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Re. 1

Women workers marching to court arrest at Bhopal on March 23



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International Women's Day

IN the context of the rapidly intensifying economic crisis all over the capitalist world, with tens of thousands of men and women hunting for jobs, and interlinked with this the ever growing danger of a nuclear war and destruction being unleashed primarily by American imperialism, International Women's Day, on March 8, assumed particular significance this year.

In far larger numbers, women literally all over the world expressed their very clear and determined NO TO NUCLEAR WAR. In our country also, a larger number of women than previously have become aware that this threat is not confined to Europe and America and other far-off countries alone, but threatens us right here also, our lives, our families, our homes. That is why they responded in far larger numbers, and in many more towns and centres than ever before.

This, however, is only a beginning. This threat of nuclear war and the need for active struggle by ordinary people to preserve peace, must be carried to all corners of this vast land, until Indian women join their sisters in other lands in a vast human wall around the world, that will bar the hand of an inhuman imperialism that cares only for its profits, will destroy the world for it, but cares not for people, for children or the beauty of our earth.

Thus on March 8, in India, in small towns and big cities the voices of women were raised in slogans, and the streets resounded with the sound of their marching. Colourful banners and flags rose above them and people gathered in support as they pledged to fight for their rights under the twin slogans of Peace and Employment.

In India, it was jointly decided by a number of women's organisation that in addition to raising the peace issue, they would also highlight particularly the question of employment opportunities for women, as this is becoming one of the most pressing needs and

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Valiant Fight By Cardamom Workers

THE last four months of 1982 have seen a series of brutal attacks on the cardamom workers of the Santhampura area of Idikki district in Kerala. Goondas from the Congress(I) and the INTUC working in close connivance with the police, have been terrorising the workers, especially the women workers of the area.

Their attempt is to intimidate the workers belonging to the Devicolam Estate Employees' Union led by the CITU, and to establish an INTUC foothold in the area. Since a majority of the workers are women it is they who have had to bear the brunt of these attacks, which continued on for six months.

Police Repression

By December thousands of cardamon and other plantation workers were implicated in false police cases. The police would descend on the area where the workers live and let loose a reign of terror, searching and combing the houses of union members. Two women workers from Chemmannar were taken into custody and illegally kept in the Santhampura police lockup for four days. No attempt was made to produce them in court nor were any charges made against them. The aim was only to terrorise the women into revealing the whereabouts of other union members.

In yet another incident two women labourers, Dolly and Reena, were forcibly dragged out of their homes by the police at Arivilayanchal of Senapath panchayat, on the night of November 15, in the presence of their parents. The police took them around the houses of other workers in order to drive home the point that this would be their fate if they continued their fight for their just demands. They were left on the road at 3 a.m. in the morning.

On the same day, the goondas brutally manhandled another woman labourer, Reetha, who was full-term pregnant. The police also

give shelter to various goonda elements who frequently assault the militant women members of the union.

Mary, one of the union members, in the forefront of the fight against such blatant goonda-raj, has been particularly earmarked for attack. The goondas have raided her house several times, smashed her household articles and utensils and burnt her clothes and other possessions, mistreated her husband and children.

Brutal Attacks

On December 12, when she and her sister were returning from work on pay day they were attacked by goondas. Mary was brutally beaten with sticks, leaving her with most of her bones broken. She had to be admitted to hospital for three months. Her sister was also badly beaten, her ornaments removed, and both their pay packets stolen. A week later in another attack by goondas of the Congress(I) on two women union members, Mary and Thilothama at Methappur, goondas broke into their house and kicked them with their heavy boots, severely injuring Mary's back bone. Thilothama who was three-months' pregnant aborted on the spot.

These are but a few of similar incidents of looting and burning of workers' houses, stealing and destroying what little money, sarees, radios, watches, the few valuables they possess, which took place and were repeated every day. But these frequent attacks did not cause these valiant women to waver from their militant stand or stop their resistance to safeguard themselves and their movement. The repression loosed on them only made their will to fight even greater. And their efforts have not been in vain. After the three months' long attempts to browbeat these workers into submission, the police and goondas have had to admit failure, and retreat. At the moment the area is almost quiet again.

Please Nurse, . . .

WHEN you walk into a general hospital you come across rows and rows of people, some dying, some in pain and others racked with fever or disease.

They are all waiting for a doctor, a nurse, a helping hand. They seem to wait endlessly and begin to wonder at the callousness of the medical and nursing profession.

But when you look behind the scenes, you find that the nurse too is human. She has her own problems and the pressures on her are immense.

"While Florence Nightingale is still a source of inspiration for us it is difficult to maintain the spirit of dedication and devotion with which she worked, because of the hardships we face," says Mrs. Nagpal the General Secretary of the Trained Nurses Association of India.

In an interview with *The Voice of the Working Woman*, Mrs. Nagpal explained some of the problems faced by nurses and revealed how poor their working conditions are.

Mrs. Nagpal speaks from her rich experience as a leading member of the Association, which has taken her to many parts of the country.

Pressure on Nurses

The demand for medical care is constantly increasing, as more and more people are unable to get the basic amenities and satisfy their minimum needs. A lack of resistance, malnutrition and infection are common complaints. This increases the number of patients and puts an inhuman burden on nurses.

"The Medical Council has prescribed a ratio of one nurse to five patients, but this ratio is maintained nowhere", says Mrs. Nagpal. "There may be three to four nurses these days to look after as many as 60 patients at a time. How then can you expect a nurse to give her undivided attention to each patient? And at night there is only one nurse."

And this despite the fact that plenty of nurses are available for employment.

What are the wages paid to nurses?

"Nurses working in both municipal and government hospitals are paid wages on the same scale. The wages are very low. Even after four years of training a nurse earns only Rs. 650 a month, out of which she has to meet all her expenses — food, lodging, washing of uniform, etc.," said Mrs. Nagpal. Most nurses also send money home — one of the basic reasons why they take to nursing in the first place.

"The pressures are even greater because a majority of nurses come from poor families. In most cases they were unable to continue their studies and took to nursing to supplement their family's income."

What are the avenues for promotion in the profession?

"One of the main demands of the TNAI, has been promotional avenues for nurses. Today, the only way a nurse can get promoted is if a post falls vacant with the retirement or resignation of a senior nurse. Thus only a few nurses benefit during their careers," she explained.

While nurses do get some facilities like maternity leave with pay for three months and provident fund, they face an even more serious problem. It sometimes takes almost 10-12 years for a nurse to get confirmed. Thus, by the time they become 'sisters' they are already close to their retirement age!

Are nurses provided accommodation?

"These days most hospitals do not provide accommodation for nurses. We feel that this facility would greatly help improve the efficiency of nurses as they work long hours and often have to do duties at night as well."

"The lack of accommodation", she adds, "creates other problems like that of security"
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1000 Women Court Arrest

A thousand-strong contingent of women participated in a huge demonstration and courted arrest in a satyagraha organised jointly by the Madhya Pradesh State Committee of the CPI (M), the CITU, SFI, DYFI, the Kisan Sabha and the Janavadi Mahila Samiti at Bhopal, the State capital on March 21, 1983.

