

AITU POLICY PAPERS 2001

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- ❑ Imperialist Ideological Offensives
 - ❑ Imperialist Economic Offensives
 - ❑ Fight Against Communalism
 - ❑ Casteism and Social Oppression
 - ❑ Working Women: A Class Perspective
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AITU PUBLICATION

FOREWORD

Centre of Indian Trade Unions, during its tenth conference held at Hyderabad from the 27th to 31st of December, 2000, devoted a full day for holding discussions in seven separate Commissions on issues of topical importance to the working class and the trade union movement. Papers presented in these Commissions were thoroughly deliberated by the participants, who enriched the contents with their experience. The papers finalised after taking note of the comments and suggestions that emerged during the discussions are published in this book.

As the subjects presented in this book relate to matters of policy in the context of the challenges faced by the trade union movement and the working class in India, this publication is titled as 'CITU POLICY PAPERS'. These reflect the principled stand of the CITU on these issues and underline the future course of action, in meeting the various challenges. Needless to state, these papers are intended for further in depth study and discussion at every level of the CITU organisation.

We trust that the affiliate unions and committees of CITU will benefit from this publication. Many State Committees of CITU took keen interest on these issues and translated the draft papers presented to the Conference in vernacular languages for the benefit of their delegates. It is recommended that all the State Committees plan to publish these papers, in their final form, in their local languages, so that the policy of the CITU can have a wider reach among the workers and trade union activists all over the country.

It is expected that the organisations friendly to CITU will find this publication useful in fine-tuning their policies and in their day to day activities.

31st March, 2001

M.K.Pandhe
General Secretary
CITU

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IMPERIALIST IDEOLOGICAL OFFENSIVE

PREAMBLE

The dismantling of the Soviet Union and the setback to socialism in the East European Countries towards the end of the eighties have come as serious reverses in the advance of the world working class movement. These developments helped the imperialism, led by the USA, to gain advantage, *albeit* temporarily. It has utilised this situation to launch its offensive. It embarked on its globalisation drive to impose its hegemony worldwide.

Imperialism has intensified its savage exploitation of the third world countries, using the institutions like the IMF, World Bank, WTO. In the uni-polar world, imperialism has launched a massive propaganda blitzkrieg that socialism is dead and capitalism is the last stage in the evolution of human society. This was an ideological offensive directed against the working class to distract it from its struggle for socialism.

At the outset, it is necessary to remember that the CITU, in its Constitution, has enjoined the establishing of a Socialist State as its objective. Holding fast the ideal of scientific socialism,

the CITU stands for complete emancipation of the society from all exploitation.

The setback suffered by the Soviet Union and the East European countries was the result of the mistakes committed in the process of building socialism. These serious reverses do not negate the validity of the scientific principles of socialism.

The achievements of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries were impressive and significant. They eliminated poverty, illiteracy and backwardness; gave right to work and banished unemployment; checked and brought down the prices of all commodities; provided education, healthcare, housing and other social security and welfare measures. These were achieved in the face of constant attacks by imperialism. These achievements, however, forced the capitalist countries to provide some sort of social security network to their workers.

The existing socialist countries viz. China, Cuba, Korea, Laos and Vietnam even today stand out as shining examples of the effectiveness of the socialist system, for finding lasting solution to the basic problems of mankind.

Yet, the process of building socialism is a protracted one and the struggle for socialism will be a prolonged and intense one.

Today, in the erstwhile socialist countries, millions are deprived of the means of livelihood, with growing unemployment, poverty, hunger and miseries, unknown under the socialist system. Dismantling of socialism took place under the blitzkrieg propaganda of "democracy". That "democracy" has now been rendered meaningless and exposed as an imperialist ideological hoax to the present generation.

Moreover, the happenings in the capitalist world today testify that world capitalism is incapable of solving the basic problems of humanity. The capitalist system cannot eliminate unemployment. It only accentuates disparities in income and wealth, between the haves and the have-nots and between developed and developing countries. It continues to be a crisis-

ridden system.

Thus, the present tilt in the correlation of class forces in favour of imperialism is temporary. It can and has to be tilted back by the working class, in its favour, by class struggle.

TRANSNATIONALISED GLOBAL ECONOMY

The profile of global economy has changed significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the setback to socialism in Eastern Europe. The imperialists, under the leadership of USA, have started pressing for a so called 'new world order', under a globalised economic regime

The imperialists propagate that "this transnationalised global economy is an unalterable fact of life. The whole world has become a global village and every country has got integrated with it. No country can remain isolated from this process of integration. Hence all countries must readjust their developmental priorities in line with this global integration. Free flow of goods and capital and unhindered operation of market forces will lead to faster wealth generation in the economy and benefit all concerned".

According to these neo-liberal ideologues, "the State should withdraw itself from all developmental and economic activities, including the distributive aspects, to facilitate such operation of market forces. The public sector should be wholly privatised and all regulatory and monitoring mechanism on economic and financial operations should be done away with". They also propagate that 'public sector means inefficiency and private sector ensures competition, efficiency and so more growth. They also say that in a globalised economy, reservation of the core sector industries for public sector, and also reservation of items for production by the small scale and tiny sector are all meaningless. The contention is that, all the countries, rich and poor alike, will benefit from this brand of neo-liberal globalisation. Hence, the world populace will automatically be benefited. At the same time, the competitive environment will ensure availability of quality products at cheaper prices for all'.

Such theorising is nothing but sheer deception by the imperialist powers and the global finance capital. The aim is to have greater grip over the economies of the developing countries through de-industrialisation and grab their markets.

REAL FACE OF GLOBALISATION

This is also to confuse the people and the working class that “this imperialist globalisation is an incomprehensible command of destiny and they should keep away from the struggle against it. Any improvement can be brought about through reforms only. There is no need to fight for socialism, as within the globalised capitalist framework itself all their problems can be solved. Globalisation with a human face will take care of common people’s well being.” Such illusions are spread.

Fidel Castro, commenting on the real face of the ongoing neo-liberal globalisation, said: “I believe that the problem is not globalisation *per se*, but rather the type of globalisation... Globalisation has been held tight by the patterns of neoliberalism; thus, it is not development that goes global but poverty; it is not respect for the national sovereignty of our states but the violation of that respect; it is not solidarity amongst our peoples but the unequal competition prevailing in the marketplace.”

GRIM REALITIES

The experience of the developing countries during the last decade has proved each and every aspect of the philosophy of economic liberalisation to be an absolute hoax. The paradox is that despite phenomenal rise in productive capacity, consequent to technological revolution, the world has witnessed only widening of disparity worldwide and also within the countries. Aggravation of poverty, price rise and unemployment, misery, illiteracy, sickness and closures of industries, etc expose the rapacious plunder by imperialist powers. It is directly responsible for the dangers of nuclear holocaust, ecological imbalances, increasing moral and ethical degeneration, gender and racial discrimination and so on. It is also continuously debasing the

finer qualities of human beings. While talking aloud about democracy, it has posed a definite threat to the sovereign authority of the developing countries, both on economic and political fronts.

Again to quote Fidel Castro from his address to the summit conference of the G-77 countries in Havana on 12.4.2000: "Never before did mankind have such formidable scientific and technological potential, such extraordinary capacity to produce riches and well-being; but never before were disparity and inequity so profound in the world."

CAPITALISM, BIGGEST OBSTACLE

The ideological offensives of the world capitalism today are the biggest obstacle in providing the benefits of scientific and technological revolution to the teeming billions of the world. In the globalised economy today, international finance capital is in constant search of quick speculative gains; it seeks unhindered access to all countries for market, for sustaining the crisis-ridden capitalism.

Marx and Engels wrote in 1848 in the Communist Manifesto: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. ...It has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old established national industries have been destroyed or are being daily destroyed ruthlessly. It becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations and the working class." This passage glaringly portrays the present day happenings, as if it has been written now.

The last decade witnessed a consistent all round decline in all the developing countries, including India, besides the severe weakening of the economies of even the so-called Asian tigers. The capitalist class has wholly appropriated the fruits of whatever little growth had been in certain sectors/regions. It meant nothing for the common populace. Nothing trickled down

in the background of a jobless growth scenario.

This also exposed the false claim that market force alone can ensure distributive equity. In reality, no amount of growth can automatically ensure flow of its benefit to common populace, without a conscious equity-oriented policy support from, and intervention in economic matters by, the Government/States. The capitalist system cannot ensure and sustain such distributive equity.

Despite these grim realities, a big section of intelligentsia, and common people as well, are misguided and confused by the imperialist propaganda and worldwide media blitzkrieg. The neo-liberal globalisation, drawing strength from such confusion and resultant vacillations, seeks to weaken the working class opposition and struggle.

THE MYTH OF FDI

The ideologues of imperialist globalisation are posing 'foreign direct investment' (FDI) as the only means for furthering economic growth of the developing economies. This has created confusion even among a section of those who are generally critical of the liberalised policy regime. They fail to realise that FDI cannot be the only source of investment for self-reliant development in the country. Destroying the potential for indigenous investment for alluring the FDI, as is being done now in India, is suicidal for the country. In almost all the developing countries in the world, barring rare exceptions like China, the FDI has come in mostly to take-over domestic companies or for ousting them from the market. It led to greater outflow of resources, than the investment inflow. It indulged in much more import and outgo of foreign exchange, than its contribution to export. Instead of generating employment, it killed employment in a big way. Even the World Bank, IMF and UNCTAD documents bear testimony to this grim reality.

MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE SOCIAL CLAUSE

The imperialist ideological offensive has generated yet another

faulty understanding regarding the role and character of various agencies of neo-liberal globalisation. The loud talks about democratisation of the World Bank, IMF and WTO, even in some sections of trade union movement, demonstrate this. An equal status and right to vote in the WTO does not bring any relief to the developing countries, in the face of muscle flexing and machinations by imperialism. The fact remains that these institutions dominated by imperialist powers were set up as instruments to economically subjugate the rest of the world. They are brazenly anti-people and anti-development in character.

In a similar manner, the imperialist block is seeking to incorporate 'social clause' in the WTO agreement, to impose observance of 'minimum labour standards' as a precondition for exports by the developing countries. They are trying to involve ILO in the process. This is nothing but erecting non-tariff barriers to the exports from the developing countries. Imperialist countries are least concerned in ensuring observance of the labour standards in the developing countries. Their game plan is only to prevent or restrict entry in their markets of exports from the developing countries. Still, a big section of the world trade union movement, including some from the developing countries, is supporting the linkage of social clause with trade. They are under a misplaced notion that such linkage may help in improving the lot of labour in their country. In reality, such linkage of social clause will only lead to closure of industries in the developing countries, allow the MNCs to exploit the market merrily and push a large section of labour to destitution.

THE NGO OPERANDI

The imperialist agencies, to help them in the practical field, have been promoting a network of well-funded NGOs, to work in the area of trade unions. These NGOs pose to collaborate/associate with the trade unions, indulge in left demagogy, but help the foreign masters funding them. Acting at the behest of imperialism, they try to wean the trade unions away from their own political-organisational activities. The servile Governments also play into the hands of imperialism, by boosting these NGOs

financially and organisationally. In the process, these NGOs attempt to even usurp the space of the trade unions. This NGO-*operandi* is another method to de-ideologise the working class in favour of neo-colonial net work of imperialist globalisation. Although there are some NGOs with genuine intentions, doing good and sincere work in the social sector, there are many with doubtful credentials.

All the trade unions in India have opposed linkage of social clause with trade. They have recorded such opposition in all international fora, including ILO, World Development Summit at Copenhagen etc. The Govt. of India has also voiced similar opposition. But, it is curious to find many NGOs from India - many of them enjoying financial patronage of the Government in those very fora propagating in support of social clause.

'APOLITICAL' CLOAK

Another aspect of the ideological offensive is to disjoint the trade union movement from its class and political understanding. Nowadays it has become fashionable for some trade unions, even some claiming left orientation, to talk about politics with contempt and boast of apolitical trade unionism. They propagate that the trade unions should remain independent of politics. This apolitical stance is only a cloak to hide their support to the naïve politics of the capitalists and the exploiting class. In decrying politics, they turn a blind eye to the politics of the capitalist system and imperialism and their perpetual exploitation of the people.

There is another dimension to this ideological offensive, added by the intellectual elite, that in the matter of economic policy, one should not be guided by ideology. They talk as if their particular economic principle is devoid of any ideology of its own, to serve the interest of a particular class. These talks of 'non-political trade unionism' and 'economics without ideology' are parts of the same conspiracy to de-politicise and disarm the working class. This is intended to prevent the working class from realising their potential to lead the struggle for social transformation; to blur their vision to identify the real cause of

their problems and agony; and to restrain them from attacking the exploitative system at its very root.

Trade unions, as champions of the whole class, cannot be an adjunct of any political party. But, that does not mean they should remain apolitical. They must have a politics, the politics of the working class, with a clear vision about the exploitative character of capitalism and how to advance the struggle, in stages, towards putting an end to the same. Otherwise, they will succumb to the imperialist ploy to limit the trade union activities within the confines of economism, derailing the working class movement from its struggle against capitalism. Several agencies are quite active in our country to promote this idea and they have also published a number of literature, with official and foreign sponsorship.

CULTIVATING THE 'TINA' SYNDROME

Another dimension of the ideological offensive is to legitimise the surrender to imperialist designs, by advancing the plea of 'no alternative'. It has become fashionable on the part of the intellectual agents of liberalisation to argue that 'there is no alternative' (TINA) to accepting this imperialist neo-liberal globalisation in this unipolar world. They plead that our country has no resources for development and we have to abide by the conditionality imposed by the international financial institutional lenders or foreign investors. This TINA syndrome has infected a sizeable section in the trade union and democratic movement as well, who argue that as globalisation has become a *fait accompli*, it is better to seek a better deal within its framework instead of opposing it. There are several other variations of this TINA syndrome presented by the imperialist ideologues. The purpose is to dilute the resistance against the onslaught of globalisation and pave a hassle-free path to imperialist exploitation.

But the fact remains - there is a definite alternative to the exploitative capitalist regime - the socialist system, which is the inevitable future of humankind.

One would do well to remember that even in comparison to the

pre-liberalised path of self-reliant economic development, with the active role of the State, despite all its negative features of sticking to the capitalist path of development, the alternative offered by neo-liberal globalisation, has proved to be the worst.

It is also not at all a fact that the developing countries have no resources to fund their own development. Even in India, there is no dearth of resources within. Only, the ruling polity lack the political will to harness those resources, lying with the rural rich, big monopoly houses, speculators, hoarders and black-marketeers. Rs 58000 crore of loans from the nationalised banks remain unrecovered and termed as Non-Performing Assets. Rs 62000 crore are in arrears as unpaid income tax/corporate tax/customs and excise duty. The big corporate houses have usurped all these. There is also huge accumulation of black money. It is, therefore, ridiculous to lament about resource crunch. To add to this, the Government is showering huge concessions every year to their class allies. While sacrificing such revenues, the Government seeks to replenish its coffers by looting the common people. Hence, the talk of resource crunch is unalloyed falsehood to deceive the people.

The struggle against liberalisation in our country since 1991, despite its many limitations, could visibly slow down the pace of liberalisation. The struggle is yet to reach a sizable section of the population. During recent years, many an upsurge could be witnessed in many parts of the world, including the developed capitalist centres. Hence, if the working class can unite the masses, much broader unity can be forged and nationwide struggles to defeat this disastrous policy regime can definitely be strengthened.

MILITARIST OFFENSIVES

Besides the offensives on the economic front, imperialism led by the USA, has stepped up its political-military offensive to strengthen its hegemony over the world. It actively seeks to subvert the existing socialist countries and wages a ceaseless economic and ideological war against them in the name of "democracy" and "human rights". Apart from its intervention and

arm-twisting measures in China, Cuba, Korea, and Vietnam, the US imperialism encourages the right reactionary forces all over the world. It supports Israel against the Palestinians. It has shown its brutal character in Iraq and Yugoslavia to dismember these countries because they dare to challenge the U.S. imperialists.

In its war mongering drive, the US imperialism has even abandoned the pretense of using the United Nations as a cover to carry out its militarist interventions all over the world. It had openly come out with its political and ideological objectives in expanding the activities of the diabolical NATO, to dominate the world militarily.

In the midst of the devastating attack on Yugoslavia, the NATO observed its 50th anniversary at Washington on 23rd April, 1999. In his address on the occasion, Bill Clinton asserted: "military measures can be taken outside the territory of the NATO countries". Secondly, he also stated that, "we have to reaffirm our readiness to address regional and ethnic conflicts beyond the territory of NATO members".

Such official policy pronouncements are corollary to the drive for total economic domination through the fora like the G-7, IMF, World Bank and the WTO. This is to cover up the ongoing global economic crisis, which is haunting the capitalist world including the USA, for which they want to strengthen their war ideology. The 'New World Order' was thus officially explained. It not only poses danger to world peace, but is also a direct threat to the sovereignty of nations. It explicitly explains the imperialist game plan for subverting national sovereignty, towards which the process of globalisation is proceeding.

"IDENTITY POLITICS"

The second point mentioned by Clinton explains the other ideological offensive of imperialism, i.e., it is not the class politics, but "Identify Politics" that is relevant - identity based on community, race, religion and so on. This is the trend, which fosters caste, communal and sectarian identities and ideologies,

to divide the people in different countries, helping imperialism to take advantage of. This was the political and ideological background of the continued offensive against Yugoslavia, which started dramatically in 1991, after the dismantling of the Soviet Union.

In India too, we are experiencing this trend. The USA has already intervened in Kashmir and the forces of *Hindutva* are aggressively undermining the secular foundation of the country and democracy. They are directly and openly helping the offensive of international capital and imperialism. Their demagogic slogan of "*Swadeshi*" is only to confuse the people. Their direct offensive is against the organised working class to ideologically denude its class-consciousness and channelise it into the so-called "Identity Politics", based on community, race, caste and religion.

The BJP Government is more inclined towards collaboration with imperialism. It seeks to be a junior partner of the USA in the globalised economy. India was the founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). But, the BJP Government has undermined the anti-imperialist character of NAM.

Along with the liberalisation being imposed by imperialism, the communalisation of the society, under the fascistic ideology of *Hindutva* propagated by the RSS, has taken an aggressive stride. Both the processes have aided imperialism to undermine the sovereignty and the secular foundation of our country. We have to fight against the both.

The working class of the country, with its practical experience, has to ideologically confront the imperialist ideological offensives in all its manifestations. It must re-assert:

* Capitalism based on exploitation of man by man cannot provide lasting remedies to the ills of the society.

* There is definite alternative to the ongoing neo-liberal globalisation and the same can be reversed.

* Socialism remains the objective of all sections of the working people.

The CITU has to take the lead to unite the entire working class to carry forward this task.

Imperialism remains the main enemy of the working class and the mankind and we have to unite all forces against it. We should also steadfastly defend and pursue the goal of socialism and educate and equip our ranks, politically and ideologically, in that direction.

CAPITALIST CRISIS

The modern productive force, coupled with the ongoing technological development, can liberate the whole world from the curse of poverty and glaring inequality. Production can advance with technological developments, if the purchasing capacity of the people can be increased simultaneously. But, that is not possible in the capitalist system. A socialist system only can develop markets for enhanced production, using technological development.

Manufactured goods cannot yield profits for the capitalists, if they remain unsold. Production is boosted up only through the usage of a large market. Market is one of the essential prerequisites of capitalist development. The bourgeoisie, ever since its emergence as a class, had been endlessly searching for this in the whole world. But, the market cannot expand infinitely within this system. Today, the bourgeoisie has almost fully conquered the market and leaving very little to be explored and even the existing ones are approaching stagnation. This has led to the most serious crisis of the capitalist economy.

