preceding the emergency. Let me quote figures from the RBI Report on Currency and Finance 1977-78.

INDEX OF WHOLESALE PRICES

	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78
All Commodities	116.2	139.7	174.9	173.0	176.6	185.6
Food Articles (1970=100)	111.3	136.6	172.1	163.6	155.3	173.4
C.P. Index All-India 1960=100	207	250	317	313	301	324

The week ending January 13,1979, the wholesale index number was 185. By August 1978 the consumer price index for industrial worker was 331; in September it was 336 and in October it was 340.

The utterly untenable character of the claims made by the Janata Gvoernment stands exposed, they were made only to make the people believe that the working class did not need either higher D.A. or increased wages.

What the people were in need of was drastic reduction in the high prices of recent years. The Janata Government has totally failed in this respect. Under its two year's rule prices rose higher than before.

There was bound to be this failure because Janata Government also resorted to the discredited method of deficit financing following in the footsteps of the Congress Government. The previous

budget showed deficit finance of not less than one thousand crore of rupees. What chance was there for the price to decline under these circumstances.

As the RBI Report (1977-78) observes, "In the first place, the growth of money supply continues to be very high, 19.4% in the year under review and 16.6% in the previous year." This is not required by the growth of production of national income. "This pace of increase has to be seen in conjunction with an annual average increase of about 5% in the real national income."

In short, deficit financing and high prices are used as an instrument for robbing the poor transferring purchasing power from the havenots to the haves, as an instrument of robbery as in the Congress days. The Janata Government, at best, can claim that they have slowed down the pace of price increase as compared in hectic years 1973-74 and 1974-75 and for this also a big section of the peasantry, producers of commercial crops had to face ruin.

STRIKES AND LOCK-OUTS

Comrades, may I also refer to another question of importance to us. Spokesmen of the capitalists vie with each other to oppose strikes and advertise the loss of production due to them while they remain silent over the loss of production deliberately caused by lock-outs. The strikes are weapons of defending the legitimate rights of the workers, weapons of their fight against attacks on their standard of living. Lock-outs are weapons of profiteers and exploiters to starve the workers into submission and are used regardless of the loss caused to production. But the former is condemned because it is resorted to by the workers; the lock-outs are passed over the silence because they are declared by the capitalists whose interests are sacrosant. The following figures were recently given by the Government in the Parliament.

Year	By	No of workers involved	Man days lost
1976 Jan to June	Strike	164,576	14,45,684
	Lockouts	70,612	41,88,006
1977 Jan to June	Strike	567,961	44,87.185
	Lockouts	115,700	40,14,005
1978 Jan to June	Strike	563,382	58,95,004
	Lockouts	131,684	68,37,814

The prolonged character of the lockouts is obvious. In 1976, the number of workers on strike was more than double those locked out and yet mandays lost due to lockout were nearly three-time the number of those lost in strikes. In 1977, the number of workers locked out was 1/5th of those on strike but the loss of mandays due to lock-out was almost the same as due to strikes. In 1978, again the number of workers locked out was 1/4th of those on strike but the mandays lost due to lockout was 15 to 17 percent more than the loss due to strike. But, it would not be a class Government if it were to admit the severity of lockouts and denounce them as anti-social and obstructing national production. Do they not ban strikes under the Industrial Relations Bill while appearing to equate strikes with lockouts.

Comrades, the inception of Janata Party's rule has not brought in taxation relief to the common man. Like its predecessor Government, the Janata Government also uses taxation as a measure of deprivation of the common man, a measure to reduce his claim on consumption goods and even the well intentional Dandavate has not escaped this partiality for additional taxation on the poor. His decision to increase to season ticket fares in Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere is bound to hit lakhs and lakhs of ordinary people, workers and office employees who are daily passenger. He has imposed a burden of not less than 28 crores on these people. The preceding budget of the Janata Government also raised taxation on the common man while it granted certain reliefs to big business. The budget for 1979-80 also imposes further additions to these burdens. The monstrous character of this taxation can be best summed up in the words of Karl Marx: "Modern fiscality, whose pivot is formed by taxes on the most necessary means of subsistence (thereby increasing their prices), this contains within itself the germ of automatic progression. Over taxation is not an incident, but rather a principle. The destructive influence that is exercised on the condition of the wage labourers concerns us less however were than the forcible expropriation resulting from it of peasants, artisans and in a word, all elements of the lower middle class." Taxation and inflation together with the development of capitalist relations have accentuated the process of mass eviction of peasants, artisans, separation of small producers from the means of production. This is why the unemployment problem is becoming more and more menacing.

ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

The Janata Party is continuing with the new vigour policies which increase the dependence of our country on Western economies. The cry for self-reliance of economy is replaced by the cry for exports and more exports. The World Bank ever vigilant to integrate the Indian economy with the economies of the West, has been pressing Indian Government for more export and the Indira Government readily accepted exports below cost, exports with huge subsidies costing the people hundreds of crores of rupees. The Janata Government today follows the same policy.

As early as October 1975, the World Bank demanded that India should re-shape its industrial development programme leaning away from capital goods and heavy industries and go in for massive export production during the rest of the decade. Exports and massive foreign aid should, it said, form major part of the savings to boost India's flagging industrial growth rate. The Janata Government follows in the footsteps of the Indira Government and only embelishes its conformism with valuable reference of Gandhian values. The demagogic talk about giving priority to petty production, rural orientation and attack on big industry is nothing but paraphrasing for the Indian audience, the terms laid down by the World Bank.

This has naturally led to greater freedom for private capital and great demands for concessions by multinationals. The World Bank has been demanding that India should give greater scope to foreign private capital and the Janata Government's recent steps clearly show that private capital both indigenous and foreign is being encouraged. This is leading to a new dangerous development with equally dangerous political consequences. The desperate effort to secure export foot-hold in the foreign markets is leading to efforts for joint concerns with foreign monopoly firms in the hope of sub-contracting in the Third World countries.

This is creating new economic interests. The content of the entire process of subsidised export promotion and import liberalisation of offering concessions at home and seeking them abroad is the striving for partnership with foreign capital in India and outside. Political dangers inherent in this development are easy to see.

Comrades, it is not properly realised by our working class that the World Bank acts as an instrument for imperialist policies and

uses its aid to keep the under developed countries dependent on imperialist finance. Our trade union movement is not conscious of this danger and is unable to put up a proper fight against it.

REPRESSION

Comrades, the General Secretary's Report deals at length with the labour policy of the Janata Government and the immediate demands of the working class. It gives a full picture of what the working class and our CITU had to pass through these two years notwithstanding the restoration of democratic liberties following the Janata victory in the Parliament elections. We all must denounce the Industrial Relations Bill which is unanimously rejected by the working class and which is nothing but legalising the illegalities of the emergency regime in respect of the trade union movement. Another bill proposes to ban strikes of teachers, nurses, etc., and goes beyond what Indira Government did. In U.P., M.P. etc. large number of strikes have been declared illegal and ordinance have been passed to suppress them. The Right C.P. led Kerala ministry is also guilty of repressive measures against electricity workers and other sections.

Demands of workers are being resisted in the public sector; the Bureau of Public Enterprises continues its aribtary intervention, stalling meaningful negotiations and compelling trade unions to accept whatever the Bureau thinks fit. I may remind you that the Labour Minister has gone back on his promise given in June last during negotiations concerning the demands of the public sector employees. He has also broken the agreement arrived at with the Kota atomic plant workers. No previous Labour Minister perhaps had put himself in this position of openly repudiating the word given to the workers.

So despite restoration of democratic rights the workers are faced with the same situation—struggle for D.A., need-based wage, bonus, against retrenchment., lay-off and violation of trade union rights.

Comrades, our CITU cadres and workers have to face another ordeal—the growing attacks of the hired goondas of the employers. Now the goonda elements are no longer occasional recruit; they form the standing army of the employers in many places, they are often called the watch and ward personnel and are licenced to carry arms which are used against the workers. In Ghaziabad in U.P. and other places arms were used against the workers. In

Haryana, in Faridabad and other places these gangs have been fully used against the CITU.

Our comrades in Faridabad, Gahaziabd and Rajasthan are courageously facing this attack. Our attackers do not flinch from murders and several of our comrades have lost their lives fighting them. In Rajasthan our comrades have to face the attacks of hoodlums from vital organisations who claim that they are affiliated to some all-India organisations with whom we maintain fraternal relations. Our attackers in Rajasthan claim that they are followers of the INTUC; our attackers in Bhillai claim that they belong to the BMS. We earnesly appeal to these organisations to disown these organisations who do the work of the employers. We congratulate our comrades in M.P., Bihar, U.P., Haryana Rajasthan who are carrying forward the banner of the CITU at great sacrifice and with extra-ordinary courage.

Comrades, the CITU and the entire trade union movement should demand the disarming of the employers' gangs. It should demand that the licences for arms given to the employers' personnel should be immediately withdrawn. No one can be allowed to keep private force.

Comrades, this city of Madras where we are meeting is not unfamiliar with the use of hirelings and agents against the trade union movment. The Tamil Nadu Government led by Shri M.G. Ramachandran not only launched the severest repression during the Tamil Nadu bandh but also used its agents to attack the workers. During the Tamil Nadu bandh it arrested in a single swoop more than 3,000 of our workers and cadres. Since then it has taken an anti-strike attitude and while its has used it muscle power againstt the workers, it has adopted a sycophantie attitude to the employers who defy its instructions.

T.U. RIVALRIES

Comrades, the Janata Labour Minister and his ministry have borrowed from the Congress arsenal all the weapons of slandering the working class and the trade union movement. It was the Congress regime that made the discovery that strikes in India were more due to trade union rivalry than anything else, and the Labour Minister also refers to trade union rivalries and multiplicity of trade union whenever the workers are engaged in struggle or oppose government policies.

But the Congress government made the accusation when the

trade union centres were sharply divided over immediate issue. The Labour Minister, however, makes the charge when the trade union centres are uniting more and more to oppose government policies. The unprecedented demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill made clear to everybody except the Labour Minister the growing unity of the movement.

It is a fact that there is multiplicity of unions. These unions have different outlooks on many questions. And yet as the experiece of the railway strike, the West Bengal jute strike shows, they overcome their difference and come together for common action.

The multiplicity of unions arose because most of the employers and the Government recognised unions entered into agreements behind the backs of the workers and lost their credentials. When the workers repudiated the adverse agreements signed by these unions, the Congress Government described it as due to trade union rivalries. The capitalists picked up this argument and their press today makes the utmost use of it.

