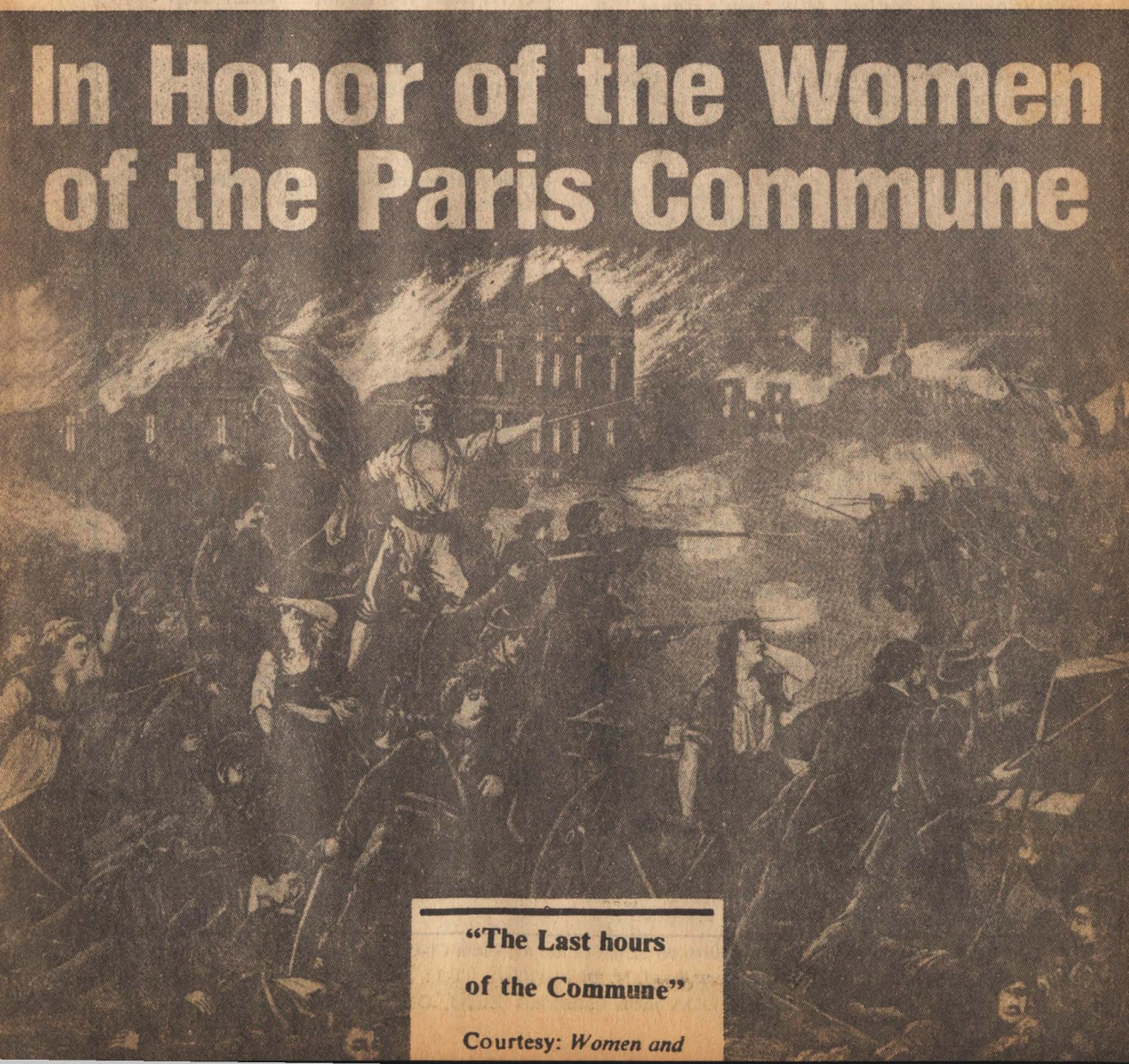
THE VOICE
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In Honor of the Women of the Paris Commune



"The Last hours of the Commune"

Courtesy: *Women and*

May Day Greetings

On May Day the CITU greets the working women and wishes their struggle further success. The year that has gone since the last May Day has witnessed greater activity on the part of working women in assertion of their rights. There have been many struggles against discriminatory treatment and in defence of their earnings and jobs. Women in some trade unions are now occupying responsible positions. Much more requires to be done to defeat the official policy of discrimination and neglect of women's rights. A lot needs to be done to activise the trade unions to fight for their rights. The CITU Conference in Bombay is devoting a special session to consider the working women's problems. May its deleberations bring further success to the working women.

B.T. Ranadive
President-CITU
3-5-1987

Grand Participation of Women in the Haryana Strike

At the call of Sarva Karmachari Sangh, Haryana, most of the employees including women went on strike on the 7th and 8th of May 1987. The rally held at the Boat Club on 3rd was a magnificent one, when thousands of men and women poured in Delhi from Haryana. They broke the police cordon, courted arrests and were lathi-charged by the police. A number of employees including women were injured. The demands of the employees were implementation of the 4th Pay Commission, Interim Relief, Promotion, regularisation of the employees, etc. The Central Govt flatly refused to intervene compelling the Karmachari Union to give the call for strike on 7th and 8th.

The role of women in the strike and courting arrest was notable. As per news received from Rohtak, Karnal, Faridabad, Chandigarh, Kanthal, Sirsa, Kurukshetra, Zajjar, Bahadurgadh, etc. there were huge rallies. Women under their unions and J.M.S. workers picketted at the bus stops, did not allow the buses to come out. Those who did not join the strike, women offered bangles to them asking them to sit at home. The main gate at Rohtak Bus stop was obstructed by hundreds of women employees. Police lathicharged and arrested and took them into custody. In Zujjar, Bahadurgadh depots, not a single bus was allowed to come out despite strong police force there. Women sat in the front gate and had to be removed with the assistance of police. The leaders of the Karamchari Sangh charged the police that they used lathis on

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The Heroic Women Communards of Paris

WORKING women in our country will learn with pride the role played by the unknown, unaccounted heroines of Paris Commune, the first worker's Government in 1871 in France. The common men and women were terribly exploited, starved, there was no work. There were militant struggles of the working class for their economic demands everywhere in France, Germany and elsewhere. The wars between Prussia and France for aggression on their frontiors was one more reason for the working people to hate their own governments adding more misseries for the people. And under such explosive situation existing at that time, "In the early morning hours of 18th March 1971, the red flag waved from the city Hall in Paris, and the workers marched through the streets with the cry of, Long live the Commune". The people had arms under the Government of "National Defence" formed under Thiers, the bourgeois Govt. formed after the defeat of Napolean. The first action of this Government was to disarm them so that those arms will not turn against them. He sent troops. But the workers of Paris mobilised to defend as one man with arms. The war between Paris workers and the Versailes Govt was declared. The workers of Paris also declared "Paris commune" on March 26th and elected their members, while the proclaimation was made on 28th of 1871.

The Paris Commune lived a short life, only for 72 days. But it resisted all attempts to disarm the people, women pleaded with the soldiers, fraternised with them requesting not to shoot their brothers and sisters. They helped day in and day out to erect the barricades to prevent the army to pass.

The Paris Commune declared a number of steps in the interest of workers. Firstly the Commune gave the orders to arm the people capable to defend the State of the workers. It remitted all the payments of rent for dwelling houses. The most important thing the Commune did was about salary. Highest salary to be received by any employee of the commune, and of the members was not to exceed 6000 Francs. Third very important issue was the separation of the Church from the state and abolition of all State payments for religious purposes and transformation of all church property into national property. It excluded all symbols of religion, pictures, prayers etc from schools. On April 16, it gave orders to open the closed factories. It abolished night work for bakers, closed the pawn shops. The Commune not only adopted various laws concerning common people but introduced equality for women, carried them out into effect. They soon took measures for labour safety, for abolition of rent debts and for setting up the worker's co-operatives.

But while taking these measures for the people, a continuous armed struggle with the Bourgeois Govt. was on. Engles said, "during this period 30,000 men, women and children were killed, 60,000 thrown out into prison." After all, this was a class war against the "Paris Commune", the workers' Govt., "most simple conception, the form under which the working class assumes the political power in their social stronghold, Paris and other centres of industry. And it was a pride for the International Working Class to "identity itself with Paris Commune". Marx said, "the commune governed for the people and by the people." It lived only for 72 days and was bound to fall without any support from workers from other parts. But the women and men gave a brilliant fight, gave blows after blows to the reactionery forces," Marx said "the commune had been a State form at last discovered under which to work at the economic emancipation of labour." Commune not only worked in the interest of the workers but also for the peasantry and petty bourgeois.

The anger against the bourgeois system and pride in the formation of Paris commune of the workers, could be noted from the burning of the guillotine publicly on the 6th of March brought by the 137th, battalion of the National guard amidst great popular rejoicing! It is a great pride for all of us that the men and women died bravely in defence of the commune "in number unequalled" in any battle known to history". Marx and Engels said "The women of Paris joyfully gave up their lives on the barricades and on the place of execution.." Some women like Louise Michael have become immortal. They abused their own brothers

when they felt some hesitation to go to fight against the soldiers of the enemy.

On the Occasion of this May Day, we salute those heroines who gave their lives on barricades for the 'Paris Commune' the first Government of the workers formed more than hundred years back, honoured with pride as an International event by all the workers in the world. The following article by Leela Sundarayya written on the occasion of 100th Anniversary of Paris Commune in 1971 in Peoples' Democracy is reproduced here for our readers.