IMPERIALIST ECONOMIC OFFENSIVE

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The long history of the development of the capitalist mode of production shows that from time to time capitalism was able to establish, and then sustain, an economic and political equilibrium for an extended period. But, it was never able to overcome the periodical crisis, which threatened the existence of the entire bourgeois society, each time more intensely over the earlier instance.

In the existing capitalist system, the wide disparity between the 'haves' and 'have nots' is increasing, along with unemployment and joblessness. With ever increasing disparities between the rich and the poor families, or rich and poor countries, wealth gets concentrated in the hands of a few. Market does not expand commensurate with productive capacities, developed through new technologies.

RECENT TRENDS

The 20th century had started off amidst a crisis of capitalist production-system. In recent times, the unprecedented development in science and technology has helped the capitalists in carrying out large-scale production by employing a very small labour force. In this background, the capitalist class has become more offensive at the fag end of the 20th century. Everywhere around the world, industries are being liquidated, throwing a large number of workforce out of job. In the limited market, there is a mad and cutthroat competition among the capitalists to capture the global market. This contradiction, inherent in the capitalist system, leads to struggle between big Multi/Transnational capital and none too big or small capital or to the ongoing fight between the so-called developed countries and the developing countries.

The offensive of international capital has found new outlets in the guise of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, through which Multi/Transnationals are trying to capture the world market. A global trade war has started to get hold of the vast markets of the developing countries. Many of these countries have created an indigenous and technological industrial base through the sacrifices of their patriotic people.

Their march toward the goal of self-reliant development has got a serious jolt because of an unchecked free market policy. The process of de-construction and de-industrialisation is active there.

To capture the market of these countries, there is a concerted effort for de-industrialisation, i.e., closing down indigenous industries, divestment of profit making industrial enterprises, especially those in the public sector; deregulating imports along with the withdrawal of customs duty and thereby forcing the indigenous industries, including small and medium sectors, to face an unequal competition with Multinational giants; forcing the Governments to withdraw from the social sector etc.

The MNCs and TNCs, in their attempt to further reduce the production costs, are continuously shifting capital as well as production-base from one part of the globe to the other. This has resulted in widespread destabilisation in the world economy, the worst sufferers being the third-world countries. Even the advanced capitalist countries cannot escape the consequences of this uncertain industrial and economic atmosphere. During the recent period, even in the developed industrialised countries, the phenomenon of flight of capital and production base abroad, of the MNCs, is being used as a weapon by the capitalists there to bargain with the workers for lower wages, flexible working hours and cut in social benefits. In the ultimate analysis, the working class throughout the world is at the receiving end of a relentless attack on their rights and daily livelihood. The science and technology revolution has virtually led to "jobless growth" in the advanced countries. The third world, knowingly or unknowingly, is also following this path.

In order to perpetrate their hegemony in the world market, they are utilising World Bank, IMF and the recently formed WTO. Within the imperialist powers, USA has established its hegemonic power. It has also resorted to military activism for the countries, which are not ready to follow its dictates.

IMPACT ON SOCIETY

According to the World Development Report 1999/2000, "... the broad picture of development outcomes is worrisome. The average per capita income of the poorest and middle thirds of all countries has lost ground steadily over the last several decades, compared with the average income of the richest third. Average per capita GDP of the middle third has dropped from 12.5 to 11.4 percent of the richest third and that of the poorest third from 3.1 to 1.9 percent."

The number of poor people has risen worldwide and in some regions the proportion of poor has also increased. "Of the 4.4 billion people in developing countries, nearly three-fifth lack basic sanitation; a third have no access to clean water; a quarter lack adequate housing; and a fifth have no access to modern health services. About 20% of children do not complete five years of school, and a similar percentage does not receive enough calories and protein from their diet."

The income disparities of developed and developing nations have been increasing rapidly all over the world. The gap between the rich and the poor is also getting widened. In 1993, global GDP was estimated at \$23 trillion, with a share of a mere \$5 trillion to the poorer countries, even though they constitute 80% of the world population. Between 1960 and 1991, the share of the richest 20% population in the world has increased from 70% to 80%, while the share of the poorest 20% of the population has declined from 2.3% to 1.4%.

A recent World Bank study shows a sharp rise in world income-inequality. The combined wealth of the top 200 billionaires hit \$1,135 billion in 1999, up from \$1,042 billion in 1998. The combined wealth of \$146 billion for the 582 million people, in all the least developed countries, may be compared with that.

More than 70% of the total global flow of direct investment is concentrated in the three global centres of capitalism of the United States, the European Union, and Japan. In turn, it is pointed out, 30% of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is concentrated in only some ten so-called 'emerging markets', with the East and increasingly South Asia, taking the lion's share

in the process. The incentive is obviously the opportunity to garner the highest rates of gross profits in these markets.

World export of goods and services expanded rapidly between 1990 and 1998, from \$4.7 trillion to \$7.5 trillion (an increase of 59.5%). But, the benefits are accruing to the more dynamic and powerful countries of both the North and the South. In 1988, the least developed countries, with 10% of the world population, accounted for only 0.4% of global exports, down from 0.6% in 1980 and 0.5% in 1990.

Many of these developing countries are helplessly drifting towards the 'debt trap'. Public debt of the Third World countries reached \$2067 billion at the end of 1995. The yearly repayment of this debt imposes a burden of \$69 billion on these countries. Not surprisingly, national Governments are painfully washing their hands off from the basic services to the common people, as there are not much funds left for developmental activities. More and more attacks are being launched on the welfare schemes, security of services, social security schemes etc. These trends are accelerating.

Outstanding external debt for India in 1998-99 stood \$ 97,666 million, which was about 23% of GDP. The debt servicing stood at \$ 11,342 million. Concurrently, the rupee exchange rate i.e., rupee per dollar has gone down from Rs. 28.96 in 1992-93 to Rs. 42.08 in 1998-99. Presently, the same is more than Rs. 46.00 per dollar. This has its own impact and the liquidity position of the country is further deteriorating.

Added to this is the deteriorating position in trade balance because of huge import and lack of matching response in export. Compared to a negative trade balance of minus Rs. 38,061 crore in 1995-96, this has become minus Rs. 55,478 crore in 1998-99, which means then trade balance is widening at a rate of 13% every year.

Analysis of external transactions shows that the non-petroleum imports, which means mostly, consumables, durables and luxury items, have gone up from \$ 15,964 million in 1992-93 to \$ 36,775

million in 1999-2000. This doubling of import has already led to decline in industrial growth and a rise in consumerism. The dumping of goods, which are otherwise available indigenously, is leading towards de-industrialisation and subsequent reduction in employment.

The past two decades have seen productive employment in the developing countries getting reduced by 15%. The corresponding figures in some EU countries are England (43%), France (23%), and Germany (14%). In the remaining EU countries, the rate has crossed 10%. Even the US is no exception to this, generally speaking.

PRIVATISATION: FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?

Self-reliant economic development of a country depends largely on indigenous investments. Foreign investments, as and where necessary, can only supplement the same. Available private capital in the developing countries is also quite inadequate, compared to the total investments required for such development. That is why, even in the developing countries, which have chosen the path of capitalism, public investments have played a crucial role. In our country also, the role of public sector has been much more dominant and all pervasive in developing the industrial base and a self-reliant economy. Most of the core sectors have been created and nourished by the public sector. Even today, the Indian private sector does not have the financial and technological capability to take over the responsibility of handling this sector on its own.

On the other hand, no country can become truly self-reliant only on the basis of foreign investments. Foreign investments cannot be a stable source of development and it may shift at any time to other destinations in search of higher profits and more speculative pursuits. Moreover, the role of FDI (non-speculative), in almost all the developing countries - barring rare exceptions like China - played the role of replacing or ousting the domestic producers in the field and catering for the domestic market with very little contribution to the host-country's export. The net result is huge loss of employment instead of

employment generation, besides huge outflow of funds abroad through profit-repatriation - in several cases more than the investment inflow. In China, the situation is somewhat different because of the compulsion of export obligation imposed on the foreign investors and strong economic governance, ensuring for the domestic industries the major share of domestic market. And such strong economic governance in China is laid on the foundation of overwhelming presence of the socialist Government in the economic front, a dominant public sector supported by strong infrastructure sector and strong policy support for the domestic industries as well.

In the present crisis of capitalism, it is over-production in a stagnant, rather squeezing, market, which is creating all the problems. That is why there are desperate attempts to open up more and more new markets elsewhere. Global Finance Capital is keen to dismantle the well-established public sectors in the host countries, so that they can have aggressive forays into these sectors. There is, therefore, a direct nexus between the Multi/Trans-nationals and organisations like the World Bank, IMF and WTO, which are recommending closure or handing over of the public sector undertakings to private owners.

The misinformation campaign that privatisation is the way to revitalise our industry and economy is totally untenable. This step, on the other hand, is helping MNCs and TNCs in increasing their turnover and the profit at the cost of indigenous industries and the millions of workers employed there.

In the name of reform, the present Government is only playing into the hands of imperialist powers to destroy and annihilate Indian industries. In order to avoid people's wrath against dismantling and disposing of the public assets in the form of public sector, wilful vicious propaganda is being unleashed, day in and day out, through Government machinery and public media. That "people in public sector do not work, public sectors are all loss making and hence a drag on public money" etc. is part and parcel of such vicious propaganda. From the CII's survey last year, it is observed that out of the top ten companies in terms of profit, nine belong to the public sector. However,

this factual revelation does not find any mention in the national media.

Public Sector Undertakings, on an average, pay Rs. 35 to 40 thousand crore as dividend and taxes to the Government. But, in the absence of Parliamentary control, the facts and figures about the amount of taxes paid by as well as the amount remaining not recovered on this score, from private sector are not available to the public. In case of privatisation, much of this money would not be forthcoming to the Government exchequer. This will only lead to stoppage of developmental work and planned expenditure and to high inflation.

The Government at the Centre has been continuously engaged in malicious propaganda against the public sector undertakings. An impression is being created as if movement for protecting the public sector in the national interest is a movement only for protecting the jobs of the employees working in these organisations. The Government in collaboration with the private and global capital is, in the process, trying to alienate the common people of this country from this struggle, which is actually the struggle for sustaining the economic sovereignty of the country and to create more employment for millions of unemployed youth. The Government does not want the people to know this truth and that is why this misinformation campaign against the public sector goes on unabated.

PRIVATISATION OF POWER SECTOR

To understand the implications of privatisation, it is important to consider the impact on the objectives being served and what kind of transformation would result. Given below is an example of the power sector in India.

Objectives that the Independent India sought to achieve in the power sector:

- * To provide industry with power at affordable rates in order that industry may be competitive.
- * To take electricity to rural and urban slum areas and provide

electricity to the economically disadvantaged irrespective of their capacity to pay.

- * To encourage and build self-reliance.
- * To ensure regional co-operation in a complex plural society within a situation of shortage of capital and resources.
- * To support the growth of industry, rail transport and communications.
- * To optimise utility domestic primary energy resources.
- * To make electricity a backbone for food security - based on electrical irrigation pump sets - especially after India had lived the humiliation of ship to mouth existence under import of food from U.S.A. under PL 480. Failure of this industry will result not only in a power crisis but also a food crisis.

Objectives of the neo-liberal ideology of the World Bank led 'reforms' in Power Sector:

- * To build and enable multinational corporations that can effectively control the entire energy system of the world.
- * To ensure that the State is demobilised and the entire fund requirement in this capital-intensive industry is based on and controlled by international finance capital.
- * To maximise private profits.
- * To provide this essential public service only to those who can pay.
- * To make energy borderless flow system that does not respect national boundaries and only respects the flow of capital.
- * To ensure political control of the developing countries by powerful industrial nations.

It can be noticed that the reforms that are carried out on the plea of improvement in 'efficiency' in fact change the objectives with all the consequent fallouts.

THE CORPORATISATION MOVE

Government of India, with a view to transfer the public assets to the private sector and MNCs, are nakedly converting the Government departments and institutions into corporations. The Government departments and institutions cannot be sold away

through the policy of disinvestments. Corporatisation will help the Government to sell its stake in the corporatised departments to the private capital at a nominal price.

Big institutions, like the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, were the first victims of this attempt. The same was given the shape of a Corporation under the name and style 'Oil and Natural Gas Corporation'. In the same process, Telecom department has also been converted recently into a corporation. Attempts are being made to convert the State Electricity Boards, Factories under the Railway and Defence ministries etc. into corporations. Thus, the Central Government is transferring the public assets to the hands of private capital. These institutions played a nation-building role in the past; now the foreign and domestic private capital is being given the opportunity to build themselves up, in place of nation-building.

SERVICE SECTOR

Multi/Trans-nationals are not much interested in investing in the production sector viz. manufacturing and capital goods sector, as their main interest lies in investment in the service and infrastructure sector, especially in the financial sector. Government of India, under the directives from imperialists/neo-colonialists, has already privatised the Insurance sector. It has also announced its decision to sell 67% shares of the nationalised Banks to private investors. These steps are being acclaimed as steps towards economic development of the country. But, they are very cunningly hiding the adverse impact of these decisions on the common man.

It is binding upon the nationalised banks to extend loans, at a lower rate of interest, to priority sectors, which cover poor and marginal farmers, artisans etc., self-employed schemes for unemployed, cottage and small scale industry, small trades etc. Private investors are always after super profit. They bother least about their responsibilities towards society. In the event of privatisation, there will be no such binding on the private banks, and the lending to the priority sector will totally be stopped.

After privatisation of the banks, most of the banks will come under the control of foreign capital. Their main objective will be to take care of the interests of foreign capital, rather than contribute to the industrialisation of our country. No industry can be run without support from the banks. Thus, the foreign interests controlling the banks will also regulate industrialisation of our country. For example, if any industry develops in the country, which creates hurdles in the marketing of products from Multi/Trans-nationals, that industry will not get the assistance from the banks controlled by the foreign interests. However, the process will be reversed, when an Indian company markets the products of the Multi/Trans-nationals. Thus, the scope of developing indigenous industry will be severely restricted.

At present, the nationalised banks and insurance companies invest the moneys, collected through deposits and premia, within the country, creating opportunities for development and employment generation. With the privatisation of these institutions, as per the agreement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), no such conditionality, of investing the resource garnered from within, can be imposed on them. Our resources can, therefore, be invested or utilised freely outside the country.

WHO GAINS FROM IMPORT LIBERALISATION?

The Government of the day has been liberalising imports at random. A section of the people are happy over the availability of cheap imported items. But, the serious impact of this policy on the life of the common man is not being made known to them. With the lifting of the Quantitative Restrictions (QRs), items ranging from steel, coal, fertiliser, machinery etc. to garments, puffed-rice, flour, wheat, and even tomato, can now freely come from outside to Indian market. Total lifting or substantial reduction of import duty on these items, and on the other hand, increase of excise duty has made the imported items comparatively cheaper vis-à-vis the Indian products.

When these items are produced within the country, our people get the jobs, which is not possible when these items are

imported. The increase in import of steel, coal, machinery, fertiliser etc. is bound to increase simultaneously the loss of jobs. This holds good not only for the organised industry; if the garments are imported, the tailors lose jobs here. When wheat, flour and puffed-rice come from outside, there will be simultaneous loss of jobs in these sectors. Thus, industry, agriculture, service sector, all will face a serious crisis of loss of jobs and non-creation of fresh jobs.

UNEQUAL COMPETITION

To keep the developing countries dependent, the developing countries are not allowed access for the latest technologies in the possession of the imperialists. The vacated technologies, which they are providing to the developing countries, in the name of new technology are also not made transferable. The technological advancement still remains the major agenda for the bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that they want to put the developing countries in unequal competition for market with them.

When the industrialised nations are strongly advocating for globalisation of market, capital, legal framework, labour relation and so on, they are totally silent about globalisation of technology. The modern technology remains the monopoly of the advanced capitalist countries and with this powerful tool they want to conquer the rest of the world, in an unequal competition.

The G-7 countries have their own guidelines in the form of what they call 'COCOM REGULATION' to regulate export of technology to developing countries. The generation of technologies to be exported to the developing countries is being decided by this co-ordinating committee. As per these guidelines, the products of latest technologies, like telecommunication, computers and machine tools, are not provided to the developing countries. If vacated technologies only are exported, and that too without technology transfer, how can that lead to an equal competition? The Govt. of India, which accepted the prescription of globalisation, liberalisation and

privatisation without any objection, has never demanded globalisation of technology.

THE EMERGENCE OF EPZs

As a part of imperialist offensive, around 1000 Export Processing Zones (EPZ) have come up all over the world. These have become instruments of intense exploitation by the MNCs. In India, 10 such EPZs have emerged, which are practically given immunity from all labour laws in the country. Using EPZs as a cheap source of labour has become a weapon in the armoury of MNCs and also Indian capitalists to earn more profits, through intense and unhindered labour exploitation since trade unions are not allowed to function in these zones.

The use of prison labour for production by the capitalists has become a regular practice in several capitalist countries. In the USA alone, the capitalists are allowed to use the prisoners as labour, with wages less than one-sixth of the normal wage level prevalent there. The prison labour produces \$ 9 billion worth goods every year. Can exploitation go any further? The MNCs and the rich countries that talk so much about labour standards and child labour in India and other developing countries are keeping silent about this phenomenon.

IS THE GLOBAL MARKET REALLY OPEN TO ALL?

What about the market? Is it really free? The imperialists are forcing us to open our market for their products, but they have not opened their own markets for our products. On the plea of environment and labour, the developed countries are trying to force such clauses through the WTO, which will hinder entry of non-technology intensive products like tea, garment, carpets. etc. from developing countries to the markets of developed countries. Very recently, the Govt. of India, as per bilateral agreement with the US Govt., has opened its market for 714 products by withdrawing all sorts of restrictions; it has agreed to open further 715 products in the next year. Whereas, the US Govt. has declared to continue with the restrictions on import to their country at least till 2005. In fact, Indian exports are facing

increasing restrictions in European and American markets.

The India's performance in the foreign trade during last one-decade of liberalisation is a dismal story of extreme adversity. Despite opening of the economy to the hilt and removal of almost all barriers of goods and financial inflow, the India's share in export trade has consistently been dwindling. Even in respect of commodities where India had dominance in export markets, like tea, leather, leather manufacture, man-made fibre etc, India lost heavily in her market share of exports, not to speak of the manufactured and engineering items. Even in primary products, India's share in export market has consistently been declining during last three years upto 1999.

Increasing and stubborn protectionism and anti-dumping measures on the part of the developed countries on the one hand and increasing liberalisation of duty-exempted imports being imposed on the developing countries on the other has literally killed the indigenous industries. Can these be treated under any circumstances a 'level playing field', conducive for equal and fair competition between developing and developed countries? This becomes clearer when one goes through the recently amended Patent Laws.

PATENT LAW AMENDMENT: FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?

India had its own Patent Laws, which encouraged indigenous research to evolve appropriate technology, at least in certain areas like seeds, pharmaceuticals, drugs etc. To promote R & D activities and to protect the interest of the people in general, and industries and agriculture in particular, many items were excluded from product patent protection. But, after the amendment of the Patent Laws as per the dictates of the WTO, product patent on those items have also been introduced. Thus, India is now losing all the avenues to develop its indigenous R & D activities and its application in manufacturing activities.

