



THE WORKING CLASS

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Right to Work And Unemployment Problem

B. T. Ranadive

The National Federations and Confederations of Workers and Employees who have called the convention on Right to Work at Durgapur deserve congratulations and the Steel Workers Federation of India deserves appreciation for taking initiative in this regard.

During the last four decades though right to work is included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution the unemployment problem has aggravated and it has now reached a colossal proportion. During these four decades neither the Congress Govt. nor the short-lived Janata Govt. did anything to stop or curtail this growth of unemployment except sometimes saying something about employment oriented schemes and plans. But the laws of the capitalist path could not be checked and unemployment continued to penetrate all walks of life.

The trade union movement of our country has also neglected this problem mainly looking at it only as a question of industrial unemployment and that too confined to retrenched workers. This neglect has weakened the struggle for employment and the right to work. In these circumstances one must appreciate the initiative taken by the Steel Workers Federation to organise this Convention.

Not Just Job Security

The right to work is not just security of jobs, it is the most important fundamental right among all democratic rights. The other rights like freedom of speech and organisation, right to vote and form government of people's choice precious in themselves, become formal rights in the absence of right to work. These rights in themselves do not end the dependence of the workers and the common man's livelihood on the sweet will of the employers, those who own the means of production like factories, mines, railways and land. The toiling man is really free and suffers from no inferior status when the state recognises his right to work, that he need have no fear of unemployment, that no employer can play with his livelihood and job.

How can this right be ensured? Only by ensuring equality of all members of society, the working class and other toiling sections in relation to the means of production, i.e., factories, etc. This is ensured by removing all means of production from the ownership and control of private owners, of a handful of capitalists and monopolists and putting them under social ownership. To effect this it is necessary for the masses to have political power, a govt. of the toiling people led by the working class.

Capitalism & Right to Work Cannot Go Together

It is therefore not accidental that only the Constitutions of socialist Countries assure the right to work as a fundamental right. The Constitutions of capitalist countries even the richest among them like the USA do not sanction this right to the working class or the working people. Because in these countries the means of production are owned by the private capitalists and the working class has no choice but to seek employment in their factories. The capitalists are the sole masters and they hire and fire the workers according to the needs of their profit making. Workers' livelihood and jobs become a plaything for their hunt for profits. Capitalism and right to work cannot go together.

But in socialist countries private capitalists and employers do not exist; the factories, mines, railways and land are no longer under the monopolist possession of private employers. They are owned by the entire society and the objective is to bring prosperity to all. The socialist society sees that economic planning is done in such a way that all are assured of their jobs. This shows the superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist system. It is necessary to remember this because there is now persistent propaganda in our country and elsewhere that socialism has failed and capitalism has shown its superiority over socialism.

While in the socialist countries in all these years there has been no unemployment, no economic crisis, what has been the record of these capitalist

countries? Today in these countries more than 30 millions are unemployed and the rate of unemployment rises higher with every technological advance. In the USA alone in 1985 the unemployed were 83 lakhs, in Japan 15 lakhs, in France 23 lakhs, in Germany (FRG) 23 lakhs, in Italy 24 lakhs and in the UK 32 lakhs. Between 1979 and 1985 the number of unemployed has more than doubled in the UK, in Germany it has nearly trebled and in the USA it has increased nearly 25 per cent.

Unemployment Must Increase In Capitalism

Why is this so? It is the law of the capitalist society that unemployment must increase, that there must be an industrial reserved army at the disposal of the capitalists to keep down the wages of workers when the need for more labour arises. What is this law of capitalist society? Private capitalists carry on production not for social benefit but to earn and increase their profits. They compete with each other to capture the market by introducing new machinery and lowering the cost of production. Lowering the cost of production means using less number of workers with more effective machinery. In the competition all capitalists try to surpass their rivals to economise labour, use less labour and these lead to increased unemployment. The capitalist society cannot exist without this competition among private owners to decrease the number of workers at work. India is not fully a developed capitalist country. It has recently entered upon the path of capitalist development, but in India also so far as modern industries are concerned the law of capitalist accumulation leading to increased unemployment along with the growth of capitalist industry applies. This we already see in the cities and industrial towns. Statistics reveal that there is industrial growth sometime at 8 to 9 per cent while the number of unemployed increases.

With each successive plan the number of unemployed has increased.

Registered Urban Unemployment In India

At the end of the First Five Year Plan — 53 lakhs
 At the end of the Second Five Year Plan — 71 lakhs
 At the end of the Third Five Year Plan — 96 lakhs
 At the end of Fourth Five Year Plan — 1 Cr. 71lks
 At the end of Fifth Five Year Plan — 2 Cr. 21lks
 At the end of Sixth Five Year Plan — 2 Cr. 49 lks
 As on 30.6.89 — 3 Cr. 10lks

(Source : 1. Lok Sabha reply dated 4th Sept. 1989.

2. Indian Labour Journal October, 1989.

3. Ministry of Labour D.G.E.T.S.-1302517/
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The competition of big industries with the smaller ones ruins the latter and releases thousands of workers, only a part of which is absorbed in big or

new industries. Competition among the big ones for more profits leads to the introduction of new technology and machinery, which while absorbing enormous amount of capital, employs less number of workers. These are known as capital intensive industries which require a huge amount of capital but require only a small number of workers to run them.

Capitalist Anarchy in Production

Then there is a capitalist anarchy in production. To earn profits several capitalists start new industries but soon find that they are producing more than the demand of the market. They are unable to sell their products at profitable rates, close down their factories or declare lockouts throwing thousands of workers on the streets. Besides, the economic policy of the bourgeois-landlord government of the country leads to reduction in the purchasing power of the people, reducing their capacity to buy necessities of life which again leads to closure and unemployment for millions. India's Cotton textile industry is a typical example of people's poverty and reduction of purchasing power leading to closure of factories. The rising price level in recent time has reduced the real earning of the people and the working class making them unable to purchase their needs from the market. The result is that when at least one-third of rural India is almost going semi-naked the textile mills have closed or gone sick for want of demand, increasing unemployment of thousands of workers. As many as two lakh big and small industrial concerns have been closed during the last few years again throwing lakhs of workers out of jobs. According to Government only 20 percent of these can be revived leaving large number of unemployed to their fate. These concerns are being closed because of competition from new and big industries or reduction of purchasing power of large sections of people without which capitalist advance in a backward country cannot take place.

Capitalist Accumulation and Rural Unemployment

Generally, when considering the problem of unemployment in the country, trade unions pay attention only to the unemployment caused by the factors mentioned above. They confine their attention to the workers who were once employed but now they have lost their jobs. But these are not the only source of unemployment. There are two other sources which create far bigger unemployment than the factors operating in the industrial areas. The advanced capitalist countries have brought their entire economy under the control of capital long ago. But in a backward country like India the process of complete domination of capital over the economy is still going on. In the beginning of capitalism the present day advanced countries had to go through the same process over a prolonged period. In India lakhs of people are employed in pre-capitalist industries, handicrafts and smaller concerns. These traditional industries like hand loom, coir, cashewnut and various types of handicrafts are now being ruined throwing out lakhs of workers. The process has

been going on since the inception of the British rule and continues today imposing prolonged misery and unemployment on those engaged in these traditional and village industries. The same process is taking place in agriculture with eviction of the small peasant from the land and the means of production. Capitalist development requires separation of mass of producers from the means of production so that it can have cheap labour power and expanding market for its products. In India inspite of several land reform measures and some kind of land distribution there has been mass eviction of peasants from land, turning them into agricultural or industrial or bonded labour. The extreme concentration of land in India has not taken place without this mass eviction. Marx called this process of separation of producers from the means of production, the process of primary accumulation.

The needs of capitalist development, more food production for towns and the evicted mass of people has led to building of giant dams for purposes of irrigation and bringing new land under cultivation. But this has led to lakhs of adivasis and others losing their land which is submerged under new dams. These lakhs of people are just evicted enmasse without any compensation or rehabilitation and are thrown into the mass of unemployed to starve or die. No wonder Marx observed "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." (p 712 capital Vol. I).

The means of communication and transport required for the development of the capitalist path play further havoc with rural employment without offering any alternative or substitute. The development of lorry and truck transport have thrown out of employment lakhs of bullockcart owners which had the privilege of transporting from village to towns. The institution of electric pump for well irrigation has again deprived thousands of bullock owners who used bullock power to draw well water for irrigation purposes. These inevitable developments under capitalism have created enormous mass of rural unemployment far bigger in number than unemployed in the cities.

Unemployment to Stay till Causes are Eliminated

The total problem becomes a colossal problem which cannot be solved and the right to work cannot be ensured if this unemployment process is not checked and a different type of socio-economic system is not ensured. Such a system can be based only on socialised means of production and a socialist society. Under it the development of modern industry can be rapid and able to absorb all persons displaced by new industries. In the condition of capitalism the rate of industrial growth is too slow and it displaces far more persons than it absorbs in employment.

Another source of unemployment in the present

society is its incapacity to employ all new entrants to the labour market. The youngman coming from a working class, middle class or peasant family, full of productive enthusiasm and wanting to serve society with his full productive power is told that society has no need of him and his labour capacity is frozen. Day by day the capacity of private capital to employ is getting less and less. The introduction of computer in service industries, in banking, insurance and other service sectors and automation in industries are bringing down the potential of future employment. In some cases those already employed are being retrenched. All these factors make it quite clear that in the coming days, the problem of unemployment is bound to be aggravated and those already employed will be threatened with growing insecurity.

This is the colossal character of the problem. It will be with us so long as the causes that operate are allowed to go unchecked. And there is no way to end unemployment, and end the abject dependence of the livelihood of the people on the profit sharks except the right to work as the fundamental right under the Constitution. All fundamental rights become nominal unless the right to work is secured by the people.

Obligatory Class Task

It is obligatory therefore for the entire working class, employed and unemployed, for the destitute rural masses to join hands and throw the strength of millions in the struggle for right to work. Its acquisition means the real liberation of the people from bondage of a few capitalists. And for the first time they and their families will live in an atmosphere of freedom when no one could jeopardise their jobs.

While propagating the right to work the entire working class, unemployed and the rural mass must demand adequate changes in the present economic system, in the property relations without which the requisite sanctions for right to work cannot be created. There can be no right to work if the present land monopoly of the few continues and unless a new land reform overhauls the agrarian property relations with wide distribution of lands to the landless. Similarly there can be no right to work if means of production are allowed to be run by private owners with their inalienable right to hire and fire. Growing nationalisation of industries managed with workers' participation and growing elimination of private ownership are necessary to

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prepare the basis for the implementation of the right to work. These have to be campaigned for while propagating the right to work.

Alongwith this there must be agitation for immediate measures to increase the number of jobs, to curtail the power of the employers regarding hiring and firing and schemes for employment expansion of jobs and employment relief for those who are unable to secure work.

The campaign for these immediate demands as well as the right to work must be the common campaign of employed and unemployed workers, urban and rural workers. The trade unions which represent the organised strength of the working class must take the lead in organising the campaign of the unemployed workers, rural mass, youth, students and women and take steps to see that a permanent organisation of the unemployed enabling all sections from workers to middle class is created to carry on the battle. The present outlook does not go beyond taking up the cause of the retrenched factory workers. This will never unite the common mass of all job-seekers from all sections. Special attention should be paid to the youth from all sections—the most militant part of the movement. Their initiative and resourcefulness once aroused will work marvels in organisation. The DYFI and SFI have already done praiseworthy work in this direction. In some cases as in Kerala it was the DYFI that took the lead to raise the question of the unemployed with the trade unions lagging behind.

Land Reform and Rural Relief

The National Front Government has accepted the implementation of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana for the rural areas and a modified Nehru Rozgar Yojana for the urban areas. Utmost benefit should be secured out of these schemes. But to be able to do this, a radical land reform has to be ushered in, otherwise the resources will be cornered by the vested interests. Mere decentralisation and involvement of Panchayats is not going to help unless the power of the vested interests in rural areas is broken.

Campaign for Immediate Measures

New Schemes to relieve the distress in rural areas should be undertaken besides radical Land reform.

In the cities in urban areas steps should be taken to open the closed mills and factories and where reorganisation is necessary it should be done in consultation with and approval of the workers. The Government departments and public sector institutions should lift the ban on new recruitment and the employees strength should be increased in proportion to the increased work.

