



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

On Other Pages

- ★ Comrade Chou En-Lai
- ★ Chasnala Disaster
- ★ Multi-National Cartels In Drug Industry
- ★ Magistrate Orders Thorough Enquiry
- ★ Declining Trend In Utilisation of Industrial Capacity
- ★ Output of 50 Industries Declines In 1975-76
- ★ Regional Rural Banks And The Bank Employees
- ★ Chasnala Tragedy/Legal Notes
- ★ Railwaymen
- ★ In Parliament
- ★ J. K. Jute Mill Workers Submit Memorandum To U. P. Governor
- ★ CITU Application On Pre-Censorship In Calcutta High Court.
- ★ Unequal Wages Still Continue In Plantations
- ★ Anti-Labour Agreement In Ritz Continental Hotel
- ★ Other Regular Features

Editorial Board

B. T. Ranadive (Chairman)

P. Ramamurti Monoranjan Ray

Niren Ghosh Sudhin Kumar

Suspension Of Seven Freedoms And Working Class

THE PRESIDENTIAL ORDER OF 10TH JANUARY UNDER Article 359(1) of the Constitution suspending the right of any person to move the Court for enforcement of the fundamental rights of the Constitution, will have a direct bearing on the working class as on other sections of the Indian people.

The fundamental rights like freedom of speech and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom to form associations, freedom of movement within the country, freedom to reside in any part of the country, freedom to acquire and dispose of property and freedom of profession, occupation and trade now stand suspended and trade union movement in India will be greatly affected by suspension of these fundamental rights.

The trade union movement in India since its inception have been striving hard to emphasise the right of the workers to organise and it had been able to enforce these rights through collective efforts. The I. L. O. convention on Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining has also given stress on the workers right to organise. In the new circumstance how the trade unions will be able to assert the right to organise is matter for serious consideration to all of them.

The right to organise is closely related to the freedom of speech and expression. They are necessary for the growth of the trade union and democratic movement in the country.

As withdrawal of right to property does not mean that everyone would have to liquidate his property, so also withdrawal of right does not mean that trade unions will be dissolved. The Government has assumed power to decide in what manner the rights would be permitted to be exercised and if it thinks it necessary the right can be denied to certain organisations. Does it mean that it would put additional restrictions on the trade unions?.....

How long these restrictions will continue to operate is very difficult to say. The trade union movement will have to reorientate their attitude towards their day to day activities. The trade union leadership should put their heads together and find a way out to serve the interest of the working class in the new situation.

Output of 50 Industries Declines In 1975-76

The industrial production in as many as 50 industries, out of 104 industries for which production data have been received by the Union Ministry of Industry and Civil Supplies, has gone down in the first eight months of 1975-76 as compared to the last year.

The essential commodities in which there had been substantial fall in production are: hurricane lantern (by 22.2 per cent), dry cells (16.9 per cent), plastic foot-wear (25.9 per cent), synthetic detergents (12.1 per cent) and matches (19 per cent). In the case of paper and paper boards and leather foot-wear also, there had been a shortfall in production of 2.3 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively.

Even in the case of eight major industries, in which the index of production has gone up, the production this year is less than that of last year. These include cotton cloth (less by 10.7 per cent), cotton yarn (by 6 per cent), cars (by 32.8 per cent), jeeps (by 13.9 per cent), newsprint (by 5.5 per cent), and phosphatic fertilisers (by 2.9 per cent).

In the case of 30 other industries, for which production data is available, production has gone down in several of them. The maximum shortfall is recorded by room conditioners (73.5 per cent), followed by tooth paste (41.8 per cent), phenolic laminates (33.3 per cent), air conditioning and

refrigeration plants (20.3 per cent), optical bleaching agents (24.9 per cent), viscose yarn (23.6 per cent), sodium hydrosulphide (21.4 per cent), acetate yarn (9.1 per cent), mild steel bolts and nuts (8.4 per cent) and sulphuric acid (6.2 per cent).

Among the machinery industries, there was a substantial fall of 43.5 per cent in the production of cement machinery. The electrical and electronic industry also recorded a shortfall. Pro-

duction of radio receivers was down by as much as 28.9 per cent, electric motors by 16.6 per cent and electric fans by 8 per cent.