Human Development Report 2000 observed: "The move from process to product patents introduced under the TRIPS agreement dramatically reduces the possibilities for local

companies to produce cheaper versions of important life-saving drugs, such as those for cancer and HIV/AIDS. Local production in India had kept prices at a fraction of the levels in neighbouring countries. For example, in 1998 the anti-AIDS drug *flucanazole* cost \$55 in India for 100 tablets (150 milligrams) but \$697 in Malaysia, \$703 in Indonesia and \$817 in the Philippines.”

It further observed: “The TRIPS agreement benefits technologically advanced countries. The industrialised countries hold 97% of all patents and global corporations 90% of all technology and product patents. Developing countries have little to gain from the stronger patent protection from the TRIPS agreement because they have little research and development capacity. Research and development for a new drug is estimated to cost around \$150-200 million, but no developing country has a pharmaceutical sale volume of even \$400 million.” Definitely, the amendment of Patent Law has gone against the interests of India and served the interests of the developing countries and the MNCs

THE ECONOMIC BLOCKADE AND SANCTIONS

While talking about free trade on the one hand, the imperialists and MNCs are engaged in resorting to the weapon of economic blockade against the countries opposing imperialist machinations. The economic blockade of Cuba, Libya and Iraq by the imperialists, ignoring the world opinion, is an example of imperialist design to throttle economies of the developing countries. The sanctions imposed on several countries including India are manifestations of imposition of hegemonistic rule of the imperialists at a global level. Despite worldwide condemnation, the US imperialism is pursuing these designs with impunity.

THE TINA (THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE) FACTOR

The so-called reformists, time and again, are propagating the theory, which is now widely termed as ‘TINA’ factor. ‘There Is No Alternative’ as there is no money for development. The Prime Minister says that hard decisions are to be taken, which means

reducing subsidies to the poor and lower middle class, the working class, farmers; hiking the price of basic necessities like rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene and other items; closing down public sector units or selling the blue chip ones at throw away price to make up budgetary deficit.

How far it is true? If it is a resource crunch, what stops the Government to recover black money worth lakhs of crore Rupees, generated and used in gross violation of the laws of land? As per Govt.'s own estimate, Rs. 58,000 crore worth assets have become non-performing assets in the nationalised banks, as the loans taken by corporate borrowers have not been paid back. The defaulters are not the common men, but those big wigs who are now the zealous supporters of the reformers.

One Harshad Mehta, the king pin of the infamous security scam, still owes more than Rs. 200 crore to the banks. But, the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister of the country are making a hue and cry of reducing the subsidy to farmers by increasing the price of urea. There had been no action whatsoever to recover Rs. 4000 crore from the urea manufacturing companies, collected through manipulation of production capacities.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has estimated a loss of more than Rs.5000 crore to the exchequer towards license fee, because of the Government decision to shift from license fee to revenue sharing system in respect of cellular phone operators. Who benefited? The big business houses and not the telephone user. Recently, the Finance Minister was on the dock for restraining the tax authorities to impose a capital gain tax worth Rs.2000 crore on 19 foreign companies fakely registered in Mauritius. The list is unending including the Government decision to invest Rs. 1400 crore in "Sankhya Vahini". There are no 'hard' decisions on these issues. Hard decisions are meant only for the common man in the form of hike in prices of electricity, kerosene, diesel, domestic gas, rice, wheat and what not.

The alternative to the so called 'reform' dictated by World Bank

and IMF lies in a self-reliant economic development model based on the natural and human resources of the country. A strong public sector, linkage between the big and small industries, development of indigenous and appropriate technology through R & D, import substitution, mandatory export obligation for foreign investments etc are some of the basic steps in this direction, coupled with better resource mobilisation and economic discipline achieved through unearthing of black money, recovery of arrears of taxes and bank loans, arresting drainage of scarce resources through various 'scams' which have become part and parcel of 'reform' process. Instead of depending totally on an 'export oriented' economy, domestic market should be strengthened through land reforms to increase purchasing capacity of the poorer section of the country along with decentralisation of power, involvement of people with planning etc.

Alternative is there, but what is lacking is the 'will'. TINA is a factor only for a Government of the Corporates, by the Corporates and for the Corporates - but not for the working class and the people of the country.

PLANNED CAMPAIGN TO SUPPRESS THE FACT

If the people know the above implications, they will resent the Government policies of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. That is why the proponents of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation are trying to divert the attention from this grim scenario by projecting a rosy future.

The national media of this country, which are mostly captive in the hands of the industrial corporations and the Government, are also gleefully co-operating in this concerted disinformation campaign on the issue of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. A planned campaign is being organised on all the fronts to brand those who are opposing these reforms, especially the Leftists, as big obstacles in the path of nation's development.

TU RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK

One of the worldwide features of globalisation is the ferocious attempt by the ruling class to marginalise the trade union movement. The ILO, in its report, studied the situation in 11 advanced capitalist countries and observed that the TU movement has been losing its importance in those countries. Laws curtailing trade union rights are being enacted in most of the capitalist countries.

In India too, the constitution of Second National Commission on Labour, to change the labour laws to suit the liberalised economy, is a part of the global offensive of the finance capital. The fight against this offensive, the struggle in defence of trade union rights and the gains of trade union movement has, therefore, assumed great importance.

IN THE POLITICAL FRONT

The ongoing neo-liberal globalisation through World Bank, IMF and other agencies, all dominated by imperialist forces, is aimed at establishing the economic hegemony of the imperialist powers over the entire globe. In other words, reversing the process of self-reliant economic development in the developing countries is the sole target of neo-liberal globalisation. Such hegemonistic effort of the imperialist powers got a special boost after the collapse of the Soviet Union

In the background of aggravation of the crisis of capitalism, offensive has been mounting from the centres of imperialist-powers both on economic and political front, thus bringing the entire developing world under their thumb.

ROLE OF LEFT LED GOVERNMENTS

The left led Governments in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura had been trying their best to follow an alternative path of self-reliant, pro-poor, pro-working class policies to the extent possible within the Constitutional frame work of the country. These are the Governments, which have carried out land reforms,

decentralised power and involved the people with State planning. Left led governments have so far been able to keep their State Electricity Boards under their control. Whereas Government of India has made a new department of 'Disinvestment' to dispose off profit making public sector units and to close down sick units, Government of West Bengal has a department of 'Industrial Reconstruction' to help revive the sick units both in public and private sector. It has been possible to make some of the sick industrial units under the state Government profitable during the period of their rule. 'Industrial Sickness' being one of the major issue confronting working class, the left ruled State of West Bengal has started giving Rs. 500 per month to the affected workers of industrial units under closure, lock out or 'suspension of work'. In Kerala, Construction Workers' Welfare Scheme has been introduced benefiting more than 9 lakh workers engaged in construction work. State Govt. of West Bengal is introducing a Provident Fund Scheme for unorganised sector workers, a major section of which is still not covered by any such provision of existing Central labour laws. These Governments have protected the trade union rights of the working class and refused to use ESMA against the striking workers.

These alternative approaches of the Left led Governments placed them in comparatively better position than others. The rate of economic development in the states where World Bank model of reforms have been vigorously followed, like Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, during 1993-94 to 1997-98, had gone down by 43%, 40.2%, 35% and 4% respectively. The Left led States have shown the maximum growth of 101% in case of Tripura, 140% in case of Kerala and 180% in case of West Bengal. These are compared to growth rate of 1.02% in Orissa, 5.58% in Madhya Pradesh, 18% in Behar, 22% in Maharastra, 50% in Rajasthan, 88% in Tamilnadu, 85% in Karnataka and 121% in Gujrat. (Source Government reply in Parliament in Winter Session of 2000).

TASK AHEAD

These trends establish beyond doubt the core importance of

class struggles in resisting, and subsequently overwhelming, the encroachments, on a global scale, by the forces of capitalism on the masses in general and the working class in particular, notwithstanding the sterile bravado of the rulers to the contrary.

Resistance to globalisation of capital and against the anti-people and anti-labour assaults have been, it is true, taking place globally, *albeit* in a somewhat random and fragmented form. Cohesion of the process of global resistance of the working class is an urgent imperative. But, class struggle has necessarily to be initiated at the national level.

The working class in India has been struggling against these anti-people policies, right from the beginning in early 90s of the erstwhile century. More people are getting involved in the struggle. However, the desired success is yet to be achieved. The delay in mobilising wider sections of the people in the struggle has been due to the confusion created by the misleading propaganda by the ruling class among the toiling masses.

We shall definitely come out successful in our struggle against liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation as well as against imperialist onslaught by making the working class and the toiling masses conscious of the devastating effect of these policies. We can unite the working class in the struggle, through such efforts only, removing all confusions created by the vested interests.

Production is a social phenomenon. The capitalist system of production is heading towards its inevitable end. The desperate offensive by imperialism is also the manifestation of the crisis of the system itself. At this stage, intervention by social forces is necessary to ensure its downfall. Technology is the surest implement to advance social development. The bourgeoisie has misused it and brought immense misery to the humankind. But, under the socialist system, the same can be used for large-scale social development. The working class must strive for that.

There has been rising discontent against globalisation and its resultant anti-labour, anti-people policies adopted by the bourgeoisie. But, this is still unorganised and disjointed. It is essential to channelise this discontent into organised movements against the capitalist globalisation and ultimately the capitalist system of production.

Scientific socialism calls for qualitative changes in the level of consciousness of the working class to fulfil this historical task.

COMMUNALISM TASKS OF THE TRADE UNIONS

1. Communalism has been afflicting our society and polity for nearly a century. The notorious 'divide and rule' policy introduced by the British to secure their imperialist rule gave rise to continuous political conflict on communal lines with intermittent outburst of communal violence culminating in the partition of the country. After independence, the Sangh Parivar with RSS at its centre took up the same weapon of communalism to get to the seat of power and having reached there, along the long trail of blood left by series of communal riots engineered by them, they are out to create an explosive communal situation, while recklessly trying to implement the disastrous economic

FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNALISM: TASKS OF THE TRADE UNIONS

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policies of the imperialists. The situation demands determined intervention by all democratic forces, particularly the working class.

2. Communalism is a complex phenomenon. Many factors contribute to its growth and account for its numerous facets. Its essential character, however, has been sharply expressed in the view that it is "a political doctrine which makes use of religious-cultural differences to achieve political end." In our country it is the religious factor, rather than the cultural, that is uppermost in popular consciousness and it is by manipulating the religious consciousness of the people, that communal passion is roused in order to "achieve political end" ; to reach the seat of power, to secure it once it has been reached, and if this is beyond the reach, at least to gain some weight in the political power balance.

3. It follows from the above definition and is also confirmed by our experience that religion *per se* is not responsible for the growth of communalism. Contrary to what communal forces would have us believe, none of our great religious teach its followers to hate and fight with the followers of other religions. It is the various sections of exploiting and ruling classes that distort the religious teachings and manipulate the genuine religious sentiments of the people to transform it into communal consciousness. It is important to be clear and also to make it clear to all that opposing communalism does not in any way mean opposing religion or the genuine religious sentiment of the people.

BEFORE INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER

4. For centuries, people belonging to different religious communities lived together by and large peacefully, if not always, in perfect amity. Clashes between communities were, of course, not altogether unknown. But they were generally isolated localised events. The society could absorb them and broad unity of the people was not shaken. Existence of "religious cultural differences", even acute awareness of these differences, did not automatically lead to long lasting communal hostility. In

nineteenth century, amazing unity of Hindus and Muslims was demonstrated during India's first war of independence in 1857, which the imperialists derogatively called *sepoy* mutiny. The situation has undergone qualitative change when scared by the rising wave of national movement, the colonial rulers took recourse to the "divide and rule" policy.

5. Eminent historians have rightly traced the beginning of communalism to the introduction of "divide and rule" policy by the imperialist rulers. It is well known that in terms of this policy, two major religious communities of our country which fought against colonial power in perfect solidarity with each other, were set against one another, with a view to perpetuate their rule. The British rule in the subsequent phase was marked by many bloody conflicts between the two communities. The colonial rulers succeeded in creating a divide in the political life of the country. Though the people of Indian sub-continent wrested freedom from their hands, it was amidst great communal conflagration. The end result, as already stated was the partition of India that accompanied freedom.

6. The imperialist rule ended but not communalism. The most reactionary forces gathered under the banner of *Sangh Parivar* soon jumped to the centre-stage with the weapon of communalism, which they have been sharpening over the decades, generating in the minds of Hindus, intense hostility against the other communities (initially the Muslims and now against the Christians also), with the aim of mobilising the support of the majority community in their favour, for reaching the seat of power. They ultimately succeeded in installing a coalition Government at the Centre, with the BJP, the political outfit of RSS, having the dominating position.

7. The RSS started its career as early as in 1925 as a small obscure sect, drawing inspiration from European fascism, with the programme of a "Hindu Rashtra". It embodied the so-called Hindutva ideology, modeled largely on the fascist blueprints. It had been preparing for its future role - half secretly, half openly, keeping completely away from the freedom struggle. In independent India, particularly in recent decades, it has come

up openly with its programme and ideology, with the large number of its units scattered all over the country. The RSS with its frontal organisations like the VHP, Bajrang Dal, etc., which together constitute the *Sangh Parivar*, has become the focal point of all communal activity, for all to see - ostensibly to protect the interests of the majority community, but in reality to enlist the support of the vast majority community to occupy the seat of power. The *Sangh Parivar*, linked with and supported by the vested interests, does not, and cannot, have any programme for the solution of the problems of the common people. The only way they can mobilise support of the people is by rousing communal (anti-Muslim, now anti-Christian as well) passion of the majority community. Communal hatred most intensely and widely develops during bloody riots. It is unprecedented bloodshed, killing of thousands of innocent people, looting of shops, burning of houses, raping women, destruction of historical monuments, together with political chicanery and immoral practice, that has brought them to power. They are carrying on the same activities today, in order to continue in power.

8. BJP's advent to power at the Centre has added a dangerous new dimension to the communal situation in the country. The administration of the country is being communalised; the administrative machinery is being utilised to communalise Indian society and polity, with its thrust on *Hindu Rashtra* and *Hindutva* ideology. Attack on minority communities like the Muslims and the Christians is going on, with direct and indirect backing of the State machinery. Democratic norms, which can never go hand in hand with communalism, are being trampled under feet. Unless checked in time, the unity of the nation, integrity of the country, democratic norms— all will be destroyed. Trade unions have, so far, failed to discharge their responsibility in adequate measure. It is high time they come forward before it is too late.

9. The RSS had been preparing the ground since long for a political takeover, spreading its organisational network throughout the country. Though they succeeded in engineering communal riots at various places, some time on a large scale, it did not for a long time succeed in making any major electoral

gain. Congress was, by and large, dominating the political scene. Utter bankruptcy of the Congress itself created the ground for the rise of communal forces. Moreover, the Congress itself, with a view to buttressing its sagging support base, adopted an opportunistic policy. Instead of fighting communal forces under the banner of secularism, it started making veiled appeals to the communal sentiments of both the Hindus and the Muslims - particularly of the majority community, the Hindus, at a later stage. The opportunist compromise with communalism could not save the Congress; but it threw open the opportunity to the rabid communal forces to make rapid progress. The non-Left, non-Congress national or regional parties, which did not hesitate to join BJP in the coalition Government, are also responsible for strengthening the communal forces.

10. The Hindu communal forces led by RSS are undoubtedly dominating the political scene today. With State power in hand, they are frantically trying to carry out their communal agenda. They represent the mainstream of communalism today. But communal forces are not confined to majority community alone. Muslim communalist forces, fundamentalist elements, are also active in India. While the Hindu communalist programme is anti-Muslim and the Muslim communalists thrive on anti-Hinduism, objectively they help each other. Hindu communal activity is used by Muslim communalists to rouse anti-Hindu passion and Muslim communal activity is utilised by the Hindu communalists to create or intensify anti-Muslim feelings among the Hindus. Muslim communalists like their Hindu counterparts not only create situation of tension and even violence but also try to keep the Muslim community out of the democratic movement in the country. Democratic minded people and the trade unions have to fight against both. But it must not be forgotten that because of the opportunity to extend their appeal to majority in the country by the majority-fundamentalist forces of so called *Hindutva*, because of their scope to mobilise larger section of people, because of the possibility (at present reality) of their being in control of Government, their capacity for doing mischief is infinitely greater than others. "The communalism of a majority community is apt to be taken as nationalism" - this remark made in 1961 by the then Prime Minister of India now sounds

prophetic. The Hindu communalists today are trying to sell their version as nationalism.

SOME REINFORCING FACTORS

11. The imperialist effort to disrupt unity of the nation and ultimately dismember the country is now well known. They are boosting and directly helping all sorts of divisive trends and movements. The international Muslim fundamentalists' role in aggravating the communal situation has also been clearly established. These activities, in turn, provide communalists of the majority community with the material that strengthens their hate campaign.

12. In the context of decline of national culture in the capitalist countries, a trend of a sort of religious revivalism has set in almost throughout the world, and certainly in India also. Every day new obscurantist cults are emerging and all these invariably extend the support base of fundamentalism and of the communal forces. And to the extent these developments strengthen the divisive forces, the organisations that are involved in them get lavish material help and encouragement from the various imperialist agencies and Governments.

13. Finally, vast majority of our population live in rural areas, where remnants of feudal relations persist and backward ideas, associated with the backward socio-economic conditions, widely prevail. Large sections of our urban working people have close links with rural society and share the backward ideas of the rural population and are, therefore, susceptible to communal influence.

14. It should be clear from the above that in the fight against communalism, we will be up against formidable forces. We have to take up this task with utmost seriousness and determination.

CITU AGAINST COMMUNALISM

15. The founding fathers of CITU, the organisation that emerged in the course of a prolonged struggle against TU economism,

were particularly aware of the communal developments and the dangers inherent in them - for the country and for the working class in particular. A major policy resolution, on communal and other divisive forces, was adopted by the foundation conference of the CITU. It drew the attention of the democratic people to the serious threat extended by these forces to the unity and integrity of the nation and the country, as well as its democratic set up. Referring to the fact that violent riots affected all major industrial centres, the resolution pointed out how the communal activities were directed to disrupt the struggle of the working class. The resolution called upon all trade unions, all democratic parties and organisations, all mass organisations to come together to face the challenge of organisations like Jan Sangh (now called BJP), RSS, Shiv Sena, Lachit Sena (of Assam) and similar organisations and to defeat these counter revolutionary forces. The conference also pledged itself to do all in its power to unite the democratic forces for this sacred cause.

16. As the communal activities continued unabated, almost all our conferences and meetings of the General Council and the Working Committee tried to impress upon the working class and the trade unions, particularly all units of the CITU, the paramount importance of the struggle against communalism and other divisive ideology and activity. Com. B.T.Ranadive castigated the trade unions based at Delhi for their failure to intervene during the large-scale killing of the Sikh community, following the brutal murder of Indira Gandhi. Unfortunately, even the CITU organisations cannot claim that they had duly addressed themselves to this all-important task.

17. Having noted this serious lapse with concern, the 8th conference of the CITU, held in 1994 at Patna - a little more than one year after the destruction of the *Babri Masjid* - discussed in a commission, ways and means to address this challenge. The commission paper ratified by the 8th conference made important contributions, particularly on some practical aspects of the task of the working class and trade unions in the struggle against communalism.

18. It must be admitted self critically that in spite of all this, the working class in our country, the trade unions and even the CITU, has not played a very significant role in effectively fighting communal and other divisive forces, though activities of the latter went ahead with big strides and ultimately the BJP has come to power, mainly riding the wave of communal passion roused and through widespread blood bath caused by them. Now a serious exercise on the issue assumes great importance, at a time when communal activity has entered a new phase with the BJP coming to power.

