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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



A VIEW OF THE AUDIENCE ↑

NIRUBEN PATEL VALLAGE →

COMMUNITY HALL BY CITU ↓



TRIPURA 'ASANGHATITA SHRAMIK SAHAYIKA PRAKALPA'

The Left Front Government of Tripura has introduced a Social Security Scheme for the workers in the Unorganised Sector, named 'Asanghatita Shramik Sahayika Prakalpa'. The Scheme is applicable to workers in the unorganised sector and the self-employed persons in the occupations specified by the State Government. All wage employed and self-employed workers in the age group of 21- 55 years, in Tripura, with an average monthly family income not exceeding Rs. 3,500/-. Initially one person from a family will be eligible to become a member of this Scheme. The State Government may re fix this eligibility criterion from time to time. Workers covered under the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, will not be eligible to be covered under the Scheme. At present the workers in Brick/ Stone breaking and Stone crushing, Tile manufacturing, Construction of roads and buildings, beedi, rice mills, public motor transport, tailoring, printing, handloom, saw mills, motor garages, copy writing work in the courts/ registration office, type copying, earthen pottery work, and dhup kathi

manufacturing industries where less than 4 persons are employed, in the unorganised sector. In the self employed sector, auto rickshaw, rickshaw and hand pulled carts, masons, carpenters, painters, electricians, plumbers, cobbler/ shoe makers, head load workers, fishermen, street hawkers including newspapers hawkers, ayas / attendants engaged in hospitals/ nursing homes, weavers and others engaged in the handloom industry, domestic servants, agricultural workers, dhup kathi manufacturing and such other workers as may be decided by the State Government.

Under the Scheme, each subscriber would contribute a sum of Rs. 25/- per month. The State Government would contribute an equal amount. The State Government/ Bank would pay interest at a rate declared by the Government, on the balance at the credit of the subscribers. The total contribution along with the interest would be refunded to the workers on attainment of the age of 55 years or in the event of the account becoming inoperative due to the death or permanent total disability due to accident or loss of two eyes or two limbs or loss of one eye or one limb in accident or prolonged default in making contribution. The contribution made by the subscribers would be returned to him/ her after the expiry of a lock in period of three years in case of prolonged default in making contributions. The State Government may prescribe provisions for loans and withdrawal from the Fund as and when deemed necessary.

The Labour Inspector or an authorised official of the Labour Department will collect the monthly contributions. He/ She will identify and fix a place within the Block area for the collection, in consultation with the Block Development Officer. The Scheme will be implemented and maintained by the Labour Department through Labour Directorate under the guidance of respective advisory Committees set up at Block, Sub division, District and Stat level. The State Government will nominate a representative of Central Trade Unions in the advisory committees at the District and State level.

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

DECEMBER 2002

HERE & NOW | Sudhir Tailang



No, no — not xenophobia — he's suffering from Harenphobia!

Courtesy: Hindustan Times

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EDITORIAL

DEFEAT THE COMMUNAL FASCISTS

All the attempts by the BJP and the *sangh parivar* forces to hustle through the elections to the Gujarat State Legislative Assembly to gain electoral mileage out of the most barbaric carnage indulged in by them were foiled by the timely intervention of the Election Commission and the Supreme Court.

No sooner than the Election Commission finally announced the election schedule, the aggressive *hindutva* bandwagon headed by the VHP announced to carry out a *vijay yatra* on the heels of the *gaurav yatra* undertaken by Narendra Modi, from Godhra to Ahmedabad, ostensibly to observe the tenth anniversary of the demolition of the Babar Masjid in Ayodhya on December 6 in 1992, but with the intention of rekindling the communal passions for ensuring the victory of BJP in the State elections. The anti-minority bashing overtly resorted to by the likes of Togadia forced even the Narendra Modi administration to admit to the Election Commission that such a *yatra* could result in vitiate the atmosphere in the State at the time of elections. Promptly the Election Commission advised the State Government to withdraw the permission granted to the *vijay yatra*.

After some rattling by the VHP hawks and the BJP spokespersons in New Delhi, the Prime Minister was forced to direct the Narendra Modi government to act in deference to the directives of the constitutional authority that the Election Commission is.

The battle lines have since been drawn in Gujarat.

The *sangh parivar* and the BJP are making the Gujarat election as the laboratory to test their *hindutva* electoral plank. If they succeed in Gujarat, whatever had been resorted to in that State would be repeated throughout the country, setting it aflame. It is, therefore, imperative that the democratic, secular and peace loving people of Gujarat must come forward to trounce these communal fascists headed by Modi, Advani, Vajpayee etc. and throw out the BJP government in the State, which is illegitimately clinging on to power.

The BJP, despite all the bravado indulged in by the leadership, is already finding itself on a very weak turf in Gujarat. That the Chief Minister himself had to give up his earlier constituency to seek a safer seat is indicative of the nervousness that has overtaken them. But, there is no room for complacency. The working class of Gujarat must lead the struggle to root out the communal virus from the state and contribute to restoration of amity and peace in the country.

FORWARD TO NATIONWIDE JOINT SATYAGRAHA ON 8TH JANUARY AND MARCH TO PARLIAMENT ON 26TH FEBRUARY, 2003

The oft-repeated assertion by the Prime Minister about his Government's determination to vigorously push forward the atrocious policy of globalisation and the retrograde reforms there under, including the anti-worker and pro-employer amendments in the labour laws, is a challenge confronting the country's working people and their movement. With utter disregard to the all round demand, including from the trade unions, for a thorough reappraisal of the economic policies, the Government is going ahead with its agenda. In the meantime disinvestment is done with vengeance, even profitable PSUs, like oil companies and NALCO etc. are sought to be sold out. Government has set a target of mobilising of Rs. 78,000 crores from sale of public assets during the 10th five years plan. Move is a foot to privatise the nationalised banks. Attack on the working class is mounting everyday, in public private, unorganised and informal sector. While shedding crocodile tears for the unorganised sector, Government refuses to enact a law for the agricultural workers and denies providing any social protection to the unorganised workers forming the largest section of the economically active population. In his address to the recent

session of the Indian Labour Conference, the Prime Minister had appealed for consensus on his government's economic and labour law reforms, totally ignoring that the trade unions were opposed to this policy. A concerted onslaught is unleashed on the workers and their trade unions. The present policy is aimed at suppressing the trade unions and pass on the heavy cost of the so-called reforms to the working class and other deprived sections of the population. Joblessness is mounting on an unprecedented scale due to downsizing, r e t r e n c h m e n t , contractualisation, outsourcing and closures of units. The toiling workers are being subjected to severe hardships because of non-payment of wages for months together, wage cut, withdrawal of hitherto available fringe benefits and so on. Blatant violation of labour laws has become the order of the day with the tacit support of the people in power. Never before had the working people come under such attack and never before since Independence was there a government so hostile to the workers after assuming power. The Central trade unions and independent federations together representing the cross section of the working class of the country had assembled in a mammoth "National Assembly of

trade unions" on 15 July 2002 at Talkatora Indoor Stadium and given a call for countrywide Satyagraha, Jail Bharo, Rasta Roko on the 8th January 2003 throughout the country to register protest against the economic policies of the central government. The Assembly further decided to take out a massive workers' March to Parliament on the 3rd day of ensuing Budget Session.

At the recent meeting of the Central Trade Unions held on September 28 at New Delhi, it was decided to launch the March to Parliament on February 26, 2003 with an appeal to the working people to make the Satyagraha on 8th January and march to Parliament on the 26th February, 2003 massive. The constituents of CTUOs along with independent trade unions and federations have to organise conventions and rallies to mobilise the working masses for these two programmes. The central leaders will participate in conventions and rallies in state capitals and major industrial centres.

**MOVE COLLECTIVELY FOR
JOINT ACTION PREPARE FOR
8TH JANUARY SATYAGRAHA
AND 26TH FEBRUARY MARCH
TO PARLIAMENT**

Demands :

National Assembly endorsed the minimum demands as under:

1. Halt to privatisation of profit making and potentially

viable public sector undertakings.

2. No changes in the Labour Laws, including the Industrial Dispute Act and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, favouring the employers and against the interest of workers.

3. Restoration of quantitative restrictions on

imports, the removal of which is much to the detriment of industry, agriculture and national interest as a whole.

4. No to policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment and evolving nationwide employment generation policies and programme.

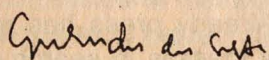
5. Well thought out social

security schemes including an unemployment insurance scheme.

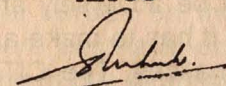
6. Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for Agricultural workers.

7. Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings.

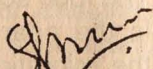
8. Restoration of 12% interest on the P.F. deposits.



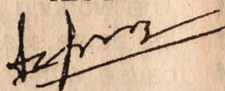
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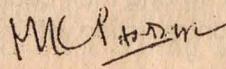
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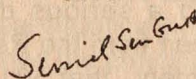
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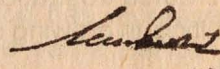
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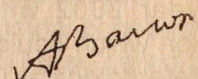
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CITU



(Sunil Sen Gupta)
UTUC



(Umraomal Purehit)
HMS



(Ashutosh Banerjee)
UTUC(LS)

COMRADE SHANTI GHATAK

We record with deep grief the sad demise of Comrade Shanti Ranjan Ghatak, a veteran trade union, a former member of the CITU Secretariat, President of the West Bengal State committee of CITU, a senior member of the CPI(M) State committee and the former Labour Minister of West Bengal. Com. Santi Ghatak, who has been ailing for some time with age-related complications, passed away at the SSKM hospital in Kolkata, November 1, 2002.

Com. Ghatak played a significant role in the trade union movement in West Bengal in his early days. Com Ghatak was an outstanding leader of the working class movement of the country since last more than five decades. He played an important role in building the trade union movement in Bengal as one of the strongest movements in the country and led the movement to play frontline role in the political arena as well to strengthen the left movement in the state. He was a front line leader of CITU since its foundation and as a member of the national secretariat of CITU till the tenth conference of citu held in December, 2000. He made immense contribution in shaping the policies and organisation of CITU towards tremendous advance.

