

THE VOICE OF THE WORKING WOMAN



Vol. IV No. 1

January 1984

Re. 1.00



Women Join Hands
With Women in U.K.
For Peace

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1983-An Year of Degradation for Women

The year 1983 will be remembered as an year of abuses and insults towards women resulting in countless dowry deaths, molestation and gang rapes of women, when a woman Prime Minister is ruling our country. The degradation of a woman was never so low as it was in the 1983. The working woman was discriminated in wage and promotion, was thrown out due to mechanisation, no attempts were made by the Congress rulers to implement the legislations concerning women.

But it was also a fact, the year passed was marked by raising anger of women against the management and the ruling Congress culminating in demonstrations, processions, Dharnas, arrests etc. It was marked by an urge of united actions seeking joint platform of different organisations to solve their problems. Women workers, in different states launched class struggles against their class enemies, the main slogan being a demand for an employment, as a fundamental right. CITU took the lead of mobilising working women to fight for their specific demands, for their promotion on the higher bodies. National Campaign Committee, a joint platform of the Central Trade Union was a significant step in 1983 to mobilise workers and employees. It was due to efforts of CITU, the NCC has taken up the question of working women culminating in the future joint working women's convention and demonstration, in Delhi.

The 1984, coming in the period of terrible Nuclear War clouds approaching all over the world, USA making Soviet Russia, the main target is aiming the total destruction of the socialist system. The very existence of the humanity is in danger. The working women will surely rise to occasion, joining the mainstream of the working class and common people of our country to save our country, and the whole world, from the holocaust of war

We will Continue to Fight Under CITU

Vimala Ranadive

The 2nd Conference of working women, Tamilnadu at Coimbatore was successful with majority of delegates coming from CITU. At four in the afternoon, at the open session, the hall was full with about 400 women workers in different industries.

A handloom worker, Isiku said "40,000 women are employed on piece-rate. There was no creche for their children, not a room to eat and rest! Even the toilet facilities are not there and the place they work stink with horrible smell. Minimum Wage Act is not implemented. We launched struggle to get these demands....."

At Tirpur, a big hoisery centre where more than 4000 women out of 15,000 total, and 1000 children are employed the working conditions were explained by Papati. The work continues day and night with no legal protection and security of jobs. The maximum wages are Rs. 8. Since the formation of CITU union, the conditions changed considerably with increase in wage and also getting bonus. From here, 2 women delegates attended the 4th CITU Conference at Kanpur. One delegate from Ginning factory expressed satisfaction for holding such convention which was helpful to learn about the struggles fought at various places. She said in Ginning Factory work was seasonal, only for 9 months, with daily wage of Rs. 6/- only with 50 N. P. deduction for supervisor as his commission. There was no protection against the cotton particles they had to inhale while loading and unloading the cotton. Since CITU intervened last year there was increase in wage of Rs. 1/-. She said women were molested at the work place.

Com. Mary from Plantation in Nilgiri had come from Ceylon many years back. She

said she was in fact a slave there. She insisted there should be a right to work in our country. She was surprised as to the huge demands for dowry made at present when her marriage was performed for only Rs. 5/-. Com. Sollamal from Sivakasi Match Factory made stunning speech explaining how the women and children are working with meagre wages, Rs. 5/- for women and Rs. 7/- for men with no protection against the health hazards. In one of the accidents 50 people died while management gave the figure of only 9. As soon as women asked for compensation, they were retrenched!

Shrimani from North Arcot explained the horrible conditions in Tannery. They wanted to hold a convention which the management tried to sabotage. Management asked women whether they could feed the people which was retorted by women! They were threatened if they went to the convention! In spite of that "we held a good procession and came to Coimbatore to attend". Com. Challakka in her speech described the unequal wage women received in agriculture as Rs. 5/- while for men Rs. 10/-. Com. Rudrani had from Nagercoil Plantation who described the struggle which continued for 160 days under CITU. They had no Maternity Benefit in spite of the Factory Act. Vimala from India Meters, where 122 women were employed explained as to how they could achieve their demands after the formation of CITU. Now there was a room for creche. Com. Rajeshwari from Oil Mill said "after struggles and fight we achieve our demands. What is our position? In childhood we are under the control of our father, then under the control of husband. Now let us have a day for ourselves!" Com. Rajamma from Textile Coimbatore told the delegates how

they fought in 1955, when there were 700 women, but there were only 80 women now! If we do not fight the employment will still go down!"

Com. Rajeshwari from Kumarpalayam Mill spoke well while explaining the struggles they fought. There was stay-in-strike for 24 hours, all 3 shifts were on strike. The strike continued for 5 months over the demand of retrenchment of one woman. Management threatened to bring anti-socials, but we will continue our strike....."

There are 4000 women employed on low wage on Salt Fields, Tuticorin on wage Rs. 7/- for women and Rs. 10/- for men. Susheela said when they were launching struggles the management abused them as "rotten women". Women were beaten, locked! In a challenge, we came in a procession—in thousands—the anti-social threw stones at us...65 workers were arrested, we were lathicharged! In the end the management came down.....

It was a lively experience for all the delegates, for the leaders of the CITU to hear these militant women who have gone through the bitter class struggles! All these fighting women are under CITU and will strengthen the common struggle of the working class for their demands under the CITU.

Dear Shri Mukherjee,

Please refer to your D.O. letter no. SM/2635/F-3/83 dated 6 September 1983 regarding representation of CITU and AIDWA in the advisory Committee set up under the Equal Remuneration Act.

I have got the matter examined. In the reconstituted Committee we have three employees' representatives. I regret that it was not possible to accommodate more representatives from the employees' side by enlarging the committee at this stage,

With regards,

Working Women's Conference

Tamilnadu, 27 December

The conference started with flag hoisting by Com. Lakshmi, who works in a Spinning Mill, Coimbatore. It was followed by the shouting of the slogans by participants. There were about 126 delegates and 54 observers from all over Tamilnadu. Com. Mythili Shivaraman, proposed the names of Jayanthi, Kalistha and Dhanalaxmi as members of the Presidium. Jayanthi called upon Eswari, Tripur to welcome the gathering

Jayanthi read out the resolution paying homage to the Martyrs Veerumma garlanded Com' Vimala Ranadive.

Com. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Working Women's Co-ordination Committee in her key note address pointed out that, it is apt to have this function now, this being the Marx Centenary year. This convention pays its tribute to Marx, who has done a lot for women. She explained at length, the various struggles in which our workers have gloriously participated. She concluded her speech, emphasising the need for greater participation of women in Trade Unions, the need for changing the present socio-economic set up of our society, and the need for world peace. This was followed by a resolution on prevention of war and restoration of peace. The noon session came to an end with the presentation of work report by Saraswathi and general report by Com. Mythili.

The noon session started with the discussion on the work report and general report, Nearly 23 women participated in the discussion and spoke. They were from textile, oil mill, India Meters, Tablet Company, Hosiery, TWAD, Municipality, Rubber, Leather com-

Continued on Page 24

Successful District Conference in Kerala

Com. A. Nazimuneza, Kerala

The CITU State Committee at its meeting held on 6 October 1982 at Ernakulam, decided to hold the District Conventions of the Working Women's Co-ordination Committee. Accordingly district conventions were held in almost all the districts.