19. One major reason for this failure of the trade unions is that as yet our trade union movement, which is engaged in fierce struggle against the imperialist sponsored economic policies for a whole decade, is not adequately conscious about the inextricable link between the struggle against the economic policies and that against communalism. The BJP led coalition is hell-bent on implementing the imperialist-sponsored economic policies. They are launching the worst-ever attack on workers' rights. The communal appeal serves them as an effective means to divert the attention of the people from the economic issues. The BJP led NDA Govt is as much committed to the reactionary economic policies as to the reactionary communal ideology. These are indeed the two sides of the same coin. It is impossible for the working class and other democratic forces to effectively fight the economic policies without simultaneously fighting against communalism.

THE PRESENT STAGE

20. As stated, installation of a BJP-led coalition Government at the Centre has added a new dimension to the communal situation in the country. The Sangh Parivar is going beyond all limits in utilising the opportunity offered by this position to use - or rather misuse - the political and administrative machinery to carry out its communal agenda. What is important to note is that not only these communal forces are incorporating many items on their communal agenda in the Government's policy and programme and getting them executed through Governmental machinery, they are taking this opportunity to

project their agenda as national agenda. This enables them to mislead a larger section of the population. It is well known how they are trying to impose and infuse politically and administratively the so called *Hindutva* in the sphere of education, culture, law etc. Obviously, it has far reaching effect.

21. Another side of their strategy is direct action, that is atrocities against the minorities. These are organised directly by constituents of the *Sangh Parivar*, some time in some place or other (For example, attack on the Christian minorities on the generally false plea of forced conversion). The administration, which is under their control, provides all possible protection to the perpetrators of atrocities and the leaders of the Government as well as the *Sangh Parivar* organisations provide ideological and other justification for such crimes.

22. The communal forces and the BJP are, however, somewhat circumscribed in carrying out their entire communal agenda because, being short of absolute majority in the Parliament, they are to depend on their NDA allies, all of whom do not necessarily subscribe to the communal ideological position of the BJP. They have electoral compulsions also for not overtly supporting the communal agenda of the BJP some times, to woo the minorities on electoral considerations, they take heroic posture of opposition to their big brother (though in some cases ultimately acquiescent in their proposals). Because of this position of the allies, the BJP, instead of trying directly to bring in the temple issue, article 370 or the issue of Personal law for immediate implementation, is appealing to the communal spirit already roused in a section of people for ensuring absolute majority for it to enable it to implement their agenda in full. Significant in this context is Vajpayee's statement that the *Ram mandir* issue represent national sentiments.

23. Another aspect of their strategy, as already stated, is to go ahead at a breakneck speed to implement the economic policy sponsored by the imperialist agencies like the IMF, world Bank, and WTO and generally accepted by the big business of our country. Total dismantling of public sector, complete opening up of the economy for foreign interest and all that. In this, there

is a fair degree of unity among the NDA partners. The latest step in this direction is the proposed changes in labour laws giving the employers the right to hire and fire. Along with this, as is by now well known, they are trying to manipulate our statute to give our polity unitary and authoritarian shape.

24. In the media, stories often circulate about differences between the BJP and the RSS. One will be mistaken to read too much in these stories. There may sometimes arise difference of views, among those who directly run the administration and those outside, on appropriate tactics to be adopted at a particular point of time. But, the BJP is nothing but a frontal organisation of the RSS, committed to implement the RSS ideology. All the major leaders of BJP including Vajpayee are hardcore RSS men. BJP cannot stand without the backing of the network of RSS organisations in both electoral and other matters. The ultimate control lies with the RSS.

TOWARDS FASCISM

25. The magnitude of the danger posed by communalism today, particularly by the majoritarian communalism, cannot be correctly gauged unless it is clearly understood that the RSS-BJP communalism is very much a component of the fascistic ideology of the RSS. As already mentioned, the RSS ideology and some of its organisational system bear the impress of European fascism, particularly the NAZI variety. The "*Hindu Rashtra*" for which it stands with "*Hindutva*" as its ideological content, claims that the Hindu tradition, alone is the national heritage of India. Unless one accepts Hindu heritage, has reverence for the Hindu Gods and Goddesses, accepts Ram as the symbol of national culture, he is to be regarded as alien. He can be prosecuted and killed, his house can be burnt, and all that. Apart from this social and ideological aspect, they are ruthlessly pursuing the most reactionary economic policies. Politically, in spite of their present limitations, they are seriously trying to give our polity an authoritarian content. Demolition of the *Babri Masjid* by force, with careful planning, is much more than simple communalism. The measures they are adopting in every sphere would remind one of the activities of early fascism.

FOREWARNING BY CITU

26. Significantly, while the BJP is never tired of repeating that they do not have an agenda of their own, on *Ram Mandir* etc issues, other than the agenda of the NDA Government, the BJP Prime Minister has declared that all their original agenda would be taken up as soon as they get two thirds majority in Parliament.

27. The CITU envisaged the possibility of such a development, as early as in 1970, during its foundation conference. Calling upon all democratic forces to wake up in time and take up the challenge of communal reaction, the resolution adopted by the conference stated: "a democracy which cannot do minimum justice to its minorities cannot last; it must sooner or later succumb to the fascist forces and such are the forces (*Jan Sangh, Shiv Sena etc.*) represented by the above reactionary organisation...The hunting of religious and political minorities constitutes the first step of the reactionaries to bring down the existing democratic set up and establish reactionary dictatorship. The recent slogan of Indianisation raised by *Jan Sangh* is an open incitement against minorities".

28. While the propaganda carried on by the Hindu communal organisations and their violent anti-minority actions are bound to create a sense of alienation among the minorities, especially the Muslims, the process is complicated by the Muslims communal organisations. These organisations "while pretending to defend the just grievances and demands of the Muslim minority, harp on Muslim separatism and communalism. The end result of this communal appeal is to isolate the Muslim masses from the common class and democratic struggle and look for solution in separatism."

29. Communalism poses serious danger to the unity of the nation and integrity of the country. It divides the working class and democratic movement. The backward sections of the working class are susceptible to communal and other divisive appeals. The trade unions will not only have to protect working class unity but "from protecting working class unity, the workers

must march forward to protect people's and national unity."

30. "Despite efforts of reactionaries, the trade unions do succeed in forging unity of thousands during strikes. But its unity, based on immediate economic demands, is not sufficient to counter the reactionary offensive...". "The working class in its unity has a special responsibility in saving country's unity. It is the experience of history that the only class, which by its unity and consciousness can save the unity of a newly liberated country, is the working class...The working class living in modern conditions united in thousands in the factory can easily overcome the sense of religious communal considerations and set an example. ...The working class of India has to play this role of defending popular and national unity overcoming religious and communal differences. If sections of the working class themselves become affected by communal virus, the working class is doomed. It must realise that the unity forged by it in its prolonged battles can be reduced to nothing, if it fails to act as a class force and influence the people."

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

31. Trade union responsibilities are, therefore, two fold: (1) to keep the working class free from communal virus and maintain its unity and (2) to defeat communal and divisive forces to protect the unity of the nation.

32. A substantial part of our working class has links with, and is under the influence of ideas held by, old backward society. It is this background that helps the communal forces to rouse the false consciousness of the primacy of the religious communal identity, amongst the backward section of workers. Constant involvement in class struggle, even at economic level, brings about some change in the worker's psyche; the class identity starts to compete with religious-communal identity. On the basis of primary sense of unity developed in the course of day-to-day struggle of the workers, the trade unions have to develop a higher consciousness - that of its responsibility to the nation. It is only when the working class is imbued with higher consciousness, it can intervene to stop spreading of communal

hatred; can intervene directly when communal riots are started by the reactionary forces. In some States, the CITU workers have, to a limited extent, taken direct part in the fight against divisive forces. But, the trade union movement generally "confines itself mainly to immediate demands and does not educate the workers regarding their duty to protect national unity. It does not educate the workers regarding their duty to the nation, to the people, to protect national unity. It does not educate the workers regarding the evil role of communalism and caste....". As a result, being swayed or neutralised by religious and communal considerations, the workers stand paralysed before the attack of disruptive forces, when they should be in the streets to fight them back. The communal majority sits silent and does not fight those who attack its class brothers. The working class and trade union movement must fight against this paralysis and train itself to be a secular class army out to defend its unity and the unity of the people.

33. The tasks of the trade unions in the struggle against communalism may concretely be enumerated as follows:

i) People in general, and particularly the workers, are not inherently communal. It is due to the false consciousness that is developed by communal propaganda that they are turned communal in varying degrees. The basic task of trade unions is, therefore, to educate the working class - at the first instance to explain to them the real truth, by refuting all mischievous false propaganda by the communal forces. This cannot succeed if considered as a one-time affair. Education for sharpening even of primary trade union consciousness and for inculcating general political consciousness, to be really effective, has to be conducted on a continuous basis. Educating the workers on the dangerous portents of communalism has to be an important part of trade union education. Small group meetings facilitate discussion. However, seminars, big meetings are also to be used and suitable printed material should be considered.

ii) Similarly, persistent efforts should be made to inculcate scientific outlook in the minds of the activists and the general workers to defeat the fundamentalist and obscurantist offensive.

iii) Now it is the *Sangh Parivar* that is spearheading the communal offensive, both in ideological political sphere and also organising atrocities against minorities. Apart from exposing their false theories of history and society etc, workers have to be organised to oppose the Sangh Parivar politically and to directly intervene, when the attack is launched against minorities.

iv) The working class has been fighting against the policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. The link between the reactionary role of the BJP Government in economic matters and their communal agenda - the only means by which they think they can come to power and retain it, so that the economic policy can be pursued to the end, needs to be thoroughly exposed.

v) Suitable means to be developed for carrying the message of unity to the people, in cooperation with the other democratic forces at large. It is mainly an intense and widespread class struggle of the rural exploited classes that can create a favourable condition for effectively fighting communal influence among the vast rural population of the country.

vi) Trade unions must champion the cause of minorities. Workers coming from oppressed castes and minority community have disabilities and grievances in addition to the grievances common to all workers. Sometimes, these are of greater importance to them in their daily life, than the common trade union demands. They do not feel enthusiastic about the common movement, if the trade unions do not champion their special demands. This is one of the reasons of low trade union membership from these sections. The trade unions must remove this weakness and ventilate the special grievances of these sections.

vii) The CITU Centre and the State Committees have the greatest responsibility in this matter. Firstly the Centre and the State committees alone can produce material for education of activists and for the workers. This has to be done on a continuous basis, as communal propaganda is bringing in new

issues every day, through the print and electronic media in a continuous stream. State committees must issue literature particularly on the issues used by the communal forces at the State level. A comprehensive publication on the subject must be brought out as early as possible.

34. Apart from this, it is the responsibility of the higher committees, the Centre and the State committees, to take organisational steps, so that the work against communalism becomes a part of the day to day trade union activity at all levels,

Caste divisions in Indian society are inherited from the old feudal socio-economic order and were based on the "Varnashrama Dharma" of the Hindu religion. Over the ages, even in the process of infusion of gradual modernity and its impact on the social structure, this pernicious system continued to remain, albeit with little moderation in its medieval crudeness.

It is also worth-noting that despite many radical developments during the century just ended, in the socio-economic scene, including the national independence movement, not much change could be brought about in the prevalence of caste hierarchy in the society.

As Com. B. T. Ranadive put it: "These are the sins of the past-the sinful heritage, which the national liberation struggle could not and did not repudiate. It could not repudiate it because the national bourgeois leadership of the struggle was not interested in going to the root of the problem and uprooting it... The remedy lay in sweeping away the feudal and semi-feudal set up of

CASTEISM AND SOCIAL OPPRESSION: OUR TASKS

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agrarian relations. This the leadership (of the national liberation struggle) was not prepared to do." (*Foreword to 'Caste, Class and Property Relations'*).

CLASS INTERESTS FOSTER CASTEISM

In the pre-independence period, the British rulers patronised the landlords and the caste system to perpetuate the inbuilt disunity in the Indian society. During freedom struggle, the Congress leaders, representing the rising bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, mostly hailing from the landlord class, preferred to follow a 'do not disturb policy' on the prevalence of caste hierarchy in the society. They were occasionally mouthing slogans against untouchability and other forms of caste oppression, while taking a position of virtual support to the landlords and feudal interests. Their class interests, besides the Influence of revivalist ideas in a section of the Congress leadership against foreign ideas and foreign culture along with foreign rule, had also played a role behind the eventual compromise of the Congress leadership with feudalism and also with the casteism.

Again to quote Com. BTR: "It will be seen that three powerful class interests - the imperialists, the landlords and the bourgeois leadership - were acting as defenders of the caste system by defending landlords and the pre-capitalist land relations." (*Caste, Class and Property Relations*)

Both the colonial rule and post independence period witnessed many anti-caste movements. But again, they basically limited their attack on the caste system in itself and on its reflections on the people, but not on the feudal agrarian relations, which promote such discriminatory divide in the society.

IN INDEPENDENT INDIA ...

The same situation continued even after independence. No doubt, the Constitution declared 'equality before law' - irrespective of caste; untouchability was made a penal offence; provisions for reservation of jobs and seats in educational

institutions for the SC/STs were made; yet, utter deprivation continues to haunt the overwhelming majority of the oppressed sections of the society, even after five decades of independence.

The reason is apparent. The ruling class in independent India refused to change the feudal agrarian relations and shared power with the landlord class. They were not for uprooting feudal land relations; but adopted and perpetuated the same - at times seeking only to modify them marginally, without affecting the basic structure. Thus, even after five decades of independence, concentration of land holdings and assets in rural India, in the hands of a very small percentage of rural households, continues. Land Reforms Legislations were intended only to adjust the old structure to the immediate needs of the ruling bourgeois-landlord combine. Even these were not properly implemented. The number of landless agricultural labourers is increasing every day and their wages are sharply falling in real terms. All these are having reflections in the extremely unequal economic and social equations, including the caste divisions. All these led to perpetuation of the semi feudal social relations, of which casteism was an integral part.

The provisions for caste based reservations were not properly implemented; whatever little was implemented, it could not touch even the fringe of the real problem.

The Annual Report of Union Labour Ministry for 1999-2000 revealed that during 1988-1997, as per live registers of the employment exchanges, the number of SC and ST jobseekers had increased by 50.3% (more than 5% per year) and 65.6% (more than 7% per year) respectively. This is much more than the annual growth rate of the population and the labour force. The same report also shows that during the same period, the placement of ST workers in jobs has gone down by 29%. The employment profile of the Public Sector Undertakings and various Government departments - where alone the scheme of job reservation is supposed to operate - also shows a declining trend in the share of the SC/STs. It is nowhere near the 25% mark.

The situation in respect of the OBCs is again one of utter callousness. The question of extending reservation for the OBCs was deferred at the time of framing the Constitution. The report of the Kaka Kalelkar Committee on this question was thrown to the dustbin. The Mandal Commission report was also not implemented till the V.P.Singh's tenure of Prime Ministership. The decision itself was greeted with violent protests, organised by vested interests; its implementation is yet a far cry.

While generally extending support to the provisions for job reservation, in the absence of a permanent solution, we, in the CITU, have pointed out that reservations alone will not offer any lasting solution to the problems of the dalits and the OBCs. To quote Com. BTR: "In the very nature of things, these palliatives will neither solve the problems of poverty and unemployment, nor change the conditions of untouchables and other downtrodden castes. They will certainly offer some relief to individuals from these communities, but not change their status."

The pious declaration of 'equality irrespective of castes' and other palliatives could not check the intensification of poverty and deprivation among these downtrodden sections, even in comparison with their counterpart, below the poverty level in other communities.

The Survey conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) revealed: "The level of income by social groups suggests that total household and per capita incomes are the least among SCs followed by STs in comparison with the national average. Per capita income of the SCs and the STs are 38% and 36% lower than the national average of per capita income." (*India: Human Development Report - Oxford*) The same survey also revealed that both incidence and intensity of poverty are much higher among the SCs and STs. The proportion of ST and SC households in the lowest income category is over 70%, in comparison with the average of 50% for the entire Hindu households.

Besides this horrifying income-poverty estimates, the SC/STs

represent the biggest proportion of the population not having any assets, including land, and being more than 60% illiterates. This exposes the mockery of the Govt. claims on poverty alleviation and uplift of the downtrodden castes.

SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

On the social front as well, these sections have been, and are being, subjected to worst form of atrocities. Even at the end of twentieth century, untouchability is practiced in its crudest form in many parts of our country. The upper caste groups indulging in organised attacks against the lower caste masses had been going on for decades. Downright killings and other atrocities on the lower caste people are widely taking place in rural India. Killings of the dalit agricultural workers in Bihar, by the '*Ranbir Sena*', the hired army of the landlords, had become a recurring phenomenon. Even now in many parts of the country, the people of various castes do not share food and even sit together. In many parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, the dalits are not being allowed to use the common well for drawing water and in teashops separate cups are used to serve tea for them. In many places, the houseowners refuse to rent their house to the lower caste people.

The lower caste people are still being subjected to various discriminations on caste lines, in the workplace as well. Dalit workers deployed as sweepers/scavengers are not being allowed, circumstantially, to change their profession on promotion or otherwise, despite their proven competence and entitlement, even in many PSUs. In many places, lower caste people who are educated and employed in higher positions, are treated with contempt by their fellow colleagues and even juniors from upper castes. Casteist prejudices are imbedded so deep. Hence, the problems of casteism are not confined only to issues of economic rights of the downtrodden, but also extend to their rights of self-respect and identity in the society.

Further, caste divided society and accompanying socio-religious ideology have also its inroad among the downtrodden castes, provoking and promoting further divisions among the castes of

lower order, on the false premise of so called superiority. Com. BTR noted: " The so called lower orders or castes in Hindu society actually form the majority; then why has not the majority succeeded in removing the stigma of caste-inequality and defeat the conspiracy of a few Brahmins or upper castes? The reality is that the poison of caste divisions has deeply infected its victims - the masses and the lower order who are further divided into several castes and sub-castes. Each recognises the injustice done to it, but is not ready to remedy the injustice done to the other by its own superior status."

All these reflect the depth of caste divisions in the society nursed and perpetuated by the remnants of pre-capitalist relations in the socio-economic structure. They also confirm that superficial talk against the caste system and pious assertions of equality cannot free the society from this evil, unless the feudal agrarian relations at the root of such social crime are uprooted. Rather, there is enough evidence that the militant struggles against feudal oppression in the past could effectively cement the unity of the toiling people irrespective of caste and creed. The Telengana struggle revealed the unique account of the unity of the peasantry from the upper caste to the dalits in the battlefront. Later, the land struggle in West Bengal and Kerala also portrayed unity of the poor peasants of all castes, which had its positive reflections on the socio-political scene in these two States. On the other hand, the caste strife and caste based politics could raise their head only in those areas, where the movement of the rural proletariat and poor peasants is weak.

GROWING ASSERTION

The capitalist path of development followed by the Indian ruling class, in compromise with the feudal interests, only perpetuated the caste system and the social oppression associated with it. However, the superficial infusion of this process of development in rural economy, led to a growing consciousness among the oppressed castes all over the country. They began to assert against the social oppression to which they are subjected. This has surfaced more prominently in recent times in the socio-political scene. This is a positive development with its

democratic content, which needs to be nurtured and integrated with the mainstream of struggle against the exploitative bourgeois-landlord system.