As a Labour Minister, with his clear vision and rational approach he handled many a labour dispute in West Bengal, most efficiently. In the background of the mounting onslaughts on the working class in the post liberalisation regime, Com Ghatak's contribution and sincere effort in defending the interests and rights of the working class and also most skilled handling of the industrial relations situation in the state in particular will be ever remembered by all.

The death of Com Shanti Ghatak has left a void in the working class movement in the country, which is difficult to fill up. The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to the departed leader and convey condolences to his bereaved family members.

RALLY TO DEFEAT NDA GOVT. POLICIES!

M K PANDHE

The dangerous consequences of the policies pursued by the BJP-led NDA Government are being seen by the people from their own experience in a clear light. The pro-BJP euphoria witnessed among the press has now withered away and the national press has become critical of the policies of NDA Government. Repeated electoral defeats faced by the BJP and its allies have created frustration among their cadres which is resulting in growing contradiction within the NDA camp.

WORST DROUGHT

The year 2002 witnessed a serious drought situation which could be seen from the Report of the Meteorological Department that 301 out of 523 Districts were affected by deficient rains. It has been officially admitted that 13 states were worst affected namely U.P, M.P, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka, Orissa, J&K and Tamilnadu starvation deaths have been reported in the States such as Orissa, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. The Financial Express dated 22nd September 2002 pointed out decline in acreage of Kharif crop, "paddy is lagging behind in area coverage by 57 lakh hectare (1h) as compared to previous year. This year area coverage under coarse serials is less by 541h Area coverage under oilseeds is less by 13 1h The total area under pulses has shrunk by 17 1h and that of cotton by 121h."

Estimated cost of relief work measured as placed before the Central Government workout to be Rs. 17,000 crores! However the relief package prepared by the Government of India for drought affected area is only Rs.2000 crores. Though the FCI godowns have stock of about 60 million tonnes the Government has not come forward with any concrete food for work programme to give genuine help to the drought affected people.

The rural poor is greatly suffering due to serious draught situation while in some parts of the country near famine situation is prevailing. The peasants and agricultural workers movement in

India have been campaigning for effective relief measures to the affected people. However, the required help is not forthcoming from the Government of India.

The Prime Minister's appeals to opposition political parties not to use the draught situation politically. However, he is not taking any positive and timely measure to take up the relief measures seriously. The food scarcity will be strongly felt in the country in the near future. Already press has reported the migration of rural masses in search of work and livelihood.

The working class will be adversely affected by the acute scarcity and it has to make a common cause with the rural masses. The CITU unions should come forward to express solidarity with the Kisan and Agricultural workers movement in their legitimate struggle for food security. The starving peasantry will certainly come forward for powerful movement to compel the NDA Government for effective measures and our unions must join them wholeheartedly. This will be an important step in developing worker peasant alliance in the forthcoming period.

AN ELECTION GIMMICK!

Though the Planning Commission has finalised the 10th Five year plan and the Cabinet has approved it, the whole exercise has been done with an eye on the forthcoming Parliamentary elections. Several economists have already expressed doubts about achieving the target of 8 per cent rate of growth during the next plan. The first year itself the growth rate has been less than 5 per cent. The draught situation is likely to result in reduction of one per cent in GDP. It will mean that in the rest of the 4 years of the plan the growth rate must be nearly 9 per cent, which is next to impossible to achieve.

When the economy is facing acute recession and the rate of growth is slowing down expecting 8 per cent growth within the frame work of present policies of NDA is not going to be accomplished. The Tenth Plan document though gives a blueprint of bright future, it is just a mirage.

The plan frame has given special emphasis on

labour law reform and labour flexibility. The emphasis on downsizing of manpower and right of hire and fire is also there.

Regarding the resources, the plan document has placed the target of Rs. 78,000 crores by sale of public sector undertakings. It means the disinvestment policy will be implemented more vigorously. Though Minister for Disinvestment Arun Shorie had expressed his apprehension about achieving this target due to controversies within NDA, the Government is likely to go ahead with the policies of disinvestment non-chalantly. The plan expects bigger role for MNC's and foreign capital, more concessions to big business houses are offered in the matter of taxes and visualises additional burden on the poor people. It talks about more emphasis on development of power sector and hopes to spend about 3,50,000 crores there is likelihood of not fulfilling the target by any standard. The NDA Government has converted the entire planning process into a hollow shell.

Our trade unions have to campaign to explain to the working class the dangerous proposals made in the plan which will result in more attacks on the common people and worsening their working and living conditions.

INDUSTRIAL DECLINE

Since April 2002, the happenings in the economic front during the first six months of the current financial year confirm the same declining trend ridiculing all talks regarding recovery signals in the economy being made by the Govt officials and their hired economists.

* The index of industrial production during April-June 2002 witnessed a negative growth on the average as compared to immediately preceding quarter (January-March 2002) by around 12 points on the average

* During the four months period from March 2002 to June 2002, the production performance in basic-goods sector declined by around 10 points, capital goods about 48 points, consumer goods by 35 points, consumer durables by 49 points and consumer non-durables by 32 points as measured by index of industrial production.

* In the mining & quarrying, manufacturing and electricity sector representing the foundation of the industrial economy declined by 16 points, 19 points and 17 points respectively during the

same period. (RBI Bulletin, October 2002)

* The gross domestic capital formation as a percentage of GDP steadily declined from 25.3% during 1991-95 to 23.4% in 1999 (RBI Annual Report, 1999-2000) and the concerned growth rate dipped from 11.1% in 1995-96 to 2.0% in 2000-01. (Economic Survey, 2001-02).

* Contribution of the private corporate sector in gross domestic capital formation as percentage of GDP has consistently declined from 6.4% in 1998-99 to 5.9% in 2000-01, while the public sector's contribution has increased from 6.4% to 7.1% during the same period. (RBI, annual Report 2001-02)

OVERALL DECELERATION

The real situation in the industrial economy, which remained the principal target for so called reforms since 1991, can be best described by quoting the Economic Survey (2001-02) itself. The Survey noted: "The industrial slowdown is widespread covering all broad sectors such as manufacturing, electricity, and mining and all end use based groups such as capital goods, intermediate goods, both durables and non-durables. The slowdown in domestic and global demand appears to be the major factors. ... This is reflected by low level of prices for manufactured goods in 2001-02. However, given the relatively low level of external sector for the Indian economy, domestic demand and supply side factors have played the key roles for industrial slowdown."

The agricultural sector has, of late, become the target of globalisation. The same trend of slowdown, depressed prices and increased cost of input, reduction of subsidies, proliferation of imports etc. resulting in widespread unemployment, depressed level of wages, and deepening poverty daunts this sector. A trend of gradual reverse transfer of land to big landholders either in the form of leasing out or complete sell-off is setting in. Increasing dominance of MNCs in the agro-trades is another ominous symptom signalled by the policies of globalisation in agriculture.

The collapse of the prices of the manufactured goods in domestic market is having its natural reflection in the price indices, although the rising prices of essential commodities for daily living offer no solace to the common people. This demand

recession reflects the fast eroding purchasing power of the mass of the population, which in turn is putting the recessionary pressure on the economy. Thus, the all round decline has become perpetual. Similar is the claim for improvement in the poverty situation made by the Govt. Even the World Bank estimate noted the households below poverty line (living at less than one dollar a day) to be more than 470 million (47 crore). The mounting stock of food grains along with starvation deaths in various parts of the country exposes the utter bankruptcy of the policies of economic liberalisation.

It is universally accepted that the demands constraints, fuelled by the deepening poverty, increasing joblessness and squeezing commodity market, have been the main reason for low investment and the recession in the economy. Yet, successive budgets and accompanying measures have deliberately not address the demand side problems but concentrated on supply side management to please the corporate lobby, both Indian and foreign. Lavish giveaways and concessions have been showered on them, which

yielded no result in reversing the depressed market and recessionary environment. The World Bank - IMF driven policy is aimed at perpetuation of the recessionary situation, which benefits the international finance capital most in firming up its grip on the economy of the developing countries. The game plan is to demolish the manufacturing base of the country's economy and acquire control on the natural resources and infrastructure through acquisition of indigenous companies. The main objective of such economic exercises is designed to facilitate larger transfer of resources from the mass of the populace to the capitalist-landlord class, in a stagnating economy. The ruling polity of our country, quite consistent with their class position, has succumbed to such nefarious anti-national, anti-people designs. We have to rally the entire working class in the struggle to defeat such nefarious policies of the NDA Government.

(Excerpts from the General Secretary's report to the meeting of the CITU Working Committee at Hissar, Haryana, 1-4 December, 2002)

Huge Rally Against Privatisation Policies, Labour Report

P R Krishnan

The historic Azad Maidan in south Mumbai witnessed, on October 28, a 15,000 strong joint rally of white-collar employees and blue-collar workers to strongly condemn certain decisions of the Maharashtra state government. These decisions are about privatisation of department services in the state, downsizing of their workforce, freeze on the dearness allowance (DA) the state government employees are entitled to get, and denial of bonus to them. In addition, in one voice, the rally demanded rejection of the second National Labour Commission's report and recommendations which, the rally said, are anti-working class.

The call for the protest rally was given by the Maharashtra level Coordination Committee of State Government Employees, Semi-Government Employees and Teachers as well as by the Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions. The former

had put forth the following demands: (1) grant of annual bonus at the time of Diwali, (2) withdrawal of the state government's decision to freeze the DA, (3) revocation of the decision to privatise the state government's undertakings, and (4) an end to the move to downsize the workforce. At the same time, the Joint Action Committee had given the call to protest against the recommendations of the second National Labour Commission. The Joint Action Committee comprises central trade union organisations like the CITU, AITUC, HMS, HMKP, Kamgar Aghadi and TUCC as well as certain independent unions and industrial federations.