Among other consumer items, production of cigarettes has gone down by 12.5 per cent, bicycles by 15.2 per cent and tea by 2.8 per cent. Other industries whose production had declined during this period include synthetic rubber, vat and azo dyes, penicillin, refractories, glazed tiles, wire ropes, power transformers and PVC cables.

*(The Economic Times,
January 13, 1976)*

REGIONAL RURAL BANKS AND THE BANK EMPLOYEES

The Bill passed by the recent session of Parliament providing for regional rural Banks as subsidiaries of the existing Banks would have been considered as a mere extension of banking facilities in the rural sector had it not provided for different scales of pay for the Bank employees.

The different scales of pay in the present context means less pay than what is being paid to the bank employees in the urban sector. There is no reason why the bank employees should be paid less merely because they work in the rural areas. The provisions for housing, education and other facilities will pose a difficult problem for the bank employees and they may have to maintain two establishments. Moreover to deny them a decent wage standard just because the prevailing rate of wages in the rural areas are

low cannot be considered as a rational argument. Why the argument is not applied to a landlord who earns many times more than the agricultural workers? Or an M.P. or M.L.A. elected from a rural constituency?

The national wage policy should not be based on the low level of the poorest strata in the society, but on the minimum requirements of a human existence. A phased programme should be chalked out to ensure need-based minimum wages to the agricultural workers. To deny a decent wage standard to the bank employees working in rural banks on the plea of low rates of wages of agricultural workers is therefore posing a problem in a wrong way. It is hoped that the bank employees movement will take up this problem in right earnest so that they get justice in this regard.

CHASNALA TRAGEDY

It is officially reported that about 372 miners were trapped underneath when a 80 foot barrier broke down under the pressure of water and 11 million gallons of water submerged the Chasnala mine where excavations were going on. This is a tragedy rarely to be paralleled anywhere in the world and people all over the country are now asking questions whether the tragedy could have been prevented or not. The question is persistent even though it is being said that the 80 foot barrier against the flood under which the miners were working had the thickness of international standard.

In section 23 of the Mines Act, 1952, certain probable accidents that may happen in a mine are referred to and one of them is "irruption or inrush of water or other liquid matter". Chapter V of the Mines Act, though speaking about the probable accidents, makes no provision for safety measures against those accidents. Section 23 makes provision only for a notice of such accident to be given to the prescribed authority by the other owner, agent or manager of the mine.

On such notice being given, the Central Government may appoint a court of enquiry into the causes of and circumstances attending the accident. That court of enquiry shall give a report stating the causes of the accident and its circumstances, adding such

observations as they may think fit to make.

We may presume that such an enquiry will be held into the tragic Chasnala accident. But, assuming that the enquiry committee is authorised to comment on the conduct of the management, it is not understood how they can discharge this part of their function unless they are posted with the norms or standards of safety which the management are required to comply with and which they may have failed to observe.

Let us now examine whether any such standards or norms have been laid down and also whether those norms or standards were complied with.

There is an entire chapter XI in the Coal Mines Regulations framed under section 57 of the Mines Act, 1952, providing for safety against inrush of water. Regulation 126 warns against danger from surface water. Clause 2 of this Regulation specifically prohibits the working of any mine vertically below any part of any river, canal, lake, tank or other surface reservoir except with the permission in writing of the Chief Inspector and subject to such directions as he may specify therein.

In the instant tragic incident, there was no threat, it is true, from any surface water. But the principles laid down in the Regulation seem to have been applicable. As far as reports go, the mine where the tragedy took place was al-

most vertically under the disused mine which had been flooded with about 20 million tons of water. Ordinarily, therefore, this mine should not have been worked except with the permission of the Chief Inspector. The question is whether such permission was taken. A news has seeped through into the press that about nine months ago the Chief Inspector gave a caution that the present Chasnala mine should not be worked. If that is true, it was criminal on the part of those official or officials who insisted on the working of the mine in spite of the caution of the Chief Inspector. It seems probable that the order of the Chief Inspector was flouted because the mine is reported to contain coal of a good category and funds from certain international monetary organisations as well was taken to exploit the mine. It is not wrong for suspicion to gain ground that certain officials might have been straining at the leash to give a good account of themselves to the indigenous and foreign financial institutions by hastening to exploit the mine.