Unbearable Life in Paris

The conditions of the workers were such that hardly a man could live like a human being. And the women were exploited the worst. The women either worked mostly in factories or on needle work on their own which had given Paris international reputation. But their income ranged from 15 centimes to five francs, their working from eleven to thirteen hours.

Women who lived singly could hardly afford any living space-they were entombed, not accommodated, in holes of maximum 5×3 feet. They had no means to buy medicines when they fell ill. Since it was impossible for a woman to live off her wages alone, she chose a mate, legal or otherwise, which in no way improved her condition. Prostitution appeared as a normal way of supplementing wages.

Movement for Women's Rights

Not all women took all this passively. Janny d' Hericourt had warned the democrats that if women drifted away from the revolution of 1789, it was because they saw that the declaration of Rights of Man had nothing to do with them. History repeated itself in 1848. "I tell you this in all sincereity, all your struggles are in vain, if women do not march with you. You are blind not to understand that if woman is on the one side and man on the other humanity is doomed to do the task of Penelope".

In 1868 freedom of assembly was granted. Working class conferences began taking place. The demand for "work for women" began to be raised. Women's wages always were lower than those of men, were going down with a terrifying rapidity and the inevitable alternative facing women was prostitution or suicide. Many speakers stressed this point at the conferences. Maria Deraismes and Paule Minck made speeches asking for political rights for women.

This movement for women's rights brought together Andre Leo, Maria, Deraismes, Louise Michel, Nocmice Reclus Mme Jules who all later became leaders of the struggle. But the movement for women's rights as adults, equals and free human beings was inseparable from the total political situation in the country.

Empire in Decay

The empire was in decay. The working class and the peasantry were all groaning under unbearable conditions. Strikes became more frequent. Despite all repression, meetings, demonstrations and strikes began acquiring a mass character. In January 1870, a demonstration of 200,000 men and women marched through the streets of Paris,. Jules Vallis noted, "Women everywhere. A good women. When women get embroiled, when the housewife gives a push to her man, when she ripe her black flag of revolution down from the kitchen and raises it in the streets, it means that the Sun will rise over a town in revolt."

The adventurous Bonaparte decided to declare war on Prussia to divert the people's discontent. Prussia's Bismark had been ready for this for years. The French army met reverse after reverse and had to continuously withdraw. The workers who had been demonstrating for peace and the people decided that the empire had to be overthrown.

Four men who tried to seize arms from the barracks were condemned to death. Women prepared a memorandum on behalf of the condemned prisoners, collected thousands of signatures on it, marched to the Governor of Paris and refused to budge from his ante-chamber without their demand being granted. The Governor had to make the promise. These unkown women had accomplished a courageous feat—the execution of the rebels was stayed. This was on September 2, two days later, on September 4, the empire was overthrown. The bourgeoisie had triumphed.

A republic was set up, but the new Assembly elected on February 8, 1871, was made up of about two-thirds Royalists and one third bourgeois Republicans, with a few petty-bourgeois radicals thrown in to make things more palatable to the working class. Paris, at whose walls was the German army, was controlled by the 25 men Central Committee of the National Guard.

On September 17, the German army laid siege to Paris and the city was cut off from the rest of France. There was no milk for the children, no food, no fuel to keep the cold out.

Nathalie Lemel and Louise Michel carried out the difficult task of feeding hundreds of starving people by organising soup kitchens. There was no work. The National Guard at the ramparts received one and a half francs a day and 75 centimes for his wife which could not buy anything. There was no work for the women except making soldiers' equipment. Such centres were opened by the women's committee, but this work also soon came to an end.

These centres were then turned into medical centres and many of the women were accepted as nurses in the battalions.

Demand of Women's Battalions

In this war, with no front or rear, and everyone involved with the enemy bombarding the gates of the city, it was but natural for women to follow their men up to the ramparts, carry their rifles. Women worked as ambulance nurses and carried food. They were in a common fight shoulder to shoulder with their men.

Soon the demand arose for a women's battalion. A poster went up with the demand for ten battalions of women without distinction of social classes. The poster said, "May the whole of Europe, learn with admiration that it was not only thousands of citizens, but also thousands of women, who, in Paris, defended the freedom of the world against a new barbarian invasion". Thousands of women signed up, but the demand was rejected by the Government.

But along with men's vigilance committees, committees of women had also been formed and women were getting initiated into political life beginning with distribution of essential goods and the just administration of things. They led hunger marches demanding bread, street demonstrations demanding arms.

Women at Barricades

Soon the beseiged people of Paris, specially the women cented that their scarifices were useless, that the Government was gradullay capitulating to Bismarck. They decided to march to the Hotel de Ville, the seat of the Govt, men with arms and women to march with them to protest against the latest bread rationing measure.

A deputation of the marchers was received by the Deputy Mayor who lost his temper. The people outside were raising slogans when guards from inside fired upon them. The National Guard returned the fire.

The deputation had failed, but the Government became afraid of the activities of the women's association and ordered them to be closed down. Newspapers were banned and many warrants for arrest were issued. And then the Government of Thiers signed the armistice (surrender) on February 26 in which it agreed to give up Paris.

With the aim of forcing rebellious Paris to surrender, Thiers at three o'clock in the morning of March 18, had his troops under General Vinoy attempt to seize the 250 cannons of the National Guard. These cannons had been paid for by the people with their own subscriptions and they were determined not to surrender them. Women and children went to the place where the cannons were kept. The guardsmen opend the gates and women and children "whom a flick of the finger could have knocked over" carried the cannons and installed them on the heights of Montmarie and battasllion, and the National Guard stood guard over them.

When Thiers' men came, the alarm was given, church bells began tolling, women, men children started rushing up the hieghts of Montmarie. Louise Michel wrote. "We ran up double, we expected to die for liberty. It

was as if we were lifted from the earth. ... The whole place was enveloped in white light a splendid dawn of deliverance." And then she suddently found her old mother beside her. "I felt an appalling anguish: worried for us she had come. All womenkind was at our side."

The groups of women and children became an enormous mass and formed a veritable human barricade between the National Guard and Thiers' men. When the latter were given the order to fire, the women spoke to them, "Will you fire upon us? On your brothers? Our husbands? Our children?" The soldiers hesitated. The shout of "Mutiny" went up and the battalion of soliders fraternised with the people and arrested their General. In many centres in the city, the people, mostly women surrounded the soldiers and persuaded them to fraternise with their brothers of the National Guard.

With the National Guard at the head, the people marched to the centre of the city. Workers from the suburbs had arrived by then. By evening all the strategic points, Government buildings were occupied under orders of the Central Committee of the National Guard and Red Flags were Hoisted. March 18, 1871—the beginning of the world's first dictatorship of the proletariat. Thiers' Government fled to Versailes.

Ten days later the Commuue that had been elected by the people moved into the Hotel de Ville. A huge crowd, many women among them, welcomed the new power "the power of the people and of hope."

The women had very good reasons to rally behind the Commune. Some of the decrees of the Commune for the first time gave them equality with men in many respects. But the Commune could not legislate any further, it had to fight for its sheer existence.

By the beginning of April the civil war was raging. The Communards fought a brave but losing battle.

The Women's Union issued an appeal, "The gauntlet is down, we must win."

Let the women prepare, than to defend and avenge their brothers. "And if we have neither rifles nor bayonets, there will still be paving stones to crush the traitors with".

On May 21, the Versailles troops entered and for eight days a bloody struggle continued. People of Paris fought bravely at every step. The streets bristled with barricades — the work of the fighting women. Jules Vallis wrote, "There were all the women and children getting into the fight Women in rags and in silk dresses young girls and old ladies, were sewing and filling sandbags working with pickas and mattocks all day and by gas-light all night. The ladies of La Halle erected a sixty-five-long barricade in half a day! A regiment of women was seen crossing Paris".

Who were these heroic women

There was the wine merchant Modeste Trochu. To construct a barricade, she distributed some pickaxes which employees of the Highway department had stored with her.

There was Josephine, mender of stockings who brought coffee day and night to the fighters at the barricades and was seen with a rifle in her hands.

There was Alphonsine Blanchard, Journey women who with a riflle slung on her shoulder, worked at the barricade and got every passer-by to lay a paving stone on it; Celina Charters, a professional nurse; Josephine Courtois, a seamstress, "the Queen of the Barricades" who had fought in 1848 also; with her, Marie Calier, clothes-maker, Jeanne-Narie Querat, wife of bank employee, Madeleine Billault, shoe dealer, Marie-Aguslane Garboriand who organised an ambulance post, Eugenie Rousseau, a hair-dresser who called her neighbours to the barricades, cleaned rifles, washed them to cool them and recharged them and brought them to the fighters.

A hundred and twenty women held the barricade at the Place Blanche, stalled the troops for several hours and withdrew only when their ammunition was exhausted. Those who were taken were killed on the spot, others withdrew to another spot where they held out for another three hours and then the last of the survivers retreated to another barricade to fall there. "Not one survived. This is one of the

many episodes of this legendary barricade".

Elizabeth Dimitrioff gave a last order, "Muster all women and come here immediately to go to the barricades". She was with Louise Mitchel at Montmarie, at Faubourg Saint-Antoine with Frankel.

Louise Michel held out with about 50 women from the 61st battalion. Soon they were no more than twenty, then fifteen, then she alone was left.

But it was a losing battle from the beginning, the Versailles troops advanced. Repression struck not only fighting men and women but all. Any woman with a basket was shot dead on the spot on the pretext that she was setting Paris on fire. Women who were executed were stripped and insulted while they were in their death throes.