The CITU and several trade union centres have demanded that trade union recognition be decided on the basis of a secret ballot of all workers. We stand for one union in one industry democratically voted by the workers. Why should not the Janata Government which is supposed to defend democracy, have accepted this basic democratic proposal during its two years' Rule? The Industrial Relations Bill also does not accept ballot as a compulsory principle to decide recognition. It gives the option to the government to decide recognition by verification or ballot-whichever method is suitable to instal a favourite will be adopted, by the bureaucrats. I may here mention that the P & T Minister recently granted recognition to a new organisation with hardly any following. The reason is that it was headed by men belonging to his party. The other organisations with mass following have protested against these divisive methods. And these are the people who, when it suits them, deplore multiplicity of unions and trade union rivalries.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Comrades, in this connection I may mention another scandalous propaganda. Recently, an employer in Bombay was the victim of an attack by hirelings. It was an attempt to murder him. Immediately the bourgeois press, the capitalists, the usual crowd of exploiters and their mercenaries denounced the trade unions and said that the murderous attack was due to trade union rivalries. We

do hear of such occurrences occasionally. What are they due to? In a large number of cases they are due to the fact that managements, employers and the ruling bourgeois parties often use unscrupulous individuals to fight established unions, grant special facilities to them, recognise their union and patronise their gangs to terrorise organised workers. These unscrupulous individuals or anti-social elements are given the status of "leaders" by the management and their organisations are granted recognition. Interested only in feathering their nest they soon fall foul of the management and use the same methods that they were encouraged to use against the workers.

This is a new danger facing the movement. The entire trade union movement must combat it unitedly.

THE WORKING CLASS AND THE PEASANTRY

Comrades, the virtual delinking of the trade union movement from the peasantry and agricultural workers' movement, the failure to champion the demands of the rural masses as an integral part of our struggle for democracy and socialism has not only weakened both the movements but is now creating new dangers for both. Economic facts clearly show that while the organised working class was able to fight and retain at least part of its living standard, the peasantry and the agricultural workers became the most atrocious victims of the crisis. The drastic lowering of the real wage of the agricultural workers and mass evictions of the peasants prove it.

Having driven the peasant and the agricultural workers to the lowest living standard, the landlords, the capitalists and their spokesmen are joining hands to incite the rural mass against the city poor-the workers and the employees. They quote figures of monetary wage to show that the city workers and the employees are living in affluence, concealing the fact that the real wage has gone down. Mercenary professors are hired to prove that the working class and the employees constitute a privileged class and exploit the peasants.

They unscrupulously conceal the fact that the degradation of the peasantry and the agricultural workers is the direct result of the exploitation of landlords, of land relations and exploitation of the capitalist path. Leaders of the Janata Party like Shri Charan Singh make it a question of urban versus rural people deliberately mixing the workers, the slum dwellers, the employees with the monopolists and the affluent. The monopolists also join the cry saying that

the workers should not demand more wages as they are earning more compared with the rural mass.

The alliance of the two forces-vital forces for democracy and socialism-must be steadily built by championing the cause of the peasant and the agricultural labourers, by demanding an end of the land monopoly of the landlords, by demanding a fair price for the peasant, by taking active steps to organise the agricultural workers.

By winning over the solidarity and sympathy of the peasant masses for its daily struggles, the working class will be in a much more favourable position to win its demands. This is especially true today when the ruling classes are intent on inciting the rural masses against the working class.

The break-up of the land monopoly of the landlords and distribution of land to the tiller-the solution of the land question—will ease the pressure on employment in cities, helping forward the trade union movement. The championing of this demand has a direct relevance to the security of jobs in the factories and cities.

Division on the basis of caste, religon is alien to working class movement. The trade unions must offer resistence to all revivalist trends like the RSS and communal and caste conflicts. This along with the championing of the agrarian demands will lay the basis for a close unity between the workers and rural masses.

The mounting struggles of the peasants and agricultural workers against the exploitation of the bourgeois-landlord state, of landlords and moneylenders creates solid ground for active cooperation between the two driving forces against the present social system. The active cooperation and alliance between the two acts as a lever for building the front of left and democratic forces. It is high time that the CITU and our trade unions developed closer cooperation with the All India Kisan Sabha-the leader of many a heroic mass battles of our peasantry and agricultural workers.

WORKING WOMEN

Comrades, the CITU at its Kota session decided to call a working women's conference. That conference finished its deliberations yesterday. All unions and all committees should see to it that its decisions are properly implemented.

The CITU had to take the decision to call a special conference because it was found that the grievances of working women were unattended; the government was indifferent; the employers were hostile; and even the trade unions were not very enthusiastic about

their demands. In the so many strikes that the working class fought there were very few instances when the special demands of the working women were given prominence.

It was also found that women, even in industries and occupations where they formed a sizeable section were hardly representd in the leading bodies of the union.

This state of affairs was partly due to the disabilities which women suffer from in a society like the Indian society. The inferior status assigned to women in both Hindu & Muslim communities is known to all. That discrimination doggedly puruse the working women and it is the elementary duty of the trade unions to fight against. We cannot say that our workers and some of our trade union leaders are free from this discriminatory outlook towards women.

It has been noted that the employers resort to retrenchment of women workers to avoid giving maternity benefit, and provision of other facilities prescribed by law. In many industries the number of women employees is decreasing. The axe of retrenchment falls first on the women workers.

The notorious Baveja Committee on coal industry has suggested retrenchment of 50,000 coal miners. The committee says, "A large number of those are female workers who cannot be sent underground. The redeployment in other projects in the vicinity is possible through a programme of training and *replacement of female workers.* "This means women will be daily retrenched. And the Janata Government's Energy Minister is intent on implementing this recomandation.

Under the Congress regime, women membership of trade unions went down. In 1961-62 it was 370,000; in 1968, it reached 421 thousands, by 1974, it had fallen to 262,000. Perhaps the indifference and neglect of trade unions has also contributed to this fall.

Regarding the question of equal wages for equal work also there is discrimination. The tea planters, the bidi emplolyers find diverse means to cheat the women workers and the trade unions have not always shown the same zeal that they would have if men were affected. The plantation women, the bidi and coir women and the sweeper women have been the worst suffers from this discrimination.

Nor is the condition easy for women employees in private and government services. Apart from sharing this denial of creches and

other facilities with the women in factories, they are discriminated on the matter of promotion and transfers under a male administration and are often the objects of lust of superior officers. The employers besides retrench women or refuse them employment to avoid giving them maternity benefit. The number of women employed in factories is decreasing. So far as the employees are concerned, they are often retrenched after marriage.

In all capitalist countries, there is discrimination against women. Even now women have to fight for equal pay for equal work in many of the advanced countries.

It is no wonder that India with one foot in the capitalist age and another in the preceding age should show discrimination against women at every stage. The trade union movement has to fight it as pat of the working class struggle. Our leaders and cadres besides must see that the union leadership does not become a male preserve, that women are trained and quickly promoted to leading positions. The trade union movement cannot attain its full stature unless the women's contingent plays its role in organising and leading the unions. Thousands of women have participated in strike struggles, faced jail and repression, gone through privatisations along with men workers and employees. But they are far from occupying the position in the unions that is their due. The fight for working women's demands—for the demands of factory workers, teachers, employees, nurses, etc. should not be the exclusive concern of the trade unions. All women's organisations should lend their support and actively help the trade union movement in this struggle.

WEST BENGAL

Comrades, on bahalf of all of you, I greet our Vice-President Jyoti Basu who is heading the Left Front Ministry of West Bengal. The left front ministries of West Bengal and Tripura constitute a source of great inspiration to all left and democratic forces engaged in a fight against the authoritarian forces.

I greet all our leaders and cadres of CITU in West Bengal who have brought fresh success to our movement. None can forget the historic role they played during the critical days of unprecedented floods affecting more than 10 million people. They together with the state government employees saw to it that the people were saved, relief was organised and the game of the enemies of democracy to bring about a breakdown of the Government was frus-

trated.

The functioning of our West Bengal ministry stands in sharp contrast to the course followed by Janata and Congress(I) ministries elsewhere or to the methods adopted by the Tamil Nadu Government or the Right C.P. led government of Kerala. Standing by the peasant initiating a scheme of unemployment relief, loyally serving the cause of the bargadars, raising the wages of agricultural workers, providing honest relief to the flood striken people—the West Bengal ministry remained loyal to its basic electoral pledge that it will not use force, the police against the workers and peasants fighting for their legitimate demands. The Chief Minister openly declared his support for the demands of the striking jute workers. West Bengal is the only state where the right to strike has been fully recognised and allowed to be practised without interference from the State. During the prolonged strikes lasting over months there have been no arrests and prosecutions and no interference by the police. No where else was such scrupulous concern for democratic rights shown.

Supported by the ministry, the jute, engineering, Bata and other workers have succeeded in reaching a victorious settlement of their strikes and disputes. There is no doubt that this will further strengthen our CITU organisation in West Bengal.

It is because of this loyalty to the cause of the working class and the people that the West Bengal and Tripura ministries are becoming the rallying point for left and democratic forces in the country. And it is because of this that the forces of authoritarianism, Congress(I) and the reactionary and revivalist elements in the Janata Party have launched a campaign of villification and slander against the ministry. The press, the forum of parliament, the legislature all are utilised to defame the two governments. It is the task of the working class and democratic forces to expose and rebuff this attack and rally all the left and democratic forces behind the two ministries.

TRADE UNION UNITY

Comrades, the General Secretary's report deals in detail with our struggle for trade union unity and the success achieved by us.

Recent months have witnessed a sharp rise in the activities of the trade union movement, representing the industrial workers and employees. What is more important, they have seen increase in the united activities of trade unions, their common actions for

demands and policies. The unprecedented demonstration in the capital on November 20 last year against the Industrial Relations Bill—that monstrous piece of anti-working class legislation engineered by the Morarji Cabinet—epitomised the mounting urge for unity. The demonstration was joined by all Central trade union organisations. The INTUC vacillated till the end but took a last minute decision to join to make it an all-on demonstration. It was joined by the powerful industrial federations like the AIRF, the Defence Workers' Federation, the P & T, Federation of State Government employees, organisation of LIC employees, AIIEA, Mercantile and Bank Employees' organisation, etc.

This growing urge for unity is the result both of a rising awakening as well as increased attacks against the workers and employees under the Janata Party's rule.