Again, if it is contended that the Chief Inspector gave the permission, the people must know what conditions were specified by him to be obligatory to be complied with. All this can only come out only in course of an open, confronted enquiry which, it is hoped, the Government will lose no time to institute.

As already indicated, the Regulation is defective insofar as it leaves entirely to the dis-

cretion of the Chief Inspector whether a mine perpendicularly below a flood of water should be worked or not. Nor does the Regulation specify the nature of the conditions under which and subject to which such a mine may be worked. After all, one must take into account human frailties and it may not be improbable for an Inspector to submit to pressures from high and mighty quarters. Clause 1 of the Regulation similarly leaves it to the discretion of the Chief Inspector. It provides that adequate protection must be taken where there is a danger of any inrush of surface water into a mine and, in case of any doubt, the matter shall be referred to the Chief Inspector whose decision is made final.

Perhaps, Regulation 127 comes nearer our case. Under this Regulation, "proper provision shall be made in every mine to prevent irruption of water or other liquid matter from the workings of the same mine or of an adjoining mine" (emphasis mine).

Clause 2 of this Regulation lays down that, where work is being done in any place in a seam approaching a fault passing through an upper seam or portion, *which contains or may contain an accumulation of water or other liquid matter*, adequate precautions shall be taken against an irruption of water or other liquid into the working.

But more important for our purpose is clause 3 of the said Regulation 127, which commands that "no working which has approached *within a dis-*

tance of 60 metres of any disused or abandoned workings (not being workings which have been examined and found free from accumulation of water or other liquid matter), whether in the same mine or in an adjoining mine, *shall be extended further* except with the prior permission in writing of the Chief Inspector and subject to such conditions as he may specify therein" (emphasis mine).

It appears, therefore, the gap from the flooded mine should not be less than 60 metres, or about 197 feet. Some spokesmen are talking about the so-called international standard of 80 feet but how can any international standard avail against the standard of 197 feet laid down by our Regulations? We can legitimately question the wisdom of the Chief Inspector if he had given prior permission to extend the working beyond the Regulation distance of 197 feet or 60 metres and also to ask what pre-conditions he had specified if such a permission were given by him.

Proviso to clause 3 of that Regulation further provides that, even when the working has not approached within 60 metres of the disused or abandoned mine, such working must be stopped and shall not extend further except with the prior permission of the Chief Inspector, if heavy seepage of water which is not normal to the seam is noticed. The question is whether such heavy seepage of water was noticed. The report is that about 11 mil-

lion tons of water gushed in and flooded the entire mine within a matter of minutes and, in the face of such a report we cannot but presume that heavy seepage of water must have been noticed quite some time before the tragedy happened. Was the Inspector notified about such seepage of water, and again, if so, what were his directions?

These are some of the questions and doubts that occur to the mind. It is true that they cannot be answered or resolved unless there is an impartial enquiry which we shall await.

We shall also expect that adequate steps shall be taken to prevent recurrence of such tragic happenings and further that condign punishment be meted out to persons or officials who will be found in course of the enquiry to have committed laches responsible for the tragedy,

Arun Prokas Chatterjee

Conciliation Proceedings In Tensa Mines Failed

The conciliation proceedings between the management of Hindusthan Steel Ltd. Rourkela and United Mines Mazdoor Union Tensa over the alleged illegal removal of A. V. Sabhapathy Vice-President of the Union has resulted in a failure. The Asst. Labour Commissioner (C) Rourkela has sent his failure report to the Government. L. Nayak, Secretary United Mines Mazdoor Union and Subichar Dey (CITU) appeared in the proceedings on behalf of the Union.