After arrest Lousie Michel and other women were kept in a loft. In the courtyard below men were crammed together lying on mud in the rain. From time to time they would be fired upon. Names would be called out and these men would be given shovels to dig their own graves. The women were given a pallet of straw for two and a tin of preserve for four. The recalcitrants were punished by being tied to the stake for several hours. In another place a group of 800 women were not able to change their linen for weeks. The guards would often strike them, usually on the chest. Some women had miscarriages, others went mad. Forts and prisons were overflowing, thousands died of hunger and ill-treatment.

After entering Paris, Versailles soldiers chose at random 42 men, three women and two children and shot them to avenge the deaths of two of their Generals. People were shot and killed everywhere many women among them.

I Belong to Revolution

The glory of the women Communards lives for ever in the words of Louise Michel. When she was arraigned before the court on charges of executing two Generals, planning to assassinate Thiers, organising the women's union and women's vigilance committees, etc., she declared, "I belong entirely to the revolution and I wish to accept the responsibility for all my deeds". She was convicted and spent ten years in prison exile. So were Sophie Poirior and Nathalie Lemel sentenced to transportations for life in penal settlements. Elizabeth Dimitrioff escaped the police and was sentenced to transportation in absentise.

Marie-Catherine Regissart who with other women were responsible for tracking down evaders of the Commune decree for all men from 10 to 40 years to enter the National Guard and used to tell them, "I will make you go, you are nothing but a bunch of lay-abouts. Me, I am a women and I have more courage than any of you. Like it or not, you are going to fight the Versailles murderers" — she was sentenced to seven years' hard labour.

Sidoine Marie Herbelin was sentenced to transportion to a penal settlement for "having done everything she could to ensure the triumph of the insurrection". Ekise Louise Keinerknecht, who belonged, to the women's battalion got five years in prison and ten years' surveillance by a parole board for making a collection. Many other women were given sentences for denouncing policemen and their wives, for these simple women-seamstresses, laundresses, journey women, prostituted the shameful regime was concentrated in the authority of policemen. Ten years' hard labour for cook Melain Jacques, for denouncing a policemen's wife. Same for a trouser-maker Claudine Lemaitre who had casused the arrest of an informer, the wife of a former police commissioner. Transportation for Marie-Anne Du'oulin for having chased the wives of policemen and threatening them.

Marie Josephine Miguet, a button worker was sentenced to five years in prison for complicity in the looting of a shop of a traitor and distributing the goods to the poor people who did not have anything.

(*Contd. on p-9*)

Women will vote for Left Front in the coming Assembly Election in West Bengal

Mrinalini Dasgupta

The article below has been written before the election in West Bengal The Predictions made in the article have come true. The Left Front once again won for the 3rd time. The following article gives an account as to why common people including women voted for the Left Front. (Editor).

THE date 23rd March was announced at last for tenth assembly election in West Bengal, Men and Women all over the state have become extremely busy with election work, particularly the women, who now feel that they comprise the fifty per cent part of total voters. The women in general and the working women in particular have become more conscious since 1977, when the Left Front Government first came in power.

Both in rural and urban area in West Bengal working women are getting involved in this fight. Why shouldn't they? They are conscious of their rights, self reliant and also determined to fight for re-establishing Left-front government, because they have witnessed what happened before them in the seventies, they have the experience of the Congress regime both under Jawaharlal and Indira Gandhi at the centre and Prafulla Sen, Bidhan Roy and Siddharta Roy at State. How can they forget the firing incidents in Teachers Movement at Calcutta when a student died, the firing incidents in Food Movement in the district of 24 Parganas, where the women of the peasantry were confronting the Congress and police when two pregnant women Ahalya and Malati were shot dead on account of the police firing. The unfortunate unborn babies were killed in the womb. The generation of those unborn babies now are young boys and girls today. Should the peasant women will remain as silent observer today?

In any meeting called by the Democratic Women's Association in the villages of West Bengal, hundreds of women from all section particularly the wage labourers, and the teachers, the housewives of lower middle class and small farmers and those engaged in Cottage industries will flock together. They will never forget those black days and the horrors of those dreadful nights when the whole family was driven out of their farms by the Congress(I) goondas. Those Congress(I) people snatched their ornaments and frightened them of their lives. In fact in the darkness of night at some places husband was killed in front of wife and the child was killed in front of the mother by the Congress(I) goondas. Innumerable such cases of oppressions of women have been recorded in black letters in the history of seventies in West Bengal till the Left front came in power in 1977. Can the people of West Bengal ever forgive and forget those Congress(I) leaders who are now asking for votes for assembly election?

On the other day a young woman leader of Democratic Women's Association, a primary schools teacher in the village Pahoria of North 24 Parganas was speaking "We are the daughters of the soil which was soaked with the blood of Malati. M.A. we will not allow the Congress(I) to win and form the government in West Bengal. We must bow down to the old lady Matangini Hazra of Midnapore District, the immortal SAHID coming from a peasant family and was bulleted down by the police in 1942 with the tri colour flag in hand, and the BANDE MATARAM slogan on her lips. But today the Congress(I) means the goondas, the drunkard. There are fights among Congress youths. Do they have any right to represent Matangini, Pritilata, Kshudiram, Benoy, Badal and Dinesh of 1942 and 1930? Not a single vote in the ballot box for the Congress(I) will be dropped in this state."

On the otherhand in the urban area in the city like Calcutta, a huge gathering of women was found at the call for PATHASABHA by the Democratic Women's Association at Maniktola on the election issue. The teachers,

the nurses the students the office goers, who were just returning from their work, working women from the basti area came with flags and festoons in procession with slogan. "Vote for the friend of working class-Inquilab Zindabad. All votes for Left Front" The broad road like VIP Road was so crowded that the traffic police had to change the route of the traffic to control the crowd. The women comrades were continuing speaking for hours together for re-electing the Left front candidates, every where, the feeling was that Left Front Government may be formed again the third time.

Comrades spoke, "The Left Front government was formed by the people in 1977 to get rid of the inhuman torturing by the Congress government. Left Front did not came out one day all of a sudden, it is the people, the students the youth, the peasants and labourers, the lower and middle class housewives who elected the Left Front with a big margin. The women had suffered much, they had not only lost their husbands and children, some of them had to lose their 'IJJAT' — only because they did not support the atrocities of the Congress(I). They all voted against Congress(I) in 1977. The rights and responsibilities of women as citizens have brought them to elect the proper party for governing the country and their states. They had faith on Left front Government and for that they had re-elected Left Front again in 1982 in assembly election. What is the experience of the women in West Bengal today?. They are assured of security of their home and children. The Governor Shree Nurul Hassan, Shree Buta Singh from centre had to admit that law and order in West Bengal is superb, cannot be compared with any state. We know that the Harijans are molested in the villages in Bihar, are burnt to ashes in the states governed by the Congress, the condition of women of Harijan and Tribals is deplorable, whereas a few cases of atrocities on women had been recorded in West Bengal. Very few cases of oppression on women and children were recorded in the last nine year's history of West Bengal. People live peacefully.

The heaviest amount of money more than 25 per cent of whole budget is spent for education in West Bengal particularly for women's education and that for Schedule caste and Schedule tribe. In this state the widow pension scheme, old age pension scheme has become known for those unfortunate women. Amount may be meagre being Rs. 60/- still the women appreciates the attitude, they believe that the Left Front government is a friend of theirs.

At the centre, the government represents the big bourgeoisie and the landlords. Only the Left Front government in West Bengal stands for the poorer section. The working women of this state wiil identify who is their friend and who is their foe. They can not and shall not commit any mistake in this election of 1987, neither the film stars nor the bagful money of the President of Congress (I) and the false promise of giving employment to the youth and the false assurance of the opening of closed industries of that Big Munshi cannot purchase any vote from the women of West Bengal. They have learnt the lesson for identifying friend and foe at the cost of their blood. They will not move from their judgement. The Congress (I) candidates will be paid back in their own coins by both the younger and older generation of women who have been entrusted, honoured and enlightened and well secured by the Left Government which they will save with all efforts as an apple of their eyes. This election of 1987 must bring back again the Left front government in power.

(*Contd. from p. 7*)

Most of these women came from the working class. But there were also many who played a brave role who come from comfortable homes and embraced the cause of Socialism. With self sacrificing courage they all served the cause of the Commune, the cause of a society in the process of transformation, a society in which equality, freedom and justice were no longer to be words devoid of any meaning. All glory to them.

Maternity Benefit to be Reduced

THE Government has accepted in principle the Fourth Pay Commission's recommendation that no maternity benefit should accrue to women employees of the Central Government after they have two living children, according to sources.

Not only has it accepted this for the 1,00,000 women who are its employees as part of a larger package proposed by the Pay Commission. It is also planning to extend the application of this new norm to the 50,00,000 women workers eligible for maternity benefit under the Maternity Benefit Act and the Employees State Insurance Act.

It proposes to do this by amending these two laws so as to make women workers covered by them eligible for maternity leave only for the first two children. The aim of the proposed amendments is to encourage the small family norm. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 applies to all establishments, including factories, mines, plantations and circus industry. It also covers bidi workers who work at home. In addition, the State Governments can bring any other establishment, Industrial or agricultural, under its ambit. However, the Act does not apply to any factory or establishment which is covered by the ESI Act as women workers get maternity benefits under that law.

Two years ago, at the Conference of Labour Ministers, it had been recommended that the scope of the law should be enlarged and the Maternity Benefit Act should be extended to cover all those areas where women are employed in substantial numbers. But instead, the Government is planning to abridge the scope of the Act.

As it is, the law is applicable only to less than 8 per cent of working women, who number 63 million. But those who actually claim and get the benefit are a very small number. For instance, the number of women who were paid maternity benefits under the ACT in 1983 were only 1,813 out of over 3,00,000 women employed in factories.