At the same time, hectic efforts are at work to confine this growing assertion against social oppression and injustice, within the bound of concerned caste and channelise the same towards caste polarisation. This is to keep the downtrodden masses detached from the common democratic movement against the exploitative system. Many caste leaders, and several political leaders seek to utilise caste-based polarisation as a vote-bank for narrow electoral gains. These leaders are spreading an illusion that coming to power within the existing socio-economic order, dominated by monopolists and landlords, will provide a solution to their problem. The Governments that came to power in Bihar and UP after 1977 onwards, led by the political parties chanting slogans of social justice, did nothing to implement land reforms, on the lines of the Left Front Govt. in West Bengal; nor those parties take any initiative to organise struggle against landlordism in their respective States.

This growing assertion among the masses of the oppressed communities manifests a duality; it has its democratic content on the one hand and the trend of caste-based polarisation on the other. This duality is pronouncedly witnessed, as a big section of workers from these communities, who take part in militant struggles for their economic demands, under the red flag, express their electoral preferences on the basis of caste affinity. Such caste affinity overshadows trade union loyalty in many cases, even in the intra-trade union and inter-trade unions elections.

WORKING CLASS RESPONSIBILITY

The working class, as the most modern class in the society, has the responsibility, and the potential as well, to fight this social evil of casteism and unite the entire toiling people in the fight against class enemies. It is the task of the working class movement to integrate the growing consciousness against social oppression with the common struggle of all toilers against

the class exploitation.

The radical change of the pre-capitalist agrarian relations, which promote and sustain the caste system, through militant anti-feudal struggle is the key to alter the existing social system. The working class movement must go beyond its day-to-day struggle in workplace and play a pro-active role in developing the struggle of the rural proletariat and poor peasants, to forge a vibrant and visible workers-peasant alliance in action.

The caste system is the cancerous superstructure on the pre-capitalist feudal remnants of the present society. It carries with it the reactionary ideology of the earlier feudal age, which is used by the present day exploiting class in various improvised forms. It is the most important task of our movement to fight and expose this reactionary ideology. A concerted attack on and exposure of the reactionary ideology and superstructure is the prime need, without which neither we can mobilise, nor the struggle can advance, in the right direction.

While exposing the casteist ideology and along with it, the futility of caste-based compartmentalisation, the working class movement must also, with all seriousness, throw its weight in the struggle against all social oppression and atrocities and all discriminatory practices against the downtrodden masses, from the class platform. To a large extent, the most exploited classes in our society comprise the most socially oppressed castes. Hence, integration of the struggle against class exploitation with the struggle against social oppression is the task ahead. In order to draw the oppressed masses on to the platform of class struggle, unshackling them from various caste based formations, the class-platform needs to establish its credibility as true champions of these oppressed people.

DIVERSE PROBLEMS AND TASKS

The reflections of the caste divide in the society, particularly at the workplace-situation, if examined closely, will throw up more specific pointers both in respect of the problems, and the task. Some of them may be outlined broadly, although not

exhaustively, as under:

* A pernicious trend of formation of caste-based unions is gaining ground openly as well as clandestinely. Many of such formations remain and function independent of any Central Trade Union.

* In the context of multiplicity of trade unions, workers belonging to a particular caste or community join a particular union, while those belonging to other caste joining the other, in certain parts of the country. In secret ballot for recognition, held in certain public sector units, caste-based polarisation in different trade unions, even affiliated to certain central trade unions, was noticed.

* The growing assertion by dalits and OBCs against social oppression, coupled with dominance of caste consciousness among them, has led to conflicts and contradiction even among various segments of these communities. This is posing a serious problem in forging unity of the workers in general and keeping the union united in many places.

Scores of such instances can be found in several areas. These are having reflections in the united movement of the trade unions at workplace levels, even on economic demands.

How do we address these problems? All the above problems are manifestations of caste-consciousness dominating over class-consciousness, in the context of growing social oppression of the downtrodden masses. The failure, of the working class and the democratic movement as a whole, to develop this growing assertion into class consciousness against the exploitative regime is leading to disruptive manifestations, even within the TU movement.

But how do we proceed in the given scenario? Naturally, we should continue our efforts to address the problem from its root, through sharpening the struggle against exploitative regime; but our task does not end here. A more pro-active role is required to be taken on our part to respond to and address the problems

of social oppression and its echo in the workplace.

In decrying casteism in a bald manner, sometimes our comrades adopt a passive approach to issues of social oppression and injustice. When the SC/ST and backward caste workers raise even genuine issues, relating to social justice, our unions take a lukewarm and non-interventionist attitude. We are often seen as lacking the required initiative to take up effectively the just demands of the oppressed sections of workers as a regular trade union agenda, viz. proper implementation of the reservation-scheme in recruitment/promotion, filling up of backlogs of the same, their rights to promotion, change of profession, putting an end to caste-based discriminations at the workplace and in the society etc. Such a passive approach erodes our credibility as fighters for social justice and alienates the socially oppressed sections of workers from us. As a result, they turn towards caste-based organisations, contributing to their legitimacy and credibility.

The trade union movement must take up, as its regular agenda, the issue of social justice and struggle against social oppression, and for the positions of respect and identity for the downtrodden, besides the economic issues, for both propaganda and action and it must go beyond rituality. Although some organised efforts are being made in this regard in certain States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu in recent times, we have to admit, we are still seriously lacking in this respect, even in the areas, severely ridden by caste divisions. We must overcome this limitation.

Inasmuch as the development of the movement of the rural poor and the working class remains uneven in our country, the offensive of the casteist forces also is not uniform throughout the country. The casteist slogans do not have much appeal to the downtrodden masses in regions where land reforms have been carried out with a fair measure of success. We should take note of this to emphasise the basic truth that the ultimate solution to overcome the backwardness of the downtrodden masses lie in unshackling the hold of rural gentry over land and distributing land to the tiller. But at the same time, we must not

fail to perceive that the massive mobilisation of the downtrodden is the prime necessity for carrying on the anti-feudal struggle in the right direction. In the present caste-ridden society, the struggle against social oppression and for social justice has to be an important component of our efforts to draw them in the mainstream struggle. Particularly, in the regions where the movement is generally weak, the downtrodden masses will be attracted towards immediate issues of social oppression.

Similarly, we should not be chanting the *mantra* of class unity and frown upon every demand for caste-based reservation or the struggle against issues of social oppression, as an act of disruption. As we do not confine ourselves to economism in trade union movement, which breeds the reformist outlook of 'no social change', the downtrodden masses also will not be content with the maintenance of '*status quo*' in social relations. As these sections have undergone deprivation for centuries, they are rightfully entitled to compensatory justice, in the matter of entitlements to jobs and opportunities. A class-conscious trade union will be on the side of the downtrodden masses in their quest for social justice and ending social oppression, and will not be a neutral pacifist.

In this context, we must also seriously introspect as to how much of the 'upper caste bias', prevailing in the society, has infected our organisations at workplace levels and other tiers, despite the CITU out-rightly condemning such bias. In the present day society, with its backwardness and various pernicious trends, such a possibility cannot be totally ruled out and we must remain conscious and vigilant against the same.

A class organisation needs to establish and strengthen its credibility among the downtrodden people, who are the overwhelming majority in the society, in order to wean them away from casteist influence and rally them in the struggle against exploiting class. Hence, what is urgently required on the part of the CITU is not just demonstrating an observer's neutrality, but to intervene and establish itself as champions of the cause of the entire oppressed sections of the society, both in workplace and beyond. Fight against social oppression and

for social justice and for realisation of the genuine demands of the oppressed sections must remain the regular trade union agenda for organised action. We must, thus, wrest the initiative for social justice from the hands of the caste-based organisations. Along with this, conscious and planned efforts must be made to find more activists from among the workers from the SC/STs and the OBCs and bring them to leadership positions in our trade unions.

We must keep in mind that in the background of mounting onslaughts against the toiling people in the liberalised economic scenario, all in unity of the working class and toiling people is the urgent need of the hour. On the other hand, the offensive of economic liberalisation is accompanied by its ideological weapons as well and also the calculated drive by the ruling class to divide and disrupt the people by all means. The situation is bound to aggravate further owing to mad drive for privatisation of PSUs and desperate downsizing of workforce in various Government departments. This, besides causing many other adverse effects on the society and economy, will render the present provisions for job-reservations virtually infructuous. It is not unnatural that the imperialist US administration, while pressing India to accelerate the pace of liberalisation, is rendering all out support to the BJP Government at the Centre and its divisive policies on the social front.

In the post liberalisation regime, with declining opportunities and increasing joblessness and poverty, the divisive trends may find a fertile ground in promoting disunity and disruption on a variety of routes, including on caste lines; in the process, each group will be vying for a greater share of the already shrinking cake and end up in getting nothing. Only the forces of unity and united struggle can effectively counter this. It has become all the more urgent to take consistent organised initiative in the cause of oppressed sections of the society, both at the workplace and outside. At the same time, we have to expose the real face of divisive casteist platforms, some even camouflaged under the slogan of social justice, and unite the entire toiling people against their disastrous policies.

WORKING WOMEN, A CLASS PERSPECTIVE

The report of the National Convention of Working Women, organised by the CITU, at Madras (now Chennai) on 9-10, April 1979, noted:

“The women constitute half of the society and working women are a vital force in class struggle. It is a failure of the Indian Trade Union Movement that women workers have still not been properly organised in Trade Unions, which are considered to be schools of class struggle. This weakness should be overcome by conscious and planned efforts with a view to broaden the base and increase the strength of Indian Trade Union Movement.

“We should also appeal to the Indian working women to take courage in organising themselves in Trade Unions and show greater initiative and imagination for educating themselves and removing their backwardness. The working women should overcome all their inhibitions and vigorously participate in the trade union activities and be ready to assume positions of responsibility in their unions.”

The National Convention of Working Women constituted the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW) as a distinct part of the CITU. It also adopted a National Charter of Demands for Working Women in India.

EXPERIENCE OF TWO DECADES

For over two decades, the AICCWW had been functioning as the CITU's arm for spearheading the campaign and struggle on the working women's front. State-level coordination committees of working women have been formed under several State Committees of CITU. In a few states, even at district level, working women coordination committees were formed. They have functioned with varying degrees of activity parameters. Women sub-committees in unions, where sizeable number of women workers were in membership, were to be formed, as per decisions taken by the CITU. Such committees have also been formed, though relatively in small numbers and at very few places. Repeated emphasis had been laid at every forum of the CITU on development of working women cadre and promoting them to positions of leadership at all levels of the organisation.

The meetings and conferences of All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, the meetings of the Working Committee and the General Council of the CITU and the all India conferences of the CITU have all been constantly reviewing our progress on the working women's front. The CITU Report on Organisation adopted by the CITU Working Committee in its meeting at Bhubaneswar in 1993, self critically evaluated our efforts in this regard and redefined the priority tasks to be undertaken on the question of working women. This Bhubaneswar Document has also been on the agenda of successive meetings of the CITU for review and implementation.

The Sixth All India Conference of Working Women, which was held separately ahead of the 10th conference of CITU, in September 2000, had drawn a picture of our organisation, in its report. It states:

"More than two decades after the formation of the AICCWW, though there is a marginal improvement in the attention paid to the issues of working women, still, most of the CITU committees, particularly at the lower levels, have not understood the importance of organising the working women".

The Report has also pointed out:

"The feudal attitudes of looking down upon the abilities of women and not promoting them continue in different degrees at various levels. Women are also subject to this attitude and hesitate to come forward to take up responsibilities in the union."

WHY THIS CALLOUSNESS ?

Why this "utter callousness on the part of our leaders, unions and various committees" (as described in the Bhubaneswar Document) is still persisting? Why we have stopped with "a ritual to criticise our neglect in this regard" and "put up with this criticism without making serious improvements in our approach towards working women", as pointed out in the same document?

In our social set up, the rights of women are generally ignored or belittled. Participation of women in all spheres of social, political and economic activity, on equal footing with the men, is not considered a relevant issue at all. The extent and magnitude of direct and indirect discrimination against women in the prevailing socio-economic environment is not perceived as an atrocious injustice. It is widely assumed that women are destined to play only a subordinate role to men. Unfortunately, women themselves are victims of such notions and take every impediment in their way to be a natural and unalterable state of affairs. Such inverted norms, opinions, values and attitudes, which have contributed to hamper the development of women, have an all-pervasive and profound influence on men and also on women. Even the few feeble attempts on the part of women, somewhere or other, to unshackle them and break into hitherto male domains are fiercely resisted.

We in the CITU have not been able to "BREAK OUT" from this syndrome prevalent in our society. This is a basic reason for the signal failure on our part to advance on the working women's front.

TASK, PART OF CLASS STRUGGLE

First and foremost, we must reassert that the tasks on the working women's front we have enjoined on ourselves are an inextricable part of our commitment to class struggle. It is not borne out of any false notions of 'sympathy' towards women, who constitute a 'weaker section' in our society. The whole woman-kind is described as 'weaker sex' in common parlance, is it not? It is not a question of granting any patronising favour to ameliorate their sufferings. Nor it is a chivalrous gesture of extending a protective arm towards them, as they are the least privileged and most oppressed.

We should remember that our tasks towards working women are rooted in the very Constitution of the CITU. We have inscribed as our very first aim and object that:

"The CITU believes that the exploitation of the working class can be ended only by socialising all means of production, distribution and exchange and establishing a Socialist state. Holding fast the ideal of socialism, the CITU stands for the complete emancipation of the society from all exploitation."

The task of emancipating the society from all exploitation can never be complete without emancipation of women, who comprise half of the society.

More pointedly the CITU constitution has pledged that:

"The CITU fights...for the abolition of discrimination based on caste, like untouchability, on sex and religion, in relation to employment, wages and promotion".

For ending the capitalist exploitation of the workers and the society, it is necessary that we must make the working class

conscious of its historic task of transforming the society in a revolutionary way. This requires instilling political consciousness in the very people most oppressed under capitalism.

But, we cannot instill revolutionary political consciousness in the masses, without drawing the women into such exercise as well. "For, the female half of the human race is doubly oppressed under capitalism. The working woman and the peasant woman are oppressed by capital, but over and above that, even in the most democratic of the bourgeois republics, they remain, firstly, deprived of some rights because the law does not give them equality with men; and secondly, and this is the main thing - they remain in "household bondage", they continue to be "household slaves", for they are over burdened with the drudgery of the most squalid and back breaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and the individual family household.', in the words of Lenin.

Lenin also emphatically asserted: "There can be no real mass movement without the women".

Hence, it is important that the CITU functionaries at every level should comprehend that organising the working women is part of the historical task assigned to the working class for transforming the social system - and not a humanitarian or a good Samaritan job.

DEALING WITH WOMEN OF OUR CLASS

Women are mobilised for social action by organisations of their own, All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) for instance. But, when we in the CITU deal with the question of working women, our objective is different. There is a general tendency to bracket the AICCW with the AIDWA. Many a time, the CITU committees tend to push over all issues concerning working women to the AIDWA comrades or the working women cadres, to deal with them in association with the AIDWA. Our comrades on the working women front also tend to treat these issues as those of general women's movement, as if there is no or very little role for the CITU.

That the AIDWA and the AICCWW have many areas of common concern is, no doubt, true. But while the AIDWA deals with women as women, irrespective of the class to which they belong, the AICCWW deals with the women of our class, the working class. The AIDWA and other women's organisations take up primarily issues like:

- * Child marriage
- * *Sati*
- * Dowry related harassment
- * Bride burning
- * Atrocities against women
- * Issues related to empowerment of women in general
- * Social reform oriented issues related to women
- * Commodification of women, etc.

This is not to suggest that the general organisations of women, including the AIDWA, cannot take up capitalist related issues like inequality in wages, discrimination in the matter of employment, jobs etc.

The working women committees can and should partake in the activities of general organisations of women on these issues. The CITU also will have to intervene in many of these issues and extend support.

But the CITU, through the working women committees, seeks to mobilise the women who are part of the working class, and mainstream them with the class struggle - from the initial struggles for pursuing immediate demands to the ultimate struggle for social change.

In this, the CITU and the working women will definitely strive to enlist the support of other democratic sections of women as well. That is why Com BTR, in his foreword to the document of the National Convention on Working Women, 1979, stressed:

"The fight for working women's demands - for the demands of the factory workers, teachers, employees, etc - should not be

the exclusive concern of the trade unions. All women's organisations should lend their support and actively help the trade union movement in this struggle.

The issues and demands concerning working women, viz.

- * Equal remuneration
- * Maternity benefits
- * No deployment during night shift
- * Provision of crèche/hostels
- * Sexual harassment at workplace

etc. fall in this category, i.e. the issues on which primarily the trade unions will fight and women's organisations should support.

To lend more clarity, the general women's organisation can take up the issue of a woman in a bourgeois family, even in the matter of her deprivation in family property related disputes. But, working women committees and trade unions must primarily deal with class related issues of working women. We must at all times keep in mind that when we deal with working women, we are dealing with our own class.

As an illustration, the issue of atrocities against women can be one, where general women's organisation will bear the primary responsibility of taking up and the trade unions must intervene by way of support. (Here again, if the atrocities are committed by landlords against women agricultural workers, the primary responsibility will devolve on trade unions, as it is a class offensive). Instances of sexual harassment at workplace are issues that the trade unions must take up at the first instance, where general women's organisations could lend support.

EMANCIPATION, IN REAL TERMS

Extending this further, we must also be clear as to what "emancipation of women" means in "class" and "non-class" terms.

'Emancipation of women', 'women's equality', 'equal rights and opportunities for women', etc. are slogans raised by all organisations of women without exception. International con-

ferences of women have asserted that 'women's rights are human rights'. Across the globe in all countries, women's groups have taken up the fight. Barring a few fundamentalist outfits like the 'Taliban' in Afghanistan, almost every party in the political spectrum, in all countries, have, at least in word, come out in support of the women's quest for equal rights.

But, the CITU is firmly of the opinion that 'emancipation of women' is well nigh impossible without complete emancipation of the society as a whole from all exploitation. True emancipation of women is not possible under capitalism. Lenin very lucidly and emphatically explains this in the following words:

"You must lay stress on the unbreakable connection between women's human and social position and the private ownership of the means of production. This will draw a strong ineradicable line against the bourgeois movement for the 'emancipation of women'. This will also give us a basis for examining the women question as part of the social, working class question, and to bind it firmly with the proletarian class struggle and the revolution."

Writing on the occasion of 'International Working Women's Day (1920), Lenin further elaborated this point. He wrote:

"Capitalism combines formal equality with economic and, consequently, social inequality... But even in the matter of formal equality (equality before the law, the "equality" of the well-fed and the hungry man, of the man of the property and the property-less) capitalism cannot be consistent. And one of the most glaring manifestations of this inconsistency is the inequality of women and men."

In some other context, Lenin laid bare the hypocrisy of 'non-class' approach towards 'equality' and freedom.

"In words bourgeois democracy promises equality and freedom, but in practice not a single bourgeois republic, even the more advanced, has granted women (half the human race) and men complete equality in the eyes of the law or delivered women

from dependence on and the oppression of the male.”

He declared:

“There is no “equality”, nor can there be, of oppressed and oppressor, exploited and exploiter. There is no real “freedom” nor can there be, so long as women are handicapped by men’s legal privileges, so long as there is no freedom for the worker from the yoke of capital, no freedom for the labouring peasant from the yoke of the capitalist, land owner and merchant.”

Com.Vimal Ranadive, one of the tallest women leaders of the working class movement in the country and the CITU, in her report to the National Convention of Working Women (1979) underlined the link between the working women’s problems and the fight for socialism, in the following words.

“.... The working women should realise that under capitalist-landlord society, their basic problems will never be solved and their sufferings will never end. It is only under socialism that their problems can be solved and they would enjoy equal rights and have a free and happy life. And, therefore, they should organise themselves against this capitalist landlord rule and for establishment of socialism in our country.”