Magistrate Orders Thorough Enquiry

On the night of June 22, 1975 the quarter of Dilip Bose, Vice President, C. L. W. Labour Union—the CITU affiliated Union at Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, was set on fire by miscreants. A case under Sec. 436 I. P. C was registered at the Chittaranjan P. S. (G. R. No. 1238/75) and was heard by the Sub-divisional Judicial Magistrate, Asansol. While passing his order on the case, the Magistrate rejected the final report submitted by the Police and directed a fresh thorough enquiry into the case to bring the miscreants to justice.

While passing the order, the Magistrate observed that "The Trial Officer has submitted a final report in this case on the ground that there is no further chance of getting any clue about the culprits of this case." However, he later observed—"C. D. (case diary) contains only the statement of the said Dilip Bose in whose quarter the fire was set. It appears from his statement that he anticipated from beforehand that Congress people may raid at his quarter and hence, he had removed his family members elsewhere. He himself took shelter in a bush behind his quarter and from there witnessed the incident, which according to him took place at about 1.30 a. m. at night. As per his statement, the miscreants came by a Mini-bus, one truck and one taxi, and they were about 40/50 in number. His categorical statement is that local boys were in the said group and he men-

tioned certain specific names of some of them."

The Magistrate, in his order, further observes—"It is curious that those persons were not arrested by the I. O. (Investigating Officer) in C/W this case. Before submitting the final report in this case by the police, it is pertinent to mention that the said Sri Dilip Bose, complained before this court about the inactiveness on the part of the police and alleged that since the culprits belonged to a particular political party, the police had been trying to settle this case. On the basis of the said petition a report was called for from the I. O. and after reminders a report was sent to this court that no evidence could be gathered in this case so far."

While expressing his dissatisfaction about the mode of investigation held by the different I. O.'s of this case, the Magistrate observes in his order "No attempt seems to have been made by the I. O.'s in this case to trace out the number of the truck, as mentioned by Sri Dilip Bose, or its driver. I fail to understand when the number of the Mini-bus used by the culprits and the name of its driver (Sidheswar Bose) came to light, why the said bus was not forthwith seized by the police and the said driver was not also arrested. It appears that after several attempts the driver of the said Mini-bus could be contacted by the I. O. and it is mentioned in

the C. D. that he could not throw any light relating to detection of this case. There is nothing to show in the C. D. that any statement of the said driver was ever recorded by the police. The culprits must be known to the said driver. It seems to be contradictory on the part of the I. O. to mention that when the said driver could not supply any clue, he was asked to keep sharp watch for the culprits of this case. It appears that the said driver Sidheswar Bose had ultimately left Chittaranjan and nobody could say where he went and when he could come back again and some other driver was found to have been engaged for the Mini-bus involved in the occurrence. I fail to understand why this driver was allowed to escape by the I. O. There is good ground for presuming inactiveness on the part of the police to hold proper investigation in such a serious type of case."

The Magistrate concluded his order with the following observation :

"I totally disagree with the final report submitted in this case by the Police and I am unable to accept it. In view of the powers vested in me under the code, I direct that proper and thorough investigation ought to be held again in this case to bring the miscreants to justice. Final report is not accepted."

Copies, of the order were directed to be sent to the Superintendent of Police, Burdwan and Addl. S. P., Asansol for necessary action.

Anti-Labour Agreement In Ritz Continental Hotel

The Ritz Continental Hotel in Calcutta was re-opened on December 29 last, after a four-month old lock-out, as a result of an anti-labour agreement between the management and a minority union.

The management declared an illegal lock-out of the Hotel from the midnight of August 18, 1975 throwing all the workers out of their living. The workers carried on a long-drawn struggle against the illegal lock-out and anti-labour attitude of the management. On the same day, a minority union was brought into existence to undermine the unity of the workers and surrender their interests to the management.

Undaunted by the activities of the minority union, the majority of the workers led by the Ritz Continental Hotel Employees Union (CITU) continued a grim struggle for long four months facing untold hardships and starvation. Ultimately, a tripartite meeting was convened by the Labour Commissioner on December 26 to consider a draft agreement submitted by the management.

The draft agreement proposed by the management contained a number of anti-worker terms, including (1) Retrenchment of 33 women workers about which no dispute could be raised under the Industrial Disputes Act.

(2) Freezing of D. A. linked with C. L. I.