When the Pay Commission's recommendation was first made public women's organizations had criticizcd it on the ground that limiting maternity benefits to two children would psychologically offer yet another excuse to unscrupulous employers not to implement the law even for the first two children.

The recommendation and the amendments on the anvil put the onus of a small family, desirable though it is, only on the woman and then penalizes her for a large family, the size of which she has hardly any say in deciding, given the existing social circumstances.

The recommendation is also based on the assumption that leave with pay and a period of rest before and after childbirth is a "benefit" and therefore a favour which is being withdrawn and not a woman's basic right to ensure health and wellbeing and that of her child.

—**Neerja Chowdhury**

Orissa Govt. too initiate Similar Step

It is leart from CITU Orissa State Committee that the Government of Orissa too has dicided to deny the Maternity leave to its women employees for the third child. It was unfortunate that it was a woman minister in Orissa who sent the Gazette notification while amending the rules of the Act. Now Gujarat Govt has started a maternity benefit scheme for rural women according to some sources. But this was also linked with population control. Only upto the second pregnancy, women will get the benefit at the rate of minimum wages for six weeks, When a demand was made to continue the benefit for the third child also, the reply was that "unless this was done maternity benefits would encourage women to have larger families!"

One would like to ask the initiators of the scheme only one question. Why punish only women?

Krishna Chabra had to Fight for her Promotion for Years !

MS Krishna Chabra, a Delhi Administration teacher, after 25 years of her battle against discrimination won the promotion case in the Delhi High Court. The order for her promotion came through the high court. The promotion as a trained graduate was due to her in 1963. But she was denied because she was a woman teacher. She was not fit to teach the boys of the middle school. In a judgement delivered by Justice Ms Sunanda Bhandare while ordering to pay all the benefits from 1963 onwards said "It was unfortunate that when the constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex, the Directorate of Education approved the schools policy which went against a clear mandate of the constitution". After the judgement the strictures were passed against the Directorate of Education, since this discriminatery policy towards women teachers continued since 1963. No lady teachers were appointed on the teaching staff of boys scholl ! Ms Krishna, 45 joined the Jujranwala Gurukul Middle Schools for boys as an assistant teacher in 1961. Her promotion as a trained graduate teacher became due in 1963. She was point blank denied it. She went into representation to the management with no result. Surpisingly, 3 other male teachers got their promotions while Krishna continued to fight her case. In 1972, fortunately she was promoted as a trained graduate teacher. She thought she won her case after all! But no, she was soon reverted back as an assistant teacher within months. The plea was "she had filled the vacancy of a TGT who was under suspension"! And there was no vacancy.

Only the woman Justice, Ms Sunanda Bhandare, came to her help. Is it possible, and advisable to appoint more women judges, so that perhaps, such cases will be looked into without discrimination and justice given to women in need?

In Parliament on 24 4.87

3,108 Dowry Cases in Delhi in 1985

THE Minister of state for home affairs, Mr P Chidambaram, told the Lok Sabha today that 3,108 dowry compaints were registered in Delhi in 1985.

On the basis of the complaints, 382 cases were filed under various sections of the Dowry Prohibition Act and the Indian Penal Code.

Members, including ruling party MPs, accused the government of coming uninformed on such vital issues as dowry deaths. He said 868 persons were arrested and challans were issued against 6 69, Cases against them were pending trial. Cases against 196 persons were pending investigation and three persons had been discharged.

Mrs Phulrenu Guha (Cong) wanted to know what percentage of those arrested, were men. Miss Mamta Banerjee (Cong) suggested the setting up of a parliamentary committee of women to look into grievances of women.

On crimes against women in Delhi, Mr Chidambaram said in 1985, 1986 and the first three months of 1987 there were 94, 112 and 30 cases of molestation and 88, 91 and 21 cases of rape. The number of cases of eve-teasing had almost trebled from 756 in 1985 to 2021 in 1986. The number of cases of kidnapping, however, had declined from 680 to 556 to 171 in the first three months of 1987.

Mr Chidambaram said police personnel were involved in seven cases. In two cases. policemen are facing trial and four cases are pending investigation. In one case the court discharged the accused.

Mr Chidambaram traced the increase in cases of molestation and eve-teasing reported to better police vigilance and increased confidence of women in reporting these cases.

Our industrial climate is shining with prosperity

The Left Front Government in West Bengal's industrial progress.....

9 years of Left Front admiration has taken industry in West Bengal a great leap forward — providing necessary infrastructure, rendering financial assistance and encouraging a climate favourable for industrial development and prosperity.

In its 9 years in office, the Left Front Government in West Bengal has made significant contributions to the upliftment of small, medium and large industries in the State. As a result, the industrial climate in West Bengal has already looked up.

Significan achievements include:

* A 43% increase in the number of Small Scale Units registered since the last financial year.
* Approval of 1300 elecrronic schemes, including 150 units for the manufacture of TV sets. Electronics Testing Development Centre, 4, B.T. Road (near Dunlop Bridge) installed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2 crores has already started functioning and industrialists are taking help from this centre. This is one of the few supporting measures to boost up electronics industry.
* The training of 1654 new entrepreneurs during the last two financial years.
* Financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 6878 lakhs during 1985-86 creating job opportunities for over 73,000 people in Cottage and Small Scale Industries.
* A 'one-window agency' to help entrenreneurs implement their projects within a time frame.
* Procurement and distribution of raw materials, as well as provision of infrastructural and Marketing facilities to SSI units.
* Assistance to sick SSI units in the form of loans amounting to Rs. 50.92 lakhs upto February '86.
* The marketing of Rs. 234.87 lakhs worth of SSI products during 1985-86 — beuefitting about 300 SSI units.
* Marketing support and product development for State artisans in selected crafts.
* The development of sericulture — the most important agro-based cottage industry in the State.
* Increasing the quantum of investment in industry — from Rs. 22.90 crores in 1982-83 to 28.07 crores in 1984-85.
* A 10% increase in the number of industrial licences since the last financial year.
* An increase in the number of industrial approvals from 158 in 1984 to 230 in 1985.
* The setting up of a joint sector, Rs. 1000 crore petrochemicals project at Haldia.
* Commencement of commercial production in some of the units in the first phase of the 40 acre Electronics Complex at Salt Lake, as well as embarkment on the 93 acre second phase of the project.
* The setting up of an Export Processing Zone at Falta.
* The setting up of a chain of industrial growth centres in backward areas.
* An intensive programme for modernisation of traditional and old industries liee Jute, Tea, Textiles, etc.
* Encouraging the use of electronics in industry.
* Encouraging Joint-Sector projects.
* Taking steps to revive sick and closed units.

LEFT FRONT GOVERNMENT
Bringing industry in
West Bengal to the forefront

Government of West Bengal

8th March Celebrated in Jaipur

8TH March the internationalWomen's day was celebrated jointly by nine Women's organisations in Jaipur. A large Women's meeting attended by more than three hundred women was held in which the slum dwellers, factory workers, teachers, house wives and women ill treated for dowry spoke about their problems and struggles. The meeting was presided by Ms Hemlata Prabhu and Dr Santosh Bhatia was the chief guest. In the light of discussions held a resolution on problems being faced by women and the need to have a joint struggle on these issues, was presented by Madhu Sethia and was adopted unanimously. It was also decided that a memorandum should be given to the Chief Minister in this connection.

Convention on National Integration

On 18th January to observe the All India call, a women's Convention on National Integration was organised by Jaipur district Janwadi Mahila Samiti. Mr Vasudeva Sharma, Lecturer in political Science, University of Rajasthan was the main speaker. The meeting began with songs on national integration. Archana Shrivastava District Secretary of JMS initiated the discussion and Kalpana Kher also expressed her issues emphasizing the role which women have to play in the integrity and unity of the country.

Women's Demonstration Against Goondaism

Janwadi Mahila Samiti district committee of Jaipur organised a demonstration of Kachi-basti women of Rajiv Nagar on the Collectorate, against the anti-social elements of that area. These goondas were forcibly collecting exorbitant amount of money from every house in the basti in the name of providing essential facilities in the basti. They were also threatening and molesting women who challenged the loot. They even tried to stop women from attending a meeting of JMS held in the basti. However, the women faced it boldly and come to attend the meeting in large number, and decided to take up the matter with the local administration. The women gave a memorandum to SP and city magistrate and lodged a complaint in the local police station as well. As a result some of these goondas were arrested and there activities have been curbed.

International Women's Day at Gwalior

Janwadi Mahila Samiti, Gwalior celebrated 8th March, International Women's Day with a great enthusiasm. A meeting was held at local office, in which over 30 women took part. Com. Gayatri Saroj, Parvati Bai and Usha Raghuwanshi were the members of the presidium.

Jaishree Sharma introduced the importance of International Women's Day. Com. Sandhya Shaily spoke on the role of women in the cause of 'World Peace.' Rajrani Rajput stressed on the importance of organisation. Secretary Gwalior District Committee Mrs Afroz Sheikh discussed the problems of Muslim women and said that we shall make special efforts to bring more Muslim women and women from other backward sections of Society in our organisation. Mrs Ranjana Sharma stressed upon the importance of education. State President of the organisation Mrs. Gayatri Saroj in her address said that we must aim to build a strong organisation. Then only we shall be able to fight against the problems women are facing. In the end Com. Parvati Bai add Kashi Bai presented folk songs. The gathering dispersed with the slogans of Long Live World Peace, Up socialism. Down Down Imperialism and Janawadi Mahila Samiti "ZINDABAD'.