In fact, the JAC's call was also to pledge the support of the working class to the demands of the state government employees. It was thus that both the Coordination Committee of government employees, etc, and the trade unions' Joint Action

Committee chose the same venue (Azad Maidan), the same date and the same time for holding their rallies.

Despite the Diwali festival season in the state, an overwhelming majority of the 15,000 strong joint rally at the Azad Maidan was of the state government employees. Women employees comprised a good part of this mobilisation. The rally was a unique display of unity between the working class and the state government employees.

Apart from the state government staff, other sections of workers and employees who assembled for the rally under the banner of JAC were bank and insurance employees, central government employees, railway employees, industrial workers, municipal employees, and so on. All of them came in processions from different directions of the metropolis, to converge at the Azad Maidan.

R G Karnik, president of the All India State Government Employees Federation and convenor of the Coordination Committee of State Government Employees, Semi-Government Employees and Teachers, presided over the rally. Karnik is also the convenor of the trade unions' Joint Action Committee. K L Bajaj, a CITU leader, was one of the presidium members.

Among the leaders who addressed the rally were Shankar Salvi (HMKP), Sukumar Damle (AITUC), G M V Nayak (BEFI), Suryakant Bagal (HMS), Dr Vivek Monteiro (CITU), A D Golandaz (MSEB), M A Patil (Sarva Shramik Sangh), Sanjay Singhvi

(TUCI), Jayant Chawan (SSS), R P Singh (Central Government Employees Confederation), Ashok Tul (Zilla Parishad Employees), Suresh Dhopeshwarkar (AIBEA), Arvind Nachane (AIIEA), S S Upadhyaya (GIEU), and B Vichare (MHADA).

In his concluding speech, Karnik warned the Maharashtra government that grave would be the consequences if it did not revoke its anti-employee decisions. He further said the working class in Maharashtra is fully united in demanding that the recommendations of the second National Labour Commission be rejected.

The meeting urged upon the state and central government staff to join the countrywide working class agitation against the anti-people policies of the state and central governments and to participate in the joint rally at Delhi that is scheduled to take place in the new year. It was announced that as per the National Assembly decision at Delhi, there would be Rasta Roko and Jail Bharo agitations throughout Maharashtra on January 8. During the run-up to the proposed Delhi rally, the trade unions' Joint Action Committee will also organise conferences and conventions in all districts of Maharashtra against the government's policies and to press for rejection of the National Commission on Labour's report.

It will be mentioned here that the CITU has been playing a major role in bringing various sections of the workers and employees together for the purpose of organising united actions in the state of Maharashtra.

NIRUBEN PATEL VILLEGE INAUGURATED

Niruben Patel Village in Gujarat was constructed to rehabilitate the residents of Lavanpur village that was damaged in the January 1999 earthquake, was inaugurated on November 7, 2002. This village is situated in Maliya taluka of rajkot district.

The village has been named after late Comrade Niruben Patel, who was a leader of the working class and had been a Mayor of Bhavnagar.

M K Pandhe stated how, through the CITU, workers had contributed Rs. 25 lakh for building a primary school and a community centre in the village.

The reconstructed village consists of 150 houses, a two-storey primary school, a community centre, a panchayat office, an Anganwadi, a park for children and an underground water tank.

(Photographs of the village and the audience of the inaugural function are on the cover page)

SEMINAR ON UNORGANISED SECTOR WORKERS

P K GANGULY

The Second National Commission on Labour had two terms of reference, viz, (a) to suggest rationalisation of laws relating to labour in the organised sector and (b) to suggest an umbrella legislation for ensuring minimum level of protection to the workers in the unorganised sector.

The terms of reference may seem to be innocuous and give an impression to the gullible that at long last the Govt. is going to do something in the interest of the working class, particularly when it wants to enact a central legislation to deliver the goods to the nearly 92 per cent of the workforce in India who are in the Unorganised Sector. However, the truth is just the reverse. Not to protect labour, but to put them into straight jacket to suit the needs of market economy, i.e. the needs of the monopolists - Indian and foreign. Now it is no longer in theory or speculation, but the grim practical experience of the working class since the last one decade of liberalisation of ruthless distrection of industries in the organised sector and loss of secured jobs in millions. This has resulted in an unwieldy growth of the unorganised sector and of-course expansion of poverty among the Indian workforce, as almost the entire unorganised sector workers get wages below the poverty line.

Thus it will be ridiculous to expect that the so-called umbrella legislation for the unorganised sector workers will give any protection to them from the same profit hungry monopolists, to whom this sector has been thrown open for poaching by virtue of the 1991 industrial policy resolution. It is said that crocodile tears never dry up. The report of the National Commission on Labour concerning the unorganised sector typifies the above saying. While dealing with the report, the authors have given vivid and elaborate description of the conditions of the sweated labour, probably better than a worker himself can describe his condition. No labour laws, no social security, no minimum wage, no security or guarantee of service, worst victims of hire and fire, grinding

poverty, no housing, no family life, lack of safety, diseases, health hazards and so on and so forth - a demonstration of withering heights of hypocrisy. It will be interesting to note that the Commission constituted several study groups including one on umbrella legislation for unorganised sector. But it has not accepted anything touched good by its own Study Group. The study group projected the sector as a picture of poverty and recommended for need based minimum wage as per the norms of the 15th Indian Labour Conference of 1957, supplemented by the Supreme Court verdict of 1991 in the Raptakas Brett case. But the draft Bill prepared by the Commission has rejected the recommendation.

During the debate in the Indian Labour Conference held on 28th and 29th September, the Labour Minister assured that a national seminar would be called soon to discuss the issues of unorganised sector. This national seminar was held on November 7 and 8, 2002. A separate group discussed the umbrella legislation. This group was chaired by D. Bandopadhyaya, who was the Chairman of the study group also. CITU was represented by P.K. Ganguly. This group after more than one day's discussion unanimously arrived at the following important conclusions:-

a) Provisions must be made in the law for payment of minimum wages on the basis of the recommendations of the 15th Indian Labour Conference, supplemented by the Raptakas Brett judgement of the Supreme Court. There should be a National Minimum Wage on this basis. Mention of "floor" with regard to minimum wage should not be there.

b) Social Security, particularly in the areas of health, maternity benefits, disability and old age benefits must be provided. The existing schemes of ESI, Provident Fund should also be extended to the entire sector.

c) The approach of the legislation, both for the unorganised sector and the agricultural workers should not merely be welfare oriented, but also provide for regulation of employment,

provision of minimum employment earning guarantee, free from hire and fire with protection of employment clauses.

d) Workers participation must be ensured in formulation and implementation of the schemes.

e) Representation of employers and trade unions must be equal in number on all bodies. Representation of NGOs, experts, academics and other interest groups, given as additions.

f) There should be a separate central law for the agricultural workers. All other sections of the unorganised sector should be included in the umbrella legislation for unorganised workers including workers of the small scale and tiny sectors home based workers, self-employed workers, domestic workers, etc. There should not be any separate law for the small scale and tiny sectors.

It should be noted that while rejecting the recommendations of the Study Group regarding the 15th ILC norms for fixation of minimum wages, the Labour Commission deliberately used the meaningless jargon "floor level minimum wage" to confuse the issue and avoiding the criterion for fixing minimum wages. The Government thus wanted to take the issue back to square one maintaining status quo in the area of minimum wages despite the fanfare over the legislation. Secondly, it had clubbed together agricultural workers also under the purview of the umbrella legislation, refusing for a central legislation for them.

It should also be noted that in the Indian Labour Conference held in September there was a separate committee to discuss the problems of the small scale and tiny sectors. The employers

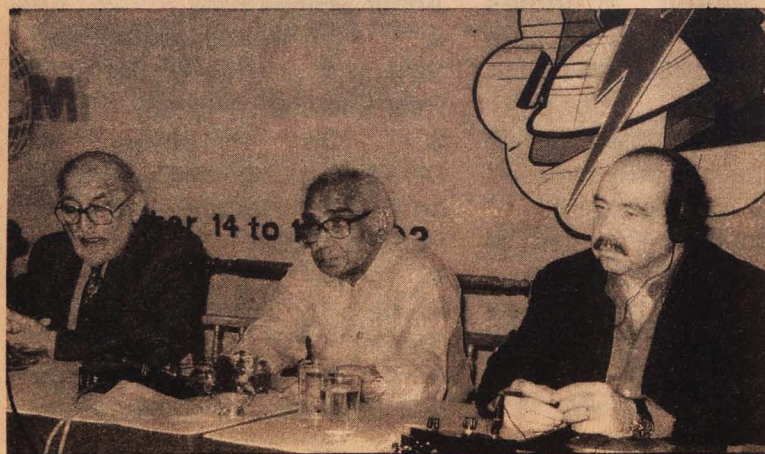
had demanded a separate law to exempt all labour laws from small scale and tiny sectors. But the ILC had unanimously negated their demand. Yet, the Government has taken a move to bring another separate legislation conceding the demand of the employers.

Further, in the draft bill circulated by the Government as the recommendations of the Labour Commission, trade unions and NGOs were clubbed together in the representation in the boards, to give equal number of representatives at par with the employers.

The group in the national seminar negated all these and gave the unanimous conclusions as stated above.

Thus it can be seen that the draft bill as recommended by the Labour Commission kept the vital issue of minimum wage as vague as before. It did not address the question of hire and fire, security of jobs, employment earning guarantee, not even social security as per the demands of the workers. It merely dealt elaborately on constitution of tripartite boards and other issues only to make a show that the umbrella legislation will deliver the goods. In fact, it is not going to give a pittance of benefits, nor solve the growing miseries of the unorganised sector workers, which is going to mount with the ongoing process of reforms.

The unorganised sector workers cannot remain insulated from the adverse effects of the wholesale amendments of the labour laws by the fake umbrella legislation. The CITU and all other trade unions must unitedly oppose the fake legislation.