The possibility of reduction of hours of work with a view to additional recruitment should be examined in modern concerns.

Traditional industries which are being ruined should be given protection in the transitional period.

Complete nationalisation of cotton textile and

jute industries should be undertaken to increase employment potential and reorganise their production.

Employers' right to hire and fire, declare lock-out should be taken up and responsibility should be placed on a competent authority with representation of workers on it.

The entry of multinationals and import liberalisation and expansion of multinationals to new areas should be stopped.

All discrimination between men and women in matters of jobs should end.

For helping educated unemployed a massive programme for eradication of illiteracy should be undertaken. The principle of unemployment relief has already been accepted in many states, it should be further extended. The fight against unemployment and for security of jobs is an all India problem with the main responsibility resting on the Central Govt. It requires all India remedies, all India legislations covering the many problems like Nationalisation of Industries, opening of close factories and widespread employment schemes in rural areas. It also requires many important changes in the economic structure which again can only be introduced by the Union Govt. These problems cannot be handled piece meal by states which not only lack economic resources but also legal power to interfere with the unrestricted power of managements and owners to deal with workers' livelihood. It is a matter of some satisfaction that the National Front Govt. recognises the importance of the unemployment problem and one expects that unlike the previous Cong(I) regime, it will take practical steps to relieve the distress of the unemployed and embark upon a practical programme of increasing employment both in cities and rural areas.

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(With recommendations of Mishra Commission report and other materials : Foreword by B.T. Ranadive, President, CITU and introduction by M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU)

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National Seminar on Agricultural Workers

R. K. Ganguly

The National Commission on Rural Labour, under the Ministry of Labour, Government of India organised a national seminar on Agricultural Labour on March 8 and 9, 1990 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The seminar was organised to consider issues relating to land reforms, employment generation and legislation for agricultural workers to regulate their employment, conditions of work, wages, social security measures, etc. The seminar was attended by about 400 delegates representing people from a very wide spectrum which included those from the concerned Central Ministries, State Governments, members of the Planning Commission, ILO, the representatives of the Central Trade Unions, agricultural workers' unions, organisations of Kisans, farmers, members of the Parliament, representatives from the Universities, Research Institutions and Study Groups set up by the National Commission on Rural Labour and from various Voluntary Agencies and Social Action Groups. The CITU was represented by P.K. Ganguly, Secretary and the Agricultural Workers' Union by P.K. Kunjachan, its General Secretary.

Ram Vilas Paswan, the Union Labour Minister presided over the Seminar. After the welcome address by the Labour Minister, and the initial remarks by L.C. Jain, Member Planning Commission, the Seminar was inaugurated by V. P. Singh, the Prime Minister.

Both the Labour Minister in his welcome address and the Prime Minister in his inaugural address referred to the deplorable conditions of agricultural workers who constituted the bulk of the 90 per cent unorganised workforce in the country and stressed that improvement of their incomes and a better quality of life were matters of urgent priority for the present Government. While pointing to the necessity of a legislation for the agricultural workers, they reiterated the need to restructure the economy itself for this. The Prime Minister informed that in commensurate with the objectives of the Government, a new agricultural policy is being formulated by a Committee. As initial steps, the Government has already announced waiving of loans upto Rs. 10,000/- to provide debt relief to the landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, artisans, weavers, etc, and also decided to allocate half of the investment in the Eighth Five Year Plan to go to the rural sector. The speeches of both however were of a general nature pointing to the conditions of the agricultural labourers and the promise of the Government according to the Manifesto of the National Front to ameliorate their conditions. They were short of any concrete measures or direction. On the question of legislation also, they mentioned of the lack of unanimity among the states. Neither the Prime Minister, nor the Labour Minister spelt out in unambiguous terms that the present Government would bring out a comprehensive central legislation for the agricultural workers, as they did on the question of secret ballot for recognition of trade unions and workers' participation in

management, and in case of construction workers. In their identical speeches both the Prime Minister and the Labour Minister although referred to the question of an "appropriate" legislation, yet they simultaneously pointed to the various legislations, like the Minimum Wages Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, etc and urged upon the State Governments to ensure their strict implementations. The Prime Minister further said, "I am aware, that there has been no consensus on having a Central legislation for this purpose, but I would urge the states which do not have laws in this regard, to seriously consider appropriate legislation in this respect". Their speeches were thus more or less of the same tune as that of the Congress, trying to pass on the buck to the States.

Sharad Joshi, the leader of the rich peasants was called upon to speak first in the Plenary Session. He assailed the policies of the erstwhile Congress Government, shed all crocodile tears for the peasantry and the poor agricultural labourers, but opposed any central legislation for them. He emphasised for implementation of the existing laws by the states, which according to him would give the necessary succour to the agricultural workers. Jasbir Singh of Janata Dal however called for a Central legislation. Meera Seth of Women and Child Development Centre opined for a Central legislation and demanded equal remunerations and treatment to women agricultural workers.

Speaking next, P. K. Ganguly assailed the long drawn Congress policies which had brought the agricultural workers to the point of destitution. He said that the political will of the Congress Government was bent in support of the landlord sections and the rural vested interests. The rural labour, about half of which belong to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, have been the victims of lack of land reforms, loopholes in the ceiling laws, eviction and social and caste atrocities. Despite all promises made by the Congress Government, the number of landless agricultural labourers were continuously rising due to continuous forced evictions. According to census, from 1951 their number rose from 27.5 millions to 55.5 millions in 1981. If the marginal workers and those poor peasants who hold less than 0.5 Hect. land and have to work as wage labourers are added to this, then the number would come to 115 millions. Because of the landlord section sharing power in the Government, the severe exploitation and oppression of this vast multitude have been institutionalised. They are forced to live and work under miserable conditions under the dictates of the armed Bhoomi Senas of the landlords and helped by the rural vested interests and the state machinery. Unemployment and under-employment had risen to around 70 millions in the rural sector. The average number of mandays employment were only about 120 days in year, which was also decrea-

sing due to decrease in irrigated land. There was no guaranteed minimum wage. According to National Sample Survey also, their earnings were much below the poverty line. The wages earned were hardly sufficient for even one square meal a day, because the major part had to be given away towards repayment of loans from the usurious private money lenders, as majority of the agricultural labourers could not get institutionalised loans. The question of social security measures or labour laws were a far cry. P.K.Ganguly stressed for genuine land reforms, plugging the loopholes in the ceiling laws and distribution of ceiling surplus lands to the landless agricultural labourers. On the question of legislation, he said that the long past had established the fruitlessness of the various laws which the Government had claimed as being applicable to the agricultural workers. It was because of the strong land lord lobby that the Congress Govt. had refused to enact a central legislation. Looking into the specific and diverse conditions of the agricultural labourers, a comprehensive central legislation was urgently required. He demanded of the National Front Government to break away from the pro-landlord legacy of the past and introduce a Central Bill in the current Budget Session of the Parliament.

Among others who reiterated the demand for a Central legislation were P. K. Kunjchan, M. P. (Agricultural Workers' Union, CPI-M); P. K. Kodyan (Agricultural Workers' Union, CPI); Sunil Basu Roy M.P., CPI(M); Gurudas Das Gupta M.P.(CPI) G.S.Bhatia (JNU); Jaswant Singh Chouhan; D.Y. Reddy; Pritish Chanda (UTUC-LS); N.M.Barot (NLO); O.P.Verma (NFITU); P.D.Paliwal (TUCC) Dr. D.Pais, Chairman, Assam Board of Revenue; and others. Practically only Sharad Joshi and Swami Agnivesh were the two persons who spoke against any central legislation and were isolated.

The seminar was then divided into two Commissions. One to discuss the question of the Central legislation and organisation of the agricultural workers, and the other to discuss land reforms and employment generation.

In the Commission on the Central legislation, which was presided over by the Labour Minister, the participants included P.K.Ganguly, P.K.Kunjchan, P.K.Kodyan, Gurudas Dasgupta, Sunil Basu Roy, Dr. D.Pais and a number of others. The opinions were completely on favour of a comprehensive Central legislation. The frame work of the legislation was discussed on the basis of the report of the Gurudas Das Gupta Committee which was appointed by the then Consultative Committee of the Parliament to go into the question of agricultural workers, and on the basis of the earlier Bill of 1980 drafted by the then Central Standing Committee on Rural Unorganised Labour. However lot of modifications were suggested. P. K. Ganguly raised the question of a criteria for fixing the minimum wage. At this stage Sharad Joshi and Swami Agnivesh intervened and raised the question of capacity to pay. They were however again isolated by the overwhelming majority, as the question of capacity to pay was long

back rejected by the workers, as well as by the Supreme Court. The final conclusions of the Commission were for a Central legislation which would determine the parameters for fixing the minimum wage based on the caloric needs and other requirements like fuel, clothing, housing, etc. The frame work of the law would also include all the related matters like resolving disputes, security of job, social securities, safety and accident benefits, equal remunerations maternity benefits, old age pension, special protection to Scheduled Castes/Tribes, etc. The Commission also discussed about the enforcement machinery for the law and concluded that the State machineries should be revamped to implement the provisions of the law. In those states where the Panchayats were free from the rural vested interests, the implementations should be done through the Panchayats. The Commission also discussed about the organisation of agricultural workers and concluded that separate organisations of agricultural workers should be built up with freedom of Association.

The Second Commission presided over by L. C. Jain, member of the Planning Commission recommended for thorough land reforms and treat land as a source of a social livelihood and not property; time bound implementation of laws to complete various aspects of land reforms; intense struggle against vested interests; increased agricultural growth and productivity; maintenance of correct records of rights, tenancy and ownership; distribution of ceiling surplus lands; statutory agricultural committee to identify surplus lands; house sites to landless labourers, afforestation; gram panchayats to be free from vested interests and short term, long term employment generation programmes including the Maharashtra Scheme for employment generation.

The reports of the two commissions were read out in the final plenary session. Various further suggestions were made by the participants. Intervening in the discussions on employment generations, P. K. Ganguly stressed for plugging the loopholes in the Ceiling Act, expansion of irrigation potential, flood control, water management, development of rural small scale and agro-based industries, expansion of infra-structural facilities like godowns, cold storage, ware houses, marketing centres, etc.

The Seminar concluded with an assurance by the Labour Minister for inclusion of the proposed central legislation in the Nineth Schedule of the Constitution.

However, although the seminar overwhelmingly opined in favour of comprehensive central legislation, yet the fact has to be noted that the National Front Government also has raised the issue of non-unanimity among the states. It is all the more surprising that Sharad Joshi, the big-peasant leader who openly opposed a Central legislation has been made the Chairman of the Committee to formulate the new Agricultural Policy of the Government. The agricultural workers supported by the trade unions have to carry forward their struggle for realisation of the demand for the Central legislation.

CITU Calls for Observance of May Day Centenary

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions met at Delhi on 9th and 10th March evenings under the presidentship of Com. B.T. Ranadive. The meeting was attended by Com. Samar Mukherjee General Secretary ; Com. Ahilaya Rangnekar, Vice-President ; Com. E. Balanandan, Treasurer ; and Com. M. K. Pandhe, Com. Vimal Ranadive : Com. Niren Ghosh, Com. Md. Amin, Com. Kanai Banerjee, Com. Jibon Roy, Com. Ranjit Basu and Com. P.K. Ganguly, Secretaries.

May Day Centenary : The Secretariat discussed about the centenary of the observance of the May Day which started at international level from 1890 and will complete hundred years in 1990. The meeting noted that the observance of the May Day centenary falls at a time when the international communist movement is under serious attack from imperialism. The meeting called upon all the State Committees and the unions to draw up elaborate programme to observe the centenary based on the revolutionary traditions and the pledge of the May Day to carry forward the working class struggle against capitalism, imperialism for the establishment of a socialist state and uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism in keeping with the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. The Secretariat decided to issue the May Day Centenary Manifesto shortly, which should be widely publicised in all the States in regional languages. The meeting further decided to bring out a special issue of the journal—The Working Class on the occasion of the May Day centenary.