The wage-freeze policy of the Bureau of Public Enterprises, the Boothalingam Committee report, the industrial Relations Bill and the innumerable firings on workers, the Essential Services Act, the proclamation of a monstrous anti-labour ordinance by M.P. Government, prescribing barbarous punishment all have called upon the workers and employees to take up the challenge.

The Janata government has been especially hard on the LIC employees. Declaring the employees as high wage islands in the manner of the Congress, they have been doing everything to attack the earnings of this section and deny them their due. It is known how they tried to baulk the LIC employees of their bonus till the Supreme Court defeated their attempts. Now again they have given notice to go back on a solemnly signed previous agreement all in pursuance of their policy to reduce the earnings of the employees.

They are following the same tactics in relation to the bank employees.

The united actions of central trade union organisations have created an unprecedented climate for unity. They have succeeded in drawing together organisations of employees, federations of workers not affiliated to any central organisation.

This brings us to the supreme importance of all-in trade union unity. Unless the labour movement exercises its full strength to shape the policy decisions of the government, it will not succeed in defending the interest of the workers. The CITU calls upon all central trade union organisations, all organisations of employees,

of central and state government employees and also associations of teachers and professors to join together to press for a common labour policy and safeguard the interests of all sections. The mighty awakening in the trade union movement, the great strides made by the State and Central government employees' association, which now have the power to move lakhs; the strength shown by the association of the teachers and professors all show that the trade union movement is a powerful force sufficiently strong to shape the policies of the government, to counter all anti-working class laws and defend common interest. It is our desire that all these organisations should immediately come together to take stock of the situation, present common front on the questions of demands and legislation and declare to the employers that the labour movement is one and indivisible. In this common task the only condition we lay down is loyalty to the working class and the agreed demands. We would, therefore, like to revive the UCTU on a much bigger scale and make it all embracing like the historic anti-wage freeze convention of 1974.

Can we not come together in a loose kind of confederation or least in the form of a labour coordination committee to take common counsel and unanimous decisions? Is it not time to giveup the present ad hoc basis for unity, coming together only when attacked?

The CITU thinks that our movement now needs a more stable and wider base for unity. This reflects the growing maturity of our movement. The various organisations are no longer concerned with day to day issues but are involved in deciding wide policy issues like the incomes and wages policies. The trade unions, if they are to protect the interests of the workers and the country, must have a proper common policy on issues like exports and imports policies of the government, its fiscal policy and various other matters. The battle for policies cannot be carried on without continuous concerted action on the part of the trade union movement.

STRUGGLE FOR POLICY

Comrades, when we call for unity, when we struggle for it, it is not just unity of numbers, but unity a round an understanding, a policy. We have had occasions to sharply criticise and attack some of the central trade unions; the INTUC and the AITUC in the past. They openly supported the emergency, lent their support to the attacks on democracy, screened the repression on the people and

the onslaught on the trade union rights. They joined the apex body for negotiations from which other organisations like the CITU were deliberately excluded. We fought their wrong policies but even in those days-demanded unity to resist emergency-called on them to reject their erroneous collaborationist policies.

Today also when we call for unity we call it on the basis of definite policies of struggle to defend the working class, struggle against official policies affecting the working class, struggle against the forces of dictatorship.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that central trade unions led by members of Janata Party have joined in our united efforts and have tried to correct the mistakes of their own government.

All our unions must remember that we unite not just for the sake of unity but to pursue a line of struggle and resistance to defend the workers' interests; that in the name of unity we do not compromise with collaborations. It is our desire that the workers of different organisations should come to a common line through joint struggles and experience.

PROFOUND IMPORTANCE

Comrades, the joint actions of the working class and the struggle for trade union unity has profound meaning extending beyond the trade unions. The trade union movement of workers and employees is the most well-organised force fighting against the burdens of the economic crisis imposed by the bourgeois—landlord rule. Its resistance rouses other sections in defence of their interets. In the present situation when the economic discontent following from the the policies of Janata party is likely to be exploited by Indira Gandhi and her chohorts, the united trade union resistance can become the basis for an independent rallying point for all left and democratic forces ranged against the return of authoritarian dictaroship. This is its profound importance in the context of the present situation with the rising challenge from Indira Gandhi.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Comrades, the CITU and the trade union movement cannot ignore the critical political situation in the country and remain blind to the arrogant challenge of Congress(I) to restore an authoritarian regime.

Though armed with a massive mandate the Janata Party pursuing the same class policies as the Congress, has failed to carry on

an effective struggle against the forces of authoritarianism. No doubt it restored democratic rights. It restored the freedom of the press, and the judiciary, of meetings and organisations. But it has not gone beyond this restoration and has not refrained from attacking the rights of the people through MISA—like ordinance and goonda detention acts.

Its economic failures have eroded its image among the people and the Congress(I) forces have been able to register electoral advances on a number of occasions. These forces which were on the retreat have found new courage and adopted a challenging attitude in the parliament. They virtually scuttled the constitutional amendments intended to remove the dictatorial framework of the 42nd amendment act. The result is that the main mandate of the election—to withdraw the constitutional provisions of the emergency days remains unfulfilled. This is a big defeat for popular forces which is solely due to the inept and complacent attitude of the Janata Government. Now with a firm majority in two States and the Rajya Sabha, the challenging forces seek to utilise the mounting economic discontent to go on the offensive. The revivalist and communal forces inside the Janata Party—RSS—bring further grist to the mill of Indira Gandhi.

The only force that can unite the people and stem the march of dictatorship is the unity of left and democratic forces in which the West Bengal and Tripura left front ministries play a vital role. It is only in these two states that the Congress(I) is on the retreat, its influence is on the wane.

That the Congress(I) leaders have not shed an iota of their dictatorial ambitions and practices is seen in Andhra Pradesh. Under the Chenna Reddy ministry attacks on harijans continue, but the police murders of naxalites are protected. The Bhargava Commission was scuttled to prevent the truth about shooting of naxalites coming before the people.

It is this force that has to be fought unitedly.

Comrades, the working class and trade union movement must realise that the danger of dictatorship is not over; that it is inherent in a situation in which the bourgeois-landlord classes are in possesion of the state machine; that its represented today by the forces of Congress(I) who hark back to the days of the emergency.

To carry on an effective fight against it, the working class must unitedly demand the scuttling of the dictatorial framework intro-

duced in the Constitution under the emergency—the rescinding of the emergency powers of the President, rescinding the provision for preventive detention in the Constitution, disbandment of the RAW, wider powers to the States, inclusion of the right to work in the list of fundamental rights, provision to put fundamental rights beyond the mischief of Parliament, by providing for referendum on constitutional representation and further expansion of people's rights.

The more these concrete demands are consciously and unitedly put forward and fought for by the trade union movement, the more rebuff will be addressed to the authoritarian forces.

The working class protecting its unity and carrying on the fight against the forces of dictatorship has to bear the responsibility of maintaining the unity of the country which is being disrupted by reactionaries of all kinds.

There are those whole exploit democratic demand of State autonomy to rouse regional chauvinism and disrupt the unity of the country. The working class support to more powers for the States is demand for strengthening the unity of the country and equality of its units. It must therefore fight all regional manifestations. There are those who would like to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people and again disrupt the unity of the country. There are those who raise the banner of anti-Hindi, sow hatred against it. The working class has nothing to do with either of the reactionary trends. It stands for the equality of all languages spoken by the masses and fights all attempts at imposing one language or rousing linguistic fanaticism.

Fighting for the unity of the country, the working class must play its role in the struggle to defeat the forces of dictatorship. If it busies itself only with its economic struggle, it will soon lose the struggle for democracy.

The unity forged in our daily struggles must become the basis for this bigger fight for democracy and against dictatorship. It must inspire the left and democratic forces from all walks of life, from all parties to join together in a battle against the authoritarian forces, a battle which cannot be carried on without resisting many policies of the Janata Government.

It can be said that the working class and the organised trade union movement did not play its proper role to prevent and fight the emergency dictatorship. Let not the same judgement be passed

against us. Let our united struggle inspire all other sections and above all the peasantry to uphold the banner of democracy, of decent livelihood and unite all the left and democratic forces. Success here will mean that the working class and the people will have the initiative in deciding their own future.

46

The Working Class and The Governmental Crisis

The Morarji Govt. has resigned or been forced to resign. This is the first time since Independence that a Govt. at the centre was forced to resign because of loss of majority in the House. This unprecedented happening shows the deep crisis and instability that has now invaded the parliament and the govt.

The Morarji Govt. led by the Janata party had an absolute majority in the lok Sabha with 300 seats and yet it collapsed because the party got divided and more than 100 members and 12 Ministers resigned from the Party.

The Morarji Govt. and the Janata Party were given a mandate to rule because people considered them to be good instrument to fight the forces of dictatorship. Their collapse means that the people must forge another instrument to fight authoritarianism and defend the interests of the masses. Otherwise the forces of Indira Gandhi will steel into power. The Sanjay gang will again come on top of the people to tyrannise over them.

Why did the Janata Party disintegrate? The Janata Party was a conglomeration of several groups ranging from Socialists to Jana Sangh-RSS combine. The BLD, Congress (O), CFD formed the other constituents. It would be difficult to imagine a more desperate combination having antagonistic ideologies. What is there common between Maduh Limaye and Nanaji Deshmukh, between Shri Morarji and Madhu Dandavate? But what brought these persons and organisations together was the common aim of fighting Indira Gandhi who represented the authoritarian forces. They in collaboration with left and democratic organisations worked for the elec-

toral rout of Congress(I) and waged the battle for restoration of democracy.

They prospered and raised their prestisge when they removed the michiefs of the Emergency period, amended the notorious 42nd Amendment Act and restored the rights of the press and freedom of the individual. They further enhanced their image when they started fulfilling other electoral pledges like resoration of bonus, reinstatment of victimised Rly. workers, abolition of CDS, etc.