Dharna Before Madhya Pradesh Assembly

Madhya Pradesh counts highest number of rape cases in whole of the country which was about 750 in the year 1986. 40 per cent of the population in the State consists of Scheduled castes and Tribes. Women in these sections are living in terrible odds. The number of dowry murders is on the increase. The women employed in cottage industries such as Bidi, Weaving etc. are being exploited beyond imagination. In protest of exploitation of women end in support of their demands, Madhya Pradesh Janvadi Mahila Samiti, organised Dharna at Bhopal in front of MP assembly on March, 9th. Major demands were equal rights for women, strict implementation

(Contd. on page 22)

Convention of Working Women in Punjab

A Convention of Women employees under the Punjab State Government was held on 17th April in Jallandhar. About 300 women from Teachers, Balwadi Workers, Nurses, Clerks, Class IV employees, Anganwadis, Librarians and others attended. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary AICCWW was the Chief Guest. The presidium consisted of Mrs. Talvinder Kour (Gurudaspur) Mrs. Surinderjit Kour (Amritsar) and Mrs. Manjit Kour (Ropar). Smt. Surinder Kour a teacher from Ludhiana presented a policy statement, highlighting the demands of women employees and need of their activisation in the movement. She said the women employees of Punjab of all Government Institutions, offices and schools have assembled to solve their problems related with their service conditions. Women have come out in search of permanent jobs, and many are employed in the Government jobs. It was true that it helped to take financial load off from only one person who was earning. But this also increased our load of work in the house and also in the offices. The women in agriculture do not get the same wage as men, despite the same nature of work. Shrimati Surinder Kour further said, that there was no provision of creche to look after the children at the office, and no security for them.

While speaking about the position of the union in general, she said, problems of service conditions of employees are taken up by the unions, but the problems of women employees in these department are not taken up by the union seriously, and the unions do not make the problems of women as the part of their movement. Therefore it was a great necessity for working women to take up these specific problems of women employees. She ended her speech by appealing to the women assembled to take more interest in the union's activitics so that their problems would be solved. She then moved the charter of demands.

Shree Trilochan Singh Rana, President of the Services Federation spoke in support of the charter. Smt. Jagir Kour, teacher, Ravinderjeet Kour an Analyst, Hasharanjit Kour UDC also spoke on their specific problems of departments. Rajender Kour Chokha, greeted the delegates on behalf of Punjabs AIDWA.

Vimal Ranadive AICCWW greeting the delegates who have assembled in the hall under the present serious conditions in Punjab, gave different instances on the movement of working women all over India by Co-ordination Committees in the states on the question of creche, maternity benefit, on equal wage. She said, the present policies of the Congress rulers are detrimental to the interest of working women where thousands of women are retrenched. Without uniting under their own Federation, or unions no problems would be solved! She appealed women to fight for peace and against war.

After the adoption of the Charter of Demands a committee was elected with the following: Surinder Kaur as President and Surenderjit Kour (Sangrur) as the General Secretary along with Vice-Presidents. The main demands highlighted in the convention were six months Maternity leave without certificate from the civil surgeon, Promotions in services, Transport facilities, one hour relaxation in duty during the day and two casual leaves at the double rate besides provision of creche.

"The Convention ended with slogan of Co-ordination Committee Zindabad."

Flogging prison for 'indecent' dress in Iran

One hundred and sixty five Iranian women have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 25 months for "indecent" dressing.

An announcement on Thursday by Teheran prosecutor Hojatoleslam Gowhari said the women would also be flogged and fined.

The official daily Jomhoori Islami reported Gowhari as saying that the punishment in future would be even more severe for women who did not respect the Islamic way of dressing and who appeared in public "indecently" dressed.

No Regularisation for Women

THE following letter was written to the Minister of Agriculture on the question of regularisation of women workers in CRRI on 18.3.87. By AICCWW.

Dear Sir,

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) received a copy of the letter dated 24.2.1987 addressed to the Director of CRRI by the General Secretary of Central Rice Research Institute Shramika Sangha, Cuttack. It speaks about the blatant discrimination made against women workers in CRRI for not regularising them while 93 other male workers were recently regularised after 30 years. From the contents of the letter, it seems, the women were working in this institute since the inception of the institute, as their male colleagues. The correspondence on Regularisation of all the workers continued from 1978 to 1985. Therefore, it is surprising that while 93 male workers in this institute were regularised after 7 years, the women employees in the same category have not. There seems to be no reason for their not being regularised except that they "were women".

The policies declared by the Central and State Governments towards women's employment and women in general, time to time, are claimed to be 'progressive and non-discriminatory' towards women. If it is so, how can one explain the non-regularisation of these women at the same place, during the same period as men workers and not being given regular service!

The said letter speaks about the sad cases of a few women, who have died while expecting their regularisation one time or other during their tenure of 30 years service. Special steps for them would have to be taken. Another point which has correctly been stated in the letter was "the resentment among the female workers by the decision of your department of regularising only men workers". It is bound to be when a blatant discrimination is made against women, showing favour to men only, which they experience often in one way or other under the present set up of the society.

I would, therefore, request you to look into the matter immediately and give justice to these women. Already they have suffered immensely, due to denial of all the welfare benefits available under the regular services. The promisses made by Government at the Women's Decade meet at Nairobi when India too was represented, should not be so easily forgotten.

The Demands of Prasav Sevikas not Granted

The large number of Prasav Sevikas in Bihar have courted arrest in thousands for their demands during the months of February and March 1987. Despite the promisses from the Health Department, Central and a deputation led by Sukumol Sen, M.P. Radha Raman Sinha, the General Secretary Bihar Medical and Public Health Employees Association and Vimal Ranadive, Secretary-AICCWW to the Health Department, no demands have been met. Again on 22nd April 1987, Com. Sukumol Sen and Radha Raman Sinha met the secretary and submitted the demands. The following letter addressed to Shri S.S. Dhano, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Planning is published herewith:

"Please recall our meeting with you on the 22nd April, '87 in your Secretariat Chamber during which Sri Sukomal Sen, M.P., & General Secretary of the All India State Govt. Employees' Federation was also present. We had requested you to please implement the recommendation of the National Health Committee to enhance the payment of Rs. 3/- to Rs. 10/- to the Maternity Attendants per maternity case attended by them. As we know, this payment is made to the Maternity Attendants to purchase the articles which are required by them while attending the delivery cases and enhancement of the rate has been recommended in view of the raised price-index.

(*Contd. on p. 21*)

A decade of commitment to the working people

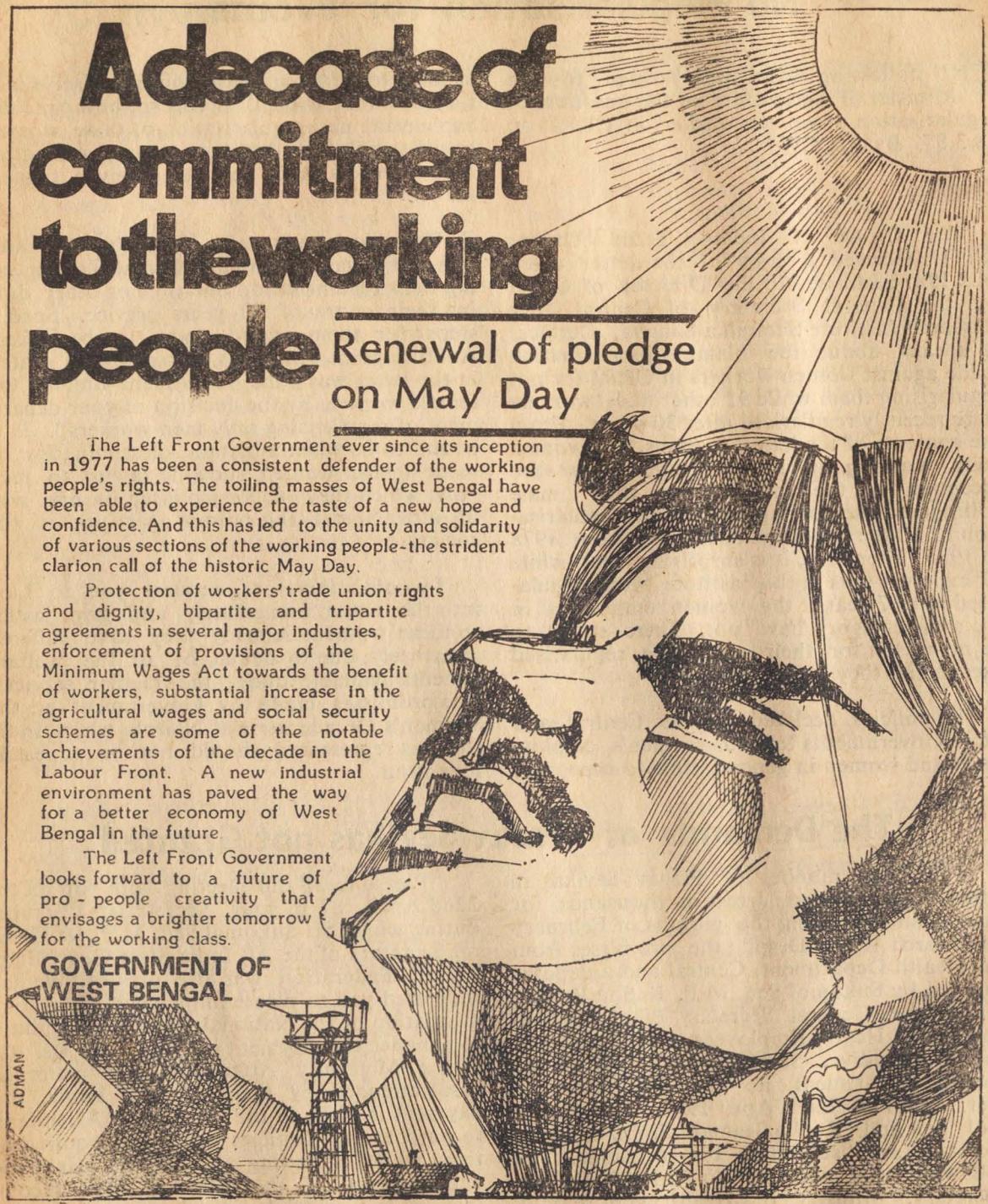
Renewal of pledge on May Day

The Left Front Government ever since its inception in 1977 has been a consistent defender of the working people's rights. The toiling masses of West Bengal have been able to experience the taste of a new hope and confidence. And this has led to the unity and solidarity of various sections of the working people-the strident clarion call of the historic May Day.