Right to Work Convention : The Secretariat heard reports about the preparations being made for the all India Right to Work Convention to be held at Durgapur on April 2 and 3, 1990. It was assessed that about 1000 delegates from various national federations, confederations, State Committees of CITU and mass organisations of students, youth, women, peasantry and agricultural workers will participate in the convention. The Convention will discuss about the enshrinement of the Right to Work as a Fundamental Right in the Constitution and the concurrent reorientation of the economic policy of the National Front Government along with the industrial and agrarian policies and submit a document to the Prime Minister in this respect. The Preparatory Committee of the national federations and the Confederations, which is organising the convention will prepare the Approach Paper. Com. B.T. Ranadive will submit a paper on the issue and the fundamental problems, elaborating the causes of unemployment and the solutions and the guidelines therefor. The Secretariat called upon all the State Committees and national federations and confederations to make the Convention a success.

Indian Labour Conference : The meeting noted that the Labour Ministry had called the 29th Indian

Labour Conference at the later half of April, 1990. The meeting expressed indignation that the Government had allotted seats to the Central Trade Unions without any basis and in an arbitrary manner based on verifications unilaterally done by the Congress(I) Government in 1980, in which the CITU and some other central trade unions did not participate. While the INTUC has been given 9 seats, the CITU and some other trade unions have been allotted only one seat each. Consequent on the protests made by the trade unions, the Labour Ministry during the Congress regime had to draw up a modified procedure of verification in 1986, to which all the trade unions had agreed. But the Government did not implement that procedure. The Secretariat took strong objection to the fact that the new Labour Ministry under the National Front Government also had allotted the seats without any basis. The meeting decided to meet the Labour Minister in a delegation and demand for equal representations by all the Central Trade Unions in the Indian Labour Conference pending the final decision on verifications. In case of failure of the Government to give equal representation, the CITU would boycott the conference.

The meeting also noted that the Government had called a meeting of the Central Trade Unions on 18th March to discuss the question of Verification/Secret Ballot for recognition of trade unions, for representation in workers' participation in management and on the issue of modification of the Industrial Dispute and Trade Unions Amendment Bill introduced earlier by the Cong(I) Government. The meeting reiterated that the Industrial Relations Bill had been rejected by the trade unions and demanded for its total withdrawal and replacement by a new Bill to be drafted in full consultation with the trade unions. The Secretariat decided that Com. M.K. Pandhe and Com. P.K. Ganguly will attend the meeting on 18th March.

Textiles : The Secretariat discussed the situation in the textile industry and the all India struggle organised by the CITU prior to the elections. The meeting heard reports of handloom workers' struggle in Tripura and other states and the situation in Mysore Spinning Mill at Bangalore after a fire. The meeting noted that the new Textile Minister had made announcement for a new Textile Policy. The Secretariat decided that a delegation of the CITU would meet the new Textile Minister and submit a memorandum demanding inclusion of Central Trade Unions in the new Committee that may be formed for formulating the new Textile Policy. The Secretariat further decided to constitute the All India Co-ordination Committee of the CITU unions in the textile industry and call a meeting of the Committee to chalk out a phased programme. The meeting further noted that the trade unions in Bombay had called a convention of textile workers to discuss the deep rooted crisis in the industry. The Secretariat

wished success to the convention.

Unorganised Workers : The Secretariat heard reports about the two national seminars convened by the Government on Construction workers and on agricultural workers and noted that the consensus of opinions were for central legislations for both these sections of the unorganised workers. The meeting decided to discuss in depth the frame work of the legislations when Bills are introduced.

Regarding carrying forward the movement of the unorganised workers the Secretariat decided to have a meeting during the General Council session of the CITU and step up the movement independently. The Secretariat opined that Rs. 1050/- should continue to be the demand of CITU as the minimum wage.

IDPL : The Secretariat discussed the situation in IDPL, the Central Public Sector Undertaking, where the management had launched attacks on the CITU union at Hyderabad and the IDPL Kamgar Federation. The General Secretary and two Vice-Presidents of the Hyderabad Union have been suspended and a number of others were chagesheeted. As for the Kamgar Federation, a large number of office employees at the instance of the management had formed another union. In the recently concluded wage agreement the management had called the representatives of the Marketing Division, although it invited the CITU union from Rishikesh, a constituent of the Kamgar Federation and the Central leadership of the CITU as the apex leader in the negotiations. The Secretariat heard the report of the Extended Working Committee meeting of the Kamgar Federation which was held at Delhi on 25th February, where some comrades had pointed out that the management might put pressure on the office employees to sign the final settlement as members of the parallel union. The Secretariat decided that in such case the employees who are in the Kamgar Federation should not sign on it. The Secretariat further approved the decisions taken in the meeting of the Kamgar Federation regarding organisational matters. The Secretariat also decided to write to the IDPL management demanding withdrawal of all victimisations and repressive measures and also follow up with the Petro-Chemical Minister on the memorandum earlier submitted to him.

Demands of Public Sector Workers : The meeting noted with concern the refusal of the Central Government to concede the long pending demands of the public sector workers for a multi-rate system of DA so as to give hundred percent neutralisation at all levels of wages. The meeting endorsed the decisions of the CPSTU to organise movements with the demand along with the demands for abolition of ceiling from the Bonus Act, raising the ceiling of Income Tax and finalisation of Pension Scheme. The meeting expressed satisfaction that the Confederation of the Public Sector Officers decided to join the CPSTU in the movements in pursuance of all the demands.

The Secretariat heard reports about various anti-labour moves by the management of Bharat Electronics and endorsed the decision of the trade unions to

go on strike on April 2 if the management failed to concede their demands. The meeting also supported the strike call by the BHEL executives.

Seamen : The meeting noted with serious reservations that the INTUC union of Seamen had submitted a separate Charter of Demands and the National Maritime Board had called a meeting bypassing the CITU Union. Furthermore, the NMB had not yet amended its Constitution as demanded by the CITU. The meeting decided that the CITU union would lodge strong protest in the meeting which has been convened on 13th March.

Working Women : The meeting heard reports about the developing movements by the Anganwadi workers and decided that a meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Anganwadi workers should be convened for the formation of the federation and finalisation of the Constitution, the draft for which has already been circulated.

General Council Meeting : In view of the forthcoming municipal elections in West Bengal, which are due in May and June, the Secretariat decided to hold the General Council Meeting of the CITU in July, 1990.

Seventh Conference of CITU : The Secretariat decided to hold the Seventh Conference of CITU in West Bengal in December, 1990. The exact dates will be finalised in consultation with the W. Bengal State Committee.

Invitation from ACFTU : The Secretariat accepted the invitation from the All China Federation of Trade Unions to send a five member delegation to China in July 1990.

Conference of HMS : The meeting nominated Com. Md. Amin, Secretary to represent the CITU in the conference of HMS to be held at Faridabad on 23rd March, 1990.

CITU Delegation meets Labour Minister in respect of restarting Raja Mills, Bangalore

Com. V.J.K. Nair, General Secretary, Karnataka State Committee of CITU has issued the following statement on March 12 :

Com. Subhashini Ali M.P. and Com. V.J.K. Nair, General Secretary, Karnataka State Committee of CITU met the Union Labour Minister Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, here today and submitted a memorandum requesting his intervention to restart fully Mysore Spinning and Manufacturing Mills, Bangalore (popularly) known as Raja Mill which was destroyed in a devastating Fire Accident on 18.1.1990.

The delegation brought to the attention of the Labour Minister the illegal denial of even lay off wages to over 400 casual labourers.

The Labour Minister assured the delegation that suitable action will be taken by him.

International Women's Day Celebrations at Delhi

8 March, the International Women's Day has become a focal point for women activists to reiterate their commitment to the cause of women's emancipation and development. This year, 8 women's organisations came together to express their solidarity with the struggle against oppression and discrimination. The aim of the symbolic human chain around Parliament was to draw the attention of policy makers to ensure equal rights to women in property and health and a ban on sex discrimination tests. It was also felt that existing laws and regulations for the protection of women which were not being implemented, should be not only implemented but in various cases should also be amended to be more effective. The solidarity action also aimed to focus on the brutalities and massacres in the name of religion, and caste, as seen at Bhagalpur, Kota and other places, where women and children were the worst affected, women vocally pledged to stand for the unity and integrity of the nation and called for a strong movement against separatist, communal and divisive forces as well as the growing threat of terrorism which had made the daily life of the people difficult and painful.

Gathering at Jantar Mantar with a number of banners, lining up together, it was indeed a memorable moment, bringing to a close a month of united activity which included a workshop on the female child, a mahila mela, a workshop on women and law and the distribution of an appeal to women in the city to come and participate in the human chain. There was an enthusiastic response to the issues raised in the appeal, problems of the girl child on whom adult burden are imposed in childhood. The girl child was the most potent symbol of inequality and exhibitions. Rallies and discussions were held to focus on the agonies of being born a girl in India.

Women from all walks of life and all areas of Delhi came to Jantar-Mantar to participate in their festival, International Women's Day. They were addressed by Vimal Ranadive of All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, Brinda Karat of AIDWA, Gita Mukherjee M. P. of NFIW, Jyotsna Chatterjee, of JWP, Mary Khemchand of YWCA, Veena Majumdar of CWDS, Pramila Dandavate of Mahila Dakshata Samiti. They identified the specific problems of working women, rural women, the poor and unemployed and communalism in the country. All India Women's Conference and Institute of Social Studies Trust also participated. Ms. Joyce Mphale, ANC came to greet the women, who in turn expressed their solidarity with the courageous women of South Africa in their valiant struggle against the racist regime. A memorandum was presented to the Prime Minister. Unity, Equality and Sisterhood generated an enthusiastic response from the large number of women who marched towards Parliament shouting slogans, waving different festoons, and rolling pins. Bystanders also greeted the

women who then encircled the Parliament, stretching out with linked hands, on either side of the main gate. The celebrations indicated the growth of united action in the women's movement, which has come of age after a decade of activities. It was also an indication of the power of women when they raise their voice in solidarity and the impact the united strength of women has not only on policy makers and the Govt. but on the ordinary man on the street.

How did the 8th March Begin : On 8th March, 1857 women workers of the textile and clothing industry demonstrated in the streets of New York, in a protest against inhuman working conditions and low pay. They too demanded the vote for women.

In 1866 the First Congress of the International Workers' Association adopted the resolution on women's professional work and thus, opposed the the unwritten law valid until then that women's place is at home. It opened up a new path towards economic independence for women—one of the basic conditions for the equality of women. In 1871 during the days of the Paris Commune tens of thousands of French women participated in barricade fighting.

In 1819 on 19 July Clara Zetkin delivered her first great speech on the question of women at the Founding Congress of the Second International in Paris. She claimed women's right to work, the protection of mother and child as well as women's broad participation in national and international events.

In 1899, the first international women's conference against war was held in the Hague. This was the starting point of an anti-war movement which was to grow stronger and stronger.

In 1910, the Second International Conference of Socialist Women, held in Copenhagen on 26/27 August, passed the historic resolution proposed by Clara Zetkin that "an annual Women's Day—a unified international demonstration should be celebrated by women all over the world in the movement for women's rights, peace and freedom." The resolution passed by more than one hundred delegates from 17 countries, was based on the experience gained in the first great women's struggles in history.

In 1789, during the French Revolution women calling for "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" demanded for the first time women's suffrage. The powerful march to Versailles in October 1789 of the Parisian women went down in history.

In 1905/07 Russian women workers took a passionate interest in the strikes against Tsarist despotism. In the Germany of 1907 the number of organised women workers was increasing: 1,20,000 were members of the trade unions, 10,000 had joined the 94 existing educational clubs.

(Cont'd on page 13)

Railway Canteen Employees are Railway Employees —Supreme Court

With the recent judgement of Supreme Court finally declaring all recognised railway canteen workers as railway employees, the railway canteen workers throughout the country have won a partial victory in their two decade long battle carried on mainly under the banner of All India Rly. Canteen Employees Federation. At the conclusion of a detailed examination of the arguments put forward by the parties to the case, the judgement states, "the result, therefore, is that the workers engaged in the statutory canteens as well as those engaged in non-statutory recognised canteens in the railway establishments are railway employees and they are entitled to be treated as such."