But the Party began to disintegrate when its leadership turned back on this course. The Govt. instead of attacking the authoritarian forces, unleadshed repression against the people. It would not implement even the land legislation of the Congress period and refused to treat bonus as a deferred wage. It inflicted inflationary prices on the people and introduced the notorious Industrial Relations Bill. Many of the Janata State Govts. introduced MISA and PD Acts; Shri Morarji openly talked about re-introducing it at the Centre and finally, it crushed the agitation of police, CRP and CISF personnel with a burtal force reminding of the happenings under Indira rule. There is no wonder that as soon as the original aim of fighting for the people, fighting the forces of dictatorship, was given up, there should be dissensions, groupings and dissidence in the Party. This fate overtook the Janata Party. This fate overtook the Janata Party because its top leadership had the same class outlook as the Congress and it pursued the same class aims—bourgeois landlord—as the predecessor Govt. With refusal to fulfil electoral promises,—Morarji made fun of them,—with concerted attacks on the democratic rights of the people, the earlier unity forged to fight the authoritarian forces disrupted and group politics seized hold of the party. The most well orgainsed-group—the RSS Jana Sangh combine—supported by Morarji began to dominate the scene. It had already captured the governments in a number of states. It captuted the organisation. It brought down the ministries in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana and was able to have pliable ministries in the last two States. Side by side with it, it covertly and openly began to spread its communal ideology. The Aligarh and Jamshedpur riots were the handi-work of some of its MLAs. But the Janata Party leadership now dependent on this group refused to condemn the RSS; on the contrary, it gave it a good certificate.

All this led to strong protests from inside. Shri Madhu Limaye

and others denounced the communal ideology of the RSS, its disruptive and anti-national role and demanded that dual membership should be ended. Moraji who was asked to decide on the issue refused to give verdict out of fear of offending his RSS supporters. And now a fake proposal it made assuring that RSS MPs will not join Sakha drills but of course will continue to work for RSS ideology inside the Party and the public.

Others like Charan Singh organised their group—the former BLD—to fight against the organisational domination of the RSS group. The mad and insane desire of the RSS to caputure all State Govts., the Central Govt. and the Janata Party brought about the disintegration of the Party.

But the serious question before the people, the masses is what next?

The condition of the people has become unbearable during the last 2-1/2 years. There has been no relief from the sufferings imposed under the Indira rule. Besides, the danger of dictatorship, of return of Indira, thanks to the reactionary economic policies of the Janata leadership and the communal orgies of the RSS looms ahead.

The people have to act in a manner which check-mates the forces of Indira Gandhi, of the RSS-Jana Sangh combine and strengthens the forces of left, democratic and popular unity. This means in the first phase that a Govt. depending on the support of the RSS-Jana Sangh combine should not be voted for or supported. The Working class also should refuse to lend its support to the formation of the joint Janata (S)—Congress Govt. headed by Charan Singh, but depending heavily on Congress(I). The working class is prepared to support a Govt. dependent on neither of these forces i.e. Congress(I) and Jana Sangh—RSS and committed to acceptance of some immediate demands like bonus for Rly. men, withdrawal of ordinances, no preventive detention act, release of all arrested policemen, end of victimisation and restoration of their Jobs, remunerative price for his produce to the peasant, effective control of prices, etc. The Congress(S), Janata(S) Socialist combination who have succeeded in forming a Govt. will have to be aware of the machinations of Indira Congress and if it has to play a role in the service of the people it must disentangle itself from Congress(I) support. If along with this it takes the above mentioned measures it will earn the confidence of the people and serve the cause of de-

mocracy. Otherwise, it will be a plaything of the authoriatrian forces and pave the way for return of Indira Gandhi to power in the near future.

In the present circumstances, Parliament will continue to be rocked by strong oppositions and live from crisis to crisis. Midterm elections are likely.

In these elections, the reactionary parties, the communal and authoritarian forces will again sell their wares among them and try to deceive the people. The democratic forces and progressive people must combine to secure a decisive verdict against authoritarianism and communalism, and an effective mandate for the left and democratic forces in the country. The left and democratic forces from all parties including the Congress, the Janata, Janata(S) and all the left parties must come together to fight the two dangers.

Already a good basis exist for such unity. It is represented in the growing unity of the trade union movement, by the greatest unity of the working class and the employees' organisations it is a matter of great importance that the Trade Unions manned by the Janata Party members have played an important role alongwith others in fighting the anti-working class measures of the Janata Govts. The CITU calls upon the Working Class to play a historic role in shaping the political future of the country and saving Indian democracy from the forces of dicatorship. Let it strengthen its unity, let the people from all walk of life awaken and strengthen their movements and let them succeed in reaching their massage to the peasant masses, so that the election battle when it arrives becomes a popular struggle for democracy and livelihood and not a plaything of bourgeois landlord parties. The united strength of the trade unions and employees must play a decisive role in bringing victory to the left and democratic forces represented by several parties.

47

The People Must Decide

The President has dissolved the Lok Sabha and called upon the people to elect new representatives. The people, the real masters of India, are called upon to solve the parliamentary impasse and give their considered judgement on the role of the political parties and currents in evidence. The organised working class, the most conscious section among fighting people, must play its role in the coming electoral battle and help the country to shape the decision in the interests of the people and democracy.

Why was the Lok Sabha dissolved? Because no bourgeois-landlord party could muster sufficient majority to run the ministry. The Janata Party during the 1977 elections secured 302 seats, nearly 2/3rd of the number. And yet it lost its majority, it disintegrated and its government was thrown out. The domination of Hindu communal forces played an important role in this disintegration.

Image Tarnished

The split in the Janata brought a coalition of several parties namely the Janata (S), the Congress, etc. to form the Govt. But a dangerous situation developed there. Guided by considerations of getting into power any how, forgetting the deep forces that were moving the masses eroding the image of the Janata Party, leaders of this combination sought the help of the authoritarian Indira Gandhi to prove majority backing for its ministry. This appeal for help from the authoritarian organisation tarnished the image of the combination. It was further tarnished when the names of the congress ministers for the Cabinet were announced. They were the same old gang which had worked for the emergency rule without protest. Some of them had become persona-non-grata with Indira

Gandhi because they appeared before the Shah Commission to testify against her. But their public image was as low as it could be and their appointment led to loud protests in their own party. Loss of public image combined with Indira Gandhi's support created a dangerous situation. The question was, will Indira Gandhi be able to use power lust of certain leaders to divert the protest against communal reaction into pro-authoritarian channel? If that had happened, then the people would have been betrayed again.

New Combination Free from Authoritarian Forces

But the events subsequent to the formation of the ministry showed that it was not easy for any opportunist leader or set of leadership to strike reactionary deals with the authoritarian forces. The result was a spate of statements and counter-statements. The forces of resistance were acting inside the combination to fight the black mail of Indira Gandhi whose followers had started making strident demands for withdrawal of Special Courts legislation, etc. These forces were sustained by the support of the left forces, especially the decision of the CPI(M) Central Committee to support the vote of confidence. Indira realised that her blackmil would not succeed, that she could not do back-seat driving with the Charan ministry acting at her behest. She decided to vote against the confidence vote and throw out the Charan Ministry. The Charan Ministry's entanglement with authoritarian forces was done away with and the new combination freed from the blackmailing power of Indira Gandhi.

Assure to serve the People

The Charan Ministry was saved from the clutches of Indira Congress and the way is open to the Congress-Janata(S) combination, if it choses, to help the cause of democracy by concentrating fire against the authoritarian and communal forces. But the combination has also to mend its ways in respect of other matters also. It has to present a proper image before the suffering people and assure them that it will serve their interests and fight the vested interests. Unfortunately during fortnight of its ministrial existence, it failed ot re-assure the masses.

The Economic Policy : Unmatched Bankruptcy

It refused to withdraw the two notorious ordinances and assure the people about its concern for democracy. It only allowed the ordinances to lapse. It refused to promise that it will not

introduce legislation for preventive detention. Mr. Chavan no doubt has given assurances regarding the release of arrested policemen and withdrawal of dismissal orders. Some action has been taken on these issues. This is the only bright spot. The CDS ordinance has lapsed but Government have pressurised some central Govt. employees' unions to transfer part of their accumulated CDS money to Provident Fund Account. Bonus to Rly. men has been denied though there are adequate funds earned by the Railways to meet this demand. The economic policy statement of the Govt. is a document of unmatched bankruptcy and ignorance. The Janata (S)-Congress combination must realise that masses cannot be fooled by prevarication and verbal inanities. They will have no chance in the electoral battle if they do not in a forthright manner sponsor the minimum demands of the masses and promise to fulfil them. Their claim to fight communalism and authoritarianism will be regarded as plain cheating unless there are guarantees for improving the living conditions of the people, their minimum demands.

Parliamentary development have shown the incapacity of bourgeois parties to retain their majority, to retain their unity. It had also shown the intense rivalry among them for power which leads to unprincipled combinations which discredit all of them. It has further revealed the weak features of the left forces in the Parliament. This has prevented the left forces from utilising the conflicts and weaknesses of bourgeois-parties for the interests of the people, for knocking out one concession after another, for the workers and peasants for protecting and expanding democratic rights; that left and democratic forces besides continue to be divided as a section of socialists still remain with Janata. The initiative therefore still remains in the hands of the bourgeois-landlord parties, only once in a while it is taken out of their hands.

Task Before the Working Class

If after the elections Parliament shows the same correlation of forces as at present then the battle is lost. It will open the way to furious horse-trading among these parties and accentuate dictatorial and authoritarian tendencies. To win electoral battle for the people, for the working class, means to inflict defeat on the forces of authoritarianism, to cripple its strength in the parliment; it means to cripple the strength of the communal Hindu forces and remove the danger of take-over of the Govt. by them; it means

decivsive accession to the strength of forces interested in fighting authoritarianism and communalism, and it also means the increased strength of the left forces in the anti-authoritarian and anti-communal forces. This is the outcome which the working class must strive for.

The coming elections are crucial for our country. They are to decide whether the dictatorial and communal forces are to defeat democracy or whether democracy is to defeat them. The challenge of authoritarian forces comes from Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the communal authoritarian forces from the Janata. The full strength of the organised trade union movement must be hurled against the Indira authoritarianism and Janata communal forces and every effort must be made to bring victory to the left and democratic forces. The Congress and Janata(S) combination must decide to play a proper role in this vital struggle. Growing strength of the left and democratic forces, consolidation of left unity and the united strength of the trade union movement of workers and employees—these together should be able to bring Victory to the people in the coming elections.

48

United We Go Into The Battle

THE mid-term Parliamentary elections promise to be a struggle for power in which the rival bourgeois combinations will stoop to anything. The talk about impeachment of the President shows that none of the cherished norms of bourgeois democracy will be observed. Indian elections have already a tendeney towards violence, the recent Bihar Panchayat elections claiming a toll of not less than 50 lives. Till recently, shootings, capture of booths, preventing others from voting were mainly local occurrences and not the devices for widespread practice to shape election results. The ruling Congress introduced mass rigging and murder in West Bengal during the 1972 elections. Now the intensity of the strggule between bourgeois landlord parties is reching a climax and there is every possibility of the widespreadd use of these practices in the coming elections. In many States, elections are likely to become regluar battle beween followers of political parties.