Protection of workers' trade union rights and dignity, bipartite and tripartite agreements in several major industries, enforcement of provisions of the Minimum Wages Act towards the benefit of workers, substantial increase in the agricultural wages and social security schemes are some of the notable achievements of the decade in the Labour Front. A new industrial environment has paved the way for a better economy of West Bengal in the future.

The Left Front Government looks forward to a future of pro - people creativity that envisages a brighter tomorrow for the working class.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL



ADMAN

West Bengal
- the land of fairs and Festivals

West Bengal is a land of fairs and festivals. Festivals for all seasons, fairs throughout the year. The most important festival is Durga Puja, a combination of spectacle, gaiety and colourful pageantry

Durga is worshipped in thousands of homes and pandals. The centre of all excitement and activity of course is Calcutta.

Some other main fairs and festivals are :





● **Ganga-Sagar Mela** — People all over India come here for a holy dip at the confluence of Ganga and Sagar on Makar Sankranti, mid-January.



● **Paus Mela** — Held every year on the seventh day of Paus, late December at Santiniketan, the abode of peace of Maharshi Debendranath and Rabindranath Tagore.



● **Kenduli Mela** — 42 Km. from Santiniketan. Held every year on Makar Sankranti, mid-January. Thousands of "Baul" singers assemble here.



● **Dusserah and Diwali Festival, Darjeeling** — Held in autumn every year. The queen of the hill stations witness scenes of uninhibited, whole hearted joy of the tribal folk, the spirit of course is shared by all.



● **Jalpesh Sivaratri Mela, Jalpaiguri** - Thousands of people congregate at the famous Jalpesh Shiva temple on "Sivaratri", February-March every year and observe this festival joyously and reverentially.

For further information contact :

TOURIST BUREAU
3/2, B.B.D. Bag (East), Calcutta-700 001
Phone : 28-8271 Gram : TRAVELTIPS

or,

1, Nehru Road, Darjeeling
Phone : 2050 Gram : DARTOUR

or,

Hill Cart Road, Siliguri
Phone : 21632

or,

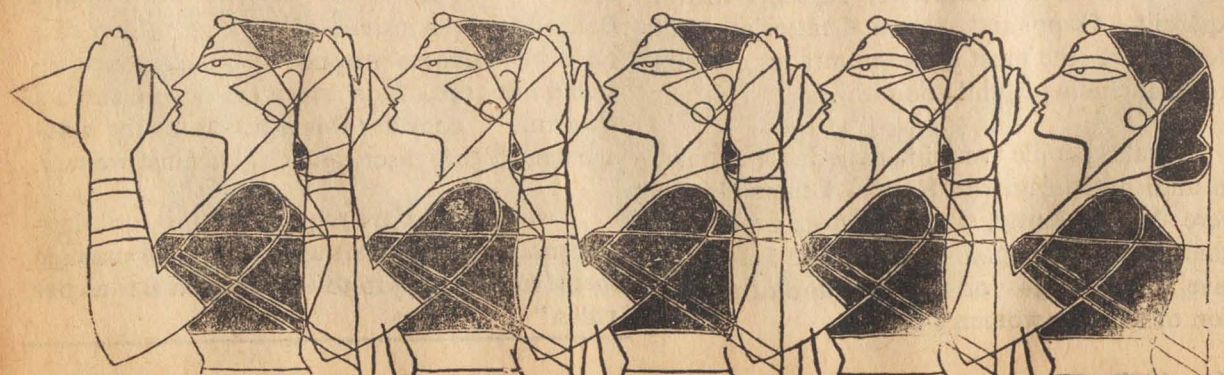
WEST BENGAL INFORMATION BUREAU
A/2, State Emporia Buildings
Babs Kharak Singh Marg
New Delhi-110 001 Phone : 323840

or,

Karim Mansion, 787 Anna Salai
Madras-600 002 Phone : 87612

For accommodation contact Udayachal Tourist Hostel in Calcutta and Tourist Lodges all over West Bengal.

Government of West Bengal



BESVAS/ICA/TB

Victory in West Bengal and Kerala

We Cougratulate you, Comrades

THE unprecedented victories in West Bengal and in Kerala, giving a thumping majority for the 3rd time in West Bengal for the Left Front, and in Kerala on the crucial political issues, should surely give some food for thoughts for the ruling Congress. Despite slanders, lies, attacks on the activists by Congress goondas besides spending lakhs of money and huge promises to the people, the common men and women voted for the Left Front in West Bengal and for the Left and Democratic Front in Kerala. The people knew very well that despite economic strains the Left Front Government was passing through, it was able to do certain things for them with genuine concern during last 9 years. They solidly stood behind the Left Front completely ignoring the promises the Prime Minister himself was offering. On the other hand, people in Kerala gave a reply to Mr. Karunakaran and the other communal and opportunist parties, by defeating them for their compromising policies. The people in both the states raised the prestige of the fronts persuing correct policies on the National unity and on economic issues in our country.

In West Bengal 13 women comrades were elected on the Left Front seats. Nirupama Chatterjee, Chaya Bera, Arati Dasgupta, Kamal Sengupta, Sandhya Chatterjee, Mumtaj Begum, Maharani Konar, Anju Kar, Minati Ghosh, Mamata Mukherjee, Jayashri Mitra, Aparajita Goppi and Shanti Chatterjee. All elected are the most active comrades of mass fronts including Mahila Samithi.

Kerala people voted Com. Gouri Amma, an undisputed leader of Kerala. Others elected were Mercy Kutty, Prof. Nabeezanmol and Bhargavi Thankappan. T. Devi and Josephine gave a good fight on the question of protection of Muslim women's Bill.

As Com. Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister rightly said that responsibilities have increased many fold after the victories in two states. The women comrades elected, will surely fight for the common interest of women and men under the present economic and social conditions. We are sure they will do their best to serve the people. Once again we congratulate them.

Discrimination of Women in Coal India

Com. Pandhe, Secretary CITU writes to the Director of Coal India, Calcutta on 27th April 1987.

"I keep several cases of discrimination shown by subsidiaries of Coal India who deny jobs to the women dependents of medically unfit women employees.

Smt. Safari Bai who was working as general mazdoor in Civil department in Korba area under SCCL was declared as medically unfit by the medical Board vide office order No. CM/KB/PM/CS/ P & T Treatment/631 dated 6th October 1986 and as per rules her dependent should have been provided job by the management.

Smt. Safari Bai has no son. Hence she applied for a job to her daughter Smt. Guppa Bai. However instead of working at her case on compassionate ground the management rejected her application since the dependent is a woman. I consider this attitude of the management highly discriminating against women.

I would therefore request you to look into the matter and prevail upon the local manage ment to provide job to Smt Guppa Bai as per rules."

Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

(The following message was received by AIDWA from Mr. Mansour M. Abu Bakr on behalf of Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Warm greetings were sent to the conference on behalf of AIDWA).

"THE International Secretariat for Solidarity with the Arab People and their Central Cause-Palestine — presents its compliments to all progressive and democratic people's organisations, political and cultural, all over the world and hopes that on the occasion of the Ist anniversary of the US brutal aggression against the Libyan people they will take special interest in deploring that barbaric aggression, which destructed human values and charter by practising the most heinous form of state terrorism under the prextext of fighting terrorism and endangering the life of the Libyan Arab civilians specially in Tripoli and Benghazi.

On this occassion the International Secretariat is organising a world conference from 14th 16th April 87 with the hope to receive your help and support for this conference and for the solidarity with the Libyan Arab people, who are making devoted efforts for peace, progress and support to the oppressed peoples, specially in Palestine and South Africa apart from their contribution to the world civilisation by offering solutions to the human problems through the Third Universal Theory.

This occosion provides to the peoples of West in general and the US people in particular an opportunity to express once again their condemnation to the fascist method of terrorism practised by the Reagan administration with the help of the Thatcher government. This stand which is expected from these people strengthens the confidence in peaceful solutions and in overcoming the situation of aggression and threat to the human life.

Thanks.

Looking forward for your positive response".

Reply

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your warm message addressed to our organisation received here on 6th April 1987. On the occasion of the first Anniversary of the US aggression on the Libiyan people, we send our heartfelt sympathy with the people of Libiya and strongly condemn the American imperialism for their aggressive designs against the people fighting for the cause of liberation. The All India Democratic Women's Association would like to join the voice of the oppressed people who have assembled for the Conference on 14th to 16th 1987 for the sole cause of peace and progress in support of the people fighting against the American Imperialist policies to brow beat the people, fighting for their liberation in South Africa and Palestine. These methods of Terrorism will never succeed before the consistant fight and determination of the whole people including men, women and children. Today, to fight for peace and against war is to fight against 'the policies of Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, the foremost leaders of the imperialist camp.