The Administration which had underestimated the mobilisation of even the men, was flabbergasted when the Jhelum Express, with five hundred women, under the banner of the JMS from Gwalior, entered Bhopal Railway Station on the 20th night. Two hundred working women from Bhilai, including peasant women from Shahdol, had already arrived by earlier trains. The morning train on March 21, brought another 300 women belonging to the PWD and Irrigation Contingency employees from Indore and other parts of Malwa.

The number of women in the satyagraha would have been much larger if the last-minute decision of the Morena contingent had not left 400 women behind at the railway station for want of space in the train, and also to a little conservative attitude on the part of the men folk.

Happy Response

The women of course, came carrying the tiny tots and holding the hands of the little more grown-up children, who walked the entire five km. route to reach the Assembly area, as usual cordoned off. The public were keenly listening to the slogans of 'Stop atrocities on women', 'Stop the dowry system', 'Give equal pay for women', 'Stop retrenchment of women workers', along with other slogans on the price-rise and suppression of trade union and democratic rights.

One could see the happy faces of the women watching and responding to the women in the demonstration, as they caught their

slogans from the windows, balconies and street corners.

At the venue of the satyagraha, three batches of women courted arrest. There was no sign of fear or shyness, although a big force of police with all their paraphernalia, lathis, guns, teargas squad, gas masks, and a fleet of state transport buses presented a scene as of a grim battle. Rather the women proved even more militant than the batches of men. In the open jail improvised in the Aish Bag Stadium, they were sentenced to one day's imprisonment.

After release from jail, all the women, feeling victorious, returned with greater confidence to their workplaces, ready to come back again in larger numbers to participate in such an even in future, if required.

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of nurses, who have to travel alone at night and so on."

According to her, earlier only married women were eligible for accommodation but now the terms have been amended. She suggested that all new hospitals should make efforts to ensure that nurses are provided living quarters at or near their place of work.

Why do nurses resist working in villages?

"As women, nurses face sexual harassment wherever they go. In the villages nurses have had frightening experiences both with the police and with anti-social elements." Apart from this they are not provided with proper accommodation and other facilities."

Are nurses represented on medical boards?

"The TNAI has made repeated appeals for the appointment of women from the profession on the Directorate of Health Services. These appeals have gone unheeded and only in a few
(Contd. on page 11)

First Convention of P&T Women Workers

ON April 11, from 3 to 6 in the afternoon, in the compound of the Udaipur Shastri, Circle Post Office, a P and T Lady Workers' and P and T Employees' Wives Convention was held under the Presidentship of Shanta Trivedi.

In the P and T organisation throughout the country, this type of convention was being held for the first time. About 300 ladies attended.

Addressing this convention, Shanker Kaduskar, Chairman Udaipur Unions' Co-ordination Committee said that the P and T lady workers and the P and T employees' wives must join hands with the workers in their struggles and throw their weight behind the employees whenever there was victimisation after agitations. They should help the workers fight all the different forms of repression practised against them.

In spite of working in a vital department of the Government, the pay and other facilities in the P and T department were so pitiable in comparison to those elsewhere, that their struggles became automatically linked with their families. The P and T ladies must them-

selves join in the demands and struggles of the employees to better the economic condition of their families.

In her address Dr. Girija Vyas asked women to find time from their busy schedule of domestic work for participation in direct social activities.

Snehlata Johri expressed her good wishes for the success of the convention, and Rama of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti, and Parbha, representative of the Rajya Karmchari Sangh, contributed to the success of the convention by their pertinent speeches aimed at making women conscious of their inherent power,

The meeting was conducted by Alam Ara (postal) and Shashi Tiwari (Telecom). Pushpa Bhatia (Postal) thanked all the participants. On this occasion, purses were gifted to all the ladies by the Reception Committee of the Seventeenth Joint Rajasthan Conference of the All India Postal Employees Union Class III, Postmen, Class IV and Extra Departmental Employees. The Conference was held in Udaipur from April 9 to 13, 1983. The Women Workers Convention formed part of The programme for the Conference.

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In the discussion which followed the presentation of the report, delegates spoke on their experience suggesting ways in which the functioning of the Co-ordination Committee could be improved for future work. Participating in the debate were Kamalamma, Padmaja (Vizag), Surya Mani (Vizag), Sarada (Vizag), Siyavathe (Hyderabad), Savitriamma (W. Godavari) and Padmini (Hyderabad). The Convention elected an eight-member Committee with Smt. Punayavati as the Convenor.

Change Society

In his concluding speech, Sri Balanandan, Vice-President of the CITU said that women were not aware of their strength and emphas-

ised that if women plunged into action, the movement would get accelerated. In the present society, the correct treatment is not meted out to the women and so it is the duty of the women to change the basic structure of the society.

Sri Balanandan pointed out that it is only the CITU which is working to build up a big movement on the basis of the problems being confronted by women, and it is the only organisation which is fighting for safeguarding the interests of the women.

At the end of the conference, Sri Parsa Satyanarayana, President of Andhra Pradesh State CITU Committee, assured the convention that the CITU would extend its fullest cooperation to the Mahila movement.

THIS IS TRIPURA IN 1983

Planning and implementation of schemes now rest with the democratic institutions at the grass root level like the Block Panchayat Samities and Gaon Panchayats.

With land-revenue exempted and protection of law for the establishment of share-croppers' rights propagated small farmers find a new hope of building their lot.

With the Autonomous District Council set up, their mother tongue having been recognised as the second language of the State, the quota in the government service having been properly protected, the tribesmen of Tripura have now been restored to their honorable position in society.

With an enhanced rate of wages already enforced, various welfare measures adopted, and minimum amenities of life assured, the labouring force in the state have proved themselves more active than ever before.

With the introduction of free education up to Class XII, mid-day meal for primary students, enhancement of the rate of stipends and other facilities, the students enrolment in educational institutions has gone remarkably high.

The Left Front Government in Tripura stands committed to strive for a united, democratic and self-reliant society free from all exploitation.

**Issued by the Directorate of Information, Cultural Affairs & Tourism,
Government of Tripura.**

Letter from Visakhapatnam

WHILE Visakhapatnam is the most strategic centre in the State, the number of women workers in comparison to men is very low. There are only 10,000 working women. Of these very few work in the industrial sector.

Almost 4000 women work as unskilled labour in the sea foods industry, as contract labourers, in hostel and canteens attached to industries, as municipal workers and as class IV employees. A number of women hold white-collar jobs in educational institutions, in hospitals, as clerks, typists, telephone operators, nurses and doctors. The Visakhapatnam Working Women's Coordination Committee has been striving to organise these various sections. In this direction the unit observed a Demands Day, at the call of the All-India Committee. Members of the unit appraised women workers in various industries about the importance of the day, mobilised a considerable number to participate in a demonstration and held a public meeting. A memorandum was submitted to the District Collector. In Kasimkota, a moffussil centre in this district, 100 women participated in a procession on that day. They submitted a memorandum to the Block Development Officer.

Transport : As working women face a daily transport problem the issue was raised and a dharna held before the depot managers office. We demanded punctuality of bus timings and special services for women and children during peak hours.

Police terror: Following the strike of workers in the Chittivalsa jute mills, the police let loose a reign of terror attacking people from the workers' villages indiscriminately. Even women and children were brutally assaulted. Our members toured these villages and met the affected families. We extended our solidarity and support and help to them. We demanded that the District Collector take immediate action against the policemen responsible for their plight.

Hospitals Bill: In response to an All India call we also demanded that the Hospitals and Other Institutions Bill be scrapped.