This shows the intensity of the politico-economic crisis of the system and following it the war-like confilicts between bourgeois-landlord parties to take possession of the governmental machine.

The conflict is not going to be confined to parliamentary elections. It seems elections are likely to be held in a number of States. Assam, U.P., Bihar are likely to see mid-term polls for the State Assemblies. Gujarat is already due for election. The entire country is going to be churned once again in a big political struggle.

Rise Above Opportunist Appeals

In this situation, opportunist appeals are likely to be made for vote-catching purpose. If in the name of defending the peasant and the rural mass, attempt is made to put the peasantry against the

working class and other toilers, it will do the biggest dis-service to the cause of democracy. India's future depends on the workers' and peasants' alliance and any appeal which disrupts it cannot but be termed as serving reaction.

The outgoing parliament was elected in the wake of the emergency tyranny and to fight the forces of dictatorship. The slogan, democracy vs. dictatorship was the common war cry of all the parties opposed to Indira Congress. But the Janata Government failed to carry forward the struggle, after some intial welcome steps -restoration of press freedom. fundamental rights and some amenduments to 42nd Amendment Act. However all the mischeif of the 42nd Amendment Act was not done away with it. The Janata leaders chose to compromise with Congress(I) rather than face an adverse vote in Rajya Sabha and expose its dictatorial face to the people. The Janata Party, functioning like any other bourgeois-landlord party, dispensed with mass support and mass mobilisation in the fight against the forces of authoritarian and relied more on the Indira trained bureaucracy for carrying out its decisions. The initiative to mobilise the masses was left to Indira Gandhi. The Shah Commission, its exposures, the special Courts—all soon became acts of the Government with no participating role for the people.

Janata's Volte-Face

The economic policies pursued by the Janata Party became more and more reactionary and the climax was reached when the notorious CDS was introudced by an ordinace—the CDS which had a distinct emergency stink. The Janata Government began to manifest its own authoritarian preferences. Mr. Morarji announced the intention to introduce a P.D. Act at the centre and policemen's agitation was suppressed with a brutality which could match the brutality of Indira regime.

All these were indications that the instrument forged by the people to fight authoritarian and forces of dictatorship was collapsing. There was a growing danger that the people will be hoisted on their own petard.

The dissolution and the elections once more raise the question how to fight and defeat the forces of dictatorship represened by Indira Gandhi, how to frustrate her attempts to steal into power exploiting the situation following the disintegration of the Janata party.

But the dominant leadership of the Janata Party created once more acute problem, shattering the unity of the organisation. More and more the organisation and the Government came under the control and domination of the Janasangh-RSS combine. The inner fight in the Janata was nothing but a fight of the RSS-Jana sangh helped by Morarji to secure a dominaant positation for the grip in Central Government and ease other out of power. The group was already in control of the State Governments of a number of States. It started the toppling game against the Janata Ministery in U.P., Bihar, Haryana and succeeded in the later two States. The danger of the take over of the Central Government by the communal forces loomed large. The dominant leadership of the janata Party was more intent on fighting the secular and democratic forces inside the organisation rather than the authoritarian forces of Indira Gandhi.

Real Political Meaning of RSS Combine

Besides the words communal-Hindu chauvinism does not carry the real political meaning of the RSS-Jana sangh combine. The Hindu chauvinism is not only anti-Muslim, RSS-Jana sangh ideology represents political reaction all along. It considers Muslims and other non-Hindus as second class citizens, who cannot have the same status as the Hindus. To achieve equal staus they must allow themselves to be absorbed by the majority community

Besides the RSS is a strong supporter of the tyrannical caste system among the Hindus which decrees an inferior status to the "Lower casts" and secures the domination of the upper castes.

Listen to Golwalkar's praise of this system which imposes untouchability on millions of our people. "History proves that Mohammedans could win over North-West areas easily where Buddhism had shattered the pattern of the caste system...But contrary to this, Hindu religion was strong in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh despite Muslim rule because caste system was strictly followed there." (Bunch of Thoughts). And again, "some people simply oppose caste system because of its present distorted apparition. They believe that all our degradation was due to caste system throughout the ages. But is it really proved by history? Caste system was there in older times and we were at our utmost height. There is nothing to prove that it ever hindered our social development. Actually, caste system has helped to preserve unity of our society." (Bunch of Thoughts.)

What kind of political democracy is possible under it? It will be nothing but another variety of authoritarianism seeking social support by appealing to the caste privileges and prejudices of certain upper castes. There is a tendency to under-estimate this challenge. It is not realised that behind the facade of the Janata Party the communal and casteist forces nearly succeeded in taking charge of the Central Government.

Role of Working Class

The working class and the employees' movement is again called upon to play its role in the coming critical elections. In the 1977 elections, it unhesitatingly joined hands with all forces opposed to the emergency dictatorship and helped in routing the authoritarian forces.

In West Bengal, it joined hands with Janata led by P.C. Sen to bury the danger of authoritarianism. Its tactics succeeded extremely well and Congress(I) was kept away from power.

Defeat Both Authoritarianism and Communalism

In the present elections again, the challenge of dictatoraship is facing the working class and the employees' movement. The main vehicle of authoritarianism is Congress(I) led by Indira Gandhi. Every effort must be made to defeat and rout this combine of anti-democratic conspirators, whose leadership boasts of luminaries like Bansilal and Sanjay Gandhi.

But this is not the only challenge. The Janata—now a facade for RSS-Jana sangh combination is another challenge to be defeated. How to prevent these two parties from stealing into power is the Central question of the election.

The Working class and employees' movements represent the urge for socialism and radical transformation of society. They together with the other left and democratic forces in the country can offer a real viable alternative to all the bourgeois-landlord parties and above all, consistently fight and defeat the forces of authoritarianism and communal reaction.

Uneven Development

Unfortunately, taking India as a whole, the left and democratic forces are weak and not in a position to defeat the two reactionary challenges by themselves. In West Bengal and Tripura, they can defeat these challenges on their own, though here also they should do everything for a still broader mobilistion of the anti-authoritar-

ian anti-communal vote. In Tripura, again the CPI(M) led left forces constitute the bastion of anti-authoritarian and anti-communal forces. In Kerala, also if the left and democratic forces unite during the elections, the Congress(I) and Janata will be defeated.

The situation is not so favourable in the rest of the country. And yet, the trade union movement, the working class and the employees must throw in all their weight to prevent the return to power of the Congress(I) and the Janata Party. The trade union movement should find no difficulty in endorsing the appeal of the Central Committee of the CPI(M) to choose the formation headed by the Janata-S-Congress which stand opposed to the authoritarian Congress(I) and RSS dominated Janata in the coming elections. The trade union movement should hold this combination and defeat the other two parties and win the election.

The trade union movement is of course conscious of the class limitations of this political formation as it was conscious of the class limitations of the Janata when it supported in the 1977 elections. Many of those who are in the leadership of this formation were part and parcel either of the former authoritarian Congress regime or of the subsequent Janata regime. Their record as the executors of the Congress and Janata policies should make every left-minded individual, group, organisation and party wary of the policies that are likely to be pursued by this political formation when it is voted into power.

For A New Realignment

However, the immediate issue is how to avoid the two reactionary challenges, how in the first place to frustrate Indira's designs to come back to power followed by the same rebuff to Janata.

How to guarantee against the future? The working class and the employees cannot advance the cause of democracy if while defeating the challenge of Indira and Janata they do not strenghen the left and democratic forces in the parliament, they do not strengthen the weight of the working class in the country's politics. In most of the States the bourgeois-landlord parties monopolise influence over the poeple. Every endeavour has to be made by the trade union movement to change this correlation of forcees and ensure that its intervention and correct tactics during the election lead to new realigement in favour of the working class and the people. If the trade union movement stands united on this question, if it takes

a common stand to defeat the Congress(I) and Janata, to mobilise and support all forces opposed to these two and at the same time takes every step to increase the strength of the left and democratic forces inside the Parliament and outside, it would be well prepared to meet the post election challenges.

This means in the first place that where the left and democratic forces are predominant, where they represent as in West Bengal and Tripura, the main challenge to the forces of reaction, the entire trade union and employees movement to a man must ensure complete victory to the candidates of left alliance headed by the CPI(M).

In other States, while supporting the Janata(S)—Congress combination to defeat the two challenges, it must endeavour to secure as big a representation in the Lok Sabha as possible for the candidates of the working class, of the left forces. The united strength of the trade union movement is such that no political party can ignore its advice. In the coming days this strength will have to be used in States where the left and democatic forces are weak.

For Basic Transformation of Society

Besides, the united trade union movement must tell the whole truth to the working class and the people. It must tell them that the challenge of poverty and unemployment cannot be met without a determined will to basically transform society, without a bold and daring attack on the vested interests in land and capital. Everything else is just tinkering with the situation. The united trade union movement with its transformatory programme will succeed in shaking the working class and the cities and help in changing the correlation of forces.

The coming elections emphasise the crisis of India's social system. The crumbling of the Janata majority was not the outcome of desertion and defection but of the bankruptcy of its class policies in the face of the crisis. No bourgeois-landlord party can maintain its unity nor can it maintain its majority in the Parliament or State Assemblies. political instability has now invaded the centre. It is again being transmitted to the States. But the political instability is a precursor to dictatorship as the example of Pakistan and Bangladesh shows. Where the working class movement is unable to meet the challenge of instability by its inervention, the people get enslaved. The working class and employees of India must therefore realise the great responsibility that falls on their shoulders.

In this battle, the working class and the left forces in India have the great wepon of our achievements in West Bengal and Tripura to inspire the people in the fight against authoritarianism and communalism and rally round the left. That weapon should be fully used so that people see in the concrete the difference between the functioning of a bourgeois-landlord Government and the left alliance Government headed by the CPI(M).

(The Working Class, Vol IX, No. 2, October 1979)

49

Face The Elections Single Mindedly

THE elections are drawing near and the working class, the employees and all those organised in trade unions—the teachers, professors—have to intervene to shape their outcome.

The working class and the Left forces, the organised trade union movement—all have to combine to defeat the forces of authoritarianism represented by Indira Gandhi and the forces of communalism and obscurantism represented by the Janata party.