People in Libya suffered at the hands of the US who bombed on the peaceful people of the country. The people of the whole world condemned this brutal aggression, including our organisation. We extend warmest greetings to the world conference and stand firmly with you.

23.4.1987

(*Contd. from p. 19*)

least. even a Congress MLA in Bhopal has been held on charges of gang-raping a woman who had come to him for help. These reports go counter to the general impression that crimes against women are committed solely by criminals from lower income groups. Under these circumstances, the role of the police becomes even more crucial. As it is the police are often reluctant to take cognisance of crimes against women. If they are committed by people from high social strata then they are even less likely to be willing to take note of them. However, the women against whom the crimes are perpetrated are always at the lower end of the socio-economic power balance.

Times of India dated 1st of April 1987.

"Union-activity, A Punishable Act"

THE story of Mr. C. P. Singh, the principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya no. 1 Gwaliar, does not end at his immoral and corrupt conduct of molesting his own Students which we have already reported in our last-issue. The most shocking (or perhaps not so shocking in the present National situation) thing is the way in which the authorities of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan are behaving in a vindictive manner! They are trying to penalise the teachers who tried to help the victims of principal's voracious lust and exposed the whole affair. The principal is being shielded on the grounds that all the three enquiry committees (!) have exonerated him. When the AIDWA representatives met the Commissioner K. V. S. to protest against (1) the manner in which the principal has successfully misused his position to influance the enquiry committee and (2) the procedural irregularities committed by the enquiry committee, the Commissioner tried to divert the issue on the irrelevant grounds that the teachers who are helping the victims are "union members" 'He told the delegation that he wanted to "Punish" them for doing union activity" Disgusted with such a reaction from the Commissioner, the AIDWA delegation led by Com. Vimal Ranadive along with Kalindi and Pramila Pandhe met the Minister of State for Education, Mrs. Krishna Sahi. Despite her arrogant and rude reaction, the delegation's intervention forced her to institute a fresh enquiry committee. However, she refused to look into the charge of unnecessary harassment of teachers because she was promptly briefed by her secretary about the "union activity" of the teachers! We do not know by what strange logic being a union member becomes a punishable act in a democratic country like ours! —**Kalindi Deshpande**

Crime Against Women

Although much is made out of the high respect accorded to women in Indian society, facts present quite the opposite picture. Crimes against women have been showing a singular increase over time. That is borne out not only by reports in the media but also by the data collected by the Bureau of Police Research and Development. From the early seventies up to the mid-eighties, crimes against women, registered under the Indian Penal Code and among them the cases of rape, have more than doubled. Thus in 1985, the available data for 22 states of the country showed that 6,189 cases of rape, 13,952 cases of molestation and 7,652 cases of kidnapping of women and 802 cases of dowry were registered. And up to July 1986 in Madhya Pradesh alone, which heads the list for crimes against women, there were 904 cases of rape, 2,732 cases of molestation, 1,621 cases of kidnapping, 280 cases of eve-teasing and 310 cases of dowry. For the other states the picture is not so dismal. The reporting of rape cases in general, however, seems to be limited largely to urban areas as yet and this is evident from its high incidence in metropolitan cities.

But what seems significant about the latest reports on crime against women is that the occupational status of the criminals seems to be showing an upward shift. It is difficult to say whether these reports constitute a trend as yet. However, some recent news reports indicate that crimes against women are also being committed or being abetted by people from professions like lawyers, doctors and civil servants. Thus, there was a case of an advocate of Tis Hazari Courts allegedly raping a client in his chamber, a doctor in Paharganj in Delhi reportedly locking a woman patient for over two days and sexually assaulting her, a sub-divisional magistrate allegedly trying to hush up a case of abettment to suicide of a women by "slapping" a doctor when he refused to change the dying declaration of the woman and even of an IAS officer working for the Delhi Development Authority being tried in a dowry case. And last but not the

(Contd. on p. 20)

Welcoming the Supreme Court Judgement

THE CEC of the AIDWA, in its meeting on 15 & 16th of April 1987 welcomes the recent supreme court judgement which has given the right to the first wife of a man who has married again or kept a mistress, to refuse to live with her husband, as well as to claim maintenance from him.

That the Division Bench in its observation makes no differenciation between a second wife and a mistress and has also given due consideration to the distress and feelings of neglect of the first wife, is both unique and praiseworthy in that it upholds the dignity and rights of women.

The court has also given due weightage to the awarded objective of the legislation under CrPC 125 for preventing vagrancy and destitution in women, children and teenagers. However, the CEC is surprised as to why the same approach is not evidenced as regards the muslim women's Act which violates the very objective of CrPC 125, when lakhs of aggrieved, destitute muslim women are eagerly awaiting the supreme court decision regarding this Act.

The CEC therefore urges the Supreme Court to give an immediate verdict on the petitions pending before it, including the AIDWA petition, regarding the Muslim women's Act, keeping in mind that "justice delayed is Justice denied", so that these vast numbers of women can receive the justice so far denied to them.

(*Contd. from page 13*)

of equal wage act, distribution of essential commodities through proper public distribution system and total employment. The demand charter also included alternate employment for the victims of Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Insurance of all Gas victims and confiscation of the property of Union Carbide in India.

Women from Gas affected areas, Muslim women and about 15 women representing different units of the organisation in Madhya Pradesh took part in this Dharna.

Punjab

On March 8, 1987 on the occasion of International Women's Day, the coordination committee of Working Women, Patiala held a Convention at the B&R Department Grounds in which working women from various Department participated in large numbers. Shrimati Harsharanjit Kaur read the report. Shrimati Ravinderjit Kaur, Smt Rajinder Kaur and Smt Salnam Kaur spoke at the Convention. The speakers told about the history of the Women's Day and the sad state of women in India. They strongly opposed the computerisation, modernisation and automation. They demanded that 30 per cent on new posts by Punjab Government and the scheme of disbanding the branch of Public Health Department be witdrawn, demanded the implementation of the Punjab agreement and exhorted that there is no other way to protect our rights except through organisation. In the end, resolutions were passed unanimously against the New Economic Policy of the Government, for the communal harmony and in support of the common and urgent demands of the women.

Hissar

The Hissar unit of Janvadi Mahila Samiti observed 'International Womens' Day' here. Mr. Mahavir Narwal, Asstt. Professor of Haryana Agricultural University spoke on "Decadant Culture and its effects on women". He explained in detail how the commercialisation of value system has resulted into fast dengeneration in the social life and that women have to bear the brunt of this dangerous phenomena. Mr. Narwal pointed out that vulgarisation in society must be checked by a potential cultural and social movement of conscious sections of society and women should take initiative in this field.

Some women participants expressed deep concern over increasing goondaism and eveteasing by anti-social elements at public places. Mr. Inderjit Singh, a trade union leader emphasised the need to give an organised opposition to screening of obscene films, vulgar songs and literature etc.

Jagmati Sang conducted the Proceedings of the seminar.

AIDWA Meet in Delhi

THE CEC of AIDWA met on 15-16th of April with 46 members present from all the states. Ahilya Rangnekar presided over the meeting. The meeting began with the homage of the martyrs who have laid down their lives in Tripura, Darjeeling district, Assam and Punjab. A resolution was placed by Shymali Gupta hailing the magnificient victory of the Left Front in West Bengal and Left and Democratic Front in Kerala, supported by Ramadevi.

The report of the General Secretary was placed by Ahilya Rangnekar. The following members participated in the discussion. Sudha (Tamil Nadu), Ranjana (Delhi), Subhashini (UP), Rama Devi (AP) Niruben (Gujarat), Mangaleshwari Das Burman (Tripura) Josephine (Kerala) Prabha Sawant (Maharashtra) Indu (Delhi) and Rajender Kour (Punjab).

Ahilya Rangnekar while summing up the discussion welcomed the suggestions made by members and suggested of adding up the points on communalism and a campaign for shelterless. It was also decided to have a separate resolution on drought.

Among the decisions taken by thc CEC one of the important decisions was to start a bulletin in English and Hindi to enable to exchange experiences of struggles through regular reports and to strengthen our ideological and theoretical struggle against the wrong trends being propagated by various forces on the women's movement.

The membership of AIDWA stands today 18,80,591. West Bengal alone has enrolled 12,50,000 the largest membership and CEC congratulated the unit of West Bengal.

Com. Mythily Sivaraman reported the Secretariat decision to hold a peace conference in West Bengal on June 7-8. She spoke on the political importance of holding the convention. The convention will have 500 delegates.

Vimal Ranadive then informed about the two invitations received — one for two delegates from AIDWA to attend the world peace conference organised by WIDF in Moscow in June and the other is from the Chinese Women's Federation to send a 7 member delegation to visit China in August. The CEC, welcoming the invitation, unanimously finalised the names as suggested by the secretariat as follows:—

Moscow delegation; Susheela Gopalan and Vibha Ghosh Goswami. China Delegation: Vimal Ranadive, Ila Bhattacharya, Shyamali Gupta, Brinda Karat, M. Udayam, Prabha Sawant, Josephine.

Mythily Sivaraman moved the resolution supporting the Supreme Court judgement on maintenance for second wife which was supported by Subhashini Ali. Geeta Pal moved the resolution on Assam accord and Sudha moved the resolution on drought situation.

Ahilya Rangnekar summing up the discussion spoke on the future tasks of the organisation. Comrade Kanak Mukherjee in her concluding speech spoke about the heritage of the women's movement and gave the vote of thanks. The meeting ended with all CEC members singing "we shall overcome".