The victory is however partial in that the Court has rejected the claim of the workers to be treated as railway employees from the date of appointment in the canteen job. The railway authorities, in terms of earlier orders of the court, have been treating the employees of the statutory canteens as well as the employees of eleven Delhi based non-statutory recognised canteens as railway employees with effect from Oct. 22, 1980. While confirming this date of effect for statutory canteen, the Court has ruled that the employees of other non-statutory recognised canteen, who constitute the largest bulk of canteen workers will be treated as railway employees with effect from April 1, 1990 only. The All India Rly canteen Employees Federation is aggrieved not only for this but also because the court has rejected the demand for treating the employees of railway canteens of other categories.

The All India Railway Canteen Employees Federation is reportedly moving a review petition before the Supreme Court.

The legal battle of railway workers for being recognised as railway employees started about twenty years back when the employees of the South Eastern Railway Kharagpur Workshop Canteen a statutory canteen under Factories Act, preferred a writ petition in the Calcutta High Court at the initiative of their union. The petition was rejected by a single judge in August 1973. But the Division Bench allowed the petition in July 1974 directing the Railways to recognise the workers as railway employees under Factories Act but without any obligation "to pay salary and allowances to them as if they were railway employees." On appeal being preferred in the Supreme Court by the Railway Administration, the Supreme Court in October 1980 expressed its prima facie agreement with the Calcutta High Court Division Bench judgement, but reserved its final pronouncement to be made if the point was raised by the Union of India and pronouncement is sought in an appropriate case. Following this judgement, through successive orders, the railway authorities gave

railway employee status to the employees of all statutory canteens and eleven Delhi based non-statutory canteens. In the meantime the case came up in two other High Courts—Delhi and Madras. The question of other non-statutory canteens also came up for adjudication and some interim arrangement was ordered also for this category. The present judgement of the Supreme Court is the final judgement, so far, which covers all the different cases that were pending before it.

In this final judgement the Supreme Court had to deal afresh with the question of treating the employees of the statutory canteen as railway employees for the purpose of Factories Act. The question was already decided by the Division Bench of Calcutta High Court and the Supreme Court expressed its prima facie agreement with the judgement. But since the Supreme Court left open to the Railways "in an appropriate case" to raise the point again and the Railways did raise it. The issue had to be taken up afresh in this judgement besides the question whether the employees concerned were entitled to be treated as railways employees for all other purposes also. Having considered all aspects of the matter the Court rejected the plea of the Railways and declared the statutory railway canteen staff as railway employees not only for the purpose of the Factories Act but also for all other purposes. Similarly, examining all relevant aspects of the question of treating the employees of non-statutory canteens as railway employees the court expressed the view that the "case of these employees should be treated on par with that of the employees of the statutory canteens and they also be treated for all purposes as railway employees."

Although the judgement has been pronounced in connection with the case of the railway canteen employees, the principle upheld in the judgement is relevant to the employees of canteens in Central Govt. establishments and undertakings.

AILRSA Demonstrates

All India Loco Running Staff Association had given a call to the locomen from its annual conference held in Delhi on 19-21 February 1990 to demonstrate before the Divisional authorities in case no declaration is made by the Railway Minister in the course of his Budget speech regarding reinstatement of the victimised railwaymen. The Railway Minister Shri George Fernandes categorically and repeatedly assured the delegations of the AILRSA and the AIREC of positive action in this regard. Even the AIRF addressed a letter to the Railway Minister urging him to take back the locomen and others., who had been victimised for participation

in trade union movement. AILRSA suspects that the Minister must be facing some resistance in the matter from some powerful quarters. They feel that mass pressure needs to be created such as would help overcoming the resistance. With this end in view AILRSA conference decided to hold demonstration at Divisional Headquarters on 15th. Reports of demonstration has so far been received from a number of Divisional units.

In Maldah, Eastern Railway, 110 loco running staff took part in the demonstration. They marched in a procession from the railway station to the divisional office and a delegation of the demonstrators submitted a memorandum to the authorities.

In Varanasi, NE Rly, about 100 locomen took part in the demonstration. Divisional Railway Manager, Varanasi, refused to accept memorandum from the delegation. The demonstrators sent the memorandum by post to the Railway Minister and complained to him telegraphically on the DRM's refusal to accept it.

More than 150 locomen demonstrated at Palghat, S. Railway, where the demonstrators marched from the Railway station to the divisional office.

In Madras, since demonstration is prohibited, a largely attended workers' meeting was held and a deputation met the DRM to submit their memorandum. As the DRM was unwilling to forward it to the Railway Minister, the memorandum was sent to him by post.

In Delhi the locomen was joined by some railway men of other categories and organisations. A gate meeting was held and a delegation had discussion with other divisional officers on local issues after submission of memorandum to the DRM.

Reports of demonstration have been received from Adra, Chakradharpur, Kharagpur, Bilaspur, Khurda Road and Waltair Divisions of S. E. Rly. At Adra, the demonstrators were addressed by M. N. Prasad, General Secretary RRSA, S. E. Rly and S. K. Dhar, Secretary General, AILRSA addressed the Chakradharpur demonstration.

On Eastern Railway, locomen's demonstration was supported by the E. Rly unit of AIREC whose leaders addressed the demonstrators while railwaymen of other categories also joined the demonstrators.

Demonstration took place in other Divisions of N. Rly also. About 250 workers participated in the demonstration at Ferozpur Divisional Headquarters and submitted a memorandum to the authorities.

The leaders of the LRSA are trying to contact the Railway Minister. At the same time they are preparing for a massive dharna in Delhi unless the

victimised workers get back their job early.

Deputation to Railway Minister

Accompanied by Members of Parliament, representatives of N. F. Rly Pantry Car Contractors Employees Union, Coal Ash and Transshipment Handling Majdoor Union, both CITU affiliates met the Railway Minister and submitted memorandum explaining their grievances.

AIRF Felicitates Ministers, M. Ps

The AIRF arranged a brief function on 20th March to felicitate the Ministers of the National Front Govt. as well as the MPs. supporting the Govt. Finance Minister Prof. Madhu Dandavate, Food and Civil Supply Minister Nathuram Mirdha, I & B Minister P. Upendra were present. Among the MPs present were Samar Mukherjee, Puroshotham Kaushik, Samarendra Kundu, Ajoy Mukherjee, Shivaji Patnaik, Janeshwar Mishra, Sukomal Sen, Daulatram Saran, Hari Sankar Mahale, Seopat Singh and others.

Other distinguished guests included Surendra Mohan, Vireshwar Tiagi, Brij Mohan Toofan, Pramila Dandavate, Manju Mohan, Indira Saxena, Vasant Gupte, Kanai Banerjee and others.

Also present were the leaders of AIRF.

The programme ended after thanks giving speeches by AIRF President Umraomal Purohit, Prof. Madhu Dandavate and AIRF General Secy. J.P. Choubry.

NRMU Protest at Ferozpur

More than 5000 Rly workers recently staged a dharna in front of the DRM office, Ferozpur, N. Rly at the call of the Northern Railwaymen's Union in protest against non-cooperative attitude and rude behaviour of some officers of the division including the DRM. Leaders of the NRMU and other organisations addressed the gathering.

Protest at Ludhiana

Railway workers of Ludhiana under the banner of the NRMU gheraoed the CDO office, Ludhiana, for 4 hours in protest against arrogant behaviour of the CDO (CWS). Work of the Depot. remained stopped for 3 hours. The gherao was the culmination of a programme of daily demonstration which continued for 8 days. Workers did not resume work till ADRM arrived and transferred the concerned official.

Steel Plant Unions Review Safety Activities

A joint meeting of National Joint Consultative Committee for Steel(NJCS) and Standing Committee on Safety for Steel Industry (SCSS) was held at Salem on 12.2.90 to discuss about safety, occupational health and environment of steel industry. The meeting reviewed the functioning of SCSSI and noted that in spite of many well meaning tasks taken by the committee, the matter remained in paper only.

M. K. Pandhe, Secretary CITU pointed out that many decisions were not implemented for years together due to lack of co-operation by steel plant authorities. As a result, the committee became mainly a management's committee with TU representatives. It should have been reconstituted in the same manner as NJCS with equal participation and right to monitor its implementation activities. He also urged to include health and environment as regular business.

Mrinal Banerjee, General Secretary of SWFI requested the Director Personnel of SAIL and the Chairman of SCSSI to finalise rehabilitation plan for medically unfit workmen to facilitate effective health check up plan and more gainful utilisation of the existing workforce suffering from various ailments.

The process of sub contracting safety jobs were raised by the CITU representatives. The contractors were not only useless, but they were cheating the SAIL management by changing their names to get the job again. The members requested SAIL authorities to develop their executives of own safety organisation so that they could take care of the entire problem of steel industry.

P. K. Das, the CITU representative in SCSSI pointed out that no SAIL plant was eager to implement even the new provisions of the modified Factories Act. Informations regarding unsafe operation and handling of dangerous chemicals, gases and other substances must be made public. Not to talk about general public, even chargemen working for the last 30 years got no safety training or knowledge of unsafe operations.

He pinpointed to the plant management's apathy to implement decisions taken in SCSSI or recommendations of important seminars like gas safety, disaster management, construction safety, etc. Overall non-cooperation of management with SCSSI rendered its service futile. Even many plant Safety Organisations refused to send reply to questionnaire of SCSSI to assess actual condition of the respective plants. Plant Safety organisations being unable to control accident rates, suppressed the accident statistics. They were also unable to maintain public toilets inside all plants to comply with the provisions of the Factories Act, 19-A.

The representatives of INTUC, AITUC, HMS also spoke in the same line. M.R.R. Nair, Director Personnel, SAIL assured effective functioning of SCSSI in near future with equal participation of the trade unions. He also instructed all plant managers to stop suppression of accident statistics with immediate effect.

Demands Day by Assam Plantation Workers

The Assam State Committee of CITU met on January 10. It decided to observe Demand Days on 29th and 30th January '90 by Tea Plantation workers and other industrial workers respectively.

On 29 January the Tea Plantation Workers assembled before the Garden offices in the morning demanding Rs. 25/- as minimum wage per day; permanent employment to at least 1000 workers in each garden; inclusion of CITU representatives in the Tripartite Wage Committees and weekly rest day wages. It may be recalled that in July '89 the Chief Minister of Assam announced a minimum daily wage of Rs. 25/- to unskilled workers w.e.f. 1.8.89. But later on it was learnt that the plantation workers were not covered by the said announcement. Since then the CITU unions had been demanding the same wage for the plantation workers also. Meanwhile the INTUC led Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha negotiated with the Planters' Organisation for a bilateral wage agreement, which had been the practice so long. The CITU unions had also been protesting against such bilateral agreements and had also been demanding for Tripartite agreement. Ultimately, in October '89 the State Govt. formed a Wage Committee for Plantation Workers but excluded the CITU from the said Committee. The CITU unions organised series of protest actions against the Govt.'s policy of discrimination. The aforesaid Tripartite Committee was asked to submit its recommendations within December 1989 and later on the period was extended by another two months. Further in 1988 the ACMS entered into an agreement with the Planters for new employment to 23,000 in tea estates of Assam valley. This was done in the wake of vigorous campaign organised by the CITU to engage at the rate of three workers per hector of the plantation. However it remained unimplemented. So the CITU Unions though criticised the aforesaid agreement, demanded immediate permanent employment of 100 workers in each garden. Along with these two vital demands the CITU raised were the demand for a weekly rest day with full wages and inclusion of CITU representatives in all labour welfare committees. The Demand Day evoked good response among the plantation workers. In some gardens the managements conceded the demand of new employment.

On 30th January other industrial workers of the State observed Demand Day by organising gate meetings, demonstrations, processions and badge wearing etc demanding the fixation of National Minimum Wage of Rs. 1250/- per month, pending that immediate implementation of State C.M's announcement of July 1989. The workers also demanded adequate compensation to the bereaved families of private motor transport workers who were killed by the extremists while they were on duty on Govt. requisitioned vehicles at par with the compensations given to the Govt employees. On the same demands the CITU submitted a memorandum to the Secretary Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of Assam.

Verbally the Secretary agreed to grant Rs. 50,000 per family as compensation at the earliest. The demand also included a weekly rest day with wages.

Meanwhile it was officially learnt that the Govt. by a Gazette Notification had fixed Rs. 25/-, Rs. 27/- and Rs. 30/- per day for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers respectively on 818 C.P.I. base 1960 w.e.f. 1.8.89. The VDA shall be @Rs. 1.3 subject to a maximum of 30 point rise in CPI. However the Notification did not cover 90% of the state's workers engaged in Tea, Plantation, and Engineering industries.