M K PANDHE, NEW IEMO PRESIDENT

In the Second Congress of the International Energy and Mines Organisation (IEMO) held at Kochi, on 15-17 November, 2002 (see report on pages 12-13) M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU had been elected President of the IEMO. He was earlier a Vice-President of the organisation. Aurthur Scargill was reelected as one of the two Co-Presidents of the IEMO. Alain Simon was reelected as General Secretary of IEMO.

In his several decades long trade union career, it is for the first time Pandhe has been elected as President of an international organisation. It is not only a honour conferred on Pandhe but also the recognition of the role of the CITU and the working class movement of India.

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AND MINES ORGANISATION: SUCCESSFUL SECOND CONGRESS AT KOCHI

The Second Congress of International Energy & Mines Organisation (IEMO) was held at Kochi on November 15-17, 2002. The Congress appealed to the energy workers all over the world to form a single organisation by merging all international organisations of energy and mine workers, so that a powerful struggle can be organised in all the continents to fight globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation. The Congress was hosted by the CITU.

The resolution adopted by the Congress condemned the worldwide attack on trade union rights and living conditions of workers. It expressed grave concern at the growing unemployment and loss of jobs as a result of the policies pursued by the governments of several countries as dictated by World Bank and IMF.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM

The Congress denounced the hegemonic designs of US President George Bush, which was reflected during its aggression in Afghanistan and by the threat to attack on Iraq, all in the name of war against terrorism, with a view to control the oil resources. It further condemned the criminal acts of Israel against the people of Palestine, who are heroically fighting against the Israeli aggression. The Congress castigated US imperialism for its decades-long blockade of

Cuba, which blatantly defied the UN resolutions. The Congress called the working class to fight against the imperialist machinations and support all the struggles against imperialism. The resolution moved by Arthur Scargill (UK), and seconded by A K Padmanabhan (India) was unanimously adopted.

One hundred and fifty six delegates from 27 countries participated in the Congress including 70 delegates from abroad. From India representatives of AITUC, HMS and Engineers Associations joined the Congress.

A broad based Reception Committee was formed in Kochi with C M Dineshmony, Mayor of Cochin, as chairman. His welcome speech was read out by M. M. Lawrence.

CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS

M K Pandhe, Vice Chairman, IEMO and General Secretary, CITU, in his opening speech appreciated the role played by IEMO in unifying the energy workers and gave a brief review of the united struggles conducted by Indian workers against globalisation and NDA Government's economic policies. He condemned the rise of communalism and stressed the need to fight against it.

Arthur Scargill, co-President of IEMO, pointed out how within a short time the IEMO had developed into an organisation with 109 affiliates from 66 countries in the world. He

welcomed the growing movements all over the world against US imperialist's attempts to dominate the world. He condemned the policy of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and pointed out how working class in UK is fighting against his policies.

Alain Simon, General Secretary, IEMO, presented a report of activities of IEMO since its first Congress held in Monlucon (France) in 1996. He affirmed the need for an integrated energy policy and demanded the right of all workers for basic human and TU rights. He expressed concern at the discrimination in the use of energy worldwide and appealed for solidarity of energy workers internationally.

LIVELY DISCUSSIONS

Several speakers explained their national experiences and endorsed the views expressed by General Secretary, IEMO. The Congress then discussed six theme papers:

1. On Globalisation by Arthur Scargill (UK)
2. On Public Utilities and Structure of Enterprises by J Paul Escoffier (France)
3. On Problems of Developing Countries and North and South Dialogue by M.K. Pandhe (India)
4. On Rights of Wage Earners by Daniahou Karimou (Benin)
5. On Struggle for Peace and International Solidarity by

Houceni Kafouri (Morocco)

6. On Unity and International TU Movement by Francois Dutiel (France)

There was a lively discussion on all these reports and delegates could get a global picture of the situation prevailing in different countries in the world.

The deliberations of the Congress were conducted in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic, with simultaneous translation.

From Europe the delegates from Great Britain, France, Russia, Ukrain, Albania, Romania and Poland, participated, while from Africa, Morocco, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Congo, Niger, Togo and Libya attended the Congress. From Asia, India, Nepal, Kuwait, Jordan and Quatar participated. Latin America was participated by Cuba and Haiti.

Over 20 delegates, who had informed of their participation, could not attend due to their difficulty in obtaining visa from the Indian Embassies. Several countries expressed their inability due to their involvement in local struggles.

GROWING UNITY

One of the most important features of the Congress was the participation of the representative of the ICEM and ICFTU affiliates. Gino Govender, who represented the ICEM welcomed the appeal for unity of the international organisations in energy and mining industries and emphasised that it was the only answer to take on the challenges faced by the TU

movement in the world today. He appealed for follow up action on these issues at a global level, so that such unity can be achieved as early as possible. He mentioned that the IMEO has been invited to attend the ICEM Congress being held at Rome.

The Congress was greeted by V R Krishna Iyer, an eminent jurist. He condemned globalisation and called upon the working class to defeat the policy of globalisation by joining other sections of people in the world.

J Paul Escoffier (France) presented the financial report to the Congress and appealed for funds to strengthen the activities of the IEMO.

The Congress elected the Executive Bureau of 17 members and the Executive Committee of 26 members.

EXHIBITION AND SEMINARS

The Mayor of Kochi hosted a dinner to all the delegates on 17th November. Two impressive cultural programmes were performed by renowned artists from Kerala and Punjab on 15th November. An exhibition on 'Power Scenario in India' was also arranged on the eve of the Congress by the Reception Committee.

On 14th November, a National Seminar was organised by the Reception Committee on 'Indian Energy Scenario in the 21st Century - Problems and Prospects', which was inaugurated by E. Balanandan, President, CITU. It was addressed by N R Srivastava, V.B.R.K. Rao, both former Chairmen of Central Electricity

Authority; J K Mehta, AGM (Corporate Planning), NTPC; R K Belapurkar, GM, BHEL; Thampan Thomas, HMS; N C Jha, General Manager (Quality Control), Coal India Ltd; K Ashok Rao of NCOA, Chakradev Pd Singh, AITUC and M K Pandhe, CITU. Speakers in their speeches highlighted various aspects of power development in the country. Speakers explained the positive contribution made by public sector in the development of energy and need to strengthen it for accelerating its growth. They criticised the policy of privatisation which would lead to increase in the price of electricity in the country.

Another international seminar on 'Energy for All' was organised on 17th November jointly by CITU and association for Right to Energy (France). It was presided over by M K Pandhe. M R Srinivasan, former Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, inaugurated it. Madjid Cheric, General Secretary, Association of Right to Energy, submitted a background paper. Among those who addressed the seminar include Danialou Karimou (Benin), J Paul Escoffier (France), B S Meel (India), Gino Govender ICEM (South Africa), Mademba Sock (Senegal) Francois Duteil (France) Ghanesh Abdul Kader (Algeria), and S M C Pillai, (India), former Director, NTPC. This seminar also witnessed identical views being expressed by different speakers, considerably helping in evolving common understanding.

(GEORGE MONBIOT (GM) has been a part the global justice movement worldwide, which has been leading a campaign against the IMF/World Bank driven neo-liberal globalisation. He is a regular columnist for Britain's Guardian newspaper and author of the book "Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain". He was recently interviewed by the Socialist Worker (SW). We publish the interview, courtesy: Socialist Worker - Editor)

"THEY ARE SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYING ECONOMIES"

***SW:** WHAT'S the first thing that people should know about the functioning of the IMF and World Bank, and how are these international institutions connected to corporate power?

#GM: THE KEY issue is that the World Bank and IMF are controlled exclusively by the rich nations and work exclusively in the poor nations. They set economic policies for those poor nations and effectively deny the governments of those nations from making a serious attempt at setting their own economic policies—and therefore their own political prescriptions.

So you have a straightforward refutation of democracy taking place here. You have the poor world being governed by the rich world, almost exactly as if we were still living in colonial times.

The result is that, very often, we see decisions made which appear to favor not the interests of the poor world—which supposedly these two institutions are trying to help—but the interests of Wall Street brokers, foreign multinationals, big business based in the rich world. The rich world has done very well out of World Bank and IMF decisions, while the poor and less developed world have done very badly.

Take the principal emergency packages from the IMF over the past few years. These have involved enormous bailouts, whose prime purpose is to allow foreign "investors"—which really means speculators—to get their money out before the economies of poor nations collapse.

There have not been any substantial bailouts at all for such essentials in the collapsing countries as health and education, the welfare of the poor who lose their job as a result of the crisis, the government institutions which can't function anymore. The bailouts seem to be aimed exclusively at securing the investments of these foreign speculators.

More profoundly than that, many of the crises—

and the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and now the Argentine crisis are very good examples—were caused as a result of, principally, IMF policy that was aimed exclusively at pleasing the financial community in the United States.

So, for instance, in Asia, we saw the IMF demanding the removal of all capital controls and financial controls, which exposed Asia to this incredible speculative flow of what's called hot money—short-term funds—allowing the Wall Street brokers to launch ferocious speculative attacks on the currencies of the Asian countries and bring those countries to their knees.

The removal of all regulations, which the IMF demanded, had nothing whatsoever to do with the welfare of the nations concerned. The only possible reason for the stringency of its demands is that it was being lobbied to make those demands by Wall Street. The only beneficiary of those policies were the brokers who made a very large amount of money after the East Asian collapse.

We see this pattern repeated time and again, and you have to ask after a while: "Who is driving this?" The only possible answer that comes to mind is that these very exclusive financial interests in the West are driving this. And they are systematically destroying economies all over the world.

SW: ONE OF the messages coming out of the United Nations' Earth Summit in Johannesburg is that institutions like the IMF and World Bank were recognizing past mistakes and trying to be more inclusive. What do you think of this?

GM: THERE ARE two problems with the idea. The first is that it's impossible to see how they can reform themselves if they continue to refuse to acknowledge the scope of the mistakes they have made in the past. Neither institution has done that. They've acknowledged certain minor errors. They've acknowledged errors of implementation.