Office Timings : Office timings have been arbitrarily altered in the state causing much inconvenience to working women. A signature campaign was conducted to demand a reversal to the old timings and a memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister.

Support to Workers: We extended our support to the workers in BHPV during a lockout in November 1980, and participated in a demonstration and a relay fast.

Nurses Strike: We extended our support to nurses when they declared a strike in government hospitals. We met the leaders of the agitation.

VSP Strike: During the recent strike in the Visakhapatnam steel project we met the striking women workers of the plant several times and extended our active support to their struggle.

Subscription: We took up the task of enrolling subscribers for our magazine *Voice of the Working Woman* as a movement, and succeeded in enrolling women subscribers from the Port, MMTC, the Dredging Corp., LIC, Steel units P&T, FCI, KG hospital, librarians research scholars, teachers and professors in the university. We now have 250 subscribers and the magazine is distributed to them personally by our leading members.

Suggestions & Observations

Our experience has been that women respond enthusiastically to the idea of participating in discussions on their problems. Most of them felt that there should be a forum where working women can put forward their problems, and some of them, though unsure of the solutions, were able to identify their problems. As subscribers, while some have not

shown an active interest, others have suggested how the magazine could be improved. We feel that the magazine can be a very effective instrument in our efforts to mobilise women.

Nurses: Apart from economic problems nurses face a lack of protection from their male colleagues. Some cases of nurses being murdered have also been revealed. They also face the problem of mounting corruption, late duty hours, and a lack of promotional avenues.

We feel that owing to the fact that a large number of women cannot read or do not understand English, a magazine should be brought out at the State level in the local language.

To make women aware of their rights as citizens of India, the laws and fights pertaining to them should be periodically published in the magazine.

Our Future Programmes

1. Organising on the demand of plying special buses for women and children during peak hours in certain important routes.

2. Enrolling more subscribers to the magazine.

3. Organising conventions in certain important industries on the problems of the women workers employed therein.

4. Holding a district convention at an early date; and restructuring the district committee.

5. Preparing and subscribing articles for the magazine.

Lastly, we feel, the CITU is not showing sufficient interest in our organisation. Even in the industries where CITU-affiliated union, are there, the CITU is not taking care to popularise our organisation amongst the women workers. We hope, at least in future, the CITU will take up of this responsibility....

Multinations Mean Unemployment

IT will be recalled that ILTD — Indian Leaf Tobacco Division of the Indian Tobacco Company — had closed down its factory at Chirala and the Parchur Depot, after the introduction of the Leaf Threshing machine

throwing 6000 men and women out of work. The sales and profit figures of the ILTD have now been published.

In 1982 this multinational increased its sale by over one-third over 1981, and made a gross profit, before deduction of costs and taxes, of Rs. 7.74 crore. Exporting tobacco to the value of Rs. 41.46 crore, it has earned Rs. 50.20 crore in foreign exchange. No wonder then that it was able to pay a dividend of 18 per cent to its shareholders.

Not satisfied with this it has undertaken further retrenchment of its workers, thereby hoping to increase its profits further. It also has started purchasing tobacco leaf from private dealers, then sending it to Anarparthy where it has installed its Green Leaf Thresher machine.

Added to all the other earlier protests, the Andhra Mahila Sangam has also appealed to N.T. Rama Rao, the Telugu Desam Chief Minister, to intervene in the matter and secure re-employment for these 6000 retrenched workers.

Second State Working Women's Convention

The Second Andhra Pradesh Convention of Working Women was held at the Kothagudem Collieries, Khamman district on April 2, 1983, with Smt. Punyavati, Advocate and President of the Union Carbide Employees' Union, Vizakhapatnam, presiding. Delegates numbered 40, from different centres of the State: Vizakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Maohilipatnam, Rajamundry, Akiveedu and Kothagudem. Inaugurating the Convention was the All-India Working Women's Coordination Committee Secretary, Vimal Ranadive.

Among the issues taken up by the Andhra Pradesh Women's Committee in the last four years since the first Convention in 1979, and mentioned in the Report given by Dr. Hemalatha were changes in the office-timings introduced by the A.P. Government, increase in seating accommodation for women in the city buses, hostels for working women, the attacks on striking women jute workers in Chittevalsa, and the retrenchment of women in the tobacco industry.

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demands. A growing number of women want work and the extra income, at the same time as thousands more get thrown out of their jobs.

Maharashtra: In Maharashtra, over five thousand women marched under the banners of 25 different organisations, led by the Shramik Mahila Samiti (AIDWA), the NFIW and the Samajwadi Mahila Sabha. The demonstration in Bombay began at Azad Maidan and ended at the Mantralaya, where a public meeting was held, following which a delegation met the Chief Minister, and handed over their charter of demands. The charter demanded generation of employment for women, a guarantee of minimum and equal wages, provision of creches and the formation of a National Commission for Women. Ahilya Rangnekar, Mrinal Gore, Pramila Dandavate, and Manju Gandhi were among those who led the delegation.

Meetings were addressed in other parts of the State by Asha Vartak, Tara Valanju and Usha Darde.

Kanpur: A memorandum was submitted to the Labour Commissioner of U.P. demanding equal opportunities of employment for women in all industries, the setting up of creches, paid maternity leave, rest rooms and toilet facilities in all workplaces.

Patna: A mass meeting was organised under the presidentship of Mrs. Rani Singh. It was addressed by Danyanti Sinha and Keka Pal. They demanded an end to atrocities against women, equal wages for equal work, the abolition of the dowry system and control over prices.

Andhra Pradesh: International Women's Day was observed in 11 places in the State including Ongole, Huzoornagar, Narsapur, Vijayawada and Hyderabad. In Narsapur 1,500 women participated in a demonstration and submitted a memorandum to the Collector. Doctors, office employees, industrial women workers and others joined the procession in Ongole. In Vizag, Smt. Punyawati addressed a meeting, while in Vijayawada, Smt. Udayam, the Secretary of the A.P. AIDWA spoke over the AIR on the significance of the day.

Madhya Pradesh: The Gwalior Coordination Committee of Working Women, together with teachers, organised a seminar on employment of women, on March 6, presided over by Prof. S.K. Mazumdar of Jivaji Vishwavidyalaya. Two students, Alka and Anjali, presented papers on the position of women under the present system and under Socialism. Speakers at the seminar said that women do not beg for their rights — they demand them, that until women become part and parcel of the social production process they will not be free. Another speaker emphasised that unless Socialism is established in the country, there will be no real solution to the problems of working women. They demanded that the right to work be included in the Indian Constitution.

Punjab: A meeting was held at Rajpura, Patiala and was attended by about 200 women. Asha, the President of the Patiala unit of the AIDWA spoke on the significance of March 8th. The meeting ended to slogans raised against war, atrocities on women and the price rise.

Delhi: March 8th was observed in Delhi jointly by the AIDWA, NFIW, AIWC, YWCA, the Mahila Dakshita Samiti and the Centre for Women's Development Studies. A meeting was held at the Agha Khan Hall in which over 1000 women participated. The Charter of Working Women's Demands, highlighting the problem of women's employment, was put forward by Vimal Ranadive, while Vimala Farooqi, the General Secretary of the NFIW moved a resolution on peace and against war. The President of the AIWC read out an appeal to the Heads of Non-Aligned Nations (see p. 21). Vina Mazumdar moved a resolution on the Media and Women.