Calicut :— Convention of the Working Women in Calicut District was held on 27.11.1983 at the Government Training College Auditorium. Com. T.V. Sumangala inaugurated and Comrade Girija Bai, State Co-ordination Committee member, addressed the convention. About 150 women workers attended. Workers from Coir, Beedi, Plantation, Headload, Timber & Plywood, Mavoor Rayons, Electricity, Transport and also employees from LIC & P&T, Municipalities and Corporation and NGOs and teachers participated in the convention. A twentyone member committee, with Comrade P. Soudamini as President & Comrade M. Janakikutty as Secretary, was elected.

Palghat :—District convention was held on 6.11.83 at K.G.T.A. Hall, Palghat. Out of the 74 Women Workers attended, 57 were from CITU Unions. A fruitful discussion on the functioning of the Co-ordination Committee was held. An ad hoc committee with Comrade Girija Surendran as Convenor was formed. Comrade A. Nazimuneza & Comrade Girija Bai spoke in the Convention. CITU District President & Secretary also addressed the Convention.

Trichur :—The convention of the working women was held on 27.11.1983 at the Regional Theatre, Trichur, which was attended by about 350 women workers. Comrade Nazimuneza presented a comprehensive report high-

lighting the aims and programmes of the Co-ordination Committee. Representatives of Canning Workers, Anganvadi Teachers, part-time contingent employees, Farm Workers of Agricultural University, Government School teachers, NCOs., Beedi Workers, P&T employees, Tile, Cashew & Tailoring Workers actively participated in the discussion. State Co-ordination Committee member Comrade S. Santhakumari spoke in reply to the points raised in the discussion. A twenty five member committee with Comrade A.R. Sarojini as Convenor was elected.

Ernakulam :—Convention of Working Women was held on 13.11.1983 which was attended by 65 working women from various sections. Comrade S. Santhakumari presented the State Committee Report. Com. M.K. Padmam & Com. Soni Kometh were elected as President and Secretary of new District Committee respectively.

Idukki :— The Idukki District Committee of Working Women was held in the Recreation Club Hall at Vazhathope on 4.12.1983. Ninety-one including 43 from CITU unions participated in the convention was inaugurated by State President Com. M. Sarada and District Secretary Com. N. Premakumari presented the report. Women from various sections took part in the discussion. Com. M. K. Padmam President of Ernakulam Committee addressed the convention. The new District Committee has 21 members with Com. N. Premakumari as President & Comrade N.V. Lucy as Secretary.

Kottavam :— Comrade M. Sarda inaugurated the District Convention held on 6.11.1983. Fiftyfive women from various sections participated. Comrade S. Santhakumari presented a report on the working of the State Co-ordination Committee. A 28 member Committee with Comrade Saraswathy Amma as president and Com. Satheemony Amma as Secretary was elected.

Assault on Pupil Nurses in King George Hospital

Com. Punyavati

IF the nurses who could not get the security when they are on duty in a big hospital like King George Hospital, what security the nurses who are working in mofussile areas can get?

Unfortunately, the assault was launched on 23-9-83 at about 9 P.M. in K.G. Hospital on pupil nurses by some antisocial elements after some quarrels between one pupil nurse and a senior house Surgeon (just exchange of words). A Senior house surgeon, beat a pupil nurse with chappal who came from Andaman for training, on 19-9-83 at about 8 P.M. When both were on duty. This type of incidents occurred even before also. Immediately the next day on 20.9.83 the nurses and pupil nurses went on agitation demanding an action against that Senior House Surgeon. At the same time the medical Students and junior doctors also went on agitation demanding an action against Soroja (the victim) making false accusations against her. The Superintendent asked nurses for 48 hours time to settle the matter. After 2 days, on 23.9.83 he dismissed the House Surgeon. Again on 23rd night at about 8'0 Clock quarrel took place among one junior house surgeon and pupil nurse. With these two incidents in one day, that night at about 9'0 Clock nearly 100 anti-social elements (some of them were recognised as medical students) entered into the wards, created tense atmosphere in the hospital, frightened the nurses, patients, and some of the doctors, beat 3-4 pupil nurses who could not escape from them. All the pupil nurses were afraid. They protected themselves by lying under the patient's beds. Some of the pupil nurses were rescued by the Doctors also.

Can we expect such type of things happening in a big hospital, that too attached to

the Medical-College? Can we expect that the doctors who ought to protect the life of the people, behave like this? But this is not the only problem of the pupil nurses and the nursing staff as a whole. When we study the problems of nurses, the hospital situation as a whole, we could know that the policies of the Govt. are not in favour of Nurses, Doctors, and Public.

After discussing with the Doctors as well as nurses the following demands are made: (1) Govt. should increase the health budget, so that more doctors as well as nurses, can be appointed, and proper care can be taken of the patients solving the problems of the staff also. (2) The nurses and their organisations should join the main stream of the mass movements to solve their problems.

Women in ECIL Launch Struggle For The First Time

C.H. Padmini

On 21 October 1983 ECIL Employees Union has signed an agreement with the management in the presence of Labour Commissioner, Hyderabad about the promotion policies for the benefit of workmen in ECIL.

As the workmen at lower grades like helpers, cleaners, etc. and the workmen at higher grades are getting stagnated after attaining some basic demands, hence the union has demanded for the higher promotions to the workmen. But the management was adamant to modify the present system of promotion. Insisting on the same issue, management has agreed the same linking it with productivity. Then the union has entered on various strug-

gles like black badge wearing, slogan shouting, procession, mass rally, hunger strike and at last indefinite hunger strike by the General Secretary of E.C. Employees Union.

On the sixth day of the General Secretary's hunger strike and seeing the unity of the workmen management has come down and agreed for an amicable settlement. The same has been signed as said above. There are nearly 2000 women working in this - 200 have participated in the above programme, 10 have participated in hunger strike. The major achievement in this struggle is that the participation of women employees in ECIL. Practically all, participated in all the struggles including the mass relay hunger strike and in procession alongwith the male employees giving slogans.

This is for the first time that women employees have participated in struggles like this on large scale, and the reason for it is the democratic function of the present union which mobilised the working women in ECIL to fight for their rights.

A Convention on Atrocities and Dowry deaths

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Sangham and A.P. Mahila samakhya of Vizag Dist Committees jointly convened a convention on Atrocities on woman and dowry deaths in Town Hall, Vaizag on 19-11-83. The two organisations, invited all the trade union leaders, youth organisations, local MLAs, Civil Liberties Union and other women organisations including the prominent personalities in the city who are concerned with this problem.

The town Hall was full. Nearly 500 women, including 150 working women participated. AIR, Vaizag correspondent attended and recorded the proceedings and produced them in the women programme. Smt. Dharmasami Sarada, Suganavath, Bharati, presided over the convention and gave the

addresses, Smt. Malleswari welcomed the speakers.

The local corporator and the leader of AITUC, Vaizag said that when women could walk in the streets at midnight without any fear, then only we could say it is real independence.