They've acknowledged that they've gone a little bit too far in some respects. But they haven't faced up to the systematic failure of their policies—and the fact that their policies have been, in many cases, far more destructive than beneficial to the interests of the poor.

Until they can do that, why on earth should we trust them when they say that they will do better in the future?

The second issue here is that both the World Bank and the IMF are constitutionally destined to fail. Partly, this is because they are controlled by the rich world, working on the poor, so they are as undemocratic as you can get. And in the absence of democracy, one can only expect failure. Also, because they are effectively enforcing a debt-based global financial system, which can only lead to more debt.

The IMF and World Bank were created in response to the failure of the original proposal before Bretton-Woods, made by the economist John Maynard Keynes, for a self-correcting international financial system, where both creditors as well as debtors were obliged to clear both imbalances of trade and international debt. That was thrown out, principally because of lobbying by the United States, which was at the time the world's largest creditor. And a wholly inadequate system—namely, the World Bank and the IMF—was put in its place. However much you tinker with that system, it will remain wholly inadequate.

SW: THE U.S. government's "war on terrorism" has had a big impact on the global justice movement, especially in the U.S. How do you see the relationship between the war and global justice issues?

GM: I THINK these are intimately connected, and I take a lot of heart from the fact that many people who previously were campaigning exclusively on issues of corporate power have widened the scope of their campaigning to take a powerful stand against war.

There's no question that these interests are connected. It's partly because of corporate power that you have a president called George Bush at all. We know the extent to which campaign contributions help to steer the result in American elections.

It's partly because the administration feels the need to secure oil reserves that we have this prospect of war. And one of the reasons it feels that need is that it's an administration run by oilmen and heavily influenced by oilmen.

It's also mindful of the extraordinary power of what Dwight Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex"—the amazing lobbying power that the defense industry has in the United States, and indeed in other countries such as the United Kingdom. While that's not the whole reason why George Bush wants to go to war, there's no question that it's part of the reason.

So it's intimately connected with the struggle that those of us in the global justice movement have been involved in already.

SW: HOW DO you think "global justice" can be achieved?

GM: I'M WORKING on just this myself at the moment—and looking at just what democracy would look like if it were applied to international relations.

What would a democratic world order look like, as opposed to the ultra-undemocratic world order we have at the moment—the World Bank and IMF controlled by a few rich nations, the G-8 nations bringing a great deal of weight when they get together in their meetings, the UN Security Council controlled by the world's five biggest arms traders, the World Trade Organization effectively controlled by shadowy teams of corporate lawyers who are utterly unaccountable to the public.

SW: WHAT ROLE does the grassroots organising of the global justice movement play in all this?

GM: IF YOU read the new book by Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, you will see that he—the man who was previously the chief economist of the World Bank—makes a very clear case that it's only because of protest that these issues are on the agenda at all in the rich nations. Protests—like the ones that were seen in Seattle, and Prague and Genoa, and Washington in previous years—have alerted the rich world to the appalling injustices being meted out by institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. And that raising of consciousness is the first step toward political change.

So I would say that the protests are absolutely essential step towards creating a just world order.

WHITHER MONETARY AND FISCAL POLICIES?

TAPAN SEN

The recent declaration by the Reserve Bank of India to lower the interest rate further, stated to be for encouraging investment in the real economy, is destined to fall flat. Similar lowering of interest rate in the past few years has not led to any notable increase in domestic investment; rather the investment scenario in the last five years is one of consistent decline in the growth rate of domestic investment. In 2001-02 itself, the Indian corporate sector's investment declined by 11.2% as per a survey conducted by Economic Times of 200 large companies in the private sector (4-11-2002). Rather the net effect of further dose of reduction in interest rate will be a disincentive for the people to save through nationalised banks and other savings instruments floated by the Government. This will also generate downward pressure on the interest rate on provident fund and other savings of the workers and the common people in general, leading to huge loss in their lifetime savings. On the other hand, this will enable the Govt. to access the bank money at a cheaper rate and also reduce the cost of interest burden on the Govt.

FALLACIOUS PERCEPTION

Not only that, the entire perception of the Govt's credit policy being pursued through nationalised banks, along with lowering of interest rates, as an instrument for encouraging investment has been proved to be absolutely fallacious. In reality, despite lowering of interest rates in successive years, the expected growth in investment in the domestic economy did not take place with the banks remaining flush with funds. The interest rate regime and the orientation of the credit policy of the Govt. should have been addressed with a comprehensive approach and with clear sectoral-prioritisation, to serve the real purpose of fuelling employment generating investment in the economy. The Govt. of India's policy in that regard is just moving in the opposite direction, which stands exposed by the appraisals made by the RBI itself.

The RBI Bulletin (October 2002) while analysing

the performance of 1242 private companies noted that the interest burden of the bigger companies (with paid up capital of Rs 25 crore and above) got eased by 3.4% in 2001-02, whereas in the smaller units the interest burden and cost remained much higher. Even a recent study on Indian investment climate by Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has admitted that real interest rate for small and medium enterprises are on the much higher side. We must note that these smaller units generate comparatively more employment and exports and worsening of their financial condition is bound to have negative effect on production, exports and employment. The same RBI bulletin also observed that the interest burden continues to be higher in the industries like iron & steel and allied products, engineering, electrical machineries, industrial chemicals, sugar, textile rubber, construction etc., ranging from 52% to 132%. All these sectors are mostly run by the Indian companies and are also major employment providers. On the other hand, interest burden in the industries like drugs and pharmaceuticals and information technology - mostly dominated by the foreign multinational companies - was light being at 17.6% and 4.1% respectively. In this background the privatisation of Indian banking sector is going to worsen the situation.

KELKAR REPORT ON FISCAL REFORM

Added to above is the disastrous recommendation of the Vijay Kelkar Committee on fiscal reform, which has prescribed drastic curtailment of the tax rate for the higher income strata, the corporates and the MNCs. Despite the hype over hiking of income tax exemption limit to Rs 1 lakh, withdrawal of provisions of all tax rebates on savings and housing will more than neutralise the illusory benefit of and result in a higher tax burden on the salaried class. A study on the impact of the Kelkar recommendations, if implemented, as published in the Business Line dated 9th November 2002 shows that the burden of income tax on the lower strata of the organised sector workers even up to an annual salary of Rs. 4 lakh

will increase to the extent of even 280% within the next three years period and the higher income strata is going to get a heavy dose of tax relief. Besides, acceptance of such disastrous recommendation by the Govt. will discourage household savings, which has significantly contributed to gross domestic savings, thereby domestic capital formation as well. This has consistently been growing over the years, in contrast with declining investment growth rate by the private corporate sector.

CONCESSIONS TO CORPORATES

Ironically, despite dismal contribution of the corporate sector, both domestic and foreign, to country's economy, the Kelkar Committee has

recommended liberal concessions for them by way of abolishing wealth tax, capital gains tax, minimum alternate tax and reduction of corporate tax. It has also recommended reduction of corporate tax for the foreign companies, whose contribution to capacity building employment or generation is almost nothing.

In essence, both the monetary policy and the fiscal-reform initiative of the Govt. are aimed at diverting the huge household savings towards the speculative stock market, in favour of the international finance capital and the Indian corporates. Workers and the people are the worst sufferers.

Global Education Gulf Deepening - UNESCO Report

The learning gulf across the globe is deepening, with schooling systems in some countries actually regressing, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

Eighty-three countries were on track to deliver by 2015 an Education For All (EFA) target, set by the World Education Forum in Dakar two and a half years ago.

But at the same time, 70 other countries would fail to meet the target and some were actually going backwards, it said.

The problem was being made worse by a shortage of teachers — some 35 million more are needed throughout the world.

The findings appear in the "Education For All Global Monitoring Report: Is The World On Track?" published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

"It reconfirms the Forum's diagnosis that almost one-third of the world's population live in countries where achieving the EFA goals remains a dream," said education expert and co-author of the report, Christopher Colclough.

The report said 28 countries accounting for 26 percent of the world's population might not meet any of the three measurable goals of Dakar — universal primary education (UPE), gender equality and the halving of illiteracy rates.

Most of these were in sub-Saharan Africa, but the list also included India and Pakistan.

Another 43 nations accounting for 35.6 percent of the world's population risked missing at least one of the goals, the Paris-based UNESCO said.

"At current rates of progress, UPE is unlikely to be reached in 57 countries," the report said, adding that 43 of them including several in central and eastern Europe were actually regressing. Efforts to achieve gender parity were making ground but still left much to be desired, while attempts to improve literacy rates were making relatively little headway.

"Unless a much greater effort is made, a total of 78 countries will not be able to halve their rate of illiteracy by 2015. These include four of the world's most populous countries, Bangladesh, China, India and Pakistan," UNESCO said.

It added that these four together accounted for 61 percent of the world's illiterate adults.

However, efforts to hit the Dakar targets were being severely hampered by a world shortage of teachers, with three million more needed in sub-Saharan Africa alone out of the estimated need to find up to 35 million more worldwide.

(Reuters London - report, November 13, 2002)

ASIAN SOCIAL FORUM 2003, HYDERABAD

The World Social Forum developed as a response of the growing international movement to neo-liberal economic policies being pursued in most countries and capitalist led globalisation. For decades, international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been making decisions that affect the lives of people all over the world, without being subject to any sort of democratic control. People in Third World countries, as well as the poor and excluded sectors of industrialised countries suffer the devastating effects of economic globalisation and the dictatorship of international institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the governments that serve their interests.

The World Social Forum was conceived as an international forum against neo-liberal policies and capitalist led globalisation build around the slogan: "Another World Is Possible". It seeks to provide a space for discussing alternatives, for exchanging experiences and for strengthening alliances between social movements, unions of the working people and NGOs. The first WSF was held in January, 2001, in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. It was timed to coincide with the holding of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Every year since

1971, an exclusive club of chief executives of the world's largest and most influential trans-national corporations meets with academics and political leaders in the Swiss resort town of Davos, to chart the global economic agenda. The WSF was thus seen also seen as a counterweight to the options proposed by the World Economic Forum.