It is precisely for reaching this message to every woman worker, the CITU has undertaken the tasks on the working women’s front. The CITU Committees and the coordination committees of working women at every level must have this basic perspective.

CLASS ORIGIN OF WOMEN’S INEQUALITY

What impedes our making progress on the working women’s front is the absence of systematic effort to sensitise the trade union leaders and activists at different tiers of our organisation on the gender issues and equip them with a proper understanding to address equality concerns, in all matters of trade union functioning.

Not infrequently, we come across views from workers, both men and women, that the women's right question is a "men vs. women" issue. Male workers often feel that it is only women who need to exercise on the question of their equality. In their perception women's rights are a 'feminine' issue and therefore not the concern of men. Women workers also feel that they have to fight for their rights, pitting themselves against men-folk as a whole.

The point missed here - both by men and women - is that gender inequality must be fought against by the workers as a class - again by both men and women.

But, the fact is that this is not the understanding of most of the workers - of even those who are in the leadership of trade unions.

Here, it is necessary to remind ourselves of some basic issues concerning the women's question in general, in order to develop a proper understanding on how to deal with the gender issues in the trade union.

Enslavement of women, historically, is the legacy of development of capitalist private property relations. Frederick Engels, in his illuminating treatise on *'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'* had elaborately discussed this aspect

Engels established that only with the development of property rights, and as wealth increased, man gained a more important status in the family than the woman. He described the transition from matriarchial to patriarchial family and the overthrow of mother rights as the world historic defeat of the female sex and added:

"The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children. This lowered position of women has become gradually embellished and dissembled and, in fact, clothed in a milder form, but by no means abolished."

Engels narrated how only as a result of property and inheritance rights, women became victims of economic oppression in the family, losing her equality. In comparison, he explained how though the worker and the employer are equal on paper under a labour contract, the concrete economic situation compels the worker to forego even the slightest semblance of equal rights. He concluded:

“The modern individual family is based on the open and disguised domestic enslavement of the woman. Today, in the great majority of cases, the man has to be the earner, the breadwinner of the family. In the family he is the bourgeois, the wife represents the proletariat.”

Under capitalism the worker is the victim of the domination of the capitalist class and undergoes economic suppression. In the family, man's domination over woman makes the wife as 'the first domestic servant,' Engels pointed out.

Women's inequality - rather enslavement - and male domination are concepts, which are a baneful legacy of the landlord and capitalist classes. A class-conscious worker will have to struggle to free himself from such concepts, which are alien to our class. For this, it is necessary that a proper understanding of the gender issues involved in trade union functioning must be cultivated, among male and female comrades.

The question here is: how far we in the CITU had attempted to sensitise the working class leaders and cadres on this scientific and historic background of women's present status in the society? Unless such a sensitisation exercise is embarked upon, targeting trade union functionaries upto the unit level, we cannot succeed in overcoming the present impasse on the working women's front.

Lenin urged:

“It is perfectly right for us to put forward demands for the benefit of women. Our demands are no more than practical conclusions drawn by us from the crying needs and disgraceful

humiliations that weak and underprivileged woman must bear under the bourgeois system. We demonstrate thereby that we are aware of these needs and of the oppression of women, that we are conscious of the privileged position of the men, and that we hate-yes hate-and want to remove whatever oppresses and harasses the working woman, the wife of the worker, the peasant woman, the wife of the little man... "

This involves considerable educational work among the men. We must root out the old slave owner's point of view.

In fine, without a thorough theoretical and practical training of our cadre - both men and women - the real work among working women, will not get to the take off stage.

TWO MAIN WEAKNESSES

Yet another common place occurrence is that whenever we confront our comrades in the States, Industrial Federations and Unions, why they are not taking even minimal steps on implementation of the tasks on the working women, front, the reply we get is: "we do not have any women". They mean that they do not have any suitable woman cadre for this work.

This underlines two weaknesses. One is an improper understanding that whatever work has to be carried out among women workers, it has to be done only by women comrades and not by men. The second is the lack of seriousness to train and develop the women workers and equip them to undertake the task.

These weaknesses are persisting even after over two decades of CITU repeatedly harping on the imperative need to take up the tasks on working women's front on an utmost priority. This only indicates that our State Committees, Federations, etc. affirming their agreement with the tasks outlined and 'suffering' in reverence the repeated critical references to the failures in this regard, is only a symbolic assent and their practice is a virtual dissent.

Here again, it will be very instructive to quote what Lenin said on the attitude of male comrades:

“They adopt a passive, wait-and-see attitude when it comes to creating a mass movement of working women... They do not realise that developing and leading such a mass movement is an important part of all (our) activity, as much as half of all (our) work. Their occasional recognition of the need and value of a purposeful, strong and numerous women’s movement is but platonic lip service rather than a steady concern and task.

“They regard agitation and propaganda among women and the task of rousing and revolutionising them as of secondary importance, as the job of just women communists. None but the latter are rebuked because the matter does not move ahead quickly and strongly. This is wrong, fundamentally wrong! It is outright separatism. It is equality of women *a rebours*, as the French say, i.e. equality reversed. ... In the final analysis, it is an underestimation of women and their accomplishments”.

The attitude, that Lenin so vehemently reprimanded, manifests in the inertia of our comrades, when it comes to undertaking the tasks prescribed by the CITU, with regard to working women.

There is no dearth of experience, which confirms that even in the States where the CITU is not a big force, women had come forward with heroic display of their determination to take on countless repression, in the course of struggles conducted by our unions. It is inexcusable that our State Committees have been reckless in the matter of developing such fighting women into able organisers and leaders.

The working women face innumerable handicaps, in engaging themselves in trade union activities. To cite a few:

* They have to bear a triple burden

- work at factory/office
- work at home
- work in the trade union.

* They have very low literacy level and less access to educa-

tion and training.

* They are victims of religious taboos, inhibitions imposed by custom and tradition.

* They are very often restrained by their family members from participating in trade union work.

* They are easy targets of character assassination, when they work in public along with male colleagues.

* They have very little opportunity for self-study and development.

Our State Committees and other leading bodies must take into account these and other handicaps working women face and make sincere efforts to enable them to overcome the same. Then, there will be no dearth of cadres or talents for deploying on this front. It is necessary to draw up specific training programmes and design them to accommodate the genuine difficulties faced by the working women. They will not be wanting in response. In the recent past, the AICCWW had organised some training programmes exclusively for working women. The experience gained in them testifies this optimism. But, at the State/Federation level, very few such special training programmes have been conducted. Whenever the CITU Centre, while holding all India/industry level training programmes, had sought nomination of women comrades, all the difficulties encountered by women are cited to justify non-compliance. It is quite understandable, though not fully justified in several instances. But, these very same difficulties warrant organising of separate training programmes for women in the States/Federations. This is not sufficiently realised.

It is also necessary that working women must be motivated to undertake self-study and self-development to the extent possible. Working women committees, in particular, need to pay attention to this.

In the syllabus for the general trade union programme of the CITU "Working Class Perspective on Women's Issues" should be included as a separate subject.

ROLE OF CITU VIS-À-VIS AICCWW

Even after two decades of functioning of the AICCWW, questions are raised as to the status, role and nature of functions of the working women coordination committees, vis-à-vis, the CITU committees at various levels. Instead of tabulating such questions, it would be better to reiterate the CITU position in this regard.

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, right from the inception, is a sub-committee of the CITU at the all India level. It is not a separate organisation. It has no separate membership, subscription or affiliation fee etc. The same is true of State level or district level or federation level committees, wherever they have been in existence. Though the first all India working women's meet convened by the CITU in 1979 was termed a "Convention", subsequent meets have come to be termed as "Conferences". Similarly the chief functionary of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women is designated as "Secretary" and not "Convener". We have continued this practice over the years. In the States, the State level functionary of the WW Coordination Committee is named "Convener" only. Questions have been raised over this as well. It should be emphasised that whatever be the terminology used, the status of the Coordination Committee remains a "sub-committee" only.

The functions of the working women's coordination committees are broadly:

- create awareness on working women's problems and rights
- undertake general campaign on the issues of working women
- make representations to Governmental and other authorities on general issues
- coordinate the activities of various women's organisations and trade unions
- mobilise the women workers in common struggles
- organise the women in trade unions
- bring out publications, journals, pamphlets etc.
- to impart training and education to working women cadres to equip them to take up responsibilities in trade unions.

All these functions are to be planned and carried out under the guidance of and with the active involvement of the respective CITU Committees, Unions and fraternal unions, as the case may be, depending upon where the targeted women workers are employed.

Decisions of the coordination committees at various levels must necessarily be reported to and implemented through the CITU committees at the corresponding levels. This, besides being organisationally a sound practice, will also ensure that the CITU committees have a sense of ownership (of these decisions) and ensure their total involvement. The practice of issuing circulars in the name of the coordination committees can be replaced by issuing circulars by the CITU itself.

One other aspect concerning the working women coordination committees is the association of some women comrades, who are from industries/unions, which are not directly affiliated to the CITU. Mostly such comrades belong to middle class employees' unions, which have fraternal relationship with the CITU.

As had been repeatedly stated, and made amply clear in this paper also, our work among working women is to advance the class struggle of the proletariat. Hence, it should always be our endeavour to organise the working women and enroll them in the trade unions affiliated to the CITU. But, we do not seek to create any split in the existing unions in the industries where the CITU does not have a presence and start new unions with the women, whom we contact. On the other hand, the coordination committees will motivate the working women in such places to take an active and leading role in their respective unions.

This does not mean that the women comrades, who are working in unions not affiliated to the CITU, but willing to associate themselves with the coordination committees of working women, have no role to play. These comrades come with a rich experience of trade union work in their respective unions. They have fewer handicaps to face in comparison to the women workers

in factories or unorganised sectors. They have better access to education and training. Hence, they can organise the working women and help in improved functioning of the coordination committees. Their services will be of immense help to our State Committees, especially when we do not have competent women cadres in the affiliated unions to undertake the tasks of the coordination committees.

But, the lacuna here is that such comrades are not utilised by the CITU committees for organisational work in the trade unions affiliated to the CITU or among the women workers in such sectors, from where they can be brought into the CITU fold. In the absence of such utilisation, these comrades do not get integrated with the CITU functioning. Their role remains confined to attending the coordination committee meetings, participating in some general campaigns, making representations, etc. In some places, this leads to an uneasy divide inside the coordination committee itself as "CITU women" and "non-CITU women" or "worker-comrades" and "middle-class comrades". It must be emphasised here that such situations are not the making of the women comrades concerned; they arise because of the failure of the CITU committees to skillfully utilise them and develop them as active CITU functionaries.

This eventually leads to a drift where the coordination committee remains very much aloof from the CITU committee. CITU leaders view it to be an appendage or separate or parallel outfit, rather than treating it as a part and parcel of the CITU organisational set up. CITU committees must ensure that this artificial isolation is ended. This also enjoins on the CITU Committees the responsibility of meeting all necessary expenses for the functioning of the WW coordination Committees, including the travel expenses of all women comrades in these Committees.

The coordination committees, as a part of their work take up the issues of women office-employees, working in different sectors such as banks, Government and insurance and also nurses, teachers, etc. This helps in drawing them into trade union activities, even cutting across affiliations. This is a healthy

trend and needs to be continuously pursued. But our coordination committees, sometimes come with a plea that their activities among such sections of working women will gain strength, if we can approach them keeping aside the CITU label. This is a wrong tendency. Our work among these sections is not for charity; though we are conscious that these women may not be organisationally drawn to the CITU fold, our work among them must bring them ideologically closer to the CITU. If this purpose is not served, our work will remain some sort of an apolitical activity. Hence, our comrades in the coordination committees must shun such pleas for 'non-CITU' identity and must always carry forward the message of the CITU, wherever they work.

In the final analysis, all the questions or doubts over the role of working women coordination committees vis-à-vis the CITU committees are the result of the latter not feeling a sense of ownership of the former and the former entertaining confused thoughts over identification with the latter.

THE 'STAND ALOOF' ATTITUDE ?

Some times we hear complaints from the male comrades in the trade union leadership that the women workers, under plea of family responsibilities, do not participate in gate meetings, demonstrations general body meetings etc. of the union. The women members in the union pay their subscription all right; but otherwise tend to remain passive onlookers. A sort of 'stand aloof' is practised by the women workers. Thus goes the refrain.

Our comrades must introspectively analyse whether this complaint of 'stand aloof attitude' on the part of women members is real? In fact, what has been our experience in several struggles? During processions, dharnas, hunger strikes, picketing, barricade jumping, etc. agitations, our comrades always field the women on the frontline. Women also exhibit exemplary heroism while facing police repression. This is not denied. Why then this complaint that the number of such women coming forward is very small?

Com. B.T.Ranadive, in his address to the Sixth Conference of the CITU in 1987, referred to the discriminatory policies of the employers and the Government towards working women. He also deprecated the step motherly (or should we say step-fatherly?) treatment given by the trade union leadership to working women and their problems. And he added:

“This attitude led to ineffective participation of women in the activities of the trade unions and their failure to occupy important positions in the unions”.

It is, therefore, to be seen whether our comrades complaining of ‘stand aloof’ attitude by women members, if at all it is in evidence, are confusing the ‘cause’ with the ‘effect’.

Then, is it also not a fact that the percentage of union members actively participating in all the programmes of the union, even in respect of male members, is very small? We, in the CITU, have laid much emphasis on the question of ensuring participation of ordinary workers in all the functions of the trade union, up to decision-making on policy matters, as part of our tasks on democratic functioning. This applies without exception to the women members of the union also.

Even if in some places, women workers show some initial hesitation, should our comrades not examine why it is so? The other side of the story is women complaining: “Our leaders want us to participate in union agitations, but when it comes to our demands, they do not take them up”; “We are asked to bring women for the meetings, but seldom we (women) are allowed to address”; “We are asked to occupy front row in demonstrations and the like. But while going for negotiations, we are not called”; “We will be called to come, with our babies even, and squat before the police picket. But when conferences are held, no one remembers to take us”. And so on.

There is truth in both these versions; but it is not the whole truth.

We must remember that the women workers whom we approach belong to most backward segment of our class - not by their option but by historical circumstances. We are trying to win the confidence of the mass of the women workers who have, for ages, been exploited, enslaved and crushed by the domination of the man, by the power of their employers and by bourgeois society as a whole.

So, it will be naive to assume that the broad masses of women workers will be inclined on their own to participate in the activities of the trade union, not to speak of the struggle to bring about revolutionary transformation of the society. They cannot be brought to the arena of struggle, if we harp on just the general demands of the working people. We must combine our appeal in the minds of the women workers with the sufferings, the needs and the wishes of the working women. We must fight for one or the other demands of the women, depending on the existing conditions, and naturally always in association with the general interests of the working class, as a whole.

To promote active participation of women workers in trade union agitation and other activities, it is necessary that we must first of all provide them with due opportunities to articulate their problems. We must lend them confidence that by their participation in trade union, they can not only present their grievances, but those will also be taken up for redressal by the union. The trade union leadership must not only mete out justice to the demands of the women workers, but also take care that, to the women, justice appears to have been done.

Women workers are rarely inhibited by the physical factors in playing an active role in the trade union. The attitude of the male colleagues towards them inhibits them more. There should be conscious effort to imbibe a positive approach in all comrades to promote active participation of women in the trade union. In the family, male members should also share the domestic responsibilities of the working women, to enable them to be active in trade union.

Some of the areas, where specific and urgent attention should

be paid are:

- * Inducting women into the union and CITU committees
- * Promoting women as office bearers
- * Giving representation to women in negotiating committees
- * Include women in delegations to conferences

Unless conscious efforts are made in these aspects, the present impasse cannot be overcome.

For the working women - and more particularly, the comrades working on the coordination committees - it is imperative to remind themselves that women's demands do not form an exclusive agenda. It is part and parcel of the trade union agenda itself. And their demands must be pursued in association with the general demands of all sections of the workers.

We also wish to remind them of what August Babel, who authored the book "*Women in the Past, Present and Future*" (described as the most valuable contribution on the women's question) stated:

"Women too are summoned not to remain behind in a struggle in which their own freedom and deliverance is at stake. It is now their part to show that they have comprehended their true position in the movement and that they are resolved to take their share in the present contest for a better future. It is the part of the men to assist them in freeing themselves from all prejudices and to support them in the fight."

In conclusion, the working women comrades must bear in mind that all said and done, progress on this front depends on the initiative they take and on how much they assert. Our CITU committees and leaders of unions and federations, confronted with the magnitude of the challenges and tasks faced in the present times, are prone to losing sight of the priorities, however much sincerely and earnestly they may affirm their commitment to the cause of working women. This is not to exonerate them; but only to underline the necessity of women comrades to relentlessly pursue their fight, within our organisational

forum itself. They must speak out.

This is how Lenin exhorted the women of his times, when they were called upon to participate in a World Congress, which was meeting to examine the women's question:

"Don't twitter like a bunch of chatterboxes, but speak out loudly. A Congress is not a parlour where women display their charm, as we read in novels. A Congress is a battlefield in which we fight for the knowledge we need for revolutionary action. Show that you can fight. In the first place, of course against our enemies, but also within ... should the need arise!"

We, in the CITU must not only let the women to speak out and assert, but also equip all our leaders and cadres with the correct class perspective on this issue. And, let us all take up our tasks in right earnest, with the urgency and priority that they demand!

INFORMAL SECTOR AND CHALLENGES TO THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

We, in the CITU, decided to pay due attention to organise the workers in the unorganised sector and formed an All India Co-ordination Committee of Unorganised Workers in the Calcutta Conference in 1991. An All India Convention of unorganised workers was held in 1992 at Panihati. It was decided to form State level coordination committees for unorganised workers in all the States but in many States such committees have not been formed. An All India strike was organised in 1993 on the demands of the unorganised sector workers. The work was reviewed in the Chennai General Council meeting.

But, these efforts have not resulted in any significant improvement in our work among the unorganised workers, although at present unorganised workers constitute around 50% of the membership of the CITU. When compared to the huge size of the unorganised sector and the vast spectrum of industries covered in this sector, we are still an insignificant force in this sector. For example, in Beedi, our membership is only around 3 lakhs out of more than 50 lakhs beedi workers in the country. Even in States where we are said to be strong, our membership is less than 15% of the beedi workers in the State.

Similarly in anganwadi, our membership is around 1 lakh out of the total 12 lakhs employees; even in States, where almost no other union exists, our membership does not exceed 40-45% of the total employees. In other industries like construction, brick kiln, carpet, pottery, bangle, fireworks and matches, tanneries and so on, it is still worse. It appears that the leadership of some unions, particularly at the lower level, after getting some initial successes is satisfied with its performance and becomes complacent. No efforts are made to expand and bring the entire workforce into our fold.

Out of nearly 6 crore workers in the unorganised sector, the membership of CITU is less than 20 lakhs. Though a small section of the rest is organised by the other central trade unions or local unions, by and large, the vast majority of the workers in the unorganised sector are left entirely out of the general trade union movement.

INFORMAL SECTOR UNDER GLOBALISATION

Under Imperialist globalisation, the unorganised sector has had a multi-dimensional growth and a phenomenal expansion. The whole gamut of the workers in the unorganised sector of the industries, non-permanent and contract workers even in the organised industries, home-based workers, self-employed workers, workers in the service sector, etc. have come to be described as the work-force in the informal sector economy. This informal sector is fast expanding in almost all the countries in the world, particularly in those countries following the World Bank dictated policies of liberalisation and globalisation.