Smt. Madhavi said despite the rule of Mrs. Gandhi, a women Prime Minister, problems of women are still there. The Dowry amendments are not yet introduced in Parliament. Vice-President of CITU Com Subha Rao said that the election of women MPs and MLAs could not solve the problems of women and unless there is a change in the present capitalist society, the dowry deaths, molestation on women would continue. The women's organisations should fight these evils along with trade unions, demanding a change in the present social set up.

Smt. B. Venkateswari opined that illiteracy should be removed and the intercast marriages should be encouraged.

Smt. Punyavati, Dist. secretary A.P. Mahila Sangham emphasised that the police were not taking any action against the culprits and untill and unless the women get economic independence, the problems will not be solved.

Sri M. V. S. Swama spoke on the obscene posters, blue films, obscene literature etc. in which woman has been made a commodity for the market.

Smt. Yesoda, Secretary of A. P. Mahila Samakhya narrated a number of incidents where women were molested. Shri P. H. Naidu, Advocate and member of A. P. Civil Liberties Council, Corporator Smt. Vijya, Shriniwas Rao, Jagadishwara Rao also spoke in the convention.

A resolution was passed in the convention condemning incident of rape and a murder of a 17 years old girl, Bhanumathi, and the death of Kanakaratham, demanding the police action against the culprits.

Social Welfare Mahila Karmachari on Strike

Com. Pramila Pandhe, Delhi

The women numbering about 500 most of whom are refugees have been employed to stitch the clothes of class IV employees.

The working conditions in these 19 centres are deplorable. The women have to sit on the floor, while the durries provided to them to sit are almost in pieces. They have to work even in severe winter on these durries. There is no proper lighting arrangement. The lights are at high level and most of them are out of order and hence they prefer to work in the open verandah even during the hot summer. There are no fans and adequate ventilation and they have to huddle together while working due to lack of space. Generally, 30-35 women work at each centre.

Though they are working in these centres for more than 30 years, these women workers are still treated as piece-rated workers, and have not been regularised so far. Thus they are deprived of all the benefits other workers are getting. Moreover they have to pay from their pockets for raw materials such as thread, buttons, buckles, machine oil, ironing of clothes and repairing of the sewing machines. These workers get from a minimum Re. 1/- for Payjama, and bags to a maximum of Rs. 33.35 to sew overcoats for men. Their average monthly income is Rs. 125 to 150, out of which the administration is deducting 25% on the plea of maintenance charges. Since 1974 there has been no revision in the wage rate, though the wages in other department were revised, when the department was transferred to the Delhi Administration in 1974, the wage rates of these workers were revised. However, the bureaucrats did not implement the revised rates till the women workers went on strike in 1977.

It should be noted in this connection that the Delhi Administration has announced revision in minimum wages three times since 1977 but the wages of these piece-rated women workers have not been revised so far. This is a gross injustice to these workers.

In this regard the Social Welfare Mahila Karmachari Union approached Delhi Administration, Union Home Minister, Labour Minister and Social Welfare Minister. But no step has been taken so far to ameliorate the legitimate grievances of these women workers. The union has submitted a charter of demands on 12 May 1982 consisting of the demands asked for.

The strike and relay hunger strike started on the 7th of December 1983. On 12, December the authorities of the Directorate of Training-cum-production offered the representatives some unspecified return out of 25% deducted by it from the wages of these women workers. The offer has not been accepted by the representatives and they have decided to continue the strike till the demands are fulfilled.

On 21 December 1983 Mr. Sushil Bhattacharya, M.P., General Secretary Delhi State CITU met the Lt. Governor alongwith the union representatives Smt. Saroj Saxena President, Smt. Pramila Pandhe General Secretary, Smt. Kishori Saxena, Secretary and Smt. Ranjana from CITU Delhi Committee and requested him to intervene in the dispute. Accordingly the Lt. Governor invited the representative of the union for talks on 22 December and also called the officials of the Administration Mr. Suman Swarup Secretary cum-Director, Technical Education and Training-cum-Production Centre and K. Nath,

Chief Rehabilitation Services and Smt. Kanpadhe. The union delegation was led by Smt. Susheela Gopalan M.P. who discussed the issue with the Lt. Governor. He assured Smt. Susheela Gopalan and the union representatives that he will implement the wage rise and would stop the cut of 25% from 1st January 1984. Regarding other demands he said that would be considered afterwards and requested the delegation to withdraw the strike and relay hunger strike. The strike is withdrawn later. The demands are:-

1. Stop 25% deduction from the wages.
2. Increase in piece-rates.
3. All expenses for the raw material, such as thread, buttons, buckless, pads, (for coats) and machine repairs be borne out by the Administration.
4. Old age pension.
5. All facilities given to other employees such as Provident Fund, Medical Leave and casual leave, earned leave etc.
6. Regularise all the workers.

Accordingly to the latest information the Delhi Administration agreed to stop the 25% cut from the wages, as well to enhance the piece-rates.

Nov. 23rd Observed in Bhavanagar Com. Nira Patel

23 November was celebrated by Bhavnagar Unit as per the call given by AIDWA.

251 women and girls staged dharna at Ghogha Gate of Bhavanagar City. Huge mass gathered there. Iva Mehta, Alkaananda Parekh, Savita Patel, Kashiben Baraiya addressed more than 5000 people, who stood and heard about the amendment to dowry Prohibition Act, Cr.P.C., I.P.C. and Evidence Act, and other laws.

To make 23 November a great success, Bhavanagar Unit held 7 street meetings of women and also sent 1000 printed Post Cards to Prime Minister.

On 23 November a memorandum was submitted by the delegation of Janwadi Mahila

Sangh Gujarat, consisting of Niru Patel, Damaynti Parekh, Nalini Jadeja Sewamani and Nurjahan to the Governor and Chief Minister of Gujarat. Delegation drew attention of Chief Minister that although some states have enacted special Dowry Prohibition Act, Gujarat has not enacted. Gujarat Chief Minister assured the delegation that attention of Government is drawn towards the suspicious death of a woman and will immediately send special CID personnel for inquiry.

Appeal To Supreme Court In Dowry Case

The Delhi administration has decided to appeal to the Supreme Court against the judgement of the Delhi High Court acquitting three members of a family including the husband who had earlier been sentenced to death by the Additional Session Judge, Mr. S. M. Agrawal, on the charge of murder of the young bride, Sudha. Mr. Aggarwal had sentenced Lakshman, the husband, his brother Subhas Chander and mother Shakuntala Devi to death holding that they were guilty of murder of Sudha who died of burn injuries.

Against the judgement of Justice R. N. Aggarwal, a number of Women belonging to Delhi Janawadi Mahila Samiti, and other organisations demonstrated outside the High Court in the month of November challenging the judgement. Women organisations along with women advocates of Supreme Court met the Lieutenant Governor urging upon him to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Voice of Working Woman

Bi-monthly Journal

Price Rs. 1/-

Yearly Subscription Rs. 6/-

NOTE

All those who desire to enrol subscribers are requested to ask for the receipt book from
6, Talkatora Road,
New Delhi - 110001

Convention On Legal Changes For Women

Madhu Sethia, Jaipur

On December 18, 1983 the Jaipur District Janwadi Mahila Samiti organised a successful convention on legal changes for women, attended by about one hundred and twentyfive women, coming from nurses, teachers, bank employees, students, lecturers, Kachi Bastis and factories.