(3) Deduction of Rs. 15000 per month from the service charge collections (which are due exclusively to the workers) in addition to the normal deduction of 25% on the same. As a result, the workers will be deprived of 75% of the service charge collections.

(4) Charge-sheets and suspension orders on about 39 workers to stand and the management to take action on the same.

(5) Introduction of a new Rolling and Polling system.

(6) No Trade Union activities to be allowed and workers required to sign a bond before they are allowed to join.

The Ritz Continental Hotel Employees Union, the majority union, protested against these patently anti-labour terms and refused to sign the agreement. The Labour Commissioner suggested some amendments, but the Hotel Management refused to accept the same and insisted on the acceptance of the draft agreement. Later, in the cover of night, the minority union signed the agreement betraying the interests of the workers.

This act of the minority union created great resentment among the majority of the workers who protested against the betrayal and refused to resume their duties. Led by the Employees' Union, they continued a peaceful struggle defying all threats and facing starvation and hardships. Unable to run the hotel with a handful of workers who joined,

the management employed anti-socials to terrorise the workers into submission. The anti-socials freely carried on their threats and intimidation. Repeated representations to the Labour Minister, Labour Commissioner and Secretary, Labour Department for intervention also failed to evoke any response whatsoever. After continuing their struggle for some days, the workers reviewed the situation and decided to resume their duties under protest.

Top Hundred Companies Earn Rs. 435 Crores Profit

"The top 100 private companies in the country had earned profits totalling Rs. 434.6 crores during 1973-74, according to a statement placed before the Rajya Sabha to-day, reports UNI.

"The top-most profit earner, before tax, was Oil India followed by Tata Iron & Steel Co. Ltd.

"Century Spinning and Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Gwalior Rayon Silk Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Union Carbides, ITC Limited, Guest Keen Williams Ltd., Phillips India Ltd., Tata Engineering & Locomotive Co. and Hindusthan Lever Ltd. were the other profit earners among the top 10 private sector undertakings."

(The Economic Times, January, 13, 1976)

Multi-National Cartels In Drug Industry

The Committee on Drugs and Pharmaceutical Industry, better known as the Hathi Committee, has noted the alarming exploitation of the Indian people by the foreign drug cartels. Their callous grip over the industry enables them to thrive at the cost of sickness of the people. About 70 per cent of the total sales turnover of drugs in the country, namely Rs. 370 crores, belongs to these multinational corporations. Ten foreign Companies control 100 per cent of the capital while 24 have majority shares. 15 companies control between 40-50 per cent of the capital while 17 companies control less than 40 per cent of the equity capital.

The Report has made the following observation on how the multi-national corporations got a boost in India since independence, "...with in a period of twenty years, multi-national companies attained a position of dominance in the drug industry. Their success could be partly attributed to the antibiotics and synthetic drugs which they introduced in the market. The Patent law concerning drugs prevented Indian companies from entering into the field of synthetic drugs. Multi-national companies had an extremely favourable climate in this country when they commenced operations. They managed

for good length of time with a meagre capital investment, pushed up the sales of their products, remitted profits to their principals abroad and built up substantial reserves. Governments' policy permitted payment of royalty even on drug formulations."

The Report further stated, "whatever basic drugs they manufactured were mostly utilised for captive consumption. High prices were maintained for their drugs for several years. Added to this, money-spinning tonics and household remedies which they could market on the basis of "Permission letters" and "COB Licences" swelled their profits. By the time, Indian companies, particularly those in the western region, braced themselves up to the situation and introduced competitive products, the sales promotion machinery of foreign companies was streamlined and perfected. High pressure sales techniques coupled with distribution of medical samples on a liberal scale to the medical profession was their forte. Attractively got-up medical literature and international brand names of drugs appearing in foreign medical journals with which top consultants in the medical profession were acquainted, played their part in popularising the drugs of foreign companies. Large sums of money were spent by foreign

companies in systematically training their "medical detailers" and the general tone of detailing resorted to by them was that their products contained "something plus" over products with identical composition marketed by Indian units and that the edge of their quality was the outcome of their superior expertise and international standing".