All have to unite to see that Indira Gandhi who represents the main authoritarian danger is prevented at all costs from reaching anywhere near power. The danger is real because the Janata Party with its anti-people record, its records of inflation and high prices and suppression to people's struggle has enabled Indira Gandhi to seize the initative and come out with the slogan of a stable government.

Indira Gandhi has again regained her confidence which is seen from the fact that she has rehabilitated the notorious Bansilal and is again praising her son who has got an equally notorious anti-democratic record.

The forces of Left, and the forces represented by the organised trade union movement are not powerful by themselves to defeat Indira and Janata and secure victory for the democratic forces. They have therefore to rely for help from another combination which is electorally opposing both these parties. *The Congress-Lok Dal combination* is one which stands opposed to the other two parties. Except where the left parties are putting candidates, the

organised trade union movement will have to help this combination to defeat the other two challenges.

Main Prop of Left Unity

The working class will of course wholeheartedly throw its weight on the side of the Left Front candidates in West Bengal and Tripura. Everywhere else also its preference and solid support will be for the Left forces and their allies. The working class and the organised trade union movement has been the main prop of growing left unity. The orgainsed working class hails the growing unity of left forces all over India. It welcomes the strengthened unity of the left forces in West Bengal which now includes the CPI also.

The struggle against the forces of authoritarianism and Hindu communalism cannot be effectively carried on unless the left forces increase their strength during the elections, unless their hold over the people increases and unless their strength in Parliament also increases.

It is true that the working class and organised trade union movement are faced with difficulty when asking for support to the *Lok Dal and Congress alliance.* Shri Charan Singh's utterances especially often constitute a tirade against the legitimate demands and rights of the workers and naturally cause resentment and anger. His utterances on public sector and orgainsed industry, his statement that big industry producing consumer goods will not be allowed to sell the products in the home market are opposed to the interests of the workers, the people and the nation as a whole. In the first place Shri Charan Singh is not speaking the truth when he presents the working class as a great beneficiary of national planning or when he suggest that whatever it has gained is at the expense of the peasantry. A person who forgets the exploiters, the monopolists like Tatas and Birals who exploit the workers, who forgets the lakhs living in city's slums, and who forgets the big landlords who exploit the agricultural workers and poor peasants, or the money lenders-cannot be said to be telling truth about Indian economy to the present.

How much has the working class gained? According to a paper prepared by the Planning Commission under the Janata Government the rise in average annual earnings of workers since 1961 has been as follows

Year	Average earnings at current prices in Rs.	Earnings at constant prices 1960-61 Census prices=100	P.C. Annual income
1961	1413	1359	
1966	2145	1354	—0.07
1971-72	2761	1436	
1976-77	4374	1453	+0.21

Doesn't Shri Charan Singh know the difference between money wage and real wage? Should he go on telling the peasants that the workers are drawing Rs. 400 per month when the value of the Rs. 400 is Rs. 100 in terms of constant prices. During the fifteen years since 1961 the real wage of the workers has gone up by only 7 per cent according to this document of the Planning Commission and the real average monthly wage is not more than Rs. 125 compared in terms of the prices of 1960-61.

Same is the story of real emoluments of Central Government Employees. According to the Third Pay Commission the real wage of a peon rose only by 5 per cent between 1960 and 1972; that of a lower divison clerk went down by 9 percent; of upper divsion clerk by 18 percent; of Assistants by 22%; the real wage index for class II was 63; for class A was 56; for class 1B 55 and class 1C 58.

In these years the profits of the big capitalists increased by crores. Why is Charan Singh silent about them? Why is he not calling for taking over the profits or putting a ceiling on them? No, he seems is only in favour of ceiling the wage of the workers.

Doubly Exploited

The peasant is more indebted today than ever. Who is responisble? Shri Charan Singh rarely mentions the agricultural labourers who is the most exploited among the rural population. He is exploited both as a labourer and an untouchable. According to the same Planning Commission paper the real earnings of an agricultural worker which were Rs. 1.43 in 1960-61 dropped to Rs. 1.17 in 1974-75. In 1977 they were 16 paise below 1961-62. The landlord exploiters have been forcing down the earnings of these workers but Shri Charan Singh has no word of condemnation for them. Why should the landlords' sins be screened like this? Why should the

peasants and agricultural workers attention be diverted from their real exploiters?

Charan Singh Made No Efforts

May we ask Shri Charan Singh why he forgets the land concentration in rural areas when he talks about the peasantry. Why does he not tell the peasants that this concentration is one of the main sources of their exploitation. Is he unaware of the fact that the richest ten per cent own more than half of the total assets in rural areas while the poorest ten per cent own only the 0.1%. Besides may we know what he did when he was in the Government for more than two years to break up this concentration? Is it not a fact that his government accepeted the fraudulant figures of surplus land prepared by the Congress Administration? The potential surplus with a 30 acre ceiling according to the Planning Commission is 21.51 million acres. What efforts were made under the Janata Government with Charan Singh as the Finance Minister to acquire this surplus and distribute to the landless. No effort was made. The Janata Government did not distribute any additional land to the poor. Shri Charan Singh should direct his attention to the real problems facing the rural mass.

Help Agricultural Workers

Whatever may Shri Charan Singh do or not to the working class and the trade union movement must continue to fight for the exploited rural masses. Till now they have done next to nothing. They must give all help to the agricultural workers for securing better wages, for breaking land concentration and giving land to the tiller, for ending peasant indebtedness and for protecting the small peasant from the ravages of capitalist market and traders by assuring him a fair price for his produce.

Shri Charan Singh in the name of the Gandhism promises prosperity to the rural masses through promotion of village and small industry. This is pure illusion. No nation has ever become prosperous through petty or village industry; for small industry means low production, low wage and poverty. Protection of small industry as a transitional measure is no doubt necessary in India. But the problem of poverty cannot be solved through it. Higher productivity through organised industry is essential to promote peoples' prosperity, provided such industry is socially owned . Besides Shri Charan Singh should know that India cannot protect her freedom and defend herself without wide network of big industries. Elec-

tions should not be an occassion to mislead the peasantry and distort the concept of national interests and jeopardise national defence. Shri Charan Singh is very much pained that a bank peon gets Rs. 500 per month. He does not stop to think what this Rs. 500 really amount to. Besides does he not know that in the majority of cases this peon belongs to a peasant fan and often it is his salary that saves the family's land from its creditor?

During the course of the elections the orgainsed working class movement will have to meet such declarations of policy, criticise them and clarify its position. There will be anti-wage-rise, anti-bonus statements. All these will have to be repudiated.

And yet where the left candidates are not contesting the working class will have to support, cast its vote in favour of the *Lok Dal—Congress combination* to defeat the other two challenges. At the same time it will make it clear that its vote is cast to defeat authoritarianism and communalism and not in support of reactioanry anti-working class policies.

Working Class a Powerful Force

The working class movement is strong enough to take up the challenge of anti-working class policies from any quarters. Its unity is a powerful force which no government can ignore. It is because of its unity, that the Janata Government with its huge majority in the Lok Sabha could not pass the reactionary Industrial Relations Bill and the accompanying Bill to prohibit strikes of teachers, profesors and nurses.

The increased strength of the left forces in the new Parliament, their increased influence among the people will be a powerful guarantee to protect the right of the working class. Immediately therefore all attention must be concentrated on defeating the Congress(I) and Janata respectively representing the forces of authoritariansim and communalism.

(The Working Class Vol-IX, No 4, December 1979).

50

What The Parliamentary Election Will Decide

On Election Manifestoes of Congress(I), Janata Party and Lok Dal

CONGRESS(I)

It poses Serious Danger

All promises made by Indira and her predecessors have proved worthless. Such promises as giving a few jobs in the police and Government service—a promise made to the Muslims and untouchables in the present manifesto does not solve the problem and offer no protection to the minorities. Under the British all the lower services were Indianised. Among the higher officials also there were large numbers of Indians. But oppression of the people, their tortures continued. The Muslims and Harijans enrolled in the police will be used to oppress their own people and get a certificate of partiality for the Government.

Multinationals are also disposed of in another ten lines. There is no promise to prevent their entry and stop them from exploiting our country and the people. There is no warning that their opeations constitute a danger to the freedom and independence of our country. Naturally so. The Congress Governments, relying on World Bank aid, had to growingly accept the multinationals and were too powerless to resist them. The multinational drug companies and others in our country fleeced the people, defied Government directives, victimised workers, but the Congress Governments continued to encourage them. The Hathi Committee's report on multinational durg companies was shelved by the Indira Government. Dange's patriotic and national bourgeoisie wants to

woo the multinationals, not fight them.

The grand declaration about labour covers exactly seven lines exactly following what was said in the notorious 20 point programme. "Workers" participation in industries is one of the cardinal aims of the Congress. We regard the participation of workers in the production and management process to be vital. Such participation will be steadily enlarged and Government undertakings will provide an effective lead in this behalf. The interest and welfare of labour are constantly kept in view as an overriding measure of social justice."

A huge strike wave has been sweeping the country. Last year millions of working days were lost. But it seems that there was no cause except lack of so-called participation of workers in management. This is hypocrisy unlimited for which Indira Gandhi and her party are notorious. It was difficult to omit all mention of the working class; the mainifesto, therefore, raises an irrelavent issue and under its facade rejects all the urgent demands of the workers and employees for which huge struggles are taking place. This is assurance to the big bourgeoisie that the working class demands will be put down with an iron hand as during the Emergency.

Therefore, need-based wage is not mentioned, dearness allowance fully compensating the workers against the rise in cost of living finds no mention. Not only acceptance of bonus as defferred wage is omitted, bonus itself is repudiated by omitting all references. Secondly, of course, unemployment relief has no place, trade union rights are not mentioned. Recognition through ballot, the demand of the organised trade union movement is again rejected by implication and the Congress(I) reiterates its partiality for recognising favourities and stooges. And of course there is no promise that the Compulsory Deposit Scheme will not be reintroduced.

This is nothing but a virtual resurrection of the anti-labour anti-employee programme of the Emergency days. The Congress(I) seeks a popular mandate to attack the workers and the employees who were earlier declared a high wage island by its Planning Commission. The employees should remember that the manifesto does not recognise their existence except perhaps of the teacher for whom a national commission is promised which will enquire also into their emoluments.

No general promise of land reform to distribute land to the

tiller, only those evicted under the Janata Party rule may get back their land. No promise to break up the present land concentration, under which ten per cent hold fifty per cent of the rural assets including land. This is an earnest of the assurrance of the Congress(I) to big landlords. Not a word about the millions of acres in the possession of landlords holding land above the ceiling. No reference even to the land surplus of 21 million acres estimated by the Planning Commission. What more do the landlords—want?