The decision to hold the Forum in Brazil was also significant. While on one hand Brazil is one the countries that has been greatly affected by neo-liberal policies, on the other hand, different sectors of Brazilian society are resisting these policies, in rural and urban areas, in shantytowns, factories, political parties, churches, schools, etc. The richness of Brazilian grassroots organisations represented a source of inspiration for the development of the World Social Forum. Porto Alegre itself is situated in the southernmost province of Brazil, and the then pro-left local government and the city's mayor supported the Forum in many ways. The WSF was locally hosted and organised by a Brazilian committee. CUT - Central United Workers of Brazil is also a part of it. The Brazilian Committee is assisted by an International Committee. (Brazil has recently witnessed the victory of LULA of the Leftist Workers Party as the country's President.

The World Social Forum is not an organisation, not a united front platform, but "...an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society centred on the human person". The second WSF held in Jan - Feb, 2002. The International Committee of the World Social Forum and the Brazil Organising Committee have decided that from this year (2002) onwards, the annual global WSF meeting will be accompanied by regional, continental, and/or thematic Forums across the globe. While the main WSF event will be held in 2003 January in Porto Alegre again, there is a proposal that the 2004 event shall be held outside Brazil. Though a final decision is yet to be taken on this, there is a possibility of holding the event in India in 2004.

In line with the WSF International Committee's call, the WSF in India is holding the Asian Social Forum (ASF) in the city of Hyderabad in India from January 2 to 7, 2003. In the World Social Forum process the ASF, 2003 is the first Asia level event to be convened with an

understanding that Asian Social Forum event would be repeated over a period in all the sub-regions of Asia.

The ASF will provide a forum for an open dialogue among the movements opposed to capitalist led globalisation. The only criteria is that the participants are opposed to imperialist globalisation as well as religious sectarian violence, and have a commitment to democratic values, plurality and peace.

The Asia Social Forum 2003 will be organized around the identified six thematic areas.

" Peace and Security
" Debt, Development, Trade, Finance and Investment
" Nation State, Democracy and Exclusion
" Social Infrastructure, Planning and Cooperation
" Ecology, Culture, Knowledge
" Alternatives and People's Movements

The programme of the ASF will be: Opening Plenary on 2nd

Jan. Conferences, Seminars, Workshops and Film Shows from 3rd to 6th and Closing Plenary on 7th Jan. 2003.

The CITU has decided to join the Asian Social Forum event. Along with the other central trade unions and fraternal all India Federations, a few seminars are being organised as trade union events during this period. Seminars will be organised on the following topics:

" Against Privatisation and Disinvestment

" Globalisation and Labour Rights

" Financial Sector Reforms

" Impact of Globalisation on Working Class and Building Global Resistance

" Communalism and Impact on Workers

" Impact of Globalisation on Unorganised Sector and Remedies

The exact dates and venues of these seminars will be intimated to you in due course.

Our Andhra Pradesh State

Committee of CITU is actively associating with this event and is a part of the WSF India Hyderabad Organising Committee.

The CITU Secretariat has requested all State Committees and Industrial Federations to arrange to send delegates for participation in the Asian Social Forum events, particularly the trade union seminars. The participants will have to make their own arrangements for travel, stay and boarding at Hyderabad. They may please contact the CITU A.P. State Committee at the following address:

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COAL MINERS PREPARE FOR STRUGGLE

The remarkable unity achieved by the six lakh Coal workers all over India during their preparation for a week long strike in August last opposing the Bill to privatise the Coal industry and other pressing demands of the workers, generated great enthusiasm among the workers to oppose the NDA Government's economic policies. The successful preparations made jointly by all the 5 federations, along with other unions, forced the Government of India to climb down from their high and mighty position and to accede to the major demands of the workers. The Government had to accept that it would have detailed discussions with the unions in Coal industry on the demand and supply position of coal in the country and how the Coal India Ltd. would be able to meet the requirement of coal during the 10th and 11th Five year plan periods. The Group of Ministers would hold detailed discussions with the trade unions, pending which the Bill to denationalise the coal industry would not be taken up in Parliament for consideration and passing. The Government had to accept that Joint Bipartite Committee for Coal industry (JBCCI) would be constituted by the end of September and negotiations would commence for the next round of wage revision. The NDA Government had to commit that joint revival package would be prepared for ECL, BCCL, CCL and NEC through detailed

discussions with the trade unions. Even the tender notice to sell Dankuni Coal Complex would be kept in abeyance, pending discussions with the trade unions on revival package.

The other pending issues of the workers were also to be settled through negotiations.

The Government of India had to accept these demands in the face of total closure on coal mines for 7 days and possibility of closing down of even thermal power stations in large parts of the country.

NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENT

However, both the Ministry of Coal and the CIL management's were not serious about implementing these commitments. It is now clear that their intention was only to somehow or the other avoid the massive strike action by the coal workers all over India.

This is clearly seen from the fact that more than 3 months have passed after signing the settlement the CIL management and the Government of India have not implemented even a single clause of the agreement. This can be seen from the following facts.

a) No meaningful discussion has been started either at the level of Ministry of Coal or at the level of group of Ministers.

b) Though implementation of the new agreement has to commence retrospectively from eighteen months earlier, the

JBCCI has not yet been constituted, even after more than one month of the committed date. Even several clauses of the agreement have remained unimplemented, while some existing facilities are being curtailed unilaterally by the managements.

c) No meaningful discussion for revival package for ECL, BCCL, CCL and NEC have been started by the management. While the management is going ahead with their own unilateral proposal before BIFR and operating agencies they are not prepared to consider a single suggestion given by the trade unions. Regarding NEC the management has openly come out with their refusal to make any proposal for making NEC a viable company. Even Rs.55 Crores sanctioned by the Central Government for NEC as unilaterally returned by the CIL management.

d) Regarding Dankuni Coal Complex, the unions have submitted a detailed revival package to the management. However, from the side of the management there has been no attempt to prepare any proposal to make the unit viable. The CIL management is contemplating to sell the unit to a private party at a throw away price.

e) Regarding the other pending issues of the workers, the less said the better. The management has clearly indicated that they have no intention to settle the matter

through negotiations. It is adopting dilatory tactics without commencing any worthwhile talks with the trade unions.

DILATORY TACTICS OF CIL

Despite the CIL holding some meetings of the Committees, there has been neither any result nor any conclusion. Several of the issues remain unresolved for years together. All protests voiced by the unions are falling on deaf years.

Against this attitude of the CIL management, the coal workers all over India have expressed strong reaction and demanded early resolution of the issues committed to be settled at the time of the proposed nationwide strike of the coal workers.

Serious corruption, contractorisation, downsizing of manpower and non-observation

of safety rules are galore in coal mines. Theft of coal and illegal mining are going on in broad day light, without any action by the authorities. All these factors have added to the gravity of the situation.

The meeting of the Working Committee of the All India Coal Workers Federation (AICWF) was held in Raniganj on 1st and 2nd November 2002, which reviewed the situation in the Coal Industry and decided to prepare for a nationwide movement in co-operation with other Federations in Coal Industry.

NEW CHARTER OF DEMANDS

The meeting considered the draft charter of demands and decided to finalise it by the end of December. All the unions should submit the charter of

demands through demonstrations on 16th December 2002. The Federation has appealed to all the Federations in Coal industry to chalk out programme of action to compel the CIL and the Ministry of Coal to implement the solemn commitment given to trade unions.

The AICWF has decided to organise campaign in all the coal mines to campaign on the joint demands raised by 5 Federations and the charter of demands prepared by the AICWF.

The Working Committee decided to hold the Fifth Conference of the AICWF at Singrauli (M.P) on 17 - 19 January 2003.

TUs OPPOSE IDBI RECAST PLAN

The Government of India has decided to repeal the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) Act and to restructure it as a stand-alone bank is flawed on many counts. The central trade unions viz. AICCTU, AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, INTUC, UTUC and UTUC-LS, in a press release issued in Delhi on 16 NOVEMBER, 2002, have opposed this move. They termed it as corporatisation of the premier development finance institution (DFI), which is a design to park it in the queue for eventual privatisation.

The press release stated: "The Government has deliberately chosen this route to avoid a thorough going enquiry on the factors and authorities responsible for the present problems that confront the IDBI. At a time when the economy is witnessing a painful process of deindustrialisation and proliferation of industrial sickness, the move to rob off the industrial developmental and promotional role of the IDBI is retrograde.

"During the past decade, the Government, in the name of leveling the field for all players in the financial sector, denied the IDBI access to low cost funds and forced it into heavy market borrowings at a high cost. In a bid to draw resources for its own fiscal management, the Government had drawn the IDBI into the tax net and benefited to the tune of Rs. 1813 crore by way of income tax, besides the dividend remittance of around Rs.2140 crores. The proposed Government guarantee of Rs.2500 crore, as a buffer for debt revamp by the restructured IDBI is nothing but a cover up of the past mistakes of the Government.

"The Government of India must roll back the present proposals to recast the IDBI and take recourse to strengthen it to discharge the role of development finance institution. A probe must be ordered into the past cases of high risk project finance ventures like that of Enron's Dhabol project and willful default by major corporate borrowers.