The inaugural speech was delivered by Shri Nathu Lal Jain, Advocate General of Rajasthan. He emphasised the need for women to get organised and fight in order to bring about desirable changes in such laws which are discriminatory to women. He also mentioned the gains of women in socialist countries and the great advance which has been made there towards establishing equality between men and women.

Mrs. Sushila Gopalan, General Secretary of All India Women's Association, the main speaker at the convention, made a great impact upon the women of Jaipur by speaking about the lacunas in the present laws regarding women's employment, working hours and other necessary protections for working women.

Seema Akhtar, a student from Kanaria College read a paper on the discrimination against Muslim women in the present Muslim Personal Law. Another student Anta Nayar spoke about the need for legal changes in the context of the general backwardness of women in Rajasthan. A paper on maintenance provisions in the present law was presented by Lucy. M. Jacob, leader S. E. Asia Studies Centre, University of Rajasthan.

Nandini Upreti from Kanaria College Women's Studies Cell, Chandra Bhail from Ruwa, Premlata Shah from Pragatisheel

Mahila Federatio (NFIW) Santosh Kulshreshtha from Law Faculty, University of Rajasthan, highlighted many aspects of the present law which violate the right to equality given by the constitution.

Prabha Saxena, a well known Hindi writer presided over the convention. Madhu Sethia of J. M. S, in her summing up speech highlighted the importance of the convention and emphasised the need for action programmes by women in order to make the rights won on paper, a reality for the masses of Indian women.

On November 20, around two hundred women coming from six women's organisations of Jaipur, demonstrated at Jawahar Nagar Police Station to demand a proper and fair enquiry in the case of Prabha Bhatias death, a young married house-wife, who was found hanged in her house on November 15, 1983. According to her in-laws she committed suicide but almost all the neighbours and friends maintain that it is a case of murder, because of the position in which her body was found hanging, the string used for strangulation was very thin and small, one of the doors of the room in which she was found hanging was open from inside. The General feeling in the area is that the Police and SHO of Jawahar-nagar area is trying to cover up the case because they have received a bribe of Rs. 25,000 from Prabha's in-laws through a local Congress (I) man.

In the women's demonstration women and children from Prabha's parental family participated in a large number. The women handed a memorandum to the DSP. A deputation comprising of N. Upreti and S. Rao of Women's Studies Cell, K.M.M., Mamta Jately and Pawan Surana from Ruwa and Madhu Sethia from Janwadi Mahila Samiti, Jaipur met the Director General of Police Rajasthan in this connection.

Janwadi Mahila Samiti—Jamshedpur

Geeta Jha

About 40 women in Jamshedpur and Singhum districts Janawadi Mahila Samiti laboured day and night as volunteers to make the arrangement for holding the working committee meeting CITU. They collected Rs. 1250/- by visiting the colonies of Harhaguha, Baghed, Pramodnagar, Adityapur and Parsudit. Com Mala, the active worker of cultural squad of Singhum collected Rs. 500/-. The working women took leave for 4 days to help the CITU when they served food, collected money ect. Com. Geeta Jha, Arati Mukherjee and Malasundari Devi were on the Reception committee who worked very hard for the success of the working committee.

On 1-12-83 a meeting of about 30 working women in LIC, contract, teachers and Railway was held when com. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of AICCWW and Com. Ahilya Rangrekar the Joint Secretary of AIDWA addressed them explaining the working conditions of woman in different industries and offices.

Another meeting under the auspices of Janwadi Mahila Samiti Jamshedpur was held about 79 women attending. Ahilya Rangrekar while addressing the women gave instances as to how women in different states under AIDWA are fighting for the rights of women against molestation and dowry deaths.

Women Workers at Ranchi Brick Klin on Strike

Sunita and Bhagni were two militant women workers from Brick Klin factory Bibrish, Ranchi in the procession of about 100 women along with hundreds of male workers who came to hear the leaders of CITU at the maidan at Jamshedpur after the Working Committee meeting on 3rd Dec. was over. Sunita was vocal and when asked about the working conditions in the factory said, "we should get

minimum Rs. 13/- per day as per the rule. But we get only Rs. 6/- we do not get medical benefit, there is no permanency even after 10 12 years of work, we had to go on strike and this is the 3rd Month, we will not go back to work unless we get our demands".

Bhagni another militant woman worker explained how they had to fight against the antisocials who came with swords, sticks etc. attacking them. "We had to defend ourselves and we did". We went on strike because our four girls were retrenched. We make 100 bricks daily and when they are sold in the market the owner gets Rs. 500/- profit by giving us a meagre salary"? In this factory about 50 women are working. There is a contract system.

A few other girls who came from Ranchi were from cold drinks factory. Main work was washing the bottles. There are about 25 women altogether employed. They work for 8-12 hours getting wages only Rs. 6/- per day. These young girls do not get minimum wages nor medical benefit or maternity leave.

Militant Demonstration by Women

By Com. Usha Raghuvanshi M.P.

On 16th September a militant demonstration was staged at Gwalior by 300 women who were demanding immediate redressal of the various burning problems affecting normal civic life. Due to road blockade the traffic remained dislocated for several hours in the Maharaja Rana Area. The demands included clearing of garbage heap, maintenance of city's sewerage system, adequate water supply, steps to curb malpractices by fair price shopowners, rehabilitation of persons displaced from Subarna Rekha Site, provide adequate street lights and other civic amenities, relief to flood affected people, pension for widows, employment for weaker sections etc. The successful road blockade was withdrawn only when the Deputy Mayor accepted their memorandum and assured to give sympathetic consideration to the demands.

Com. Susheela Gopalan on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 1983 on 21.12.1983

...It took two years for the Committee to present its recommendation. The recommendation was brought in this House one year and four months back. Dowry killings and harassments and so many effects of dowry are the result of prevailing understanding of the Society and the prevailing out-moded ideas in the society. That is why we thought of a Bill not only to deal with dowry deaths but also to deal with the system of dowry-how to do away with this system. That is why we have gone in detail. I was a Member of that Committee. We have toured all over India. Finally we have presented the report having wide implications. Without bringing a comprehensive Bill, I do not think this piecemeal legislation will help. You might have read the recent judgement of the Delhi High Court.

What does the High Court Judge in Sudha Goel case say :—

“It may be that in September or October, the mother-in-law or some other member in the family may have told the deceased that in case she gave birth to a male child they would expect a fridge and a scooter and some cash. It is customary in the Hindus that on the first delivery of a child particularly on the birth of a male child, the parents give presents. The in-laws or husband may have felt the need of a scooter and refrigerator and a scooter.....This evil is in vogue in our society since time immemorial and shall take time to be curbed”.

You see, what is the understanding of even the learned judge about the demands of presentations. He says, it is a gift. If that is his thinking and if a case comes before him, will he accept the view point that it is a dowry? You are going to deal with these murders.

Will a judge who consider demands for gift as customary think that the dowry is a motive for murder ?

In many states, police and other authorities are taking an attitude against the victims. When a lady is giving her dying declaration, the policemen and even the doctors do not take it seriously. There was a specific instance in Tamil Nadu wherein the doctor advised her: You are an Indian woman who is always known to save her husband even at the cost of her life. Why do you give a dying declaration against your husband ? Anyhow, you are going to die. You save your husband”. This was the plea from the doctor and the policemen. Even the present legislation is used against the interest of women.