JANATA PARTY

Tall Claims : Shallow Performance

THE Janata Manifesto claims with some pride that the Government was able to stabilise prices. A more shameful and callous claim could not be made. The Congress (I) was routed in the 1977 elections—one of the reasons being the high inflation and high prices imposed on the people. Everyone expected the Janata Government to give some relief from these sky-rocketing prices to ease the market situation for the common man. But instead of this the Janata Party maintained the prices at this high level and claims it as a merit.

The Janata Government claims to have arrested increase in the backlog of unemployment. It claims that it was able to provide jobs for all new entrants. This of course is a fantastic claim and is disproved by the rapidly rising figure of registered unemployed. This further disproves the Janata claim to have reduced unemployment in origanised industries also.

In 1976-77, the last year of the Emergency, the total number of unemployed on live registers was 10.6 million; in 1977-78 it was 11.9 million; in February 1979 it was 13.2 million; by July it was 13.8 million. This is the reality. Unemployment has been increasing rapidly and it increased by 30 per cent since the Janata took power. Its policies brought no relief but accentuated the crisis of the economy.

The manifesto promises to ensure the safeguarding of the right of workers to make legitimate use of strikes and protests after suppressing so many stirkes, and enacting the Mini-MISA. In every strike their first demand was, withdraw the strike before any talks can be opened. They now again promise to provide an effective machinery for settlement of disputes. What they provided during their two and a half years rule was the notorious Industrial Relations Bill rejected by the entire trade union movement.

There are fourteen items in the list of promises. But there is no mention of dearness allowance and full neutralisation against rise in the cost of living. It is known that the capitalists and monopolists have been conspiring to blow up the system of D.A. The Janata Party's refusal to support D.A. and full compensation in the midst of mounting inflation will be welcomed by the big capitalists. What has Shri Dandavate to say about this?

Having eliminated need based wage, full neutralisation against rising cost of living and bonus as deferred wage, the manifesto regales its readers about other thing—quarry workers, unorganised workers, minimum wage legislation, there being no intention to keep these promises. The Janata leaders know that they can safely make these promises without fulfilling them, because after all unorganised workers will not be able to protest and pressurise. However, they must be careful about the promise of equal remuneration for equal work. The working women are being organised and they will not allow the promise to remian in the manifesto.

It is further no wonder that there is not a word about foreign capital in the manifesto. The Janata also is too shy to mention the existence of multinationals in the country, the exploitation caused by them and the danger they pose to our people. How can they refer to multinatioanls after the sell-out they planned in connection with the BHEL? This is an offering to the World Bank that foreign capital and multinationals will not be disturbed. The same assurance is given by Indira Gandhi. And the Janata promises to protect the economic independence of the country!

LOK DAL

What it Promises?

THE Lok Dal manifesto contents itself with vague generalities as if the nightmare of the Emergency rule was not there, people had not suffered, as if the challenge of the authoritarian forces in the present elections does not exist. What it offers in protection of democratic rights is not protection against authoritarian assaults, but vague statements which were made by many political parties before the Emergency.

The Lok Dal policy will be "to promote industrial peace, prevent stoppages of production, increase output and efficiency and put an end to illtreatment and arbitary dismissal of workers." This policy, except prevention of illtreatment etc., is precisely the

policy of the capitalists. No stoppage, more production, more efficiency without needbased wage, bonus, etc. are precisely what the capitalists want.

The Lok Dal manifesto openly sides with the capitalists when it says: "The Lok Dal will take steps to link increase in wage to the growth of productivity." This is precisely what the Tatas, Birlas want. This is precisely what Indira Gandhi sought to push through during the Emergency. The capitalists demand that any increase over the present miserable pittance must be preceded by further sweated labour. Their profits may run into hundreds of crores of rupees, but for an additional rupee to the workers he must work more.

However, the Lok Dal has at least conceded one important demand of the workers—which neither the Janata nor the Congress(I) accepts. "Therefore, the Lok Dal will introduce legislations to ensure that in large establishments there is only one union in one establishment for the purpose of bargaining with the management—the recognition of the union being determined through secret ballot periodically." Very Good.

The Lok Dal's rural orienration; its concern for the village does not extend to agricultual workers. It notes that the percentage of agricultural workers role from 16.37 in 1961 to 26.33 in 1977. It also notes that the wage of the agricultural labourer is low compared with the wage of the city workers. But it promises nothing to the agricultural workers—neither rise in wages. Wage, legislation or house-s[illegible]s. Once again, it is the attitude of the property-holder to the propertyless. Here it expresses really the attitude of the landlord to the agricultural workers.

The Lok Dal manifesto misses many important things. On many issues it takes an outright reactionary stand. At the same time it takes a progressive stand on foreign capital, and multinationals. It does not do full justice to the problems raised by the challenge of authoritarianism and communalism. The class limitations of the party are written all over the manifesto.

The Working Class, Vol-IX No. 5, January 1980.

51

What Next

The Parliamentry elections have presented two contradictory phenomena. On the one hand there is a sweeping victory of the Congress(I) which has secured 352 seats in the Lok Sabha.

On the other hand the Congress(I) has lost heavily in Tripura, West Bengal and Kerala, where it was confronted by the Left forces—the unity of the Left and democratic forces.

In West Bengal and Tripura, the Congress(I) was routed in the Parliament elections. It secured 4 out of 43. In Kerala it had to contend itself with 5 seats out of 20 while together with its partners it got only eight seats.

In the Kerala Assembly elections on 21st January, the Cong(I) again got a big reverse. Out of 140 seats it could secure only 17 seats—together with its allies it could win only 41 seats.

(Collapse of Other Bourgeois-Landlord Parties)

The bourgeois-landlord parties, the main contenders against the Congress(I) in other states collapsed before its onslaught. The Janata, the Lok Dal and Cong(U) were virtually routed in a number of states. In many states the Cong(I) securing large sections of masses in its support, in the predominantly Hindi areas the Cong(I) won big victories, largely because of division in the opposition vote.

The sweeping victory of the Indira Congress is primarily due to the antipeople policies of the Janata Party which continued the same class policies as the Congress. The Janata Government growingly alienated all down trodden sections of the people. It did nothing for the peasant and agricultural workers and its collapse was inevitable because of loss of rural votes. Besides the Janata

Government pursued a policy of hostility to the working class and the employees. Apart from the many police firings and other acts of repression, the Janata Government introduced the notorious Industrial Relations Bill and another to ban the strikes of the workers, employees, teachers, nurses, doctors and others. The deficit financing under the Janata budgets pushed prices upwards, pushing them to giddy heights during the last few months which also discredited the caretaker Government and the Lok Dal and Cong(U) parties. Indira Congress profitted most of the developments, the growing alienation of Janata and Lok Dal Governments from the people.

The Janata added to its loss of prestige by its internal bickerings the unprincipled conflicts among its leaders. The Congress-Lok Dal alliance continued this tradition of inner conflicts till they split impressing the people that they were not a combination to be relied on—not a combination to give them with a stable Government. Indira Gandhi again took advantage of this and promised a stable Goverment.

But the Janata Party did the worst service to the anti-authoritarian unity when its Janasangh-RSS ideology alienated from the muslim minority and harijans and scurry them en-masse to the Cong(I). In the 1977 elections it was precisely their swing in favour of Janata which gave it its sweeping victory. The Janasangh-RSS ideology did not remain only in the ideological sphere. It took concrete form in the Aligarh and Jamshedpur riots and drove the minority mass into the anti-Janata Camp of Indira Congress. The same role was played by the anti-harijan atrocities under the Janata rule. The casteist out-look was witnessed in these atrocities out of which full capital was made by Indira Gandhi. The disintegration of the Lok Dal Congress alliance, their inner quarrel coupled with the reactionary policy announcement of Lok Dal leaders and the monstrous price rise under the care-taker Government, sealed its doom and again apurned the people to vote for Cong(I) in states where the left forces were very weak.

People Vote For Left Alternative

At the same time in three states of Tripura, Kerala and West Bengal where the left democratic forces emerged as the alternative, Indira was defeated, her magic would not work, her words had no effect. Once again it is demonstrated that all the united force of left and democratic parties can withstand the onslaught of authoritari-

anism.

Dangerous Development

The victory of Indira Gandhi in the Lok Sabha constitutes a menacing and dagnerous development for the working class. It signalises the return to power of the party which had imposed emergency, abrogated fundamental rights, banned strikes and handed over the working class and employees to their exploiters. It signalises the victory of the party which cheated the peasants and agricultural workers by flaunting the 20 points programme. Democracy is in peril. The interests of the masses are in jeopardy.

Task Ahead

The situation calls upon all sections of the working class, all sections of the trade union movement to give their thought to forge a new anti-authoritarian front in defence of democracy and peoples well being. There is no doubt that large sections of people have voted for Cong(I), voted erroneously failing to see the lurking danger behind its victory. And yet they do not constitute the majority, Indira has won 70 p.c. of the Lok Sabha seats by securing 42 p.c. votes. It should be clear that vast sections—majority of the voters—have given a verdict against her. This huge number forms the basis of a broad front to fight authoritarianism and preserve democracy. Those who have voted for the Cong(I) will soon be disillusioned, as under the deepening economic crisis they will find themselves to be cheated. The struggle for people's livelihood must succeed in mobilising even larger sections in the struggle against high prices against unemployment, for better conditions for the peasant and agricultural workers. Besides the broad front must act as the effective champion of the minorities and harijans to prevent their exploitation by the authoritarian party.

Left Forces to Lead

The lead is to be taken by the left to mobilise all the democratic forces and hasten the formation of a broad front. A central task is the defence of the Left Governments of Tripura, West Bengal and Kerala as well as the frustration of Congress(I)'s attempts to topple the Janata Lok Dal Governments.

Working Class Must Play a Vital Role

The working class and the united trade union movement has to play a leading role in building the unity of the left and democratic forces. The Working Class constitutes the most radical force and its united strength is sufficiently powerful to gulvanise other

elements into action. The unity of the trade union movement was temporarily disrupted during the elections and the events proceeding. But now with the Congress(I) back in power, it must reforge its unity quickly and be ready in the first place to meet the attacks which are bound to come in the wake of the worsening economic situation. The united trade union movement must note that the Congress(I) election manifesto does not endorse or accept a single demand of the workers. It does not admit the existence of the employees either. This shows what it should expect in the coming days. It will be hard put to defend workers' jobs, their wage and their trade union rights. United struggle for these will definitely create a new support for the left forces to march forward. The unity of the trade unions must act as the base for earning and strengthening unity of the country's left and democratic forces. This way alone the working class can meet the challenge of authoritarian forces, defend democracy and the urgent demands concerning its living conditions.