Technology makes it possible to fragment work into many small parts, each carried out in different places, and assembled in yet another place by workers removed from each other. The necessity of skilled work is gradually brought down, each task consisting of simple operations, which can be performed by non-regular workers, enabling the employers to do away with regular employees and employing cheap unskilled labour, including women and children.

The employment rate in the unorganised sector in our country is estimated to be around 92%. The organised sector's share in employment has fallen from 9% in 1981 to 8%, according to the 1991 census. According to the Report of the Working Group on Labour Policy for the Ninth Five Year Plan, 1997-2002, published in 1997, the unorganised sector represents 93% of the total work force in the country. In the non-agricultural sector, rural and urban taken together, about 79% of total employment is in the unorganised sector.

The share of the informal sector in Gross Domestic Product is estimated to be around 63%. About 47% of the value added in the non-agricultural sector and 35% of the total value added in the urban economy come, from the informal sector activities, which are much higher in agriculture and also in construction and trade.

IMPACT OF LIBERALISATION

Consequent to dismantling of the Public sector, the regular work force is being drastically cut down. In the public sector, around 3 lakh regular jobs have been reduced during the last few years. The related jobs are hived off to be performed by contract workers. Casual, temporary or daily wage workers in several Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like Steel, Coal, Railways, and Postal and Telecom services are doing many jobs of permanent nature. In the Steel industry, around one-third of the workers are contract workers. The situation is the same in the coal industry.

The situation is worse in the organised private sector. In Maruti, spare parts are produced in several ancillary units, which are modern units but with a small work force and the parts are assembled at the main factory. Reliance Textiles has no production unit at all. It purchases beams of yarn from spinning mills; these are checked for quality and given to power looms for weaving. Quality control and supervision only is done by Reliance. The weavers are paid a paltry amount as wages per metre of cloth woven. Shoe uppers for Bata Shoes are made by home-based workers, mostly women and then stitched to

the soles in the factory at another place.

The liberalisation policies have also accentuated the process of migration of the unorganised industries, from one region to another. The informal sector also comprises vast segments of inter-State and cross-border migrant labour. These issues also need to be taken note of.

Thus, the informal sector within the organised sector is fast expanding particularly in the last decade. The recipe for efficient management propagated by the World Bank, and faithfully practiced by the managers of industry, is to have a small core of regular workers and get as much work as possible, done by informal workers, towards whom the management need not have any responsibility or obligation. As a part of this strategy, many big industries, e.g. in garments, shoes, electronics etc. are outsourcing work to home based workers. The number of home-based workers has also increased several times in the last decade.

Several studies of a number of industries in this sector, like, garments, lace, beedi, cotton hosiery, coir, carpet etc, have shown that though these sectors are unorganised, capital is not 'unorganised'. The production, though scattered, is well organised from within, progressively coming within the folds of world division of labour. Thus the employers, starting from the Multi National Corporations to the local contractor, subject the workers to intense exploitation.

COMPOSITION OF LABOUR

The composition of the workers in the unorganised sector and the nature of the jobs being done by them have undergone a vast change due to the policies of liberalisation and globalisation. Technically skilled and educated workers are also engaged on piece rate or on contract basis. Development of information technology has enabled such work as preparation of accounts, data feeding etc. to be done on contract or piece rated basis, by home based workers. They are highly skilled and also relatively better paid than the ordinary unskilled workers in the

unorganised sector. These so called 'knowledge workers' are also highly exploited, as they do not have any job security or get any social security benefits and the employers get huge profits from their services. They are entirely left out of the trade union movement.

A large section of the workers in the unorganised sector, consist of women workers and child labour. 96% of the total working women are in the unorganised sector. A large proportion of the workers in the unorganised sector belong to the downtrodden and socially exploited sections of society like SC, ST and other backward castes, who are victims of both capitalist exploitation and social oppression.

CONDITIONS OF THE WORKERS DETERIORATING

In the wake of liberalisation, the Government has allowed free import of thousands of items indigenously produced in the country by the small-scale sector; big capitalists are allowed to produce the items earlier reserved for the small-scale sector. This has resulted in closure of thousands of small industries in the unorganised sector and loss of jobs for lakhs of workers. They re-enter the informal sector again in different non-regular jobs.

As a result of down sizing of establishments, both public as well as private, closure of lakhs of industries and the measures adopted by firms to cut costs of production to face competition, and the workers losing jobs, the unorganised sector is further being overcrowded.

These have led to further deterioration of the already miserable conditions of the workers.

Many of the industries in the unorganised sector are not even included in the Minimum Wages Schedule. Need based minimum wages, as per the norms decided by the 15th Indian Labour Conference and later Supreme Court judgment, are not considered by the Governments, while fixing the minimum wages. Rather, the minimum wages fixed are mostly lower than

the poverty line. In around 90% of the cases, the minimum wages are not implemented. Employers get stay orders from the Courts against the minimum wage notifications and matters are allowed to linger on for years together.

Conditions similar to bonded labour exist in many areas. In some States, workers are forced to sign on promissory notes even when they have not borrowed any money from the employers. These are later used to intimidate the workers, when they demand higher wages or other benefits, or desire to leave in search of better living. Often, workers are made to sign for higher amounts while in reality they are paid far less amount in wages.

There is neither job security nor social security available for the informal sector workers. Most of the workers are under constant fear of losing their jobs. Appointment letters, wage slips, identity cards etc. are not given. They do not get dearness allowance and even if it is legally available, it is not implemented. Social security benefits like Provident Fund, ESI, etc. are not implemented. Out of the 350 million strong work force, only 22 million are covered by the EPF Scheme, 9 million under the ESI Scheme, 4.5 million under the Workmen's Compensation Scheme and under 0.5 million only by the Maternity Benefit Act.

Women workers constitute a considerable section of the workers in the informal sector. They are not paid equal wages as men for the same or similar work. Maternity Benefit is not implemented. Sexual harassment of women workers by the employers, contractors or '*mistri*' is rampant. Children are employed without any payment, in the name of trainees or with paltry wages.

The labour department is almost entirely negligent and callous in protecting the interests of the unorganised sector workers and in ensuring implementation of the protective legislations. Rather, in many instances, it is found to be working in tandem with the employers and safeguarding their interests.

Besides the severe exploitation by the employers, the unorganised sector workers live in miserable conditions in their residential areas. Majority of them have no proper dwellings and live in slums, without proper sanitation and drinking water facilities even.

ORGANISING THE UNORGANISED

Organising the workers in the unorganised sector assumes importance in view of its continuing expansion, combined with reduction in the number of workers in the organised sector. The unorganised sector workers form more than 90% of the work force of the country and are spread over the entire length and breadth of the country. Construction workers, head load workers, anganwadi employees, panchayat workers, village *chowkidars* etc. are found in almost all the villages, even in States which are industrially not developed. Most of the workers in the unorganised sector industries come from agricultural worker or poor peasant families and have close links with them. Organising them and developing their political consciousness will enable us to influence these vast sections of the working class, the agricultural workers and the poor peasants spread throughout the country.

Though we have been reiterating the importance of organising the unorganised workers, our progress in this sector is rather tardy. The Bhubaneswar Document on organisation has pointed out: "Our weakness in this sector is most glaring. Though recently we have taken certain steps to organise the unorganised and held a successful all India Convention in Calcutta, our strength can be considered as symbolic. This stratum is most exploited with appallingly low minimum wages and no job security. Big possibility of development of movement in this sector is clearly seen in the one day successful All India strike of unorganised workers on 14th July 1993 at the call of CITU. It is high time that the CITU should take up the work in right earnest on a priority basis so that this vast chunk of the working class is brought into the mainstream of the trade union movement."

Organising the workers in the unorganised sector does not mean that we neglect the task of organising the workers in the key organised sectors.

While organising the workers in the key sector is of utmost importance, it should not be counter posed to organising the unorganised sector workers. The concerned CITU committees should discuss the priorities depending upon the concrete conditions.

It should be kept in mind that in the unorganised sector priority should be given to organising the workers in manufacturing industries, private transport like lorry transport etc. as they have impact on the national economy.

Organising any union is not an easy task, particularly in the present conditions of increasing attacks on the working class and the trade union movement. But, organising the unorganised workers needs more patience and perseverance on the part of the organisers. This may be one of the reasons for the neglect of the general trade union movement to the problems of the workers in the unorganised sector. Many leaders do not feel it worth the efforts to organise them. The CITU has to prove that it is committed enough to undertake this task with due seriousness.

It is necessary to develop strategies to organise the unorganised sector workers, keeping all the above-mentioned aspects in mind. As the conditions of workers/employees in different trades/ industries/ sectors in the informal sector vary, the same strategies or methods may not be useful for all the trades/ sectors. Different methods have to be evolved for different trades/ sectors, depending upon the concrete conditions in each trade/ sector. It may also be necessary to create confidence among the workers in the strength of unity by developing some intermediate forms of organisation like self-help groups/savings groups etc.

Street vendors, hawkers, rickshaw and auto drivers and a large number of self employed, where there is no visible employer

and employee relationship also form a large part of the unorganised workers. While organising them, their specific demands like welfare fund, protection from harassment of anti-social elements, police etc. also should be addressed.

Social issues like caste and gender oppression and the problems at their places of living, like water, sanitation, ration cards etc. also have to be addressed by our unions. The habit of functioning only from the union office, wherever it exists, should be discarded and our comrades should go to the workers - be it work places or their residential areas, according to the situation - and try to be part of their lives. By proper intervention in their day to day problems - both at the work place and the residential areas, and by being a part of their social and cultural lives we should create the confidence that they can approach the union and get the necessary help, whatever the problem, whenever required.

It is essential to develop cadres from among these workers. Initially it may be necessary to deploy cadres from outside to organise the workers in the various trades/ industries in the unorganised sector. It is the responsibility of these cadres not only to organise but also to identify the activists among the workers and develop them to leading positions in the unions. While allotting cadre also it is important to study the specific character of each trade/ industry/ sector and to allot suitable cadres who can carry out the tasks effectively. The problems and the demands of the workers/ employees in that particular trade/ industry/ sector should be identified. Demands should be framed and campaign and agitation methods should be evolved taking into consideration the aspirations, consciousness and the level of preparedness of the workers.

The 9th CITU conference had also noted that the activities of several foreign funded NGOs among the workers in the unorganised sector have increased considerably in recent times. They claim to be the only representatives of the unorganised workers and down-play the role of the trade unions in this sector. The Government and the ILO also tend to support their claims.

While there are a few genuine NGOs concerned with extending help to the workers, most of them are small or individual outfits and do not organise the workers on class issues. The real issue of struggle against class exploitation is often diverted. Because of the huge foreign funds they receive and the encouragement they get from the Government, we should be vigilant so that they are not allowed to play a disruptive role.

The activities of most of the NGOs are mainly confined to forming self help groups, providing credit and other services at the local level. By creating illusions that all their problems can be solved within the existing society, they seek to sidetrack the workers from the trade unions. This has to be seen as a part of the ideological offensive by the capitalist classes on the working class. While it may sometimes be necessary for us also to approach the workers with such intermediate forms of organisation, our endeavour always should be to organise them as a class and create and raise their class consciousness.

PERSISTING WEAKNESSES: HOW TO OVERCOME THEM?

The unorganised sector is expanding; even in States and areas, which are industrially not developed or backward, we find lakhs of workers in the unorganised sector; No major trade union is paying attention to their problems or organising them. We have decided to organise them as a priority task. We are no way near of becoming a major force in any major industry in the unorganised sector at the all India level.

Weaknesses at the all India Centre as well as in the States persist. Many of the States have not yet formed the Coordination Committees for the Unorganised Workers. No planned effort is made by most of the State Committees nor are priorities decided. The all India Centre too could not persistently follow up and check up the implementation of the decisions.

To overcome these weaknesses and strengthen our movement in the unorganised sector, the following steps should be taken with due seriousness and urgency.

1. The All India Centre should be strengthened by deploying

more cadres.

2. All the State Committees should discuss and decide priorities. State Coordination Committees should be formed, wherever they are not formed.

3. Industry/ trade wise unions to be organised

4. Survey/ study should be conducted on the problems of the unorganised sector workers in the prioritised industries and concrete demands to be formulated. Statewide campaigns give better results than localised actions.

5. Suitable cadre should be deployed for each industry/ trade wise organisation. Women cadres should preferably be deployed in industries where women work in large numbers.

6. Special attention should be paid to develop cadres from among the workers, train and promote them to leading positions.

7. Issues like social and gender oppression, literacy and residential problems should be addressed by the unions, besides the work place issues.

8. Intermediary organisational forms like self-help groups/ savings groups/ credit groups etc. to be considered to create confidence in the strength of unity among the workers in the unorganised sector.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND TRADE UNION INITIATIVE

1.1 The scope and objective of this paper is generally to deal with the conceptual and perceptual aspects of the changing character and escalating dimension of the unemployment problem. A comprehensive databased work dealing with the concrete manifestation of the problem in the context of India has already been published by CITU under the title - *"Poverty, Price Rise and Unemployment"*. In the current exercise, therefore, our main aim is to focus at the root of the problem, particularly in the context of scientific and technological revolution; imperialist globalisation and capitalist market economy, to identify the role of the working class and initiative of the trade union movement in transforming the struggle against unemployment into a people's movement without limiting it within the confine of any section of the society.

1.2 The different contributory factors in aggravating the problem of unemployment must be taken note of in order to develop deeper understanding of the issue and to identify the distinct different phases. But such exercise must not miss the linkage amongst the different factors and phases. The most prominent ones can be identified as "Scientific and Technological

Revolution" (STR) vis-à-vis capitalist economy; "the Imperialist Globalisation", "the doctrine of Market Economy".

2. THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

2.1 That the root of the problem of unemployment rests in the capitalist economy has time and again been proved with the aggravation of unemployment situation in conjunction with the emergence of the recurring crisis of capitalist economy. Different studies have shown that the process of the current phase of serious accentuation of the basic problem of unemployment started since the late 1970s. This is again the period, which has been identified as the advent of the era of Scientific and Technological Revolution (STR).

2.2 In deference to the law of capitalist economy, the sole consideration of profit has obviously been the guiding principle of the application of modern technology in the era of STR. The result was "no account was taken of the scale of redundancies engendered by the application of technological innovations and no measures were taken to create additional opportunities for applying the labour power thus released." Narrating the symptoms which emerges in the course of the crisis, a classical work titled: "*Capitalism, The Technological Revolution and the Working Class thus noted*" ... drop in effective demand everywhere and the resulting relative overproduction, the increasingly fierce competition and other such phenomena acted as a restraint on productive activities, leading to the liquidation of business, mass redundancies and so on. Consequently, the army of those deprived of a job is swelled by an inflow of people who have lost their jobs".

2.3 Technology in the age of STR has enormous productive capacity and capability to produce wealth to meet the need of the entire mankind. In his address to the summit conference of the G-77 countries in Havana on 12.4.2000, Fidel Castro said, "Never before did mankind have such formidable scientific and technological potential, such extraordinary capacity to produce riches and well-being but never before were disparity and inequity so profound in the world." The basic problem is that

capitalism is unable to provide the production relations matching with the development of the forces of production. Alexander Galkin, therefore, said, "for full realisation of the positive opportunities offered by technological progress, particular social conditions are required, else it can become regression in many other spheres."

2.4 The crux of the problem does not lie with STR, *albeit* it is a contributory factor in the mounting unemployment in the capitalist society. "Question remains: who appropriates the benefits of STR- the mass of the common people or handful of the capitalists, the owners' class?" The culprits are the capitalistic social order and capitalistic production relations. Technological revolution and consequent development of the forces of production is the unpreventable contribution of science. The cure does not lie in changing the course of science but in changing the mismatching capitalistic society.

3. IMPERIALIST GLOBALISATION

3.1 Fidel Castro, in his analytical speech on the character of the phenomenon of ongoing neo-liberal globalisation, said, "I believe that globalisation is an irreversible process and that the problem is not globalisation *per se*, but rather the type of globalisation ... Globalisation has been held tight by the patterns of neoliberalism; thus, it is not development that goes global but poverty; it is not respect for the national sovereignty of our states but the violation of that respect; it is not solidarity amongst our peoples but in the unequal competition prevailing in the marketplace."

3.2 It is but obvious that imperialist globalisation is a major contributor in aggravating the world wide unemployment problem. Almost all the countries across the globe - developed, developing and underdeveloped - are affected by the problem of unemployment *albeit* in varying degrees and perhaps in different directions. The UN has recognised that, "the problem of unemployment and under employment - especially of young men and women - affects countries all across the globe" (National Herald - 19.10.99)

3.3 In his address in a IMF-World Bank seminar held in October, 1999 in Washington DC on "Challenge of Unemployment" - Kofi Annan, the Secretary General, said: "Let me start by reminding you that at this moment there are nearly 1.3 billion people in the world struggling to survive on less than one dollar a day ... Billions of able-bodied people are either unemployed or under-employed. This is worse than a crisis. It is a scandal. Overcoming it must be our top priority in the first decades of the new century."

3.4 In his speech delivered at the meeting of the UNCTAD in February, 2000, in Bangkok, Juan Somavia, Director General (DG) of ILO came out against the so called market economy and said: "we know enough about market fundamentals - it's time to pay attention to the fundamentals in people's lives... Financial policies should be geared towards stimulating productive investments that generate jobs rather than towards sustaining the casino economy of short-term movement in the international financial markets."

4. GLOBAL OVERVIEW

4.1 The 1998-99 World Employment Report of ILO has noted that the total number of unemployed and under employed workers all over the world has surpassed all previous record. But much more alarming is the projection made in the report that this number will grow by "millions more as a result of the financial crisis in Asia and other parts of the world within a short period".

4.2 According to ILO estimate, out of a total world labour force of three hundred crores (3 billion) people, some one hundred crores (1 billion) continue to remain unemployed or under employed. Out of this, about fourteen crores (140 million) are fully unemployed. Again around one crore (10 million) became unemployed due to the large-scale displacement in course of the recent East Asian economic crisis. Thus the remaining around 85 crores are underemployed. The ILO report has elaborately dealt with the deteriorating unemployment situation in the different regions of the world. For our discussion it would

be interesting to look at the situation in Asia and the G-7 countries.

4.3 In Asia both the upswing and downturn in the economies were dramatic. The report noted the position in respect of some countries of the region. The rise in unemployment projections were: Indonesia 9 to 12% of labour force compared to 4% in 1996, Thailand 6% or almost 20 lakhs jobless compared to 1 to 2% or 4 to 7 lakhs in 1995. In the South Korea job losses have accelerated in the past year and has been doubled and reached to 7%. In Hong Kong, the unemployment rate rose sharply to 4.5% at the end of the second of quarter of 1998 from 2.9% in 1997. About India, Pakistan, Bangladesh the report warned about worsening of the situation.

4.4 On the other hand, even for the OECD countries, the ILO report cautioned about the gloomy situation: "although the employment situation may improve to a degree in the near future, the structure of unemployment is still a matter of serious concern. Rates of unemployment are usually higher for youth everywhere, and for women in Europe."

4.5 Another disturbing global phenomenon is the increasing rate of unemployment amongst young educated workers. As per ILO estimate about six crore (60 million) young people around the world between the ages of 15 and 24 are in search of job. Youth unemployment in many OECD countries has reached to 20%. This situation indicates the decreasing job creation phenomenon all over the world.

5. EXPLOSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION

5.1 In our country as well, situation is no different. Rather, being a developing country, the unemployment situation is more devastating with little or no chance of recovery owing to menacing fall out of the Fund-Bank dictated economic policies of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation.