You say that family courts are to deal with family issues and not criminal cases. Why can't a case come to the family court with regard to harassments be tried there ? The jurists are also there. I think sometime reconciliation is possible even in cases where harassment are involved. The present courts never go into the details of the question. They depend on the lawyers. If he is a good lawyer, he can argue before the court with strong points and the case. Even in this legislation there is a lacunae.

Where are the provisions in this Bill to take help at least from Women's organisations or the social welfare organisations ? You say that with regard to the cognizable offence there is a public servant. The State Government has to notify. Will that be notified by the State Government ? I am afraid this is not going to help you. You can therefore specifically mention the recognised women's organisations

or a social welfare organisation working for the benefit of women or championing the cause of women can be involved in this.

Many directives and orders were given by the Central Government to State Governments. In Rajya Sabha, the Home Minister said :

“To combat the mance of dowry deaths, instructions were issued on 22.7.80 to all the State Government and Union Territories that investigation should be conducted in all cases of attempted suicide or death in suspicious circumstances of young married women, during the first five years of their marriage. Such cases should be investigated by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police and the post mortem should be done by a team of two doctors. The disposal of the dead body without post mortem should not be permitted except with a no objection certificate by the police and the police should not give such a certificate unless the dead body has been seen by the parents or guardians or other close relations of the bridge side of the family”.

Do you know in how many State Government these directives have been observed ? It is not being observed in any State. At least to my knowledge, it is not. Why did the Government not find it possible to incorporate this provision in the Bill itself ? The body of the victim should not be disposed of before her parents come and see the body. Even in the post mortem cases what is happening ? It is good that the post mortem should be done whenever there is a suspicious death. But on most of the occasions even the doctors are on the side of the accused. This is the reality. So it should be provided that the body should be disposed of after the parents come and see the body.

What I want to say that if we have to make it pucca legislation, one of the most

important things is to involve women's voluntary organisations in this so that they can raise some objections.

Then with regard to family courts you have said that there is a special court functioning in Delhi. That is because the Supreme Court has given a directive. But that is not sufficient.

With regard to setting up of the Women's Commission also, Minister will say that this is not a remedy for everything. But I tell you that these are the recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Women. They gave the report in 1975. In that report they have suggested changes in many of the laws with regard to women. I do think that the Government is serious about it. Why do we want the Women's Commission ? It will see that all the protective legislations for the benefit of women are fully implemented. If there is a statutory women's commission, we can point out these things to them and as a statutory commission if they give directive to the State Government and the Central Government, of course, they will have to implement it. You can constitute a commission in the State as well as in the Centre. We do not say that this is a solution for everything. But we are in the field. You know we are propagating against the dowry system itself, the evil effects of that, for the last two months.

About 5 lakhs signatures the Prime Minister might have got from our All India Democratic Women's Association asking her to pass the dowry legislation and also a common law for women.

Will the Government rise to the occasion ? Never before a committee might have given such a recommendations unanimously. Very few amendments and dissenting notes are there. We all agreed. We intend on this

because this is an evil which has to be eradicated.

Com. Kanak Mukharjee in Rajyasabha On 5th Dec.

Com Kanak Mukherjee while speaking made some important points on the Bill. She said :

.....After all, the Govt has wisely chosen a time before election to show something. Anyway whatever it is, it is a shocking revelation of the grave social condition we are in that after 36 years of independence we need a law for stringent punishment for rape. And we very often boast of the advancement of our country. We claim to be civilised and our Constitution promises 'Socialism' too. But is it not definitely a retrogression from where we started in 1947 at the time of our Independence ?

Sir, the progress of the society is expressed in the position of women in that particular society. And what is the position of women we find in our country—what uncivil and undignified relation between men and women in general ? We find that very often women fall victim to rape and men become aggressive. Are the women only to satisfy the sexual lust of the men ? This is a shocking and painful thing to discuss in this Parliament, as my Hon. friend as already said.

But the fact is that cases of rape and atrocities on women are increasing everyday and the capital tops the list, I must say comparatively. According to the reports received by the Select Committee, there were 2,986 cases of rape in nine States during 1978, 1979 and 1980. But there was conviction only in 444 cases, and the Court rejected 1,509 cases and judgements being delayed in the rest of the cases. And it is needless to say that the number of the cases registered is much less than the actual number because most of the

cases are not at all registered for various reasons.

Sir, the Select Committee made some important recommendations, and the Bill has not done full justice to some of them. Firstly, the Select Committee suggested stringent punishment to economically dominant sections who commit rape on their employees. We have seen that women of the backward and downtrodden section very often fall victims of rape even by the hired people of the landlords and mill-owners whom they employ to crush the struggles of the poor people.

It is painful to note that during the last two years gang rape was committed in over 16 villages in North India. Sir, in Hissar in Haryana to break the strike even goondas were employed who not only beat the workers but also raped their women. Where is the protection of these women in this Bill ? Now where.

Again Sir, the Select Committee made another important recommendation for providing rehabilitation and compensation to the rape victims if they are in utter distress.....

Then, I come to this trial in camera. This is welcome insofar as the names of the victims are not revealed so that no social stigma attaches to them.

But, Sir I am afraid that it may go too far and that along with the names of the victims which may be hidden the names of the accused may also be hidden. This should not be a hidden way to permit the accused to escape punishment. There should be caution on this ground and this hidden business should not go too far, and give a hidden way of escape from punishment to the accused also. There should be a suitable provision in the law in this direction.....

Working Women Under Socialism

The Soviet, Chinese and Yugoslavia women delegates who attended the All India Conference of AIWC at Trichi were interviewed by Hema, Chandra and Vasuki at Trichi. A reception to these delegates was arranged in a short time, attended by Handloom, Beedi and Textile workers. Com. Pappa Umanath the General Secretary of Tamilnadu Branch of AIDWA welcomed and garlanded.

Com. Lidia Bormina is working as Dean of English Faculty in the Foreign Languages Institute, Moscow.

1. *Question* : Women in U.S.S.R. have secured equality with men in almost all spheres. Does it apply to political field? Is there any reservation for women in the Supreme Soviet and below?

Answer : Yes, Women in U.S.S.R. are equal to their men counterpart in political administration also. In local Soviets the representation of women is 50% and in the Supreme Soviet the representation is 37% now.

2. *Question* : What are the general activities of your women's organisation?

Answer : 90% of our women are working. So the general work of our organisation is to deal with the problems of working women. Our Government renders all help to do it. Our organisation has a number of standing commissions. The commissions study proposals complaints and hardships of women. They have the right to initiate legislations. There is no fixed subscription but voluntary contributions can be made to a fund called 'Peace Fund'. The organisation helps to educate people from under developed countries. They select women from these countries including India and invite them for free education in

the Soviet Union. All the expenditure in this connection are met by the organisation.

3. *Question* : What is the role of women in Trade Unions?