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MOVEMENT AGAINST NALCO PRIVATISATION

The Vajpayee led NDA Govt. had even earlier resorted to disinvestment of 13% shares of the National Aluminium Company Ltd., (NALCO). This has incurred the wrath of the people and workers of Orissa. So, when the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment announced its decision to privatise NALCO by disinvesting 61.15% of the remaining 87.15% of shares, there was a wave of shock among the democratic people of Orissa. Particularly the workers and employees of the State, who are going through very hard days because of declared and undeclared closures, VRS, abolition of some departments, privatisation of State Govt. undertakings etc., were indignant over the move. They did not expect this highly profit making concern to be handed over in this way since NALCO was in the core sector. It produces high quality Aluminium - a strategic metal considering its increasing use in Defence, Aircraft, Space appliances etc. Surface Transport and Railways, Electrical and Construction sectors, which are major areas of Govt. activities. This was also followed by a wave of protests by trade unions, mass organisations and all the political parties except the BJP. Naturally, the NALCO workers came out in a massive way in demonstrations and rallies at both the main places

of production - Angul and Damanjodi in Koraput. All these were coordinated by the trade unions with the initiative of CITU to give shape to this movement against privatisation. All the non-BJP political parties, including the ruling BJD, were represented in the convention organised by the coordinating body of trade unions on September 15th and supported the Orissa Bandh of 19th September, which was a grand success. These protests conducted, jointly by trade unions and separately by left parties and Congress has attracted the masses. This has developed as a major issue amongst the people. The militant demonstrations by NALCO workers at Angul and Damanjodi preventing the private bidders to enter into the two towns has galvanised the situation. Series of joint demonstrations by CPI & CPI (M) - and particularly obstruction of goods trains throughout the State by the CPI(M) volunteers on 17.11.2002 - have added further strength to the protests. In the face of opposition to this privatisation moves from various quarters, the Govt. though postponing the move, is bent upon to disinvest NALCO in the next three months.

NALCO'S PROFITABILITY
NALCO was established in 1981 by the Government of India with technological assistance of M/s Aluminium Pechinery, France, at

a project cost of Rs.2408 crore, of which Rs.1289 cr. was the share of Govt. of India and Rs. 1119 crore were Euro-Dollar loan extended by a consortium of International Banks. But the PSU, which started production in 1987, has paid back the foreign loan within 5 years making the concern completely debt-free. At the same time, 50% of Govt. of India investments were paid back and NALCO has also re-invested Rs.29000 crore out of its profits, reserves and surplus for the expansion of the plants.

During the years it has earned an average net profit of Rs. 550 crore per annum after taxes. If we see the financial performance of this 'Mini Ratna' for the year 2000-01, it has sales turn-over of Rs.2409 crore, including export to the tune of Rs. 131 crore and made a stunning profit of Rs.664 crore in spite of stiff competition. Over last five years, it has made a cumulative profit of Rs.2454 crore and contributed 40% dividend to the Government. Further, it is financing its Rs.3900 crore expansion plan for doubling of capacity, out of its own reserve. As a result bauxite, alumina, power and Aluminium production has increased. This PSU has paid Rs.1011 crore to Govt. of India as dividend and Rs. 2345 crore as taxes and duties. Govt. of Orissa has also received Rs.110 crore as royalty, taxes and fees etc. from NALCO. Further,

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it has earned foreign exchange to the tune of Rs.8820 crore and is competing successfully in the international market.

SERVING THE MONOPOLIES

Such a PSU is proposed to be privatised with disinvestment of 61.15% of shares, of which 10% will be sold in the domestic market, 20% of shares through American Depository Receipts (ADR), 2% to employees and 29.15% of shares will be offered to a strategic partner who will be the real owner with control over management. Through this disinvestment Government of India will get only Rs.2900 crore whereas NALCO has a reserve fund of Rs.25000 crore and its value will be more than Rs. 15000 crore.

NALCO's high quality of bauxite

from its mines and lowest cost of production in the world has allured as many as 15 bidders from inside and outside the country. Indian bidders are also having, foreign collaborators. It appears that the Aditya Birla Group with their foreign collaborator will get it, as reportedly agreed upon since the days of BALCO privatisation. As a result, they will have complete monopoly over internal market of Aluminium, as at present they control 51% and the addition of NALCO's 24% will enable them to control the market. This will happen at the cost of nation's as well as Orissa's interest and will affect 17000 permanent and temporary workers and more than 50000 families who earn this livelihood through NALCO.

Working people of Orissa are agitated over this move of Central

Government. Trade unions and left parties are in the forefront of the movement against NALCO privatisation. In the various district level joint conventions of the trade unions and Industrial Federations, this issue is coming up prominently along with other problems faced by the working class. State level workers rally has been held by the trade unions on 23rd November at Bhubaneswar with the NALCO privatisation as the main issue. A convention was held in Delhi on November 27th against privatisation of NALCO followed by a Dharna before Parliament on 28th November. Further programmes will be chalked out by the trade unions in consultation with the political parties and other mass organisations.

(Report by Sivaji Patnaik)

ANDAMAN: DOCK WORKERS' DEMONSTRATE

For the last many years there has not been a regular incumbent to hold the post of Controller of Andaman Labour Force. This caused untold difficulties to the large number workers of Andaman Labour Force.

The legitimate demands of the workers, sanction of leave, leave salary and LTC advances, regularisation of the services of the workers on temporary status, compassionate grounds and daily rated basis etc. have been lying unsettled. This Union made

protracted correspondence with the Chief Port Administrator and the Administration. But none has taken any initiative to look into the grievances of the workers.

Having no alternative, the workers of Port and Dock workers' Union, affiliated to CITU resorted to agitation, took out a procession from Haddo Wharf to Aberdeen Municipal park which culminated in a mass rally. B Chandrachoodan President of the union presided over the meeting. H.N. Parial and S.B. Chattopadhyay vehemently criticised the inaction of the

authorities. The speakers point out that the minimum wages fixed during February, 2000 has not yet been revised and hence demanded that Minimum Wages should be revised immediately.

The workers may resort to further agitation if a suitable person is not posted on regular basis to hold the post of Controller of Labour Force, regularisation of appointment and filling up of the posts lying vacant.

(Report from B. Chandrachoodan)

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TAMIL NADU: WORKING WOMEN

The Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU and the State Coordination Committee of Working Women have taken up the task of forming sub committees in industries with large number of women workers with due seriousness and in the last few months several women's sub committees have been formed and district level coordination committees of working women have also been formed wherever they did not exist.

A state level convention of women working in the Village Panchayats was held at Pudukottai on July first. T.A.Latha, Joint Convenor, of the State Coordination Committee addressed the convention.

A district level general body meeting of women fish vendors was conducted at Tiruvarur on July 14th and the district women's sub committee of fish workers was reorganised. Selvi, a fish vendor

was elected as the Convenor of the sub committee.

District level conventions of working women were held in the Nilgiris and Sivaganga district and new coordination committees were elected. In Nilgiris, Tamilazharasi, a plantation worker was elected as the convenor of the district coordination committee.

The State Coordination Committee met at Coimbatore on 1st September 2002. 25 working members participated and decided to conduct district level rallies / demonstrations in all the districts to focus the problems faced by working women.

A massive procession was organised by the North and South Chennai District Coordination Committees of Working Women, in which around 750 working women participated. The print and visual media gave the procession a wide coverage. T.K.Rengarajan,

General Secretary, State Committee of CITU addressed the gathering. A memorandum focusing the demands was submitted to Labour Minister, Secretary-Transport, and secretary-Social Welfare Department of Government of Tamilnadu.

The rally demanded- Jobs for all, equal wage for equal work, better transport facilities for working women and stoppage of the illegal retrenchment of 30000 ICDS workers in the State.

District level women's sub committees were formed in the construction workers Federation in Trichy, Erode, and Theni districts. Malathy Chittibabu attended all the meetings

Meetings of working women activists in the Electricity Board and other industries were held in Hosur, Dharmapuri and Tuticorin Thermal Station.

Effigies of Government Burnt by Anganwadi Employees

The All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers gave a call to burn the effigies of the Government in the first fortnight of November on the pay day in protest against the delay and Finance Ministry's reluctance to clear implementation of the enhancement retrospectively from 1st April 2002.

Though the programme was decided at a short notice, in many projects anganwadi workers and helpers took out processions, burnt the effigies and sent telegrams to the Finance Minister demanding implementation of the enhancement from April 1st.

A delegation of the Federation consisting of its General Secretary,

Hemalata, and Secretary, AR Sindhu and WR Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU along with Basudev Acharya, MP, met the Finance Minister Mr. Jaswant Singh and demanded that the Ministry should give clearance for the enhancement to be implemented with effect from 1st April 2002 so that the relevant GO

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could be issued immediately. The Finance Minister assured them that he would give clearance within

one week and ensure that the enhancement would be implemented during this fiscal year

but there was no specific assurance that it would be implemented from 1st April.

Anganwadi Mulazim Union hold Massive Rally

Thousands of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers under the banner of Anganwadi Mulazim Union, Punjab held massive rally and demonstration before the directorate of social security, women and child development, Chandigarh on 18th October 2002. They were demanding the restoration of the cut in their honorarium of Rs.100/- for workers and Rs.60/- for the helpers from 1-5-1997 made by the state Government. They also demanded immediate release of the GO on the announced enhancement of honorarium by the central government, TA for Anganwadi workers and helpers for attending the circle meetings, filling up of vacant posts of clerks and class four employees from Anganwadi workers and helpers, withdrawal of orders handing over

of Anganwadi Centres to Panchayats etc. The anganwadi employees also demanded that the Punjab Government withdraw its attempts to abolish 2,600 posts in the ICDS.

The protest rally was held in front of the office of the director, social security. Dr.K.Hemalata, General Secretary AIFAWH, castigated the state government for its indifferent attitude towards the genuine demands of Anganwadi Workers and helpers. She warned the government of intensified struggle.

Hargobind Kaur, President of Anganwadi Mulazim union, Punjab, harshly criticized the state social security department and the minister for not giving proper attention to the demands of the union and demanded immediate redressal of the grievances. Others

who addressed the rally include Harjit Kaur, Vice President, and Gurjit Kaur, General Secretary Anganwadi Mulazim Union Punjab.

Devaki Sharma, President, and Perm Kumari General Secretary Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, Himachal Pradesh, and Jagmati Mallik, General Secretary, and Pushpa Dalal, President, Haryana State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union also addressed the gathering and expressed solidarity to their struggle.