The Report has therefore concluded, "In contrast, Indian companies were swept off their feet by the new range of drugs introduced by foreign companies". With regard to the new technology in the industry the Report noted,....."in general, multi-national companies operating in different countries tended to make it difficult for Indian manufacturers to obtain the technology of the products developed by them."

The total amount of foreign exchange transmitted outside the country towards payment of royalty, technical fees and dividends during 1969 to 1973 works to about Rs. 26 crores. This does not include the additional foreign exchange drain on account of implicit purchase of bulk drugs, intermediates etc. by foreign companies at prices dictated by their principals. These prices bear no relation to either the cost of manufacture of the final products or international prices. "An interesting feature about remittances made by foreign companies to their principals is that even to-day remittances towards 'Head Office' expenses have been permitted because

of the operation of trading companies with 100% foreign interests", the Report pointed out.

These foreign cartels without bringing much capital in the country have accumulated huge resources by charging excessive prices for drugs. The Committee has correctly noted, "Shortly after India became independent, most of the leading multi-national drug companies established themselves as trading concerns. Their initial investments were insignificant compared to their turnover. They started by importing the finished drug formulations and marketing them. Subsequently, they imported the formulations in bulk and got them repacked in this country".

As a next stage they imported the formulations in bulk drugs and got them processed into formulations on 'job-work' basis by Indian companies. "All these activities were carried on without investing in factories or employing technical personnel". Thus foreign companies could remit substantial profits and build up large reserves and assets within the country for subsequent use or investments.

The Table illustrates how the drug monopolies earned

fortune in this country within a short time.

nearly one year ago many of the recommendations are yet

GROWTH OF ASSETS OF IMPORTANT DRUG UNITS HAVING FOREIGN CAPITAL

(Rupees in Lakhs)

Name	Original capital	Capital issued to foreign companies for consideration other than cash	Bonus shares paid to foreign shareholders	Exported profits	Reserves
ACCI	35.3	...	93.0	133.0	298.0
Bayer	4.0	...	...	66.0	368.0
Boots	10.0	10.0	15.0	26.5	126.0
Bourroughs	5.0	5.0	...	43.2	103.0
CIBA	3.0	14.0	268.0	147.5	403.0
Glaxo	1.5	150.0	360.0	505.0	758.0
Parke Davis	87.5	...	...	260.1	291.0
Pfizer	2.0	...	220.0	328.3	823.0
Reckitt & Colman	30.0	60.0	...	53.5	144.0
Roche	100.0	...	...	120.8	330.0
Sandoz	10.0	10.0	...	47.6	439.0
Geoffrey Manners	0.1	...	39.6	39.9	218.0
Hoechst	20.0	...	47.8	50.8	619.0
Suhrid-Geigy	7.2	...	110.7	64.5	262.0
Warner	70.0	...	14.0	26.0	154.0

This fantastic rate of profits are being permitted over two decades which have harmed the national interest in India. The U.S. Congress Reports have time and again noted that India is among the countries which allows highest price for drugs.

Instead of providing cheap medicine to the sick persons we have tolerated a system that allows squeezing of our patients. It is high time that this profiteering is stopped forthwith.

Though the Report was submitted to the Government

to be implemented with the result that the loot of the Indian people by the multi-national corporations still continues.

The only way to stop the loot is to nationalise all the foreign and big Indian drug companies without compensation and use the funds of the companies for ensuring self reliance in the matter of drugs. Immediate steps should be taken to drastically cut down the prices of drugs so that people are supplied free medicines.

NEWSLETTERS

Tamilnadu

After the declaration of emergency, the management of Neyveli Lignite Corporation have retrenched 14 employees and many more are on the list. Led by a Joint Committee of CITU, INTUC and other unions, the workers are continuing a round the clock hunger strike since December 3 last.

The management of Cauvery Mills had not paid even the minimum 4 per cent bonus to workers this year. Moreover, 150 workers had been laid off from December 1, on the ground of non-availability of cotton. Led by a Joint Committee of CITU, INTUC and DMK unions, the workers carried on a united struggle and forced the management to accept their demand in a tripartite meeting. Accordingly, the workers received payment of bonus and wages for lay-off period on December 10. The AITUC union did not join the struggle.