It is expected that after achieving certain demands partially, the State Committee would shortly decide upon the future course of action. The State Committee also decided to hold the first Convention of AIPWF, North Zone Committee at Silchar in April next.

Mass Dharna by Bank Employees

Over 500 bank employees from almost all the banks in the capital city and a sizeable contingent from Rajasthan sat in a mass dharna for the whole day at Jantar Mantar Park to press the demand for inclusion of BEFI (Bank Employees Federation of India) in the negotiations for improvements over 5th bi-partite wage settlement in the banking industry. The demands include restructuring of pay scales for both the clerical and sub-staff, pension as a 3rd retirement benefit, conveyance allowance, improvement of special allowances, restoration of graduate increments and the right to strike by watch and ward staff, halt to indiscriminate computerisation and revocation of all retrograde provisions of V bi-partite settlement.

Inaugurating the rally Ashis Sen M.P. General Secretary BEFI exposed the anti-employee machinations of the bankers and criticised AIBEA and NCBE for becoming collaborators to these designs instead of building up a united movement of the employees for realisation of legitimate demands. He said that a memorandum has been submitted to the Finance Minister and in case the demands were not conceded, the agitation would be intensified.

Prominent leaders of various segments of trade union movement of the working class and financial institutions addressed the dharna and assured full support to the struggle of bank employees under the banner of BEFI.

S.R. Saini (All India Insurance Employees Association), Adi Narain (Postal Employees Union), S.B. Bhardwaj (CITU), Sunil Basu Roy M.P. (Coal Workers Federation), Mohd. Amin M. P. (Jute workers Federation) and Sukomal Sen (All India State Govt. Employees Federation) addressing the gathering

(From page 9)

The resolution passed by the Copenhagen Conference met with an effective response. In March 1911 International Women's Day was celebrated for the first time in Germany, Denmark, Switzerland and Austria. The rallies and demonstrations were attended by more than one million women and men. In the USA, a month earlier, progressive women demonstrated to mark the third national 'Women's Day'.

In the following year, women from France, the Netherlands and Sweden joined the celebration of International Women's Day. In 1913 the first rally for International Women's Day was held in Petersburg, Russia, despite brutal terror by the police. Women's Day in 1914 was held under a banner to prevent the war which was then brewing. Clara Zetkin called upon the women to hold anti-war demonstrations on International Women's Day.

On the proposal of the Bulgarian Women the International Women's Secretariat of the Communist International decided in spring 1921 to celebrate Women's Day in the future on 8th March all over the world.

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of International Women's Day in 1990 women from all continents will give testimony of their grown strength. They will demonstrate their determination to safeguard peace for present and future generations. For their families they want to win a life of social and material securities and they will defend equality of rights which they won through hard struggle. On the threshold of a new millennium, the third, millions of women are facing the challenges of our time.

assured their support for BEFI's participation/inclusion in the negotiations with IBA.

While supporting the agitation they demanded that as in the case of other public sector industries, where all central trade unions take part in negotiations, in the banking industry also BEFI must be included in the negotiations along with other national level organisations.

Members of Parliament Sarvashri Vijay Mohan Reddy, Satya Prakash Malviya, Subhahini Ali, Dr. Negen Saikia, Shoupat Singh and Kamal Morarka also addressed the squatters and pledged their support to the cause of bank employees, said the demands were just and urged the National Front Government to arrange participation of BEFI in the negotiations. If necessary they will raise their voice in Parliament. Hannan Mollah (General Secretary Democratic Youth Federation) and Vijay Raghavan, President Students Federation of India) emphasized that indiscriminate computerisation in banks is killing jobs and BEFI's fight against it is the fight of students and youth of the country and assured full support.

CITU Delegation Meets Labour Minister

In pursuance of the decision of the Secretariat (Vide report on page 7), a delegation of the CITU met the Labour Minister Ram Bilas Paswan on March 18 and submitted a memorandum to him demanding equal representation to all the Central Trade Unions in the 29th Session of the Indian Labour Conference to be held in the later half of April, 1990. The delegation consisted of M.K. Pandhe, Niren Ghosh, P.K. Ganguly, Kanai Banerjee and Ranjit Basu—all Secretaries. From the Government side apart from the Labour Minister, among those present were V. P. Sawhney, the Labour Secretary and two Under Secretaries.

The Labour Minister and the other officials stated that they had no objection to allot equal number of seats to all the Central Trade Unions pending final decision on verification, provided all the trade unions agreed to this principle.

The matter was discussed the same day thereafter in the meeting of the Government with the Central Trade Unions. The INTUC and BMS did not agree to the proposition, as they were likely to lose a number of seats. The CITU, AITUC and the other trade unions however reiterated equal representation. The INTUC and BMS argued that since there was no verification after 1980, the 1980 verification basis should stand. The CITU and AITUC pointed out that they had boycotted the 1980 verification as the procedure was totally defective. All other trade unions including the INTUC and BMS had also demanded a modified procedure, as according to them also the 1980 procedure was totally defective. So all the trade unions after a series of meetings with the Government had agreed on a modified procedure which was to be implemented to ascertain the membership strength as on December, 1986. But the Government never implemented that. So the question of going back to the 1980 basis did not arise at all. However, no decision could be arrived at because of the opposition from the INTUC and BMS. It was decided that the Central Trade Unions would sit together to resolve the issue.

Verification from 1989 membership : The meeting however took one decision unanimously that the agreed modified procedure of verification of membership would now be done for membership, as on 31.12.1989.

On Agricultural Workers : On the question of whether the agricultural workers should be taken into the verification process to ascertain the membership strength of the Central Trade Unions or not, it

was finally decided that the Labour Ministry will prepare a note based on the different opinions given by the trade unions in 1986 and then on the basis of the government's note the Central Trade Unions would discuss again for a solution. The CITU and some other trade unions had opined not to take the agricultural workers into the membership count of the Central Trade Unions, as spot verification of agricultural workers were not possible. The AITUC and others had opined to take them into the count.

The meeting however unanimously decided to carry forward the task of verification of the industrial workers as per the 1986 modified procedure.

Industrial Relations Bill ; On the question of the Trade Unions and Industrial Disputes Acts Amendment Bill, which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by the Congress government, the trade unions unanimously opined for its withdrawal.

Memorandum given by the CITU to the Labour Minister Regarding I.L.C.

Shri Ram Vilas Paswan
Minister of Labour
Government of India
Shram Shakti Bhawan
New Delhi-110001

March 18, 1990

Dear Paswanji,

Re. : Labour Ministry's circular Notice No. O. II-12012-1/90-IC dated 26.2.90

Sub : 29th Session of the Indian Labour Conference.

This is in reference to my earlier talk with you regarding the allotment of seats to the Central Trade Unions in the 29th Session of the Indian Labour Conference to be held at Delhi in the later half of April, 1990, we would like to place our views as under :

While we welcome the convening of the Indian Labour Conference, we lodge a strong protest against the basis of seat allotted to the Central Trade Unions. The allotment of seats have been made in an absolutely arbitrary manner, without any rational basis. While the INTUC has been allotted 9 seats, the CITU and AITUC alongwith some others have been given only one seat each.

It is to be recalled that in the 28th Indian Labour Conference, which was called on November 25 and 26, 1985 after 14 years of hibernation, the

CITU and AITUC were not given any delegate status at all. They were given only observer status. We protested and decided to boycott the conference. There was wide spread criticism of the Congress Government for blindly supporting the INTUC and trying to exclude the major opposition trade unions like the CITU and AITUC on the basis of the irrational argument of allotting the seats on the basis of a most defective process of verification made arbitrarily in 1980, which the CITU and AITUC had boycotted. However, pending clinching of the issue, the Govt. was ultimately compelled to give delegate status to the CITU and AITUC giving them one seat each.

However, the CITU, AITUC and other opposition trade unions had recorded the protests and demanded modification of the verification procedure. After a series of meetings held thereafter, a modified procedure of verification of membership was agreed upon by all the trade unions including the INTUC. This agreement signed on 29.12.86 decided that verification will be done on the basis of the agreed modified procedure on the basis of membership as on 31.12.86. But despite this agreed modified procedure, the Congress Government did not implement it, and on the contrary introduced the retrograde Industrial Relations Bill prescribing the check off system, obviously under pressure from the INTUC.

Apart from above, there is another point to which I would like to draw your attention. The National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions (NCC) had consistently demanded of the then Congress Government to convene the Indian Labour Conference since it was unusually delayed and requested the Government to hold consultations with the trade unions about representations and other details. But the Congress Government had called the 28th Session of the Indian Labour Conference suddenly on November 25 and 26, 1985 without holding any prior consultations with the trade unions.

Now, it is surprising that the Labour Ministry under the National Front Government instead of breaking away from the undemocratic legacy of the Congress Government, has preferred to trod on the same beaten track, creating a fresh flare up of the old episodes.

Apart from above the Government has now called a meeting of the Central Trade unions on March 18 to discuss the matter of verification, vis-a-vis secret ballot to which the Government has agreed.

In the above context we request you to intervene in the matter immediately, so that pending final decision on the issue, equal representations are given to all the Central Trade Unions in the Conference.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,
P.K. Ganguly
Secretary

Conference of Tripura Rickshaw Shramik Union

The Annual Conference of Tripura Rickshaw Shramik Union was held on 24th and 25th February 1990 at Udaipur Sub Division of South Tripura District. 164 delegates from different corners of the State attended the conference.

Com. Chitta Chanda, Com. Abdul Mazid, Com. Tushar Roy, Com. Shyamlal Mazumdar, and Com. Binod Malakar, conducted the proceedings of the conference. Com. Baidyanath Mazumdar, President of the CITU State Committee hoisted the red flag in front of Udaipur Town hall.

The Conference was inaugurated by Com. Dasarath Deb, Secretary of the CPI(M) State Committee and Chairman of the left front committee of the State. Com. Dasarath Deb, in his inaugural speech criticised the anti-working class policy of the government. He pointed out that the TUJS-Cong-I coalition government was neither working for the toiling masses nor for the common interest of the State. Rather they had created terror in the State. During this period 105 comrades lost their lives. Hundreds of workers and left front supporters were arrested by the police with false and fabricated charges. Some of them were inhumanly beaten even in the police custody. Hundreds of women were raped by Cong (I) anti-socials. Many houses of left supporters were ransacked. Knowing everything, the police did not take any action against the criminal activities of Cong(I). The workers, peasants, youth were not getting jobs. All types of development work had already stopped. Now the Govt was trying to close the jute mill also. Com. Dasarath Deb appealed to the delegates to unite the working class and fight against the anti-people govt. of the state.

He also appealed to the delegates to build united movement on the 12 point demands of Left Front including immediate resignation of the State coalition Govt. On the 24th February Com. Sudarsan Das, Secretary of the Union placed his report before the conference. 25 delegates participated in the discussion on the next day. Com. Baidyanath Mazumdar, President of the CITU, greeted the Conference. He stated that 25 thousands Rickshaw workers were working in the state. But only 3000 workers were organised by our union, remaining 22,000 were till unorganised. So it was necessary to organise them within a short period.

The Jatra Shilpi Sangha, staged a drama "NABA BARSER UPAHAR". The drama showed the incident of Com. Safdar Hashmi's murder.

The Conference unanimously adopted some resolutions like, protest against the conspiracy to close the jute mill, against the attack on A.D.C (Autonomous District Council), in support of 12 point demands of the left front including immediate resignation of the present coalition govt.

The conference elected a 41 member working committee with Com. Abdul Mazid as President and Com Sudharshan Das as General Secretary.

Against Unemployment Statewide Campaign in Tamilnadu

A state level preparatory convention held in Madras on 25th February decided to organise statewide campaign against unemployment in Tamilnadu from March to June. The campaign will end with a massive anti-unemployment rally in Madras on 9th June.

The Convention was called by a Preparatory Committee of Trade Unions, Agriculture Workers' Union, Students, Youth and women's organisations. More than 1200 representatives belonging to 12 organisations from all the districts of the state attended the convention.