A memorandum was submitted to Indira Gandhi by Susheela Gopalan, Vimala Farooqi and others. The PM was told of the grave situation in the tobacco industry and the retrenchment of 5000 women due to the introduction of a threshing machine. The Government was also criticised for its failure to end the dowry system and bring about amendments to prohibit dowry. The need for a National Commission For Women was also stressed.

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States are women representatives appointed to medical boards. West Bengal has appointed three women on its Board, Gujarat four, Maharashtra and U.P. two each, and Bihar one. In Delhi the Administration has not seen fit to appoint even one woman!" said Mrs. Nagpal.

Thus the problems faced by nurses are given no attention and no effort is made to solve these problems. The situation gets worse and worse.

Moreover, she says, many of the who dominate decision-making bodies have no direct experience in the field, and even the budgets prepared by them are often unrealistic and unsuitable.

"Their lack of understanding and commitment to the profession is reflected in the kind of the decisions they take with respect to areas like mother and child care. They make our task more difficult even in small ways. For example, the wash basins are in the wrong places, the sheets too small..." she complained. "They have no ideas of the needs of patients and nurses!"

Can you tell us something about the TNAI?

"The TNAI has about 37,000 members all over the country. Its membership extends to students as well."

What sort of activities does the TNAI undertake to get its voice heard? "A solution to our problems can be found only by using

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West Bengal: March 8th was observed as a blood donation day in the State and 16 districts organised blood donation camps. A news bulletin was begun on the day to enable various districts to exchange news and views.

Assam: Despite the turmoil in the State, efforts were made at organising a discussion on women's issues, which turned out quite

avenues of negotiation and persuasion and by reaching agreements."

Do you not adopt any other forms of agitation, say demonstration or strike?

"No, we are not in favour of strike but then a strike may become essential. But if nurses do go on strike a skeleton staff should continue to work, in the interest of the patients."

What ways does the TNAI suggest for improving conditions?

"The only way things can improve and change is through the involvement of nurses in decision-making and planning. They must be represented on the directorate of health services, of the ministry. But along with that society's attitude towards nurses must change, people must help us fight this battle."

Under these conditions it is little wonder thousands of trained nurses are turning elsewhere, going abroad, forced to give elsewhere the care they would otherwise willingly give at home. Most do not enjoy the prospect of being in a foreign land away from home and family, but the contrasts are too great. In Saudi Arabia, for example, nurses can draw a monthly salary of Rs. 15,000, and moreover, they are there highly respected. "At home", as Mrs. Nagpal points out, "nurses are treated almost as untouchables, and a sort of social stigma attaches to her as soon as she becomes a nurse. Why?"

successfully and a memorandum was sent to the State Government.

Gujarat: March 8 was observed in Ahmedabad and Bhavnagar, with street corner meetings for the first time organised by the Mahila Samiti.

In all the States efforts were made to hold joint meetings with other organisations and forge unity in the struggle for women's rights.

Bring Women Workers into Working Class Movement

THE Fifth Conference of the CITU, held at Kanpur, was particularly significant for the attention it paid to the question of working women, the tasks of taking up their problems, and bringing them into the general trade union movement. In their speeches, both the General Secretary P. Ramamurti and the President B.T. Ranadive, drew pointed attention to the deviations in the trade union movement in this regard.

B.T. Ranadive, in his Presidential address stressed that these deviations reflected a feudal outlook in the movement which sought to divorce the struggle of women workers from the mainstream of class struggles.

"Women workers constitute an important part of the working class," said BTR, "and all efforts must be made to unite men and women workers in common struggle." He warned: "If conscious efforts are not made in this direction, reactionary forces will snatch the opportunity to pit women against men, in order to divide and break the unity of the class and the movement."

"The slogan 'Workers of the World Unite'," he said, "was not meant to be a slogan only for men workers leaving behind the other half of the working class and perpetuating a feudal tradition. The CITU is against this and must struggle against it."

"CITU unions must realise that the trade union movement is not the preserve of men alone. To divorce working women's struggles from class struggle is a deviation — a feudal outlook."

Stressing the urgency of this need he suggested that CITU State Committees and units in the enterprises set up coordination committees of women workers, as has been done in some places with very positive results.

"These Coordination Committees, he

pointed out, have no membership. They are meant primarily to encourage women workers to become active in their unions, to draw the attention of the leadership to the particular problems of the working women, over and above the common, general problems. There should be no confusion on this. Problems like retrenchment of women workers", he

Reply to Debate

ON the question of the working of the Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, P. Ramamurti emphasised that it is only a coordination committee trying to identify the problems of working women and co-ordinating their struggles. Working women have got specific problems apart from the problems of women as such. Therefore, the Coordination Committee of Working Women should not be confused with or counterposed to women's organisations in general. The Coordination Committee has no membership. The CITU unions should actively support the working women in their struggle on their specific problems. They should also guide and help their struggles. The CITU unions must identify themselves with their struggles and take them as struggles of their unions. In this way working women should be organised first on their specific problems as working women, should be drawn to take a more and more active part in the unions of their professions or undertakings. They must be quickly enabled to become the leaders of the trade union movement itself. If all this is not kept in mind, there is a danger of the working women's movement developing into a feminist movement and pitting it against men. This would be a danger to the trade union movement.

continued, "cannot be taken up by women's organisations alone. These are trade union issues and it is essential to encourage the involvement of women workers in the trade union movement, and ensure their promotion to responsible positions."

BTR expressed his regret at the fact that even today men dominate the leading posts in trade unions. "This must change", he emphasised.

Therefore the question is how to draw women workers into the trade union movement and raise demands specifically related to their problems, which have been neglected so far.

"In the middle class unions the leadership is often reformist, therefore they are not conscious of the role of women, and our comrades in the Coordination Committees must inspire the women to work through their unions."

"So Comrades", BTR reiterated, "if we are really serious in our desire to work for the emancipation of women and the emancipation of the working class, we must bring women workers into the mainstream of the working class movement, we must learn how to draw women workers into the movement, on their specific questions, which we have neglected so far."

Delegates to Conference

A welcome feature of the CITU conference, was the participation of militant women from over 12 states of India. These delegates represented a variety of industries and sectors.

Of the 57 women delegates, 16 were from West Bengal, 12 from Kerala, five from Andhra Pradesh, four from Maharashtra; three from Delhi; three from Karnataka, three from Tamil Nadu; two from Orissa, two from Punjab, two from Uttar Pradesh; one from Bihar, one from Goa, one from Gujarat, one from Haryana, one from Madhya Pradesh.

Some of these delegates are veteran leaders of the working class movement.

Jogabai, a contract labourer and leader from Bhilai, has withstood repression in the form of lathicharges, been jailed, has led dharnas and sat on hunger strike while demanding that casual workers be given permanent jobs.

Shantibai from Maharashtra, is a leader who has been at the helm of the textile strike in Bombay, continuing for over a year. She has been dragged to jail, but has kept the Red Flag flying.

Laxmamma is a textile leader from Tamil Nadu, and a firm supporter of the CITU since its inception.

M. Jaymani is a member of a leather factory union committee in Madras.

P. Gangamma is a leader in a jute mill in Hawarha and has always been at the head of jute workers' struggles launched in West Bengal, in the fight for higher wages, against closure of mills, in defence of the Left Front, and for democratic rights.