(The Working Class, Vol-IX, No. 6, February 1980)

52

Venkatraman's Budget

The Finance Minister's speech, presenting the Central Budget underlines the breakdown of the economy, developing over the last three decades, though the Minister, to escape the guilt of his own party, ascribes it as the mismanagement of the Janata Government.

"The performance of power, coal and railway sectors was one of the most serious deficiencies on the economic scene.....Inadequate supply of coal and its poor quality, poor maintenance, equipment damage resulting in increase planned and unplanned outrages, and poor management were responsible for the decline in the percentage of thermal capacity utilisation to as low as 45 per cent". For one the labour-troubles are not mentioned. And the plain unvarnished truth stands out that corruption and other evils have brought down the production of energy to 45 per cent of capacity inflicting terrific suffering on the people. It is obvious that this break down has developed over three decades of poor management.

"With the serious deficiencies in infrastructure it was not surprising that there was a fall in the production of major commodities like steel, cement, cotton textiles, and sugar which fell by 28 per cent."

Growing Unemployment

Naturaily this led to increased unemployment which grew more than 9 per cent in a year. The number of job seekers on the live register of the employment exchange rose from 13.15 million at the end of January 1979 to 14.44 million a year later, i.e. by 9.8 per cent.

The stagnation in the economy can be realised from the fact

that between 1971 and 1979 employment in private sector increased only 5 lakhs and that in the public sector by 40 lakhs. No wonder the number of registered unemployed has reached one crore and forty lakhs.

Trade Gap

The Finance Minister further underlined the adverse balance of payments position. The import bill has increased because of a steep increase in oil prices and other imports like fertilisers, leading to trade gap of Rs. 2,232 crores—the highest on record. The result is that the garibi hatao government of famished India has decided to export one million tonnes of rice. Besides the country is forced to export protein food—fish worth Rs. 200 crores. Such are the consequences of the growing break-down of economy.

Export rice, export fish, to be in the world market, export sugar when at home the poeple are forced to buy at Rs. 8 per kilo and for the benefit of the capitalist path, import steel, coal, edible oils and what not.

Has the Finance Minister any remedy to take India out of the present situation? He has none except blaming the Janata Government.

Increase in Inflation

On the contrary by leaving an uncovered deficit of Rs. 1,400 crores, his budget only ensures the progress of inflation and fleecing of the people. This budgetary deficit comes in the wake of the huge deficit of preceding years. How then can the Finance Minister say "This deficit is only a little over half the deficit of last year. It is my judgement that a deficit of this order will not have a significantly adverse impact on the economy."

This uncovered deficit, it must be further remembered comes in the wake of the increase in passenger and railway freight charges, road transport charges due to hike in oil prices all of which are bound to raise the prices of several goods accelerating the inflationary movement.

It should be further clear that the total uncovered deficit is reduced to Rs. 1,400 crores because an almost equal sum of Rs. 800 crores from external loans and Rs. 540 crores from the International Monetary Fund is included in the budget under capital receipts. Otherwise either the unearned deficit would have been doubled or the planning expenditure would have had to be drastically cut down.

Press and the big capitalists and supporters have joined in a chorus of approval of the budget proposals for tax relief.

In the first place these reliefs are to be assessed in the background of the imposition of huge burdens of Rs. 2000 crores through increase in oil prices railway freight (Rs. 200 crores) and fertiliser prices (Rs. 300 crores.) The Finance Minister, therefore cannot claim that his budget is anti-inflationary just because he has not gone in for heavy budgetary taxation proposals.

Other Claims

What are the other claims? The budget raised the exemption limit for income tax on personal income from Rs. 10,000 to 12,000. Certainly a good measure. This class of employees and workers whose wages and salaries lag behind the cost of living increases were badly in need of relief. But why is the Finance Minister so persimonious? Why is the nil rate slab income is being retained at Rs. 8000? "As a result in cases, where the taxable income exceeds Rs. 12,000, the incidence of income tax excluding surcharge will remain at the existing level". This means relief to a very small section of employees, clerks, teachers and workers. Those who draw Rs. 1000 per month will get no relief. Only those who draw below this sum will enjoy the concession.

Certain other measures are welcome. Specified life saving drugs, 30 in number, will be fully exempted from duty; controlled cloth will be exempted from excise duty; cycles and cycle parts—"poor man's conveyance"—are to be totally exempted from excise duty.

But what will be the total effect of these concessions and reliefs on the life of the people?

Burden on People Increased

And in the final analysis in actual money terms how much do these reliefs amount to—only Rs. 34.75 crores and nothing more. Compared with Rs. 6000 crores of revenue from excise duties proposed in the budget for 1980-81.

The Finance Minister's budget increases duties on many commodities. He raises the special excise duty from one-twentieth of the effective basic duty to one-tenth of the basic duty. Sugar, it seems, will continue to be charged special excise levy though at the old rate. With these proposals the Finance Minister increases the burden of Ceneral Excise duties by Rs. 223 crores and of customs duties by Rs. 39.58 crores.

Computer Offensive

But there are certain strange features about the reduction in excise duty. The excise duty on indigenously manufactured computers is reduced from 25 to 20 percent *ad valorem*. This is financing large-scale unemployment and nothing else. Elsewhere in the budget, the Finance Minister talks about helping small-scale industry, increasing employment potential of capital. And here he seeks to promote computers which will work havoc with the employment of workers and employees. The fact is that while indulging in the customary talk about labour-intensive industries, the Government has already decided on an assault on workers' job. The Central Government has decided to reduce its staff by not less than ten percent. And to lessen the production costs, private and public sector industries alike are preparing for the computer offensive.

The Finance Minister levies additional taxation on postal letters and parcels. The tariff for letters is increased from 30 to 35 paise at the lowest slab. The rate for parcels will be stepped up from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2.00 for every 500 gms. The charges for installation and shifting of telephones are also being increased. Local calls in a quarter will be charged at 50 paise per call against 40 paise at present. The proposed tariff revisions are estimated to bring an additional revenue of Rs. 27.10 crores a year.

Bogus Excuse

The excuse given for this heavy impost is bogus. It is stated by the Finance Minister that this was rendered necessary because of grant of bonus to P and T workers. This is nonsense. In the first place this bonus is linked with productivity. In the second place the department has already made provision for it by not filling in the vacancies. Today there is already seven percent reduction in staff and the department is likely to make a saving inspite of the bonus agreement. Besides, Mr. Venkataraman did not tell the House that the ministry concerned is attempting to impose ten percent reduction of staff on the P & T workers.

Concessions to Capitalists

Mr. Venkataraman has however made many proposals pleasing to capitalists. He has rendered the convertibility provisions harmless which will encourage the private capitalists to borrow freely from the State institutions without fear of losing control over their concerns. Secondly, he has increased the permissible allow-

ance for depreciation for the new industries. He has proposed no measures to mop up the profit of the capitalists—big sums they have accumulated due to the inflationary spiral. Nor is there any provision to control or mop up the operations of the parallel enconomy of speculators and blackmarketeers.

Another pleasing concession to Big Business is removal of restrictions on the deductible amount of expenditure on advertisement, publicity and sales promotion. This is done in the name of helping small and medium houses. It is meant to help the Big Business financiers who can now use their money for financing political parties of their choice.

Biggest Concessions to Rural Vested Interests

The Finance Minister has made the biggest concession to the rural vested interests by proposing to discontinue the levy of wealthtax on agricultural property except on the owners of tea etc. The reasoning is curious and amount to saying since the big landlords refuse to pay, the wealth tax should be abolished. The Finance Minister says, "At the time when agricultural property was brought within the tax net, it was hoped that it would be a potent instrument for mobilising resources from the affluent sections of the agriculturists. But our experience of over the last decade (no Janata here) has been most disappointing. The amount realised as wealth tax on agricultural property has been less than Rs. one crore per annum...the valuation leding to complaints of harassment". No doubt the samller fellows were harassed and should have been given exemption.

Claim Exposed

But the fact that only Rs. one crore per annum could be collected meant that the big landlords refused to pay and they bought over the taxation machinery and that the Government did not prosecute them. And naturally so. These are the vote-gathers in the big bourgeois-landlord alliance. And these are the people who have amassed crores profiting from Government spending in the rural areas under the national planning. The abolition of agricultural wealth tax exposes the claim of the Finance Minister to stand for the weaker sections.

What has the peasant to look for in the budget? Only increased price for his input and consumer goods. The middle peasants will not be able to afford the use of fertilisers. Prices of manufactured goods will not be lower for him. And at best he might get a rise in

procurement price of his produce—a miserable rise of Rs. two per quintal.

Inevitable

The consumers, the workers, employees all are threatened with further erosion of their incomes through high prices, management demand for increased productivity and promised an assult on their employment. The economy will not get out of stagnation and attack on existing employment is inevitable. Already thousands are being laid off and are out of employment.

Under these conditions further foreign loans, concessions to multinationals to promote "employment" are surely likely. And if the World Bank demands its price, attacks on food subsidies may also follow. The budget reveals a perilous economic situation which the Finance Minister has tried to conceal by concentrating attention on petty concessions in excise duties.

(The Working Class, Vol-IX No. 11, July 1980)

INDEX

1. Presidential Address and Speeches in the CITU Conference, Working Committee & General Council Meetings	1, 6, 24, 138, 161,196, 228, 269, 287, 324, 338, 409, 436
2. MAY DAY MANIFESTO	60, 155
3. International - Bangladesh, Vietnam	32, 41, 215, 246
4. National Situation & T.U. Movement	46, 50, 67, 128, 266 283, 474, 478, 482, 489, 494, 499, 503
5. On Issues	
Against Fascism in W. Bengal	52, 373, 406
Railway Workers Movement	188, 192, 209, 258
Wage Freeze, Wage & Income Policy	132, 262, 383, 401
Minimum Bonus	123
On Unemployment' Right to Work	69, 180
Government Employees Struggle	37, 184
Industrial Relations Bill	362
One Union One Industry	377

1002904

— A CITU Publication —

Centre of Indian Trade Unions
6, Talkatora Road, New Delhi-110001.
Phone : 371 40 71