S.P. Agathialingam (DYFI) welcomed the delegates. A Presidium with R. Umanath (CITU), A Bhagyam (DYFI), S. Thirunavkarasu (AIAWUO), N.L. Sridharan (TNGEA), P. Govindarajan (T4, NEPTE), V.D. Somasundaram (AIIEA) and R. Savithri (DWA) was elected to conduct the proceedings. The Convention began with a standing ovation to greet Nelson Mandela, who was unconditionally released after 27 years of imprisonment.

A.K. Padmanabhan (CITU), Convenor of the Preparatory Committee presented the draft resolution. The resolution while explaining the situation in the country with reference to the unemployment issue, listed out certain demands and put forth a programme of action in the coming months. The resolution also proposed that a Campaign Committee Against Unemployment be formed to carry forward the campaign.

Eleven comrades, representing various organisations participated in the discussion. The discussion was in such a way that each participant explained the issues pertinent to the unemployment problem. Issues which were discussed in this way were right to work, unemployment allowance, modernisation, closures, and lock outs, ban on recruitment, land reforms, food for work, unemployment and women and industrial development. Participants in the in the discussion were M. Durai Pandiyan (Civil Audit), N. Gunasekaran (SFI), R. Govindarajan (AIIEA), R. Viswanathan (TNMSRA), K. Krishnan (BEFI), D. Gopalakrishnan (T3 NFPTE), S. Thirunavkarasu (AIAWU), Mythily Sivaraman (DWA), M.R. Appan (TNGEA) and D. Ravindran (DYFI).

R. Umanath, General Secretary of the State CITU, summed up the discussion. He explained the importance of the united campaign and the necessity of involvement of all the participating organisations. The convention unanimously adopted the resolution and the programme of action.

Programme of Action

1. Campaign Committee will be formed in all districts by 15th March.

Massive Rally at Palwal against Police Firing and Closure

The District CITU of Faridabad organised a massive rally at Palwal on March 6 against the closure of an unit of Mangala Udyog, manufacturing automobile parts and against firing by the police and the management hirelings. The management of Mangala Udyog closed down one unit of the factory throwing over 250 workers with their families on the streets. The actual cause of the closure was the formation of a CITU union. When the workers held a demonstration at the gate on February 9, the management hirelings opened fire from inside the factory. It was reported that even the owner of the factory fired revolver shots in presence of the SHO, Amar Singh Daggar. The police thereafter lathi-charged the workers. Although nobody was killed, yet a number of workers were seriously injured by the firing and lathi charge. Despite repeated representations, the government did not intervene.

The rally of 6th March was organised to protest against the closure, firing and the refusal of the government to intervene. The rally was attended by about 2,000 workers. Among others the rally was addressed by Md. Amin, M.P.; P. K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU; S. N. Solanki, General Secretary of the Haryana State CITU and Raghuvir Huda, the State Secretary of CPI(M). The rally adopted two resolutions demanding immediate transfer of the SHO, punishment to the owner and opening of the unit with all the workers. Later, a delegation consisting of Md. Amin, P.K. Ganguly, S.N. Solanki, and Raghuvir Huda met the SDM and the Deputy Commissioner, who assured immediate intervention in the matter. The rally, decided to observe Faridabad district industrial strike on March 19, if the case is not resolved by that time.

2. Anti-unemployment Day will be observed on 28th March. All members of the organisations will wear badges and hold gate meetings, lunch hour meetings and street corner meetings all over the state.

3. During the months of April and May preparations will be held in all districts for four jeep jathas, which will start from different corners of the state which will converge in Madras City on 9th June. Sub-jathas will be planned in all districts so as to link it with the main jathas and ensure campaign all over the State.

4. On 9th June, one lakh strong "anti-unemployment rally" will be held in Madras.

Campaign Committee : A 14-member Campaign Committee, representing the 12 organisations was formed to guide the future campaign.

Central Budget

Samar Mukherjee, General Secretary, CITU has issued the following statement on March 20 :

While appreciating the enormous difficulty the Finance Minister had to confront in preparing his maiden budget for an economy which is in complete jeopardy, thanks to the policies of the previous Govts, with tremendous inflationary pressure resulting from the huge deficit of previous year, enormous magnitude of external debt, precarious balance of payment position and shrinking employment potential, the CITU nevertheless feels that the budget presented by Shri Dandavate has hardly succeeded in convincing the people that it (the budget) marks the beginning of a complete departure from the policies and outlook of the previous Govts, which were leading the economy to ruins. While none can expect a total restructuring of the economy overnight through one budget, the people however looked with expectation for a convincing start.

Growing budget deficit being a chronic malignant ailment of the economy, the desire to bring it down will be welcome, but the budget estimate deficit of Rs. 7206 crores for 1990-91, compared to the revised estimate of Rs. 11,750 for 1989-90 does not give much consolation because in the 1989-90 too, the deficit was of the similar order but has risen to the colossal figure of nearly 1200 crores by the end of the year. The CITU wishes the Finance Minister success in living upto his plans for keeping the deficit under control.

The CITU appreciates some positive measures proposed in the budget. The budget proposes to withdraw certain tax exemptions for the corporate sector like investment, which will fetch Rs. 800 crore from the corporate sector. But at the same time, the reduction of corporate tax to 40 percent acts in the opposite direction. It has led to reliance on the increased range of indirect tax. The CITU expresses serious dissatisfaction at the big hike in petrol and diesel prices, increase in postal charges all of which will impose heavy burden on the common people. However, reduction of excise duty on a number of mass consumption items, and total waiver in the case of some commodities like mustard oil, rapeseed oil, etc. will of course be welcomed by common man, some adjustment proposed in excise duty is expected to give advantage to the small scale sector, handloom weavers etc. Similarly some relief has been provided to the people by raising income tax exemption limit. The scrapping of Gold Control Act however is a negative aspect that it will facilitate holding of unaccounted wealth.

The waiver of farmers' loan upto a limit of Rs. 10,000, earmaking 49% of outlay for rural investment and increased allocation for poverty alleviation schemes are of course welcome features but how much all these will benefit the really poor people is doubtful in the given socio-economic structure in the villages in the absence of a radical land reform programme.

The CITU further notes that the additional taxes are levied in such a manner that the share of the states will be meagre in the additional revenue, which means the states will be deprived of their fair share.

The CITU urges the N.F. Govt. and the Finance Minister to withdraw the proposal for increase in petrol and diesel prices and postal charges which will hit hard the people of low income groups. The CITU also urges on the Govt. to take determined steps to give the economy a basic reorientation in consonance with its pledges and the aspiration of the people.

CITU Criticises Railway Budget

Com. P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU has issued the following statement on March 15 :

CITU is deeply concerned at the hefty freight and fare hike proposed by the Railway Minister in his maiden budget presented to the Lok Sabha on 14th March 1990. The resource problems of Indian railways are not new and the status paper issued by the Railway Minister earlier in the month had once again underlined them. These problems persisting long since pointed to the imperative necessity for radical restructuring of railway finance. The basic approach of the National Front Govt. also warrants thorough reshuffle of policies which were being pursued by the previous Govt. with its anti-people tilt. But the Railway Minister has belied our hope in that barring some minor innovations, he has by and large remained on the beaten track and sought to increase burden on the common people.

While 17% hike in first class and AC classes fare may be considered as taxing those who have the capacity to pay, increase in second class fare—more than even 17% at some stages to which will be added the drastically increased reservation charge, will impose a heavy burden on the common travelling public, which is not really consistent with the promises of the National Front Govt. The fact that there was no passenger fare hike in last year is a poor consolation to the commuters.

There is also little scope for taking the 7% - 10% freight hike and hike in charges on parcel and luggage lightly. It is common experience that official arithmetic regarding inflationary potential of imposts is always belied, thanks to the efficiency of the business world. This will undoubtedly stimulate the inflationary pressure and increase the prices of all commodities in a chain reaction. Given the present economic structure, notwithstanding the exemption of some essential commodities, the entire burden invariably shifts on to the common man.

The CITU is of the firm opinion that serious exercise should immediately be initiated with a view to radically restructuring railway policies including finance, involving trade unions and other sections of public opinion in the process. Pending this, the proposed freight and fare hikes affecting the common people should be withdrawn. (Cont'd on page 18)

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982 = 100)

Centre	1989	1990	Linking factor for Old base							
				Belgaum	Hubli-Dharwar	Mercara	Varanasi	Asansol	Calcutta	
ALL-INDIA	175	174	4.93	176	176	—	180	180	5.12	
Gudur	173	188	4.33	180	179	—	172	170	4.77	
Guntur	164	163	5.60	166	165	—	179	178	4.74	
Hyderabad	167	167	5.23	163	165	5.19	163	163	4.55	
Visakhapatnam	185	182	—	171	171	4.67	176	177	—	
Warrangal	167	167	—	172	173	—	180	183	—	
Doom-Dooma-				180	183	—	180	179	4.12	
Tinsukia	167	165	4.05	179	179	5.24	170	167	4.16	
Gauhati	182	181	—	162	163	3.49	164	162	4.40	
Labac-Silchar	168	164	3.96	178	182	5.46	170	170	—	
Mariani-Jorhat	175	175	3.95	179	178	5.18	182	182	4.97	
Rangapara-Texpur	175	172	4.29	194	194	6.41	184	183	—	
Jamshedpur	165	166	4.68	181	182	5.12				
Jharia	166	162	4.63	179	179	4.99	Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
Kodarma	162	161	5.43	182	180	—	Kothagudem	191	186	3.25
Monghyr	172	170	5.29	180	180	—	Himachal Pradesh	168	169	3.75
Noamundi	170	171	4.58	181	180	5.03	Bhilwara	174	174	3.20
Ranchi-Hatia	176	180	—	170	168	5.00	Chindwara	186	183	2.59
Ahmedabad	172	172	4.78	163	165	3.59	Tripura	189	186	4.37
Baroda	173	174	—	175	174	5.19	Goa	186	188	3.40
Bhavnagar	178	178	4.99	173	173	—				
Rajkot	176	177	—	174	177	5.01	Other Series of Labour Bureau			
Surat	185	184	—	173	173	5.17	Centre	Base	Dec.	Jan.
Faridabad	167	166	—	168	166	5.35		1989	1990	
Yamunanagar	165	163	5.53	188	187	4.80	Ammathi	1960	851	835
Srinagar	175	175	5.47	175	174	5.05	Chickmagalur	1960	863	862
Bangalore	169	168	5.66	175	175	5.27	Kolar Gold Field	1960	865	857
				169	166	—	Gwalior	1960	915	911
				176	174	—	Sambalpur	1960	877	870
				179	177	4.69	Berhampur	1949	1114	1127
				173	173	5.06	Cuttack	1949	1040	1079

Note : Figures on old base can be obtained by multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the linking factor given and rounding off the result to nearest whole number.

—Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series.

(From page 17)

While the proposed increased allocation for passenger amenities is welcome, it is still but a drop in the ocean.

Besides, while longterm measures for improved railway operation has been mentioned, the situation on the track calls for urgent short term measures for improved punctuality.

The Railway Minister's statement regarding the question of employment potential of Indian railways is disappointing. His approach clearly is a continuation of the ideas of his predecessor which were off-shoots of the former Prime Minister's craze for so-called modernisation. Employment being a major national concern, simply dismissing the question without serious exercise on the possibility of combining needs for modernising and also creating employment opportunity cannot be appreciated. The idea of increasing employment elsewhere due to impact of some measures proposed to be taken on the railways is not a serious proposition.

CITU is shocked to note that no declaration has been made by the Railway Minister regarding hundreds of railway employees who had been thrown out of job by the previous govt. and many more who had been subjected to various other forms of victimisations such as break in service, penal transfer, etc. for trade union activity. It is in sharp contrast with the performance of the Janata Govt. in 1977. The then Railway Minister could proudly declare in the Parliament that he had fulfilled his promise by taking back to job the workers who were victimised in connection with 1974 Railway strike within six weeks of assumption of office. It is highly regrettable that the Rly. Minister, who himself was a leader of Railway workers, has failed to make even a declaration even after 12 weeks of assumption of office.

The CITU urges upon the Minister for immediate withdrawal of all measures of victimisation against workers for participation in T.U. work.