Lalita, Radha, and Chandrika work in the coir industry in Kerala and have fought against the mechanisation of the industry which has led to the retrenchment of women workers.

Meenakshi and Cecelia are beedi workers in Karnataka, in the forefront of the struggles in Mangalore and Tamkur.

Mary and Prema, come from the cardamom plantations of Kerala. They have faced severe attacks and molestation by Congress goondas. (See p. 3) Mary while speaking on the resolution on 'Atrocities against Women', narrated their experiences and the dastardly episodes of their molestation.

Mukta Das belongs to the mines of Orissa, in an Adivasi belt. The mineworkers rose in revolt when their leader Ajay Raut was attacked by the management. The Adivasi women stood firm during the struggle and are now solid supporters of the Red Flag.

Kalyani Das, also from Orissa, works in the Rourkela steel plant.

(Contd. on page 15)

Activities of AIDWA

THE AIDWA is carrying on its effort to reach out to women in every nook and corner of the country. While this is not an easy task, it is encouraging to note each step forward in this direction. At Raigarh, in *Madhya Pradesh*, two branches of the AIDWA were formed on February 15 and 16 this year. Over 300 women attended the meeting, most of them belonging to the working class. A meeting was also organised in Vilaspur and was attended by about 200 women.

The AIDWA in *Tamil Nadu*, a State which has been reeling under an acute shortage of water, price-rise and power shortage, has taken up these issues which are State-wide problems today. AIDWA members carried out a signature campaign on these problems and went from door to door in various areas all over the State, culminating in a rally outside the Assembly on March 15, in which over 3000 women participated.

A deputation met the Chief Minister and placed the demands including those relating to child labour, maternity and child care facilities, in match factories in particular. Earlier, in December last year a seminar had been organised on the question of Women and Social Justice, addressed by Krishna Iyer. (see p. 16).

As part of its work the AIDWA has sought to raise the consciousness of its members by educating its cadre on the economic and social context in which their problems arise. For this purpose the Mahila Sabha in *Andhra Pradesh* organised a school at Ongole in February attended by 146 women, representing wide strata of women from various industries and professions. Among those who attended were students, lawyers, agricultural workers, industrial workers, doctors and office employees. Rs. 15,000 was collected earlier to meet the expenses of the 12-day school. On the last day a procession was organised through the town followed by a meeting. Thousands of men and women gathered to hear Hanumantha Rao, Vimal Ranadive, Ahilya Ragnekar and other leaders.

The school gave a big impetus to the Assembly election campaign in March, for which about 1500 women could be mobilised.

West Bengal, On April 30 a seminar was organised to mark the Karl Marx, Death Centenary. Kanak Mukherjee spoke on Marxism and Women's Emancipation.

Despite the concerted attack on the democratic and particularly Left forces in *Assam* and the serious disturbances in the State before and after the elections, the AIDWA was able to organise conferences in five districts. The Dibrugarh district committee submitted a memorandum to the Government protesting against the lack of law and order in the State.

In *Kerala* several active members of the AIDWA took part in the bye-election campaign in Nemom in Trivandrum district in March. Members in all districts also organised dharnas to protest against the rise in electricity charges and bus fares, and against the failure of the Government to insure the supply of essential commodities. On March 2 a coordination committee was formed to organise picketing at the Secretariat in Trivandrum in protest against the Government's food policy. Dharnas and picketing were also organised in four districts demanding an improvement in the supplies for the cashew, coir and handloom industries, as well as demanding protection of the interests of the workers.

Gujarat: The Mahila Samiti organised education camps in two villages for ten days, where the problems of women in general, as well as the specific problems of village women were discussed, along with the various legislation pertaining to women. In one shibir, about 30 women attended, while by evening the attendance swelled to a hundred.

Bihar: The Singbhum Committee of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti is now penetrating among agricultural and tribal women by taking up the problems of water, wages, schools, and so on. The women here receive only two measures of grain and Rs. 2 daily as

(Contd. on page 17)

(Contd. from page 13)

Mohini comes from Bombay where she works under the Red Flag union in a garment factory.

Dipali Ghosh represents the Durgapur Steel Plant while Anjali and Gargi represent Phillips workers in Calcutta.

Bina Sen is a whole timer. She works in the Hotel and Restaurants Union in West Bengal, and is one of the few women leaders in this particular sector.

Shibani Sengupta works in a transport union and has been a militant leader of the union for a long time.

Krishna Sengupta, and Mala Saha, represented the Calcutta Corporation and the cotton mills respectively.

Neelima, Sandhya Sarkar and A Roy-choudhari represented the Anganwadi Women's Union which has been formed only recently. There were also a few delegates from the

Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti.

Nisha Roy came as a delegate from the West Bengal State Electricity Board Union.

N.M. Rajamma from Karnataka represented the BHEL and has been a fighter in several struggles launched in the public sector.

Sulochana was a delegate from Delhi. She was victimised after a struggle against the transfer of an electronics firm. She now works as a whole-timer for the Delhi CITU.

The CITU is proud of these and the other women delegates who attended the Fifth Conference. It was noted that this time the number of women delegates had increased in comparison to the last conference. The women component of delegations at the next conference should improve even further if the resolutions regarding involvement of women in the mainstream of trade union activity is implemented with sincerity and determination.

Resolution on Working Women

THIS 5th Conference of CITU held at Kanpur on April 13-17, 1983 notes with serious concern the rapidly deteriorating conditions of women in the sphere of employment and the discrimination meted out to them. The colossal nature of women's unemployment can be gauged from the latest available figures of women registered in the Employment Exchanges which were 23.45 lakhs at the end of December, 1980, recording an increase of over four lakhs from the previous year. Discrimination in wages with men continues even after the enactment of the Equal Remuneration Act in almost all the industries, offices and establishments. Blatant discrimination also continues in training facilities for women, who are given training in garments and tailoring only.

Apart from this, the employers make the women workers particular targets of retrenchment for mechanisation and automation. Recently, the Chirala Tobacco Factory of ITC has thrown out 4000 women workers due to the introduction of machinery. The Conference denounces the Government's sham talk of self-employment which is nothing but a crude joke on the tens of thousands facing starvation and death. Over and above this, the atrocities on women are on the increase and the government machinery has totally laid

bare its inability to check the crimes on women. The Conference demands of the Government to take immediate measures to open employment avenues for the women, end all discrimination against them and strictly implement the principle of equal wages for equal work for the women workers. The Conference also demands associating Working Women's Coordination Committees, including Women's Sub-Committees in trade unions, in the committees for enforcement of labour laws and for formulating new policies at all levels.

While hailing the valiant struggles waged by the working women, the Conference at the same time warns the State Committees, the CITU unions and the trade union movement as a whole, that if the women's problems and demands are not taken up by the trade union movement, the reactionary circles, the Government and the foreign agencies who are already at work, will utilise the situation to pit the women against the men and disrupt the united movement of the trade unions. The Conference therefore calls upon the State Committees and the CITU unions to form coordination committees of working women under their guidance, ensure promotion of women in trade union positions and bring them in step with the working class movement in the country.