(Contd. from p. 15)

During the tolk, you had raised doubt that the payment of Rs. 10/- in cash may not be probably utilised by the Maternity Attendants, so it would be better to supply the items regularly to the Maternity Attendants through the Medical Officers instead of making cash payment.

In this respect, I shall like to make it clear that in the beginning, when the scheme was started, Kit-Bags with the requisite items were supplied to some of the Maternity Attendants after training while the rest could not receive it as yet and most of the kit bags rotted with the Civil Surgeons hampering the cause of the people and sabotaging the Government Scheme. Moreover, huge bungling was made during central purchase of the items. On the other hand, if cash payment is made to the Maternity Attendants to get the items purchased, they will definitely do so in order to give better service to the expectant mothers during delivery in order to popularise themselves and to fetch better remunerations from the public.

Under the circumstances, I shall request you once more to get the recommendation of the National Health Committee implemented in this regard soon.

I shall be very much obliged if you kindly inform me about the developments made in this connection."

World Congress of Women

●Towards 2000-Without Nuclear Weapons! ●For Peace, Equality, Development!

THE World Congress of Women is going to be held in Moscow from 23rd to 27th June 1987. The programme of the Congress has been prepared on the basis of proposals made by numerous organisations and groups in dozens of consultative meetings organised in preparation for the World Congress. It will provide ample opportunities for discussion on problems of interest to women and for exchanges of views and experience. The World Congress will be the biggest women's event anywhere in the world since the UN World Conference (1985) and the NG. Forum '85 in Nairobi. A great deal of attention will be paid to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies adopted by the World Conference of the UN Decade for Women.

The main work of the Congress will be done in the following eight *Commissions*:

1. Women for peace and disarmament 2. Women in society 3. Women and work 4. Women, children and families 5. Women's involvement in the struggle for national liberation, independence and self determination 6. Problems of development and women 7. Women and education-Mass media and women 8. The role and co-operation of NGOs in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies adopted in Nairobi.

The enclosed proposals for subjects to be discussed in the Commissions are based on ideas put forward by various organisations. The proposals indicate only a few of the aspects that could be dealt with; they are meant to facilitate discussion and not to limit it.

Besides the Commissions there will be discussion centres, informal meetings, workshops, solidarity meetings and gatherings of special interest groups. There are to be plenary meetings only on the first and last days of the Congress.

Discussion centres will function parallel to the Commissions. In one of the centres a Hearing on flagrant violations of women's rights will take place. It will provide an opportunity for women to give first-hand testimony or eye-witness reports on violations of their rights. Photos and films can be used to document their reports.

In other discussion centres views can be exchanged on matters of special interest.

They will be set up in accordance with the proposals made by participants in the Congress. Several topics for discussion have already been proposed in preparatory consultations; environmental protection, the influence of new technologies on the situation of women, problems of young women, the life of women in socialist countries etc.

Church women, trade union women and others will have a chance to meet.

There will also be facilities for exhibitions, films and video and for a solidarity bazar.

With best wishes for success in your activities.

(*Contd. from p. 2*)

women in such a way that many of them had to be hospitalised. Among those who were injured were Vimala Rani, Savithri, Mallik, Sulochana Devi and others.

In Kanthal, men and women sat at the bus stop since 8 in the morning and no bus was allowed to come despite lathicharge by the police. 50 women were arrested when an effigy of Bansilal was burnt in the chowk. The tempo of the strike could be noted from the incident that took place in Bhiwani district, when Mr. Surinder Singh, M.P., son of the Chief Minister came to terrorise the strikers along with the goondas at the Bhiwani Bus stand. The employees forced Mr. Surinder Singh and his goondas to flee from the stand.

Despite heavy rains, repression from the police, goondas, women under JSM braved lathis, arrests and gheraoed the police station and got the release of their arrested comrades from the van at Kurukshetra, Faridabad etc.

For the first time in the recent history of Haryana movement, women played a magnificrent roie in the common struggle of employees for their demands along with JMS, SFI, DYFI and of course CITU.

Magnificient AIDWA Rally

THE date was Tuesday, March 31. The scene was striking. On that oppressively hot day, thousands of women clad in a simple but colourful uniform-white saree and red blouse-braved the scorching sun even as the tar of the road melted underneath their bare feet, and walked a good four km, from the Central Station to Fort St. George, the seat of the Tamil Nadu Government and the place where the Legislative Assembly meets.

Impressive Action

The traffic on the thorough fares through which the procession wound its way stood still. The passers-by stopped in their tracks at the sight of so many thousands of women in uniform, holding placards and waving banners.

These were activists and members of the All India Democratic Women's Association, who responding to the call of the Tamil Nadu unit of the AIDWA, had gathered in Madras for a massive rally and March on the State Legislature to highlight a number of urgent issues facing the people of the State in general and women in particular.

They had come from all parts of the State, and from all strata. They came in chartered buses and vans; some came by public buses and trains. Many came carrying their babies in their arms.

Heading the Procession were Papa Umanath, General Secretary of the State AIDWA unit, and Mythily Sivaraman, its Working President.

Besides carrying hundreds of placards which conveyed crisply the anger and the demands of the people, the processionists had mounted three large-sized cartoons; one depicted dowry death, with the Government and the police looking away; another was on price rise; the third showed women stopping traffic and saying, "No buses can run without water being brought here first."

The cartoons and the placards attracted great attention.

Pressing Demands

These women were drawing the attention of the Government to the pressing problems of the people. Drinking water has become extremely scarce. The situation is especially serious in the city of Madras, where despite the experience of severe water scarcity four years ago, no worthwhile efforts has been made to find a long term solution yet. The AIDWA rally demanded that, as one immediate measure of interim relief water from Krishna be brought by rail and by military wagons.

The other demands raised by the rally were — justice for slum dwellers; provision of roads, electricity, water, proper drainage system and public toilet facilities for the suburban poor of Madras metropolis; off-season employment for women farm workers through State-run small industry strict implementation of the Minimum Wages Act and Equal Renuneration Act; welfare measures for the old, the handicapped and widows; provision of free uniforms. books and note-books, as well as an allowance for girls from rural households up to the tenth standard; etc.

As these militant women raised powerful slogans throughout their March, hundreds upon hundreds of people stood on both sides of the streets through which the procession went, and watched the procession go by, listening keenly to the slogans, which naturally struck a responsive chord, since they dealt with the very problems that were being encountered daily. They were impressed, too, by the discipline with which these women marched, and the militant dignity with which they carried themselves.

A noteworthy feature of the rally was the support action organised by fraternal mass organisations such as DYFI, CITU, and DREU. At several points en route, groups of comrades from these organisations had assembled with their own banners, and raised slogans greeting the rally. It was a fine show of fraternal solidarity.

A delegation of AIDWA leaders presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister.

The AIDWA is now making its plan for follow-up actions even as its local units get busy with their day-to-day campaigns on local and broader issues, both those specific to women and the broader socio-political and economic ones. Inspired by the rally and March, actvists and leaders of the AIDWA are determined to expand and strengthen the organisation.

Clarion Call For Peace By AIDWA

Vimal Ranadive

"MA, Didi, we are grateful to you, we want peace". One poster said in the rally. "War against War", "We demand Peace", No more Hiroshima" No Nagasaki". The slogans thundered in the sky when thousands of women marched in the streets of Calcutta on 9th under the festoon of All India Peace Convention. Contingents of women from 17 States from Punjab to Kerala and Tamilnadu along with their separate banners, marched together under the banner of All India Democratic Women's Association, led by Susheela Gopalan Manjuri Gupta, Kanak Mukherjee, Vimal Ranadive, Laxmi Saigal, Pappa Umanath, Shamali Gupta, Mythily, Illa Bhattacharya, Vibha Goswami and Rajinder Kaur. It took three hours to reach the Esplanade maidan near the Lenin Statue where it terminated. The huge procession of women peace marchers were watched by thousands of onlookers from both sides. The rally was the culmination of the two days' convention held at the University Hall on 7 and 8th of June.

Preparation for the Convention

The preparation for the Peace Convention in Calcutta was going on for more than a month. An appeal signed by more than 200 citizens, amongst whom were writers, film artists, singers, promiment doctors, football players and so on, was distributed in thousands in English, Hindi, Urdu and Bengali. Hundreds of street corner meetings were addressed by the leaders of the Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti, in Calcutta and other nearby districts. Cultural squads, plays, posters were displayed all over the city. All this resulted in bringing out thousands of women in urban and rural areas for the rally. Hundreds of volunteers were present for the arrangement for the delegates coming from outside. A beautiful folder was printed in English with statistics of increasing war budgets which deprive medicines, hospitals, schools for the people, with a beautiful picture on the front cover. Hundreds of such folders were sent for the distribution at the World Congress of Women along with AIDWA delegates.

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The open session began with songs on peace and presenting flowers by Kishor Vahini to all the delegates and guests assembled for the inauguration ceremony at 1.30 P.M. For all of us, it was a moving sight when some children with uniforms marched in the hall in the steps along with band and systematically sprayed themselves into the rows of people presenting flowers! This was our future life, which must be protected from the Nuclear and space wars by imperialist countries, USA the main enemy! The slogans went up, "No war, we want peace, No arms, We want food" "Stop war, we want life...." The audience whole heartedly welcomed the children with full of life....

Com. Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister, West Bengal inaugurated the Peace convention. He said it was an honour for the people of Calcutta to hold the peace convention here, the people traditionally being anti-imperialist and peace loving. The struggle for peace against imperialism's mechanisation to start war, is closely connected with the struggle for the rights of the women. Women do fight for

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