Answer : In the organisation and functioning of trade unions women are equal with men. 50% of the membership in Trade Unions are from women. There are special standing commission for privileges of women. Women are generally not forced to do night shift work. During pregnancy she is allotted with some lighter job other than normal routine but with the same salary. The working hours for all are five working days in a week, are less during the period. Many of the routine work in home need not be attended to by women. The laundaries serve at doorsteps and we do not need to wash our clothes. We need not cook because whatever food required is prepared and delivered fresh and hot in the shops.

4. *Question* : What are the privileges of working women during and after pregnancy at the place and in the society?

Answer : Women are given 112 days fully paid maternity leave—56 days before delivery of the child and 56 days after. If the delivery is difficult, 72 more days of leave is given. The women may join work on the expiry of this leave. However, if they prefer staying at home they are permitted to stay at home for one year for a part fixed salary of 35 roubles. If they prefer staying at home even on the expiry of this stipulated leave, they will be permitted to do without any wage payment. But her position will be kept and there is no interruption of service. More than 15 million

children go to pioneer camps. Then women are absolutely free at home. If she has more than two children, additional leave of 3 days is granted besides the normal 24 days' leave. In granting of leave generally it is given on routine and men are not granted leave in the months of May and June which are vacation months. But women are given leave in the months of their choice even including the months of May and June. If the child is sick the mother is granted 14 days paid holidays. For nurturing a child in Kinder Garten 80% of the expenditure is met by the Government and 20% of the family. Children start going to school at the age of 7 years. For facilitating working women special prolonged schools are there. The children are provided with bedrooms, taken out for walk, given music, arts and books of their choice for parttime and dinner is provided. The mothers can take home the children after their working hours. Normal working hours of the school are 9 A.M. to 1 P. M. and they are provided with tuition after that time also. There are also boarding schools from which the parents can take their wards on Saturdays and Sundays. There are periodical medical examinations for children. Music, art and sport activities are nurtured. There are technical schools and children after 15 years of age are admitted in them. There they are taught on specialised courses in which the child is showing interest and talented, besides general education. Medical aid is completely free for men, women and children-bed, food and treatment.

5. *Question* : The Western media is propagating that rapings, pre-marital sex and crimes on women are in the increase in Soviet Society. You do not seem to counter them. Why ? Is the Soviet children given sex education ?

Answer : There are crimes but they are relatively less. We need not counter the false propaganda of the Western media just for that sake when the truth is otherwise. Education is compulsory for 10 years till 17, after which the child can go to professional course or general education. After 17 years if the child prefers to go to work and not to the university, working hours are comparatively reduced for part-time education. Sex education is imparted only in certain schools from the age of 16 years.

6. *Question* : What is the membership of your organisation and its composition ?

Answer : There are 80 million members enrolled in the Soviet Women's Committee which has statutory power as I told earlier. The committee gets fund for its functioning from Fund of Peace. The other details of the organisation have already been dealt with. 500 jobs like Mines which are decided to be health hazards for women are barred for women. They conduct annual plenums. They actively took part when the laws of marriage was enacted. All the laws affecting the women are referred to be discussed and finalised by the Committee.

The three delegates Yu Shuquia Zou Xiaoquao and Lie Thenfen who visisted Tiruchy recently, are members of All China Womens Federation (ACWF). This is the biggest women's Association in China, with branches all over. ACWF plays an influential role in froming legislations, pertaining to women. It is keen to protect the interests of women and children. Its important task is to educate its members ideologically and politically. It emphasises on self-respect for women and emancipation of women.

The status of women changed after 1949 (Setting up of Peoples China). The constitution ensures equality of women and men in all walks of life. Though they have achieved equa-

lity, the struggle of emancipation of women is not complete. The remnants of feudalism are still found and hence the struggle continues, they said. From the central level to the grass root level, women play a significant role in decision making. In the parliament 21.2 percent members are women. Women are given the same wages as men for the same work. Both men and women are given equal job opportunities. They are given equal opportunities in their access to education. This apart, in the home-front also, women enjoy equality. Men share the household chores, which brings down the strain and tension on women.

Regarding marriage, the delegates pointed out that except in a few families, which are somewhat conservative, girls enjoy the freedom of choosing their partners.

When asked about the vigorous family planning drive that goes on, the delegates said that people in China have been educated to have only a one child family. They should control the birth of the second child and no third child. The reasons for such a family planning drive are (a) the rate of growth of population is very high, (b) in spite of development in all spheres, considering the rate of population growth, the needs of the people cannot be met, (c) health of the mother is an important one, (d), to ensure good quality of the babies (e) hygiene. When asked about their attitude to female babies, they said that, "we protect female babies—a female baby is given the same treatment as its male counterpart. There may be a few exceptions and we are trying to educate our women on this".

Regarding the participation of women in the trade union activities the delegates remarked that nearly 40 million workers are engaged in the production of various goods and services. Many women hold important positions in trade unions. The Vice-President of All

China Trade Union is a woman. The unions are set up, occupation-wise. More than 10 women at present occupy the post of Vice-Chairman of trade unions.

Working women in China enjoy all facilities. If a mother has only one child, she is entitled for 6 months maternity leave with full pay. In rural areas, there are nurseries to take care of kids. Every factory has a good creche. A child is looked at as the responsibility of the state, rather than that of the parents. They are given free medical aid etc....

The delegates from Yugoslavia asserted that their women have achieved great progress in their society. But in their country there is no special organisation for women, because the problems of women are considered to be problems that concern the entire society.

In the field of women's education Yugoslavia has been able to achieve great success. In secondary schools roughly half the total number of students are girls. In the field of higher education (at the university level) also there are large number of women. Crimes against women are rare in Yugoslavia.

Women are given equal opportunities in all walks of life. They also have the right to employment which is guaranteed in their constitution. Working women are entitled to 7 months to 12 months paid leave. They also have medical benefits. All their medical expenses are covered by the Medical Insurance Scheme. There are provisions for child-care centres in factories. There are provisions for child-care centres in urban areas also. According to a newly enacted law every newly constructed locality is expected to have a child-care centre.

Kampuchean Women Hold Their 2nd Congress

The following letter was received by AIDWA on Oct. 20, 1983

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Kampuchea in India presents its compliments to ALL INDIA DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION and has the honour to inform the latter that the 2nd Congress of the Central Women's Federation of Kampuchea will be held from October 28 to 30, 1983 in Phnom Penh.

The Central Women's Federation of Kampuchea will be most happy to receive a message of greetings from your Association on this occasion.

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Kampuchea avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all India Democratic Women's Association the assurance of its highest consideration.

Message From AIDWA

The All India Democratic Women's Association extends its warm fraternal greetings to the Central Women's Federation of Kampuchea on the occasion of the 2nd Congress of Central Women's Federation and expresses its firm solidarity and friendship with the women and men of Kampuchea. We are very happy to have friendly relations with the Women's Federation representing members who are struggling very hard to reconstruct their country, demolished by Pol Pot regime who is still fighting at the border & wants to return back to dominate their country. It is creditable that the people, of such a small country had made such achievements despite the great difficulties such as lack of man power and resources.

We are aghast to learn the genocide the Pol Pot regime has committed, murdering thousands of people, driving the people to

villages from towns, destroying the industries and schools and so on. It is unfortunate that women have become the majority, about 75 per cent population because men were killed in great number. Women are in the forefront of reconstruction of their country, educating the children, looking after the health problems, taking care of thousands orphans left by the genocide.