Civil Aviation Minister Assures to End All Discrimination Against Air Hostesses

The Co-ordination Committee of the Indian Airlines Cabin Crew and Air India Hostesses Association along with Dipen Ghosh, M. P., M. K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU, Ramanathan, Secretary of CEU, Indian Airlines, Bombay Region and Hemant Kumar, Secretary, ACEU, Air India Bombay Region had a meeting with the Minister of Civil Aviation, Arif Mohammad Khan on 20th March, 1990. A memorandum was submitted to him regarding the unsatisfactory implementation of the Government's notification regarding Air Hostesses of both the National Carriers, victimisation of hostesses due to medicals, marriage, grounding of hostesses at 45 years of age.

Ms. Mochizuki, Japanese hostess of Air India, and its seniormost hostess today was grounded from 5th March, 1990, after having flown for 5 months, after crossing the age of 45 years in Oct 1989 on the excuse that the new Govt. does not want the hostesses to fly beyond the age of 45 years. Ms. Mochizuki has filed a suit against Air India on 20th March 1990 as Air India had assured the Tokyo Dist Court in October 1989 that she would fly till the age of 58 years. This has created adverse publicity for the Govt. of India and Air India.

At the meeting, the Minister assured the delegation that the New Govt. had not changed its stance, and that all forms of discrimination would be removed and victimisation cases resolved. He has also agreed that Air Hostesses who are grounded on confirmation of pregnancy will be paid salary till the day of delivery. The grounded air hostesses on pregnancy leave were on leave without pay.

The Minister has given a repeated and categorical assurance to the Co-ordination Committee that all discriminations between male and female cabin crew would be removed and definite instructions issued to both Airlines within a few days.

R. Gupta, Jt. Secretary, Deptt. of Civil Aviation and Rajan Jaitley, M. D. of Air India were present during the discussions. Jaitley has assured that a circular would be issued immediately, regarding the age of retirement being extended to 58 years and removal of the bar on marriage for Air Hostesses. He has also agreed in principle to the payment of salary for Air Hostesses grounded on pregnancy and will look into the practical aspects of the same. Arif Mohammad Khan has also asked Jaitley to hold discussions with the unrecognised unions regarding problems faced by their members.

15 air hostesses from Indian Airlines and Air India participated in the meeting.

Public Sector Unions To Launch Movement on Pending Issues

The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions noted with concern the opposition of the representatives of Central Government during the Tripartite Committee on DA for Public Sector Enterprises held in Delhi on 7th March to the proposal of the Central Trade Unions to grant multi-rate system of dearness allowance for the public sector workers.

The trade unions suggested 4 slabs of the rate of DA based on the total emoluments of the workers. They were prepared to spell out the details provided the Government agreed in principle the concept of multi-rate system. The Union Labour Minister agreed to discuss the matter with the Ministers of Finance and Industry and report back to the meeting about the outcome of the deliberations.

The CPSTU also strongly felt that the ceilings provided in the payment of Bonus Act have become meaningless in view of the inflation in the economy. It is necessary that these ceilings should be removed so that all employees will be entitled for Bonus in industrial units.

The CPSTU was further of the opinion that the exemption limit of income tax of Rs 18,000 was extremely low and in the forthcoming budget this exemption should be substantially raised so that the workers will be given relief from the purview of the Income Tax Act. Otherwise, the gains of the recent agreement will be nullified for a large section of workers.

The question of finalisation of Pension Scheme in public sector undertakings was pending for a long time and it was high time that a Pension Scheme based on contribution of the workers and the managements was worked out without any further delay so that the issue was settled as soon as possible.

The CPSTU therefore decided to send a deputation to the Minister of Finance and explain him the view points of the CPSTU in the third week of March so that the Government of India moved in the matter expeditiously. The public sector workers were always prepared to co-operate in improving the overall performance of the Public Sector Undertakings.

The CPSTU decided to convene an extended meeting of the Committee along with industrywise national federations in New Delhi on 9th April at 3 p.m. to review the situation and chalk out programme of movement to achieve these demands.

The CPSTU hoped that the Government of India will realise the gravity of the situation and take urgent steps so that the issues were resolved amicably without any further delay.

Bharat Electronics Workers to Protest Against Arbitrary Bifurcation and Victimisation

The trade union representatives of all the units in Bharat Electronics expressed concern at the unilateral circular issued by the BEL management to introduce business group systems in the Joint Standing Committee of BEL. The union representatives demanded that unilateral circular should be kept in abeyance before initiating discussion in the Joint Standing Committee, but management was not prepared to consider this legitimate suggestion.

The BEL management suspended a number of T.U. leaders and activists on flimsy grounds and went to the Court to obtain injunction for even organising demonstrations. Cut in increments have been imposed against several employees. The management has gone in appeal against the National Tribunal Award which was obtained after 8 years. On the question of uniform Annual leave for all the plants, the BEL management is adopting dilatory policies. The anomalies arising out of the recent bipartite wage agreements have so far remained unresolved. The trade union representatives' legitimate request to consider these matters expeditiously were also not accepted by the management.

The trade unions therefore have decided to meet the Union Defence Minister in the 3rd week of March and observe All India Protest Day on 24th March on the above demands.

If however the management goes ahead with their unilateral plan, the BEL workers all over the country will have to observe token strike on 2nd April '90.

The trade unions hoped the BEL management will appreciate the gravity of the situation and resolve all the issues amicably through negotiations with the trade unions and avert a situation which may hamper industrial relations.

CITU Union Accorded Recognition in Salem Steel Plant

At last the year-long struggle of the workers of Salem Steel Plant ended in victory. The Steel Plant Employees Union (CITU), representing the overwhelming majority of the workers was given recognition by the management after a bitter opposition jointly perpetrated by management, Government and the INTUC.

The management in active collusion with the INTUC union, which not even represented 10% of the workforce engineered uncalled for repression on the workers. Deduction of eight days pay for one day successful strike had become almost a regular event in every strike action organised by CITU. Still workers went on a number of strikes and each of such strikes attracted increasing number of workers than the preceding one. Through relentless

struggle, CITU could forge and project such unity among the workers, that even the state labour department had to recommend full recognition of the CITU union in Salem Steel Plant Management sought to nullify the same through high court, but high court also had to uphold the recommendation of State Labour Department.

Sugar Workers to Stage Dharna before Labour Ministry

The National Sugar Workers' Coordination Committee consisting of all the Central Trade Unions and federations in the sugar industry held its meeting at Constitution Club, New Delhi on March 21 evening. The meeting reviewed the chaotic situation arising out of the Government's acceptance of the Sugar Wage Board report, which the Coordination Committee demanded rejection.

In this respect the following statement was issued jointly by Bhau Phatak, Kishore Pawar, Tarachand Sethy (HMS); P.K. Ganguly (CITU); T.N. Siddhanta (AITUC); Ghanashamdas Gupta (BMS); Abani Roy (UTUC); Sohanlal Tyagi (HMKP) and B.D. Goura (INTUC).

The National Sugar Workers' Co-ordination Committee meeting in New Delhi on March 21, 1990, expresses its strong indignation at the decision dated 29.12.89 of the Ministry of Labour to accept in full the recommendations of the Third Sugar Wage Board when the Co-ordination Committee has been demanding the rejection of the Wage Board Report.

Despite attempts, the Co-ordination Committee did not have any opportunity of placing its views in details to the Labour Minister, besides brief meetings on 29th December '89 and 10th January 1990.

It is regrettable that without any discussion with the Co-ordination Committee the Labour Ministry decided to accept the Wage Board Report which has created widespread discontent among the sugar industry workers all over the country. In fact, it is learnt that the Government had already accepted the Wage Board Report when the Co-ordination Committee was awaiting further discussion with the Labour Minister. This behaviour of the Ministry of Labour is indeed condemnable. Clearly, the Co-ordination Committee has been deceived.

The Co-ordination Committee demands under the circumstances to withdraw the decision and declare accordingly rejecting the Report.

The Co-ordination Committee further demands that the Govt. discuss with the Committee the demands of sugar industry workers.

The Co-ordination Committee calls for two day Dharna in New Delhi before Shram Shakti Bhawan on 24th & 25th April 1990 and calls upon sugar industry workers from different states to participate in the Dharna on 25th April and on 24th April the members of the Co-ordination Committee will sit on Dharna.

International Struggles

POLAND

Initial Effects of "Market Economy": Polish Miners on Strike in Silesia

Le Monde issue of 18 January 1990 touched on developments in Eastern Europe. Here is a translation of one of its articles on Poland: "Miners came out on strike on Tuesday, January 16 at mines in both Upper and Lower Silesia. Three pits, in Thorez, Wiktoria and Wabrzch in Lower Silesia were occupied, and work also stopped in Czerwone Zaglebie in Upper Silesia. Reports from the Polish press agency, PAP, indicate that miners in five other Upper Silesian mines are ready to down tools. Miners at the Kazimierz Juliusz field in the same region were however persuaded to return to work after a personal telephone call from Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

The striking miners, generally led by the miners' federation of the National Trade Union Alliance of Poland (OPZZ), the union close to the Communist Party, all calling for wage rises to offset the effects of the significant price rise which have come about since the introduction of new economic regulations.

Also on 16 January, Poland's government announced, the setting up of a special fund to help the unemployed, once a market economy system is introduced. Warsaw officially estimates that 400,000 are likely to lose their jobs initially, but that the figure could rise to 5 million in the future. Poland's active population is 18 million.

The special fund will pay the unemployed 75% of their wages over the first three months, 50% for the next six months and 40% from then on. The system is also intended to provide re-training for some 300,000 people initially and, in particular, to give 10,000 of them a sum equal to 20 times their monthly wage to help them to set up in private business".

These are the initial effects of the 'most' desired new economy by some forces in the world.

BRITAIN

New Anti-Union Legislation

Britain's Parliament this spring is discussing new measures tabled by Conservative government which attack trade union rights and further reduce the negotiating strength of unions. Published only days before Christmas, the Employment Bill, the sixth anti-union bill since 1979, contains a new three-pronged attack on the remaining rights enjoyed by the organised labour movement.

Its aim is to attempt to curb unofficial trade union action, totally outlaw the closed shop and eliminate the remaining few areas where secondary action is legal.

Stung by the success of unofficial action by railway workers last summer the government's intentions, revealed in the bill, are to allow employers to selectively dismiss those it regards as organising unofficial action.

The union of the workers concerned will also be required to repudiate the strike action and will be obliged to write to the workers telling them they will not give their support and that the strikers will risk dismissal without compensation if the action continues. In addition, the immunity of the strikers against claims for damages or breach of contract will be removed. An employer will even be able to ask a union to repudiate threatened unofficial action or demand a strike ballot, which would have to be held under the severe conditions laid down by previous legislation.

Unveiling the bill, the then Employment Secretary Norman Fowler, declared that the provisions will "end the anomaly where by an employer has to dismiss either all strikers or none at all if he is not to risk being taken to tribunal for unfair dismissal".

The measures against the closed shop proposed in the bill have been linked by the government to give, for the first time, a right to workers not to be sacked for being union members. That right, not included in the consultative Green Papers which preceded the bill appears to have been included to ensure compliance with the Social Charter of the European Community and in order to off-set any opposition from the leadership of the Labour Party. The bill makes it illegal to employ a person for belonging, or not belonging, to a union and thereby allows for non-union members to apply for work in what have been up to now 100 percent unionised workplaces. The employer becomes liable if in such a situation he rejects the applicant because of their refusal to join a union.

Mr Fowler, acknowledging that there were still 1,300,000 jobs covered by pre-entry closed shop agreements, said, the bill "completes the process of out-lawing the closed shop by extending the same protection to people who are applying for jobs." Lastly the bill removes immunity from all forms of secondary action, rendering the organisers of such action to be sued for damages by employers and even fellow workers. The main measure outlined in the bill were the subject of Green Papers last year although the proposal to abolish the Wage Councils, which govern minimum salaries for some 2.5 million workers in hotels, restaurants, textiles and retailing, which had been outlined earlier, is not included in the bill.

Reaction to the bill from trade union leaders was highly critical with most stressing that the moves would harm rather than aid shop floor relations. TUC general secretary Norman Willis calls it "crude and political" and Britain's largest union, the Transport and General Workers Union denounced it as

'unworkable' adding it would "do nothing to encourage stable industrial relations". Scottish TUC general secretary Bill Spiers was even sharper commenting that it "would only make it more difficult for ordinary trade union members to get a fair deal from their bosses".