After the rally, the anganwadi employees marched towards the Assembly building but were stopped by police near Matka Chowk. A memorandum was handed over to the Chief Minister through his OSD.

PUNJAB STATE MEET NOT AUTHORISED: CITU

Having come across reports that a meeting was to be held on 9-10 November, 2002 at Shapur Kandi, near Pathankot in Gurudaspur District of Punjab and the same was termed as the "11th State Conference of Punjab State CITU", the CITU Secretariat issued a statement to the Press on 29th October, 2002. It said: "The meeting does not have the approval of the all India headquarters of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU). All the unions affiliated to the CITU in the State of Punjab were advised not to associate, in any manner, with the said meeting. However, it is gathered that such a meeting was in fact, held. The CITU Secretariat and the Working Committee meeting at Hissar on 1-4 December, 2002 will consider the matter and take appropriate organisational decision.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. Centre No.	Month	Aug.' 02	Sept.' 02	State	Sr. Centre No.	Month	Aug.' 02	Sept.' 02
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	458	458	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	562	563
	2	Guntur	480	481		39	Nagpur	496	499
	3	Hyderabad	470	471		40	Nasik	519	518
	4	Visakhapatnam	475	473		41	Pune	534	532
	5	Warangal	509	506		42	Solapur	490	499
Assam	6	D.D. Tinsukia	398	403	Orissa	43	Barbil	440	439
	7	Guwahati	481	482		44	Rourkela	418	420
	8	Labac-Silchar	377	381	Punjab	45	Amritsar	425	429
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	414	417		46	Ludhiana	439	442
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	419	421	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	479	478
Bihar	11	Monghyr	439	449		48	Jaipur	448	454
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	420	426	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	520	523
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	484	482		50	Coimbatore	482	481
	14	Bhavnagar	501	498		51	Coonoor	473	478
	15	Rajkot	462	455		52	Madurai	464	464
	16	Surat	488	491		53	Salem	467	464
	17	Vadodra	473	472		54	Tiruchirapally	548	548
Haryana	18	Faridabad	491	492	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	447	447
	19	Yamunanagar	458	459		56	Ghaziabad	486	489
J & K	20	Srinagar	555	550		57	Kanpur	470	471
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	442	443		58	Saharanpur	438	439
	22	Jharia	376	378		59	Varanasi	495	499
	23	Kodarma	394	399	West Bengal	60	Asansol	463	463
	24	Noamundi	411	415		61	Darjeeling	412	420
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	442	440		62	Durgapur	564	567
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	456	458		63	Haldia	589	590
	27	Belgaum	521	524		64	Howrah	548	550
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	477	480		65	Jalpaiguri	425	427
	29	Mercara	463	463		66	Kolkata	536	538
Kerala	30	Alwaye	492	483		67	Raniganj	423	425
	31	Mundakayam	476	486	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	521	525
	32	Quilon	502	498	Delhi	69	Delhi	563	562
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	552	544	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	512	516
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	431	432					
	35	Bhopal	515	516					
	36	Indore	493	491					
	37	Jabalpur	470	472					
								ALL-INDIA	484
									485

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	August 2002	September 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	492	504
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	459	464
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	479	480
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	444	445
Tripura	5 Tripura	443	444
Goa	6 Goa	579	580

Europe's Biggest Anti-War Protest In Florence

All day they arrived to swell the city to two or three times its normal size. The march was a dense, colourful and energetic show of total opposition to any attack by Bush and Blair on Iraq. Coming the day after the United Nations Security Council vote, it sent the defiant message that millions will take action against war.

The march was made up of teenagers and 90 year olds, trade unionists, debt campaigners and political parties, people from all over Italy and delegations from other countries who came after attending the European Social Forum.

With this huge success in Florence, peace activists of Europe have chalked out plans to stage protests across Europe against any war on Iraq. They said they were planning to hold a wave of demonstrations in three months' time (February 15), but would mobilise supporters sooner if a US attack on Iraq looked imminent.

Jose Bove, the French activist famous for opposing McDonald's, was there in a tractor. Sergio Cofferait, who has just stepped down as general secretary of the CGIL Italian trade union federation, was among the 100,000 CGIL members who marched.

This was a transformation from Genoa in 2001, when CGIL refused to give official support to the marches against the G8 summit of world leaders. The march was both intensely serious in its political message and an exuberant carnival. There were thousands of anti-war banners and placards with slogans such as "Stop global war", "Peace not war", "Don't attack Iraq", and "Bush, Blair, Berlusconi are murderers".

But there were also wider slogans: "People before profit", "For a just and equal Europe", "Anti-capitalist", and a very popular, "One solution, revolution".

Coaches carrying marchers choked several major streets, and there were 20 special trains in addition to all the usual services.

The start time for the march had to be brought forward three hours in an effort to clear space for the hundreds of thousands pouring onto the streets.

By early evening, hours after the first marchers had come to the end of the demonstration, great swathes of trade unionists were just starting off. Many local people clapped and cheered the marches. From balconies throughout the city they hung banners reading "Peace" or "Down with the war" in Italian.

In one road an old man with tears in his eyes held an umbrella with a message written on it in Italian and English, reading, "Thank you children".

Few marchers reached the end of the route without feeling intensely emotional.

The international delegations were made especially welcome and placed right near the head of the march. People from Greece, Britain, Spain, Germany, France and Italy stood together to sing "Bandiera Rossa" and the "Internationale".

Guido Vecchi, a bank worker from Venice, said, "We saw your protest in Britain against the war. It lifted us-it made us want to do the same and more".

Huge contingents of workers filled big sections of the march. The march was led by a contingent of Fiat car workers who are fighting redundancies. Further back came tens of thousands from the Cobas unions, from smaller union groups, and then the massive CGIL contingent, including thousands of FIOM metal workers.

Roberto Teramo, a trade unionist from Rome, told Socialist Worker, I am proud to be here again to march alongside the young people.

"We are all against the war, a war that will help only the rich. Today is an inspiration. Now I feel that we should try to strike against the war".

Felicita Galimberti, a student from Turin, said, "I feel angry that the war is coming and happy that so many people are against it.

"We are the majority! They have no right to take us to war. Today Florence was our city and our streets, not Berlusconi's or Bush's".

Florence came to a halt against the war. We must work to do the same in every European capital in two months time on 15 February.

(Courtesy: Socialist Worker)

ANTI-PRIVATISATION STRUGGLE:

UNITED FORUM OF OIL PSU UNIONS LAUNCHED

A broad-based well attended meeting of the trade unions of BPCL, HPCL and the subsidiary refineries - KRL and NRL was held on 19th November, 2002 at the BPCL Refinery Sports Club, Mumbai. At the initiative of CITU unions, the Mumbai-based BPCL unions in the company met on 1st November, 2002 and decided to jointly convene this meeting.

The members of the presidium of the meeting included Tarapada Roy Choudhury, Working President, Petroleum Workers Union (CITU), Kolkata and Dada Samant, President, Kamghar Aghari of Maharashtra. S. Dev Roye, Secretary, CITU, placed the background note and the final resolution of the meeting. The following trade unions (the affiliates of CITU, AITUC, Shiv Sena, Kamghar Aghari and the unaffiliated ones) present in the meeting signed the resolution:

1) Petroleum Workers Union, Refinery, 2) Bharat Petroleum Corporation (R) Employee's Union, 3) Bharat Petroleum Technical & Non- Technical Union, Refinery, 4) Bharat Petroleum Process technician & Analyst Union Refinery, 5) Bharat Petroleum Karmachari Union, Mumbai, 6) Petroleum Workers Union, Chennai, 7) Maharashtra General Kamgar Union, Mumbai, 8) Bharatiya Kamgar Karmachari Mahasangh, Mumbai, 9) Bharat Petroleum Workers Union 9citu), Mumbai, 10) Bharat Petroleum Technician Union, Delhi, 11) Petroleum Workers Union-Kolkata (CITU), 12) Petroleum Employees Union-Chennai, 13) Cochin refineries Workers Association, 14) Numaligarh Refineries Employees' Union, 15) Petroleum Employees Association-Cochin, 16) All India Petroleum Workers Union-Mumbai, 17) Hindustan Petroleum Karmchari Union - Mumbai

RESOLUTION-TEXT

"The all India meeting of representatives of the trade unions from all over the country functioning in the Refineries and Marketing set-up of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, Kochi Refineries and Numaligarh Refineries held in Mumbai, on 19th November, 2002, expresses total opposition to the

disastrous move of the Government of India to privatise these excellently run profit making public sector Oil Companies.

The meeting condemns the central Government for their gross negligence to the strategic importance of these oil PSU's with regard to the national security, economic sovereignty, contribution to Government exchequers, balanced regional development and in providing employment.

The meeting is of the unanimous firm opinion that the privatisation move is the result of the surrender of the government to the design and pressure of the multinational private oil companies and their agents - the World Bank and the IMF.

The meeting resolves to launch a united forum under the name and style "NATIONAL UNITED FORUM AGAIST PRIVATISATION OF OIL PSUs" to fight out the privatisation move tooth and nail. The meeting decides to launch countrywide phased programmes of propaganda, agitation and action to compel the Government to stop the privatisation move. The meeting decides to observe the following programmes:

- 1) All India protest day on 5th December 2002, by wearing black badge, holding gate meetings and sending protest telegrams to the Prime Minister and the Petroleum Minister
- 2) Submission of memorandum to the prime minister and the Petroleum Minister in a joint delegation of M. P and trade unions.
- 3) To organise four regional workers' joint conventions at New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai by 31st January, 2003.
- 4) Next meeting of the trade union representatives to chalk out further programmes in the first week of February, 2003
- 5) The day government invites tenders for privatisation workers to launch "flash strike"
- 6) All India joint convention of workers in the constitution club, New Delhi on 16.12. 2002

The meeting appeals to all the trade unions in the industry, irrespective of affiliations, particularly those who could not join in today's meeting, to join the anti privatisation forum & movement."