We are happy to learn that despite difficulties the Government of Kampuchea, has passed legislation on 'Equal Wage for Equal Work', is trying to establish creches on a large scale so that mothers can work in the factories and fields, 90 days maternity leave is granted to mothers with shorter working hours for breast feeding.

It can not be denied that in their long struggle for independence and freedom against the imperialists the people of Kampuchea were rendered help by Vietnam, and Soviet Union. It would have been otherwise difficult for the Kampuchean people to face the attacks by the Pol Pot regime.

With pleasure we note that the people are happy and Socialist construction is going on with vigour. The delegates from Kampuchea to the Prague Conference stated with firm confidence that, "at last we are in fortunate position to have a home of our own and we can eat to our hearts content. We are determined to defend and strengthen our new, truly deomocratic Government to the last drop of our blood..."

The All India Democratic Women's Association heartily welcomes the efforts of our sisters in Kampuchea to rebuild their country after defeating the conspiracies of Pol Pot regime helped by imperialists, and assures them our full support in their efforts.

With best wishes and revolutionary greetings.

The Letter From The Soviet Women's Committee

We, the Soviet Women, being deeply concerned about the destiny of the world and the future of humanity appeal to you to do everything necessary and possible to prevent a thermonuclear holocaust.

Now, with the actual deployment of U.S. medium-range missiles in the territory of the FRG, Great Britain and Italy, a danger of a world nuclear catastrophe has grown unmeasurably.

It is clear to every sober-minded person that militarist actions of the present U.S. administration and its NATO allies, in disregard of the will of the people of these countries and the interests of peace in Europe and in the world, would cause a new very dangerous round in arms race.

Pershing-2 and cruise missiles stationed on the European continent in proximity to the USSR's and its allies' borders and meant to serve as a first strike weapon against our country and the countries of the socialist community are a threat not only to the people of these countries but to the whole world.

All African and Asian nations which are situated within the reach of new U.S. missiles face a growing threat of a nuclear attack.

The adventurist aggressive policy of the U.S. ruling circles forces the USSR to meet this danger and take necessary political and military counter measures to guarantee its own and its allies' security.

We hope that the propositions given by the Soviet leader in his statement would be met with your understanding.

Women Job-Seekers

The number of women job-seekers increased from 26.66 lakhs in October 1981 to 30.70 lakhs at the end of October, 1982 showing a rise of 15.2 per cent. During the period January to October 1982, 48,990 women jobseekers were placed in employment as against 50,615 during the corresponding period in 1981 showing a decline to the tune of 3.2 per cent. —*Indian Labour Journal*

Women Crash Into UK Missile Base

An estimated 30,000 women yesterday converged on the U.S. Cruise missiles base at Greenham Common in Berkshire to disrupt its operation and officials said at least 56 of them were arrested near the heavily guarded perimeter.

Screaming slogans such as "Cruise out", blowing trumpets and wielding wire-cutting tools, groups of the women attacked the 14-km barbed wire fence at several places in one of Britain's biggest anti-nuclear demonstration this year.

Several groups of the women managed to tear down sections of the four metre high fence, a Ministry of Defence spokesman said. Eighteen of the women were arrested by soldiers as they crossed the broken fence, the spokesman said.

Several of the women tried to pull down the wire fence with bare hands, and they were pushed away by stick-wielding troops on the other side.

"The philosophers have only *interpreted*
the world, in various ways;
the point, however, is to *change* it."

Karl Marx



Death centenary homage

Government of West Bengal

Who Is Responsible For The Deaths Due To Health Hazards ?

The reported deaths due to accidents numbering 4500 yearly in the factories seems to be an underestimation. The deaths and diseases due to various health hazards existing in the organised and unorganised sectors amount to a large scale despite the so-called provisions in the legislations, ILO Conventions and recommendations. Women workers and children are no exception. Due to various health hazards in Mines, Tobacco, Beedi, Cashewnut, Construction, Mica, Chemicals and so on women and children are affected resulting in their slow deaths

In Coal Mines, women coal loaders inhale coal dust which causes lung diseases like Tuberculosis. The number of women working in Manganese suffer due to inhaling manganese smoke destroying the calcium in the body resulting in the lung cancer. In the lac industry, the work is done by hand mostly, the children of women workers playing in the heaps of lac nearby. Women in Textile industry, inhale the small particles of cotton dust. 20% of the workers are engaged in bale opening, carding, blow room. They inhale cotton dust more than others. These particles and cotton dust create disease called "Bysinosis" resulting in lung diseases.

Women workers in general were found suffering with acute anaemia in factories and plants who come into contact with lead. It harms the pregnant women leading to their abortion or miscarriages. Women work on a large scale in cashew factories, breaking the baked kernel of cashew. As a protection, the white ash is thrown on the kernels. In spite of that women come into contact with the oil, which is very harmful resulting their fingers

becoming white in colour and shapeless after few years of working.

In Beedi, where only movement is of particular fingers, women sit for hours, bending which stiffen their backs. It is a repetitive job, they continue to inhale tobacco which results in the admission of large number of patients in T. B. hospitals.

Another such industry is Fish Peeling in Kerala, Andhra and other places, women working predominantly. They get occupational diseases arising from contaminated atmosphere. They have to stand in the ice for hours sometimes working in the night, grading and packing the prawns etc. for export. After few years, the fingers become numb and useless.

It is reported that different chemicals are used in the process of agriculture like BEC, DDT, Malparathion which are banned in USA being imported in our country by multinationals affecting the health of women and children who work in the fields. Continuous contact with these chemicals results in developing cancer, deformity, and nervous disorders. Due to mechanisation in agriculture a number of accidents are reported every year.

Mandsaur in M.P. is famous for Slate Pencil industry. But it is in fact a "death trap" for women and children. At least one member of each family employed in this industry has been killed due to placement of electric cutters in the slate factories. The deaths are caused by lung fibrosis contacted by constant inhalation of fine Silica dust created by the machine.

The match and fire work factories in Sivakasi where women and children constitute a majority, a number of accidents have taken

place and a heavy death toll reported. The deafening noises created by heavy machines, inhalation of poisonous gases in Chemicals by the workers result in deaths and diseases.

These hazards are assuming a dangerous proportion in industry while living conditions of the workers are slowly deteriorating in want of nutritious food, non-availability of cereals etc in sufficient quantity inadequate medical help etc.

The question about the health hazards and protection to the workers against these is raised by the trade union movement. The AICCWW demanded the association of women trade unionist, women's organisation etc. with the inspection machinery of the Government, which is a minimum guarantee for any implementation of the legislation. But who cares for the workers? And women and children are the least to be cared for.

No Representation of CITU on The Central Advisory Committee

The following letter was written by CITU to the Union Labour Minister. The letter and the reply by the Union Labour Minister to Com. Samar Mukherjee, General Secretary CITU is given below :—

...It is seen from the reports appearing in the Press, that the Government of India has set up a Central Advisory Committee on Women which had its first meeting on August 18, 1983 last chaired by you.