PALESTINE

The Intifada : Facts and Figures

The Intifada is in its third year. In an interview given to the New York Times, Yitzak Rabin, the Israeli Defence Minister, has stated that the Israeli forces have failed to put down the uprising and restore order and tranquility. In the early days of the uprising, the very same Rabin and his head of government, Shamir, had promised to end the Intifada within a short time.

In the two years since the uprising broke out, 760 Palestinians were killed, 374 in the first year and 386 in the following year. 51,900 Palestinians were wounded last year. 8,978 of them were treated for shot wounds, 6,750 for injuries caused by beatings, 2,667 for exposure to gas and 101 for other injuries. 1,300 of the wounded have been disabled and 100 others have lost one or both testicles.

A declaration recognizing the national and political rights of Palestinian and Israeli people would not only save the 4% of the Israeli state budget spent on quelling the Intifada but would also give the Israeli people peace, security and bread while ending the plight of the Palestinian people.

In contrast, however, house searches have been stepped up, especially in camps and villages close to major roads, as well as in the towns. Wide-scale arrests have been carried out. Army sources have acknowledged that 2,000 Palestinians have been arrested during the past two weeks. Other estimates put the figure much higher. A total of 60 locations have been raided. In the first week of December alone, 3 houses were demolished and orders were issued to destroy 13 more and seal up 3 other houses. At the Shati refugee camp, the house of Mohammed Ahmad Abdul-Ati was demolished for security reasons related to his son, Gamal, who died in his cell on December 4. As an example taken at random, the over-all outcome of the first week of December was 13 Palestinians killed and 464 injured, including 248 shot, 149 beaten and 54 gased.

PANAMA

Contrary to what the media have been broadcasting for the last two years, the reasons for the invasion and occupation of Panama initiated on December 20 last year by the armed forces of the United States of North America are diametrically opposed to those put forward by the Bush Administration. Underneath the moral clothing of the action, the factors which actually determined the invasion are set out concisely in the document entitled "A Strategy For Latin America In The 90s", and known as Santa Fe II.

It is no secret that, for the United States, the subjugation of Iboroo-America has been a historical constant, and it is put in question not by subversion and drug-trafficking, but by the new tendencies of development in the world. The real threat to the hegemonous interests of North American imperialism comes from the European Economic Community on the Atlantic side and, from the Pacific side, the expansion towards America of the so-called Five Dragons. Thus the strategy contained in the Santa Fe II aimed at consolidating its hegemony. In this context, the invasion and occupation of Panama are aimed towards making this country an experimental laboratory for the directives contained in the above strategy, in order to extend it to Central America and gradually to the whole region. Referring to what they consider to be the problems to be resolved by the Bush Administration in the nineties, the document points to: The reform of the Panamanian Political Constitution, the reform of the banking laws, the installation of a democratic regime (which means, in their eyes, one which is subordinate to the United States), the future administration of the Canal and, most essentially, "discussion should commence on a realistic defence of the Canal beyond the year 2000". Thus, it is obvious that the desire to maintain control of the Canal and secure military bases to support the execution of the strategy led to the invasion of Panama.

Consequently, actions directed against the US invasion of Panama, should aim among other things to preserve liberty and the defence of the right of the Panamanian people to determine its own course, and consequently to opt for the path of development which best favours its interests.

In accordance with the above, demands for: the immediate withdrawal of the US occupation troops from Panama, a halt to persecutions and terror, the immediate release of political and trade union detainees, the observance of constitutional guarantees, and the full respect for Human Rights, as well as the guarantee of the legal functioning of trade union and political organisations constitute the genuine expression of the democratic, popular and national liberation movement in Panama.

The National Federation of State Employees has protested to the government about victimisation by the authorities of key trade union leadership. The Federation issued a press statement in which it complained that in a matter of days and with the knowledge of the government, 1,000 trade unionists were made redundant for no good reason. The witch hunt, says the statement, affects every ministry and sector of the state administration. On the pretext of an attack on corruption and those guilty of crimes against the state, the authorities are victimising their political opponents. At the same time, the National Press Trade Union has issued an appeal condemning the continuing detention of ten journalists by the authorities and the Southern military command of the United States. It has also denounced the continued detention of its general secretary and other members. The journalists demand an end to perse-

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Namibia is Free

21st March, 1990 has become the red letter day for Namibia and the struggle of the African people against colonisation. The last colony in the African continent became free. The struggle of the Namibian people, formerly South West Africa, goes back to 1884, when it was colonised by Germany. The history of the Namibian people thereafter is a history of grim struggle for freedom against imperialism and colonialism, written with blood and sacrifice. There was continuous rebellion, attaining peaks at times and brutally put down by the German imperialists. One of the worst that occurred was between 1904-1907. The German troops brutally put down the rebellion killing about 70,000 Herero people.

Then South Africa, backed by the British imperialists invaded Namibia (then South West Africa) during First World War in 1915. Germany surrendered and since then Namibia became a colony of South Africa. But the struggle of the colonised people went on intensified. In 1920, the League of Nations, dominated by the imperialists, hatched the conspiracy to share the spoils, and gave South Africa the mandate to rule over South West Africa.

The end of the Second World War saw the devastation of the fascist forces, weakening of the imperialists, birth of the socialist camp, victory of the national liberation movements and crumbling of the colonialists one after another. But the situation in Namibia did not change. In 1946 by another conspiracy the League of Nations mandate was replaced by UN Trusteeship for 20 years, as if Namibia will be free after 20 years. But South Africa rejected it.

The history of Namibia thereafter was a history of barbarous repression by the apartheid regime backed by the US and British imperialists and of heightened struggle by the Namibian people boosted by the socialist and democratic forces. The South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) was born in 1960 opening a new chapter of the freedom struggle. 1966 opened another new chapter. The UN stripped South Africa of the Trusteeship right, South Africa defied it and the SWAPO launched armed struggle for liberation. In 1968 the UN renamed the country as Namibia. In 1971 the International Court of Justice ruled the South African occupation of Namibia illegal. South Africa again defied it and the SWAPO formed the People's Liberation Army of Namibia to conduct a most determined and organised guerilla war against the imperialist backed racist regime.

The period since then was a period of life or death struggle of the Namibian people. The legendary leader Sam Nujoma had to leave the country and lead the struggle in exile under extremely difficult conditions. In 1975, after Angola achieved independence from Portugal, the Cuban troops landed at Angola at the request of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. In 1978, UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 435 calling for a cease fire and UN sponsored elections. South Africa held a farcical election boycotted by SWAPO,

and installed its supported Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) into power. The world community rejected the elections. Yet South Africa refused to grant independence to Namibia and backed by the USA demanded withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola. The UN rejected the linkage of the two. In 1983 the DTA resigned and South Africa reimposed its direct rule over Namibia. The apartheid regime launched attacks inside Angola where the Cuban troops were stationed to help the freedom fighters.

But all the brutal repressions by the racist regime could not deter the Namibian people to carry forward their valiant struggle. While the armed struggle of SWAPO achieved world wide support, the South African regime was condemned by the world community. The regime got sustenance only from the imperialists led by the USA. The struggle of SWAPO for independence from the occupation of the apartheid regime thus became a part of struggle against imperialism too. The entire people of Africa, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Botswana and India alongwith the Non-Aligned Movement and the socialist countries and others extended all support to the struggle for independence led by the SWAPO.

The world community acknowledged the SWAPO's struggle as the struggle to establish a non-racial democratic state, a Government that would serve the interest of all Namibians, irrespective of colour or race. They acknowledged that the future independent state of Namibia under SWAPO would guarantee freedom of movement, freedom of association and equal rights to all Namibians. The armed struggle of SWAPO was therefore acknowledged as a struggle for peace and freedom.

South Africa was compelled to pull out its troops from Southern Angola in 1984. Then came the battle of Cuito Cuanavali, ending with a humiliating defeat for the war mongering racist forces. Many things happened since then. There was a cease fire, there were negotiations at London, New York and Africa between South Africa, Cuba and Angola in 1988 on withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola and independence of Namibia under the UN Resolution 435. The agreement was signed in New York in December, 1988 and the racist regime committed itself to end its support to the UNITA rebels and grant independence to Namibia.

But the struggle did not end there. The Security Council decided to reduce the forces of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) to a mere 4650 from the original 7500 as stipulated by the UN Resolution 435. The SWAPO protested. The Council of Churches of Namibia and the NAM raised the same objections. From their long drawn experience, the SWAPO stated that despite signing the agreement, South Africa would do everything to subvert the holding of free elections in Namibia. The UN forces numbering 4650 would be too small

to counter the fascist regime's 150,000 troops and the notorious murder squad Koevet. The SWAPO's statement came true. While half of the UN forces had not reached Namibia, the South African forces launched murderous attacks on the SWAPO fighters. They turned the agreement into hoax, suspended it and turned the country into a state of war again. The election process which started on April 1, 1989, thus had to be stopped. The two weeks battle killed over 300 SWAPO fighters.

However, South Africa was fighting with its back against the wall. The UN supervised elections were ultimately held in November, 1989. Sam Nujoma, the exiled leader had already returned to the country by the time. As expected, SWAPO swept the elections defeating the DTA which was supported by the South African regime. It however fell short of two-thirds majority narrowly, which would have given it the right to write the Constitution alone.

Thus came the success of one of the bitterest struggles of freedom loving people against world reaction, imperialism, against the abominable apartheid and against the successors of Hitlerite fascism to end the last vestige of colonialism in Africa. Thus became March 21, 1990, the red letter day in Namibia, when the SWAPO took over the Government throwing out the racist regime with the legendary leader Sam Nujoma as the Head of the State.

March 21 became significant for the foundation day of the SWAPO Government. It was the 30th anniversary of the formation of the SWAPO too. It was also the 30th anniversary of the barbarous Sharpeville massacre by the racist regime, which shook the world.

Apartheid still Remains

Namibia is free, Africa is free. But apartheid still remains in South Africa, where also the racist regime is fighting with its back against the wall despite being compelled to unconditionally release the other legendary leader, Nelson Mandela. Having lost their hold over the rich mineral resources of Namibia, imperialism still sustains the racist regime in South Africa. It was an unique occasion that Nelson Mandela himself was present at Windhoek on March 21 to witness the inauguration of the SWAPO Government. It was an unique occasion that the largest ever gathering occurred at Windhoek—the entire international community that supported the SWAPO, including India. It was an unique occasion that the international community of the democratic and anti-apartheid forces extended continued support to the struggle for freedom, to the

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cution and violation of the rights of opposition. They condemn the armed invasion of Panama by the United States and call for the immediate withdrawal of US forces.

HUNGARY

Unemployment and Government Counter-Measures

The notion of "unemployment" and "unemployment benefits" no longer causes surprise in the new Republic of Hungary. Currently 30,000 people without stable employment receive state benefits. By the end of 1990 the figure could reach 100,000. The number of unemployed people recently increased following the closure of a further 50 non-profitable enterprises. A total of 140 companies have gone bankrupt, including 14 state enterprises. Under existing legislation, unemployment benefit is paid for a maximum of one year, provided the unemployed person has worked the necessary qualifying period and is registered at a trade union centre. Such centres are to be found today in all major towns. Unemployment benefit amounts to between 50 and 70 per cent of the average wage of the person made redundant. Apart from the payment of benefits, the centres also assist with retraining and the acquisition of new skills. The state organises training courses and the trainees are entitled to higher unemployment benefits. Amongst the main government policies aimed at reducing unemployment, is support for investment in regions where the problem is particularly acute. Unemployed people who would like to start a business receive loans, the state paying the interest on such loans over the next 4 years. They are also helped with the purchase of equipment and other means of production. Those who have to move are entitled to an interest free loan with which to buy a new flat. Elderly people have the right to take early retirement.

(Source: *International Centre for Trade Union Rights, Issue No. 1,2/1990*)

struggle against apartheid.

It was irony of fate that the South African flag was brought down at Windhoek in presence of its President, F.W. de Klerk and the flag of SWAPO was brought up. So the struggle will continue at South Africa till all the political prisoners are released, till the flag of apartheid is brought down, till apartheid is dismantled in its entirety and South Africa also emerges as a free, non-racial, democratic State under the leadership of the ANC.