Women's Emancipation—A Common Cause

At a meeting organised by the Democratic Women's Association of Madras on December 12, 1982, V.R. Krishna Iyer, retired Judge of the Supreme Court was invited to deliver an address. We think that readers of The Voice of the Working Woman will be interested to also hear what he had to say, and we here giving some extracts. We regret that lack of space prevented us from publishing the speech in our last issue.

MEN must be committed to women's liberation. It is not a woman's cause but a human cause.

As the Minister for Law in the E.M.S. Namboodiripad Ministry of Kerala 1957-59, I sought the permission of the Government to introduce a Bill against dowry. Unlike the Central Government Bill which has no teeth, our Bill was meant to be very effective. The Bill could not only bark, but also bite. There was still opposition to this Bill from the Catholic Church, the Muslim League and the Hindu feudal interests. They said religion was in danger. The Hindu fanatics quoted Manu and said women should never be free. We had to be satisfied with circulating the Bill for gathering public opinion. The Bill lapsed when the Government was dismissed, in 1959.

Teethless legislations are misleading for what we have then is legislative hypocrisy by which women can be duped or doped. The dowry and other problems are not confined to one part of India alone. Hence the tearful story of Indian women must be treated as a challenge....

Socialism is the only answer for women's liberation. Although the Indian Constitution talks of Socialism we have an oppressive masculine culture. Law has become the opium for women. The law enforcement machinery is biased. Policemen never investigate anything properly. Almost all judges are men and their interpretations of evidence and judgement is unconsciously biased....

Main Enemy

The first requirement is to identify the main enemy of women's liberation. Feudalism

is the real enemy. Religious opposition is feudalism. You must revolt against it. We also have what is called judicial feudalism. When the young girl, Mathura, was raped the Supreme Court in its wisdom acquitted the police. Women's organisations raised their voice and filed a Review Petition demanding that the case be re-heard. This was rejected....

The Constitution speaks of non-discrimination. But what is the reality? For example Muthamma, and IFS officer, alleged discrimination against her by the Government. There is patent discrimination in the foreign service. If a woman in the foreign service gets married she has to resign the job, whereas if a man in the foreign service gets married and keeps half a dozen concubines, he can happily continue in service....

The Indian Constitution talks of equality. It is only a paper declaration, not a fact of life. Only by rousing the awareness of people can legislation become meaningful. Mobilise public opinion and activate men and women....

What we need is a broad blanket ban on all the discriminations. Another incidence of judicial discrimination is the famous case of Dr. Jain in Delhi: Dr. Jain killed his wife hiring mercenaries. The court ordered life imprisonment to Dr. Jain whereas the mercenaries who were hired, were sentenced to death. After a number of years, the Central Government in its mercy let off the doctor free....

Eliminate Bias

Just because we have a woman Prime Minister, this does not mean that women enjoy a high status. "A swallow never makes a summer". What we need is a counter culture on behalf of women. This is a men's cause as much as women's. Men should form the vanguard of the movement to end the oppressive male bias in the country's heritage. What we need is women's power, Seetha power, not Rama power. Rama asked Seetha to walk into the fire to prove her chastity. Seetha could have also asked the same to Rama....

A new social order is necessary. In asking for this, we only ask for what our Constitution

Did You Know

(From page fourteen)

THAT according to the Minister of State for Home, Mr. N.B. Laskar, the maximum number of rape cases occurred in M.P. and U.P. There were 1,017 and 847 cases of rape in 1981 in M.P. and U.P. respectively. During 1982 the number of such cases in U.P. was 773. The total number of rape cases in all the States and Union territories was 4,919, and 4,492 during 1981 and 1982 respectively. The volume of crime per 100,000 population during 1981 was 0.72.

April 7, 1983.

THAT the Law Ministry has accepted the Social Welfare Department's proposal to institute "family courts" in the country and legislation is being drafted in consultation with various groups and institutions associated with social welfare. Mr. V.P. Marwah, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare told newsmen that proceedings in these courts would be "in camera" and the emphasis would be on counselling and conciliation rather than on punishment.

February 18, 1983.

THAT the Government has decided to ban from June the sale of fixed combination of oestrogen and progesterone, the drug being used for pregnancy tests, according to the Deputy Health Minister, Kumud Joshi.

January 24, 1983.

THAT delay in serving food to her husband cost a 20-year-old city house-wife of Pune her life. Mrs. Sundarbai said in her dying declaration that incensed over the delay in serving food on April 7, her husband set her on fire after emptying a time of kerosene on her.

She died of burns at the Sasson General Hospital. Her husband has been arrested. She will never be late again.

April 21, 1983.

their wage. Since the Samiti began its work, the membership has risen to 140.

The Mahila Samiti is also paying attention to the problems of working women in Jamshedpur. The State Conference of the Bihar Samiti is planned for the month of June.

Punjab: The Punjab JMS is working in both the urban and rural areas. In towns dharnas have been held against the new tax on busfares. A convention of agricultural workers was held drawing in a large number of women, and in the membership drive in Sangrur district, 157 villages have been covered. In addition the Samiti collected and despatched grain to Bengal for relief of the drought-stricken people.

Karnataka: A joint convention of youth and women was held in S. Canara on the problems of women. In Tumkur district, signatures were collected against the religious injunction, issued by the heads of the Muslim community forbidding Muslim women going to the cinema.

Delhi: Three successful demonstrations against harassment of women for more dowry were held, the women rescued, and the dowry returned. The Legal Aid Committee has been set up to assist women and a number of cases have been referred to the Committee for advice and action. The Samiti organised joint demonstrations with the SFI against the harassment and molestation of girl students and women in buses, etc., during the Holi festival. The JMS has begun a political class for selected women activists.

Centre's activities

Two informative notes, one on 'Atrocities against Women', and the other on 'Women and Peace' were circulated to all branches of the AIDWA. The Working Committee met in Delhi on April 9-10 under the chairmanship of Manju Gupta to review the work and formulate the programme for the coming months. Susheela Gopalan reported on the activities of the AIDWA.

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Inequality All The Way

WOMEN the world over find themselves less qualified than men, discriminated against in terms of job opportunities and wages, greatly affected by automation, with thousands facing retrenchment.

The share of women in the total number of wage or salary earners in Latin America is 20 per cent, in Africa and Oceania it is about 30 per cent, in Europe and North America about 35 per cent. In Socialist countries this figure varies from 35 per cent in Cuba to 51 per cent in the Soviet Union.

Machines Increase, Output Declines

As a result of automation, by 1985, in France alone, over 300 thousand jobs held by women will be done away with. Already women comprise the majority of unemployed, with those under 25 the most hard-hit. According to ILO statistics, from May 1975 to May 1976, seven million women lost their jobs in West European countries, the U.S., Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The problem is particularly acute in Italy where from 1961 to 1977, the percentage of women workers dropped from 24.9 to 19.6 per cent.

In May 1977, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had 51 per cent of women unemployed. France 52.8 per cent, Denmark 43.2 per cent and Belgium 60.2 per cent of the total number of jobless.

Official statistics however do not take into account the underemployed, those who have been sent to retraining schools and may not be reemployed and those who have despaired of finding work.

In developing countries the work done by women is arduous, unskilled and least paid. Their share of participation in non-agricultural fields fluctuates from 2 to 15 per cent. A majority of women exposed to excessive exploitation work as house or agricultural servants.