5.2 The major contributing factors behind the explosive growth of unemployment in the country, *INTERALIA*, are the speedy

conversion of our economy from manufacturing to marketing ground of the profit hunting MNCs; no major investment in green field projects; sickness, closure, merger/acquisition of running industrial concerns are leading to huge retrenchment of workers; ever increasing rural poverty leading to heavy growth of landless agricultural labourers.

5.3 The gap between growth of labour force and employment growth has been increasing continuously during the last decade and adding to the intensification of unemployment situation. Mocking at the projection of the Planning Commission, during the decade preceding the year 1994 actual annual employment growth rate remained below 2% against growth of labour force by 2.5%. During 1991-96, against the annual average growth of 2.38% in labour force, employment grew at an annual rate of 1.9%, signifying worsening trend particularly since 1991. According to an official estimate: "the backlog of unemployment in the country would peak at 35 million by the end of the Eighth Plan from the backlog of 23 million at the beginning of the Eight Plan." As per projection against the present population of around 100 crores, by the year 2002 it shall reach to about 104 crores.

6. CERTAIN DISTURBING FEATURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

6.1 As per estimates based on latest NSS report, 374 million people were employed in India on the basis of usual status concept. As per a study 78 per cent of the employed worked in rural area and 65 per cent in agriculture and allied sectors alone. Women constituted nearly one-third (32.5%) of those employed. The survey showed that the percentage of workers engaged in agriculture declined marginally from 66.2 in 1987 to just 64.8 in 1993-94. (*Hashim, 2000*)

6.2 Depending on the vocation the workers are classified into three different sectors. (a) Primary sector which is largely agriculture based, (b) Secondary sector that is industries and production centres (c) Tertiary sector that includes trade, Government services and unorganised jobs. India being a predominantly agriculture based economy, the primary sector is

looked upon with too much high hope for employment generation. The hope and reality apart, it is not an ideal situation either.

6.3 But this primary sector also is not doing well even in low quality employment generation. With the entry of the foreign MNCs in the agriculture of the country in a big way and more so with the withdrawal of quantitative restrictions on imports under the WTO regime, the agriculture is destined to be affected severely. Owing to massive mechanisation including use of modern technology and various other factors, employment generation in agriculture is bound to go down heavily. Again, the Small Scale Sector with much less capital investment provides more employment on the whole than the capital intensive large industrial units. As per a study by Indian Statistical Service, in the industrial units having capital size of over Rs.100 crore and having 61.76% of the share in total capital of the industrial sector, there has been a fall of about 36% in average employment size per unit. Now given the rabid anti-SSI policy of the Government, industrial sickness and closures in SSIs have attained the degree of epidemic, throwing lakhs of workers jobless.

6.4 Another alarming feature is the increasing incidence of unemployment among the educated, mocking at the so called theory of empowerment and better-employability through education. Among the unemployed persons, 70 per cent were literate according to 1981 Census; but it has gone up to 80 per cent in 1991 Census. The national sample surveys show that, over the period from 1983 to 1993-94, the proportion of those educated to a level of secondary school or higher among the unemployed persons increased from 47 per cent to 64 per cent (*IJ of Labour Eco, Jan-Mar, 2000*). Same is the situation even among the people with vocational education and skill. This speaks about the critical state of the country's economy which cannot even absorb the educated and skilled workforce, thus signifying its low capacity of technology-absorption.

6.5 Added to this is the increasing incidence of youth unemployment signifying sharp decline in the generation of new

jobs. According to UN estimates and projections, the proportion of youth in India was 18.9 in 1995 and their number was 175 million. Their proportion will rise to 19.4 per cent in 2005 and the number to nearly 210 million and the absolute number is projected to keep on rising till the year 2025 when it will reach the 214 million mark.

6.6 This explosive aspect of youth unemployment must be comprehended from economic and social points of view concurrently. Unemployment to an educated youth is 'exclusion' from the society, deprived to participate in and contribute to the nation building productive activities. The young are also temperamentally and psychologically more vulnerable. Keeping the young reasonably occupied and interested in social progress is a big challenge that confronts societies everywhere in the world (*Higgins, 1997*). The report also points out the wider dangers of youth unemployment, stressing that youth joblessness can often lead to vandalism, crime, drug abuse, alienation, social unrest and conflict.

7. DETERIORETING QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT

7.1 A very disturbing feature is the consistent decline in the quality of employment. Casualisation in employment is increasing very fast. It was 23 per cent in 1972-73 and reached to 32 per cent in 1993-94 and crossed 43% by 1999. This problem is much acute in urban areas. The regular salaried workers constituted only 15.4 per cent of the total workers in 1972-73 and declined to 13.2 per cent in 1993-94 and the position has further worsened due to the onslaught of the second-generation economic reform. Such a phenomenon indicates swelling in the ranks of casual workers. In 1993-94, the number of casual workers was 119 million, while that of self-employed was 205 million and that of regular salaried employed was 55 million (*IJ of Lab.Eco. Vol 43, No, 1*). This trend is destined to aggravate further in the background of active legislative exercise by the BJP-led Government to legitimise and legalise contract employment everywhere.

7.2 The other contributing factor in deteriorating the quality of

employment is under-employment, both visible and invisible. While the self-employed have been identified as invisible, the seasonal workers who do not get work throughout the year have been put in the category of visible underemployed. A recent study on underemployment revealed that "5.1 per cent are severely underemployed (employed for less than 3 days in a week) 23.9 per cent are moderately underemployed (employed between 3.5 to 5 days in a week) and 66.5 are nearly employed (employed for 5.5 to 7 days in a week)" (Datt - 1999).

7.3 It is very important to take into consideration the quality of employment while surveying the employment situation particularly in developing countries. Undermining quality of employment in a developing country like India amounts to underestimation of the incidence of unemployment and underemployment and thus overestimation of employment. In developing countries like ours, where a large number of persons are below the poverty line, the labour force normally cannot afford to remain idle since they are haunted by hunger and thus compelled to accept any employment, even if they are paid just a pittance either in cash or in kind bordering destitution. In other words, the poor cannot afford to remain unemployed. It is amazing to note that in 1993, nearly one-third among the employed was poor, more or less the same proportion as that of the poor in the entire population. To comprehend the actual dimension of the menacing unemployment situation in our country, it is essential to take note of the close link between abject poverty and employment, unemployment and underemployment.

8. RESTRUCTURING, RETRENCHMENT, RETRAINING, REDEPLOYMENT

8.1 The organised sector in our country, which broadly consist of public and private sector industries, banks and financial institutions, railways, Government departments etc. is expected to provide stable employment. But the share of this sector in total employment generation remained stagnant throughout the seventies and eighties and has taken negative turn since the nineties. The mindless opening up of our economy, unlimited

hostile entry of foreign Multinational Companies in each and every sector of the country's industrial and commercial activities have actually acted in killing employment. The buzzwords for the 'market economy' are competition through economisation of labour cost. This is how we have entered into the disastrous era of 'jobless growth'.

8.2 It is a well established fact that in the matter of employment generation, the public sector had played the major role in our country. However, with the rabid anti-public sector policy of privatization, vigorously pursued by the successive Governments, the situation has been changed. It has become a design of the managements of industrial concerns to drastically downsize the workforce both in public and private sectors in the name of so called restructuring. The various schemes for retraining and redeployment announced by the successive Governments have turned to be absolute farce. Highly educated, skilled and experienced workers are retrenched from the industries in the name of voluntary retirement or otherwise and then offered for training in unskilled or low skilled work like production of candle, *agarbatti* and so on and such is their scheme for redeployment. As per the report of the Union Labour Ministry itself, against several lakhs of retrenched/VR workers, only 1475 could be redeployed till 1995.

8.3 As per the 1999-2000 Annual Report of the Union Labour Ministry there was a 0.7% negative growth in employment in public sector. In fact, during 1995-96 and 1996-97, there was an absolute decline of 2,00,000 jobs in the public sector, according to data compiled under the Employment Market Information system (*Hindu 19.5.1998*). And during 1998-2000, more than 1.5 lakh jobs were lost only in four/five major PSUs. As per the target set by the Verma Panel, more than 20,000 workers are to be thrown from the employment of the banks. Again, the State Bank of India has recently announced their decision to ease out one lakh employees. If the so called downsizing plan currently announced by the public sector giants like SAIL, BHEL, CIL, HSCL, Banks etc. is materialised and also the decision to close down several PSUs is carried out by the Government, several lakhs of employees will lose jobs and

join the huge army of unemployed in the country.

8.4 The public sector consisting of the Central and State Governments, quasi-Government bodies and local bodies roughly employ 19 million persons out of a total employment of nearly 28 millions in the organised sector. From a net provider of 3.7 million new jobs in the eighties, additional jobs in the public sector came down to 0.6 million during the nineties. But more jobs have been killed simultaneously.

8.5 In this regard, the situation in private sector is, the least said the better. Downscaling due to modernisation, merger and retrenchment on account of closure/shifting of industrial units alone has killed several lakhs of job. The engineering, textile, pharmaceutical etc, are some of the sectors, where massive joblosses have taken place. For example, in the State of Maharashtra alone up to April, 1999 about 3,500 large factories have been closed down rendering some 86,000 workers jobless during a span of the preceding two years. The number of units closed in Mumbai alone is 834, which has rendered some 17,000 unemployed. Job loss due to VR in the State during the period is 1.55 lakhs.

8.6 The international operators of FDI - the MNCs - in effect neither bring much of Foreign Capital nor generate employment in the country concerned. On the contrary, the MNCs suck indigenous capital and kill employment. Above all they never part with technical "Know How and Technology" to any developing economies. As per a recent study: "The import of capital was much less than the yearly exports of profits and royalties; further investment was financed through capital drawn from the local capital market and from reinvestment of profits ... No impulse was given to solution of the unemployment. (G. K. Lieten, Netherlands, 1999). The IMF itself has admitted that the imperialist globalisation is increasing unemployment. The IMF study (*Slaughter and Swagel - 1997*) noted: "globalisation has coincided with higher unemployment."

8.7 Therefore, it is evident that FDI is net jobs killer. This is due to the main reason that 75% of the total actual FDI in our country

came for merger and take-over. From 1993-94 to 1999-2000, the total number of such merger-acquisitions/take-over has reached to 256 and many more are in the pipeline. In all those cases, majority of the workforce in the taken over companies have been thrown out following closure of departments, farming out of jobs etc.

8.8 In fact, the MNCs have become the notorious symbol of massive retrenchment of workers all over the world. The ILO *World Unemployment Report - 1996-97* has noted, "... the dramatic losses of jobs have occurred in several large United States corporations since the early 1980s... loss of 2,50,000 jobs in General Motors between 1978 and 1993, 1,00,000 jobs in US Steel between 1980 and 1990, 1,70,000 jobs in General Electric between 1981 and 1993 and 1,80,000 jobs in AT & T between 1981 and 1988..."

9. BUTCHERING GOVERNMENT JOBS

9.1 The BJP-led Government constituted a five-member commission called 'Expenditure Reforms Commission' (ERC) under the chairmanship of Shri K.P. Geethakrishnan, former Union Finance Secretary to recommend measures to drastically reduce the number of the Government employees. The Commission has submitted their interim reports. It has recommended winding up of a very large number of departments of the different Ministries, privatisation of jobs and retrenchment of the employees. For instance, it has recommended easing out ten departments of the Ministry of I&B and reducing the number of employees from the present 7,779 to 2,176. On the Ministry of Coal, the Committee has made murderous recommendations which include privatisation of the mines, creating seven independent coal companies by dismantling CIL and, of course, retrenchment of workers.

9.2 The ERC has reiterated the recommendations of the Fifth Central Pay Commission for a 30% cut of Central Government jobs across the board. Further, 3.5 lakhs of vacant posts are to be abolished along with total freeze on fresh recruitments.

9.3 It may be recalled that killing of jobs in the Central Government has been systematically going on since the 1970s. The growth in government jobs has already witnessed a drastic decline from 27% between 1971 and 1984 to the level of meagre 10.3% between 1984 and 1994 and further to mere 2.4% during 1994-2000. Thus, the successive Governments at the Centre have been silently butchering jobs, particularly ever since the beginning of the Fund-Bank dictated economic policies in the country.

9.4 In the coming days there is going to be a "job killing yagna" by the BJP-led Government under the dictate of their overseas masters. The Expenditure Reforms Commission recommended a further 10% cut in the sanctioned strength of staff as on 1.1.2000 to be carried out by each Ministry/Department by the year 2004-2005.

9.6 The game plan prescribed by ERC study is that " the concerned Ministry/Department/Organisation should be given a maximum time limit of one month to wind up that function/ activity. All surplus personnel who neither opt for Voluntary Retirement within the first three months period nor could be redeployed within a period of one year would be discharged from service at the end of that period under the existing service rules."

9.7 In this context, another very serious development must be taken note of. The employees of the State Governments are also going to be the victim of downsizing in the coming days in a big way. The State Governments who are too much eager to turn their State into a favourite destination of foreign MNCs and have fallen into the loan trap of the international financial institutions have announced steps for large scale reduction of the strength of the Government employees in their respective States.

9.8 A glaring example, in this regard, is the Chandra Babu Naidu Government of Andhra Pradesh. Under the very stringent and harmful conditionalities of the loans negotiated with the World Bank and other financial institutions, the Naidu Government is

taking steps "to reduce State Government employment by an average of 1 per cent annually in the Ninth Plan period ... by various methods of downsizing, ... natural attrition, elimination of vacant posts ... voluntary departure scheme..., possible discharge, and any other methods, necessary to achieve the time-bound employment reduction target."

10. IN NUTSHELL

10.1 The facts and figures conclusively establish that the problem of unemployment has attained alarming height as a consequence of the onslaught of imperialist globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation and has turned chronic. The MNCs and global finance capital have tightened their grip over the economies of the developing countries like India and turned the third world economies into their captive market killing their industrial base. Such disturbing developments are factors directly contributing in seriously aggravating the vexed problem of unemployment through a process of fast de-industrialisation. Thus, this issue has emerged as an issue of serious national concern.

10.2 The problem of unemployment has thrown a serious challenge to the trade union movement. It is a fact that industrial sickness, closure and retrenchment of workers are resulting in reduction of the trade union membership. The CITU's own experience is that although there has been an over all increase in the total membership since the last conference, our total membership would have been much more had there been no such massive joblosses in industries as mentioned above. Therefore, it is clearly evident that job loss is affecting the trade union membership in a big way.

10.3 Pointing out the social dimensions of the problem of unemployment, a former Member of the Planning Commission said thus: "Exclusion will lead to alienation and alienation will lead to consequences that are inimical to the sustenance of the social fabric. Unemployment in the 21st century will be less of an economic problem and more of a social problem. The problem of unemployment needs to be given utmost attention

in our society in order to meet the emerging challenges.” The Director General of ILO has put the matter thus: “The global employment situation is grim, and getting grimmer. Stubbornly persisting high levels of unemployment and underemployment lead to social exclusion of the young and the old, the less skilled, the disabled and ethnic minority groups - with a strong bias against women in all categories.”

10.5 When a worker is thrown out of employment, apart from the economic sufferings, such workers undergo serious mental trauma, face humiliation within the family and of course confront social seclusion. When somebody's job has been taken away, it is just not merely his pay packet but his sense of self, peace of mind and status in the family have also been taken away along with. In the family front the picture is “explosive situation of “role reversion”, and narrowing to the extreme of the circle of social contacts. The final outcome is often the breakdown of the family unit.”

11. TRADE UNION INITIATIVE

11.1 The unemployment problem has become compounded with the addition of new dimensions. It is no longer a problem for the youth and students alone as used to be looked upon, particularly before the advent of the era of STR and the intensification of the current phase of capitalist economic crisis and the onset of imperialist globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. Today closure, lockout, lay-off, restructuring, merger and acquisition, downsizing of industrial units, Government departments etc. have been throwing lakhs and lakhs of workers out of employment and contributing in massive scale in swelling the ranks of unemployed.

11.2 It has become an urgent imperative task for our trade union movement to take up the issue of unemployment as a priority task. Years back Comrade BTR wrote: “The policy of disbandment of public sector and reckless privatisation and encouragement of multinationals to enter the Indian market is fraught with the gravest danger for the employment situation. They offer a challenge to the TU movement, which must accept

it, if it wants to protect the jobs of those who are already at work." The current situation is incomparably alarming then the one prevailed when BTR wrote that piece. Under their 'second generation economic reform', the BJP-led Government at the centre has completely surrendered to the foreign MNCs and international finance capital - the actors of the dangerous game of "jobless growth". Therefore, unemployment situation in the country, which has already assumed very serious character, is bound to accentuate further in the coming days. In such a situation the trade union movement must take due initiative right earnest for developing a sustained united democratic movement to combat the cancerous growth of unemployment.

11.3 On the urgency of such trade union initiative Comrade BTR had said: "The trade unions should take the initiative to organise jointly conventions of the employed and the unemployed...to pressurise the Government to check the growth of unemployment ... to champion the basic changes in Government's economic policies and measure to check unemployment." Pointing out the importance and significance of the demand for 'right to work to be embodied in the Constitution as fundamental right, Comrade BTR said: " the right to work is in fact the basis of all democratic rights, without this right many democratic rights become just formal decorative rights."

11.4 The all India trade union convention on "Right to Work" held at Durgapur on 2-3 April 1990 was a significant initiative by us in right direction. The understanding of the Durgapur convention was: "It should be a common campaign of all sections of people, employed and unemployed workers of the cities, the villages and also the students, youth and the women folk. It should also be the task of the trade unions representing the organised strength of the working class to lead in organising the campaign of the unemployed workers, rural mass, youth and women." It would be befitting to quote the declaration once again: "The TU movement can no longer continue as the representative only of those who are having permanent jobs. This narrowing down of the TU movement has done the biggest harm to India's working class movement."

11.5 At a time when unemployment problem has reached to a point of social explosion and has engulfed all the major sections of the society in our country - the employed and unemployed, the urban and the rural population, men and women, the working class, peasantry, students and youth - it is the historical task of the working class to take serious initiative to unleash a nation wide united mass movement against the Fund-Bank prescribed policy of "jobless growth". Such initiative shall strengthen the organic link between the working class and general democratic movement. Such initiative, incidentally, can effectively dispel accusation of economism levelled against the trade union movement.

11.6 The Commission on unemployment during the 10th conference of CITU elaborately deliberated on this vital subject. The leading points which were identified in course of the discussion were *interalia*: the practical steps at different levels of our organisation viz., unit, district, zone, State and national, the different phases of the campaigns, the form and scope of our independent initiative, followed by realisation of united initiative of the class and mass organisations. The unity move can take-off aiming at involvement of all the major trade union centres and the consolidation of this move has to serve as the catalytic agent to draw the other mass organisations into the united movement. The most important requirement is that widespread propaganda and agitation on the issue has to take off at grass root level to create condition for the united action with the objective to culminate in a massive nation-wide movement of the people.

11.7 The working class movement must understand that this is the single issue which directly affects mainly that section of the people, which has immense capability to greatly influence the course of national events in the country. Moreover, this issue has tremendous cascading effect on the overwhelming majority of the population from all walks of life. Therefore, we must comprehend that the question of unemployment can be a rallying point to unite all sections of the progressive, democratic and downtrodden people. At the same time, since the root of this evil lie with capitalism and its current phase of imperialist

globalisation is the major cause of aggravation of the problem, massive peoples' action on the issue, with the continuity of the initiative of the working class, to combat the atrocious social evil, would ultimately strengthen the struggle against the capitalist order itself. It would be worthwhile to quote the former UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali: "If you cannot find any solution to the problems of unemployment, the disintegration of the social fabric and globalised poverty, you shall see new revolutions and extremely serious destabilisation of the world order."

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