We are very much surprised to find that all organisations, both trade unions and also women's organisations, have been given representation in the Committee except CITU and the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) of which Smt. Susheela Gopalan, M. P., is the General Secretary. We are sur-

prised at this exclusion because it is known to the Government of India, particularly your Ministry, that we have an All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women functioning under the Centre and many of the State Committees have such committees under them. The CITU had organised at least two conventions, one in Madras in April 1979 and another in New Delhi in November, 1981. It has two women nominees in the Standing Committees on Child Labour and on Equal Remuneration. Such exclusion of CITU from this Central Advisory Committee on Women, therefore, appears to be discriminatory. Equally if other women's organisations like NFIW etc. could be given representation, there appears to be no valid reason as to why AIDWA should be discriminatedly excluded.

Besides, another fundamental point is involved in the issue. The point relates to whether the workers' representatives particularly the Central Trade Union organisations, who are recognised as having national character should be informed about these steps, irrespective of the fact whether they are given any representation in the said bodies or not. Not informing them about the committees and/or subjects that are discussed prevents these national organisations from acquainting themselves fully with the Govt.'s policies and efforts and their offering appropriate remarks on the same.

I would, therefore, request you to kindly review the matter and ensure that the CITU and AIDWA are given representation in the Committees. Beside a copy of the agenda papers and the minutes of the meeting held on 18th August 1983 may please be furnished to us for our study.

An Open Letter to The Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

Permit us to draw your attention once again to the alarming and unabated increase of gruesome murders of young women due to the greed for dowry. According to the Government's own statistics, there is a dowry death every twelve hours and it is common knowledge that many more go unreported. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 has singularly failed to combat the evil, there being one solitary conviction to its credit to date.

For years, women's organisations have focussed on the urgent need for effective and stringent laws to help eradicate dowry. The Select Committee of Parliament, set up in 1981 to go into the amendments to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, submitted its recommendations on 11th August, 1982 but sixteen months have elapsed and your Government have failed to bring comprehensive legislation along the lines suggested.

Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch, consisting of five all India women's organizations with which several organizations of students, teachers, youth workers and professionals are associated has, since its inception in 1982, conducted an intensive campaign in Delhi—a city that has the dubious distinction of maximum recorded dowry deaths—drawing to its fold thousands of young educated men and women and bringing to light many new dimensions of the problem, especially police apathy and even collusion. Public response to our campaign has been overwhelming. On 3rd August 1982, thousands joined us in a march to the Boat Club to appeal to Parliament for an early enactment of legislation to end this heinous crime.

We are sorry to note that Government's

setting up of a special dowry cell in the Delhi Police Headquarters recently has not been effective enough in helping dowry victims.

In the months of May, June and July, Delhi again witnessed a fresh spate of dowry murders, revealing the inadequacy of the measures so far taken by the Government.

We had demanded that Dowry be made a cognizable offence; Dowry Prohibition Amendment Bill be introduced in the Monsoon Session of Parliament and Necessary Amendment to I.P.C., Cr. P.C. and Succession on Laws be made.

When a delegation of Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch met on 26th July 1983 you agreed with our demands and assured the delegation that the amendments to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 along the lines suggested by the Select Committee would be introduced in the monsoon session itself. Not only was no such legislation introduced, but the concerned Minister spoke of the complications in bringing the required legislation, giving the impression that apart from pious concern and empty promises, the harassed women would get nothing else.

Dismayed at the non-fulfillment of a promise made by no less a person than the Prime Minister herself, a large number of women including several members of Parliament courted arrest under the banner of Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch on 26th August 1983 to remind you of your responsibility as a woman and the Prime Minister. Your administration finds it necessary to declare wall-writing a cognizable offence, but hesitates to bring similar strictures against dowry.

Is the Government prepared to display the necessary Political and Administrative will to enact and implement anti-dowry legislation in the winter session of Parliament? We seek an answer from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kunti Sondhi	A.I.W.C.
Vimala Farooqui	N.F.I.W.
Ivy Khan	Y.W.C.A.
Vimala Ranadive	A.I.D.W.A.
Suman Krishen Kant	M.D.S.

11th November 1983.

Woman to head France's SC.

France's Socialist Government has nominated a woman for the first time to preside over the highest court in the land.

The Supreme Magistrate Council meeting yesterday named Simone Rozes, 63, to succeed Robert Schmeikby as president of the Court de Cassation, France's supreme court.

Rozes, who began her career as a lawyer in 1947, was the first woman to sit at the head of the Parisian High court in 1976. She has been serving as Attorney General at the European Court of Justice at Luxembourg since 1981.

INDIAN EXPRESS Dec. 15, 1983, Page-8.

Blind Pak girl freed in adultery case

Pakistan's highest Islamic tribunal has acquitted a blind teenage girl whose earlier sentence to 15 lashes for adultery sparked a controversy about woman's rights here, a government spokesman said today.

Hearing the case on appeal, the federal Shariat court dropped adultery charges against Safia Begum, a maid who said she was raped by a man and his son who employed her in a village south of the Punjab capital of Lahore.

The case tried under traditional Islamic laws introduced by President Zia-ul-Haq, sparked a controversy in Pakistan because the two men were let off for lack of evidence.

The local court trying the case noted the fact that Safia Begum bore a child, who latter died, as proof of her part in the act and sentenced her to 15 lashes and three years in jail.

TJMES OF INDIA 15.12.1983.

7 Million rise in number of jobless since 1979

The number of job-seekers on the live register of employment exchanges as on December 31, 1979 and October 30, 1983 were 14.33 million and 21.28 million respectively, Mr. Dharma Vir told Mr. Satish Kalmadi in the Rajya Sabha today.

INDIAN EXPRESS, 20.12.1983.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Rickshaw Pullers in U.P.:- Out of 70,000, fifty hold a master degree, three times more are B.A. and 5000 are Intermediates.

Expenditure on Furnishing Bungalows of Central Ministers :

Rs. 2,94,395 in 1880

Rs. 3,68,053 in 1981

Rs. 3,60,686 in 1982

While there is huge Expenditure on 5Star Hotels, the figures for household families without house are as follows :

1980 : 22.93 lakhs

1981 : 23.27 lakhs

1982 : 23.61 lakhs

From Page Four

pany, Corporation, Anganwadi, Handlook etc. Resolutions on Technical education, Job opportunities, Komarapalayam Mill Workers, on Horlicks Company, price-rise, on atrocities against women, on communal clashes etc. were passed amidst cheers. All these resolutions were approved by the delegates.

The discussion was followed by a brief summary of the entire discussion by Com. Mythily. Later Com. Pappa Umanath greeted the delegates on behalf of the Democratic Women's Association. She appreciated the joint efforts taken by DWA and WWC Committee, in various struggles. Later Com. Ramanai MLA, greeted the participants on behalf of CITU.

The Madras District Conference was held on 2.10.83, 135 women participated in the conference of whom 10 participated in the discussion.

With following committee members the Dist. Working Women's Co-ordination Committee was formed:-

Com. Kasturi and T. Poongauvnam, Com. Nagarathinam, Com. Usha, Com. Devaki and Pushpa, Com. Surya Prabha and Eswari, Com. Sivakkami, Com. Devamani, Com. Gowri, Com. Punidha, Com. Vimala, Com. Saraswathi. Com. Gowri was unanimously elected as Con- venor of the Committee.