In Socialist countries, a steady demand for labour is ensured. Female labour is employed more widely with scientific and technical progress, which also results in the advancement of their skills. In the USSR, women constitute 52 per cent of all specialists with higher education and 63 per cent of specialists with secondary specialised education. In Bulgaria, 51 per cent of all specialists with higher or secondary education are women, while in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) the number is 40 per cent.

Reference : Documents of the 8th International Trade Conference of Transport Women Workers.

(From page 17)

Future Programme

1. To observe International Children's Day on June 1, 1983.
2. To observe the National Integration Campaign Week from June 3 to June 10.
3. To observe June 12 as Organisation Day in memory of the late Vice-President of the AIDWA, Pankaj Acharya's first death anniversary.
4. To hold joint campaigns on price-rise and atrocities against women, with other women's organisations.
5. To observe the Marx Death Centenary by organising seminars and meetings.

Office bearers of the AIDWA are meanwhile working on a Note on the different legislation concerning women, already in operation or for consideration by Parliament. This will be sent to the States for discussion and comment.

Human Walls Against Nuclear Bases

EASTER Peace marches have become almost a part of British tradition, but this year the marches were even bigger in West Germany, where a resounding 750,000 came out in all the major cities. In the United States, the number of arrests in peace demonstrations ran into hundreds.

Easter weekend had its particular highlight this year when 80,000 linked hands along 20 kms. of road between Greenham Common (nuclear) Base, Burghfield nuclear weapons factory and Aldermaston Atomic Research Station. Initial Easter weekend marches of 20 years ago started out from this research station to walk to London, camping out along the way, and are still remembered as the Aldermaston Marches.

Hundreds blocked the Burghfield factory, while at Greenham Common 90 scaled the fences into the base. The 37 arrested will no doubt face court injunctions, much as their predecessors in the January 1 action to Reclaim the Base.

Women's Action, New Feature

The strength and determination of the women's peace groups and peace camps at Greenham and other US bases has been another particularly new feature of the British peace movement. As one of the Greenham women arrested in January declared in court last month: "I don't want to see Cruise missiles in this country. I don't want to see the country devastated. I don't want to see burning flesh and mutilated bodies."

The Greenham women's action has been taken up elsewhere. Falslane Base outside Glasgow, Scotland, has had its peace camp for about six months now, and thousands of women congregated there on March 8, Inter-

national Women's Day. May 24 has now been declared as International Women's Day for Disarmament, and actions are planned around it.

The Greater London Council, along with over 100 local councils, and all of those in Wales, have declared their areas Nuclear Free Zones; and opinion polls show 68 per cent of the electorate to be against the Cruise missiles.

U.S. Peace Marchers

Also in Britain now is a group of 20 U.S. peace marchers. From several religious denominations, they started walking some eight to nine months ago from Bangor, Washington State, USA, to heighten people's awareness of the dangers of nuclear war. In March they walked through Ireland and Scotland; and they are now in England, on their way through Europe to Jerusalem for Christmas. They walk 20-30 kms. a day, talking to people in local towns, sending two or three ahead to set up meetings. One of the group happens to be the Roman Catholic priest who blessed the pilot setting out to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima in World War II (neither at the time knew the exact nature of the mission) and who has since become a pacifist.

MONEY FOR ARMAMENTS WHILE CHILDREN STARVE

About 40,000 children are in danger of dying on account of severe drought conditions in Panama's Viraguas province. At least 12,000 rural families will be without food for the next five months.

The Times of India, May 14

Commander Ana Maria

THE death of Ana Maria is undoubtedly a priceless loss to our people, but at the same time with their tremendous heroism and determination to struggle our people will turn this blow into a defeat for imperialism and its puppets." These were the words of Andres Martinez, speaking on behalf of the FMLN-FDR, the Movement for National Liberation and the Democratic Revolutionary Front, to hundreds of Havana residents, Salvadoran students and representatives of national liberation movements and progressive governments who had turned out en masse to denounce the murder of the patriot Melida Anaya Montes.

For the previous 24 hours an endless flow of men, women and children had gone to the FMLN office in Havana to sign the book of condolences in honor of a woman who had displayed extraordinary heroism in the struggle for the freedom of her people.

Anaya Montes was a teacher in San Salvador, a worker and then a professor at the School of Sciences and Humanities of the Autonomous University in San Salvador. She was a founder of the June 21 National Association of Salvadoran Educators, an organisation noted for its opposition to the military dictatorship in El Salvador.

She was a member of the leading body of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, a united mass front which held huge demonstrations and challenged several tyrannical regimes. She was subjected to persecution, ill treatment and arrest, and finally went underground using the name of Ana Maria. She continued to defend the most elementary rights of her people with absolute loyalty to revolutionary ideals, regardless of sacrifices or dangers.

Commander Ana Maria was killed by assassins whilst on one of her trips to Managua, capital of Nicaragua. The assassins wore slippers to avoid making a noise, special slippers which make even less noise than the normal kind. They knew the room Commander Ana Maria slept in, that she did not lock the door. They had approached the place and taken her by surprise while she slept. They threw a sheet over her face, grabbed her right arm and twisted it until it broke, and then started stabbing her.

Gagged and with a sheet over her face, they stabbed her 82 times until the final fatal

wound that was in the left side of the neck. Her colleague and comrade-in-arms, Commander Borge said in the meeting held to condole her death, that this had been done due to awareness of the fact that the autopsy would indicate the cause of death, and this was something only to be grasped by trained people. The stab wounds were not intended to kill and the razor wound in the neck was what had caused her death. The attempt was to create confusion, to pretend this was not a political murder.

That is why she was gagged, her arm twisted to prevent resistance, first stabbed all over her body, then finally the death wound.

Her death will not go unavenged. This and the thousands of other killings in El Salvador, are the acts of desperation of the reactionary Salvadoran dictatorship backed by American imperialism, caused by the irresistible advance of the revolutionary liberation movement in that heroic country.

PAKISTAN

Flogging Continues

FLOGGINGS were carried out on two women on Wednesday, April 20, in the city of Multan. The authorities said the women, both married and convicted of adultery, were flogged after the Shariat Court rejected their appeals for mercy.

One of the women, identified only as Azizan, aged 32, nearly fainted as she underwent 20 lashes with a single cane below the waist before a doctor called a halt. She is to get more lashes later. The other woman, 20-year-old Sakina was awarded five lashes. Both women, convicted in 1981, are serving three years' hard labour at Multan's Central Town Jail, which accommodates 109 women prisoners.

This was the first time that women have been flogged in the Punjab province and only a handful of women are known to have been whipped since President Zia decreed the punishment in 1979. Meanwhile, nearly 100 women, arrested for prostitution in a pre-dawn swoop on April 21 are to be tried in Islamic courts and face the prospect of being flogged and serving full length jail terms, the police said.

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has already provided. Anyone who opposes this will really be unconstitutional....

Another fiction is statistics. According to official statistics there were no dowry deaths in Tamil Nadu. Our innocent Chief Minister believes this. Dowry harassment exists in Tamil Nadu as much as anywhere else in India. South Indian women are as oppressed as the north Indian. They are sisters in misery.....

The conditions of women inside prison also are terrible. It used to be said that the women in the Andamans are like a fast circulating currency. Women in Indian prisons are also in a similar condition....

No Political will

The laws have failed because of the lack of political will and their enactment has largely remained a formality... We also need legislation with a broad sweep and clearly worded. When a woman dies within 10 years of marriage, and even when it is a suicide because of harassment in the family, the husband must be held guilty of homicide. Any money taken from a girl directly or indirectly within a few years of marriage must be treated as dowry. Action must be taken whenever a man is found guilty of not obeying the legislation.

Women Police

In all investigations women must be associated. As a start, women should be appointed in large numbers in the executive and the judiciary at all levels. At least one third of the posts in the Police Force should be filled by women. Women must be given training in fire-arms. Men police should work under women police; women must not be isolated. In all cases of murder of a woman, the investigation should be carried out by women police officers. There should also be larger representation for women in the legislatures, if necessary, through reservation....

In Socialist countries 50 per cent of women are in high positions. In China young girls walk along the road even at midnight. The instances of offences against women in Socialist countries are very few. There is a new reverence for womanhood in China.

In India also there must be more women in power. There could be an 'ombudswoman' who would constantly watch the enforcement of the laws to protect the rights of women. Culture must develop. In West Bengal there is a great respect for women....

We are now at the end of 1982. Before the New Year starts let us take a firm pledge to fight for women's liberation. Though India is free, Indians are not free. So long as Indian Women are not free, India can never be said to be free.

Appeal to Non-Aligned Movement

MORE than eight National Women's organisations and groups including the AIDWA and All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, submitted an Appeal to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Chairman of the Non-Aligned Conference, at the time of the Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi in March, 1983. We give below some extracts from the appeal.

"The situation of women in many developing countries still continues to be grave, as observed from studies undertaken in various regions. Women are the major producers of food in most of these countries, but they are also the most starved. Society imposes on them the responsibility for the education and rearing of children, but they constitute the largest group of people deprived of all access to even basic literacy. As mothers, they are responsible physically and culturally for the health of the future generation, yet they are again the largest group deprived of access to even primary health care and continue to be victims of high mortality. In spite of repeated decisions taken by the national

governments, the majority of women in the developing countries still do not have independent access to the means of production, skilled training and economic independence....

"In solidarity with women struggling for their rights throughout the world, we appeal to the Seventh Conference of Non-Aligned Heads of State/Governments to take immediate steps to implement the decisions that they have taken and have helped to introduce into the World Plan of Action for the second half of the International Women's Decade....

"We also appeal to them to check the violations of women's rights that continue to take place in many of our countries and to incorporate review of progress on these decisions on the agenda of future conferences. The Non-Aligned Movement has always recognised that the problems of women's inequality — the oldest inequality in the world — cannot be solved by women alone, but has to be part of the entire complex of economic, political and social development of humanity and of each country.

Where Women Are Free And Equal

A lively and well-attended meeting of more than a 100 delegates and volunteers was held on April 16 at Bangbhavan Hall, to give a reception to the two Soviet women attending as fraternal delegates the Fifth CITU Conference at Kanpur. — Ludmilla Zemlyanikova, Secretary, All Union Central Council of Trade Unions USSR, and Tanya Garbatenko of the International Department, AUCCTU.

Susheela Gopalan, Vice-President of CITU welcomed them on behalf of the women delegates, offering them rose-garlands.

In her address to the women, Ludmilla Zemlyanikova, talking of the conditions of women in the USSR pointed out that soon after the Soviet Socialist Government was formed, it decreed that all men and women were equal. This was translated into action in Article 35 of the USSR Constitution which gives women equal rights with men in every sphere of political and economic life. In the course of implementation of these decisions over the last 65 years — no easy task because the illiteracy and backwardness of the women after centuries of oppression and suppression, as well as the backward, feudal outlook and prejudice of the men, had to be overcome — women have come increasingly to hold equal positions with men.

Equal Opportunities

Today forty per cent of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet, (Parliament) are women. Women make up 51 per cent of the employment in all sectors of the economy — educational, cultural, technological, scientific. Fortynine per cent of the workforce in agriculture are women, but this does not refer to tillers of land only but to farm experts, technologists, etc.

For every boy and girl there are equal opportunities in education, and compulsory free education from primary level to degree level obtains everywhere. The young are given

every encouragement for higher studies. With this sort of educational system, it has been possible to eliminate illiteracy completely in the Soviet Union. Side by side the State takes every care for the health of every citizen.

Special privileges are given to women to enable them to be good mothers and professionals. These privileges start from childhood and in education. Every woman gets a maternity benefit of 100 rubles, full pay for 112 days, and an extra benefit with the birth of every child. In certain cases she is given one year's leave, without any loss in her seniority, allowance for the whole period of her leave, and she can go back to her job after this leave is over. There are nurseries, kindergartens and creches to look after the children of working women, arranged at places close to the homes of their mothers.

To help the working woman there are laundries, canteens, etc., for them. The arrangement of laundries is very necessary for working women because the people in that country have to wear four types of dresses according to the changing seasons with their extremes of heat and cold. The men help the women in all household activities.

The retirement age for working women is 55 years. In such industries where the work is more strenuous, the women retire at an earlier age. Full pension is assured by the State, through the trade unions which take particular interest in working women's problems. In every industry there will be a trade union Women's Commission to look after the working conditions of every woman.

The trade unions also run holiday homes and sanatoria for working men and women where they can spend their holidays at very low cost. Children are sent to special holiday resorts and camps at the expense of the State and the trade unions.

Thus there is every encouragement for a

*The Soviet Delegates
Ludmilla Zemlyanikova,
and
Tanya Garbatenko
addressing the 5th CITU
Conference at Kanpur, 1983*



women to be an active member of the society, a good worker, a good wife and a good mother too. Soviet women having been the worst sufferers of the Second World War know the consequences of war much better. So they are ardent defenders of peace and appeal to all women to raise their voices unitedly against the danger of war.

Marriage & Divorce

A few questions were asked to the Soviet delegates by the women present. One question was why the percentage of divorce has increased in the Soviet Union and what is the machinery to settle disagreements between husband and wife.

Ludmilla agreed that the incidence of divorce has gone up recently and the Soviet system wants to minimise this. They have consultative committees where the couples are invited, and attempts are made as far as possible to unite them amicably. The basis of marriage in the Soviet Union is of course love and the system of arranged marriages no longer exists.

A second question related to how the working women manage the house, the responsibility of children and work, altogether. To this she replied, that at present it becomes a little difficult for women. The main responsi-

bility still falls on women and not all husbands always help them, though many do and understand. The State offers many facilities. For example children are kept in the nurseries or kindergartens and the mother brings them along with her in the evening. But I must say that male selfishness still exists in the Soviet Union and women are fighting against it.

To another question whether there are joint family units in the Soviet Union, she replied there was no joint family. The unit consists usually of three or four persons, in general.

After a few other questions and answers, the Soviet delegates were presented with gifts by Vimala Ranadive on behalf of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women. Amidst slogans of hailing the unity of Indian and Soviet women, the meeting ended.

On Working Women

"The Conference and all speakers criticised themselves for neglecting the working women and showing indifference to their problems. It was noted that this negligence was born out of an outlook which refused to consider women workers as a part of the working class. This was part of the feudal outlook common in India and from which workers and trade union leaders were not free."

From the CITU May Day Manifesto 1983

The First Convention of P and T Women Workers held at Udaipur on April 11, 1983



P & T LADY WORKERS

AND

P & T EMPLOYEES WIVES CONVENTION

UDAIPUR

11-4-1983