In accordance with a tripartite settlement, the management of Jayalakshmi Mills at Singanailore had paid 10 per cent advance to workers for 1974. Recently the management unilaterally decided to deduct the advance in three instalments from December, 1975 without consulting the union. Led by the CITU union, the workers protested against this and boycotted their salary. The struggle is continuing.

In a memorandum to the State Transport Minister, the

Pallavan Transport Workers Kazagam has demanded immediate re-instatement of 97 workers who are still under suspension for participation in the State-wide transport strike of June, 1975. The workers are on fast before the Transport head office at Kumari since December 1 last.

In accordance with a tripartite settlement, Bidi workers of North Arcot district will get increased rate of wages from August 4, 1975. On behalf of CITU, comrades Godandaraman, Kannan and Sundaraman participated in the talks.

The workers of Gomathi Mills, Veeravanallur continued their struggle for 33 days on the demand for 20 per cent Bonus. Although a joint committee with C I T U, AITUC and DMK unions was formed to lead the struggle, the AITUC and DMK unions later withdrew all the demands and signed a settlement with the management under Sec. 18(1) of the Industrial Disputes Act. They agreed for 4 per cent bonus with a recoverable advance of Rs. 150, they gave up the demand of no victimisation for participation in the struggle and allowed management to get apology letters for dropping victimisation against 87 workers. The CITU union refused to sign the agreement and asked the workers to join under protest. The strike was withdrawn on December 12 last.

Violating the agreements

arrived at earlier and the Sadasivam Tribunal Award of 1974, the South Indian Millowners' Association gave a notice for reduction in D. A. and reversion of wages to April, 1974 level in all Textile Mills in Coimbatore. To discuss the issue, the Central T.U. organisations at district level in Coimbatore convened a meeting of representatives of all unions from all districts working in the Textile industry on December 30 last. The meeting was attended by representatives of CITU, HMS, AITUC, DMK, TNTUC (T.U. wing of Cong. O). A Co-ordination Committee with representatives of the five organisations was formed with A.M. Gopu (AITUC) as the convener. The Committee decided to ask the Mill managements not to implement the notice and to appeal to the State Chief Minister for intervention. As per the decision of the Co-ordination Committee, regional meetings of textile unions were held at Coimbatore and Madurai in January, 1976 where the workers endorsed the decisions of the meeting held on 30th December and decided to form factory-level committees to resist the management attempt to cut D. A. and wages.

The management of Janardhana Mills announced layoffs and the management of Jayalakshmi Mills and Rengavills Mills resorted to retrenchment and increase in work-load and issued notice to recover the 1974 Bonus

(On Page 14)

CHASNALA DISASTER

As we go to the press, all hope seems to have been abandoned of rescuing alive any of the hapless victims of the Chasnala disaster. The Press reports of the last few days merely refer to finding of a few decomposed bodies, unrecognisable even to their near and dear ones, from the watery grave of Chasnala. Even amidst the official fanfare of judicial enquiry, promises of massive relief and bandying of technical jargons, the question is asked again and again—Was the disaster inevitable? Had everything been done to prevent the disaster which claimed so many precious lives? Will Chasnala open the eyes of those responsible for Mines Safety or will there be many more Chasnalas?

The Tragedy

Following an explosion occurring at 1.35 P. M. on December 27 last, millions of gallons of water rushed into the Chasnala Colliery from a nearby derelict mine drowning several hundred miners who were working underground at the time. Although, official reports put the number of trapped miners at 372 it is feared that many more were inside the mine at the time of the accident. According to Press reports even officials admit this to be the biggest mine accident in the world.

The Chasnala colliery situated about 16 miles from Dhanbad in Bihar, is a captive mine of the Government managed

Indian Iron & Steel Co. Ltd. Spread over an area of 690 acres, it is one of the most modernised collieries in India. It is equipped with most modern machineries costing Rs. 138 crores of which Rs. 40 crores had been received from the World Bank. Questions are being asked, how such a devastating accident could occur in such a well-equipped mine?

Neglect of Mine Safety

When Comrade Samar Mukherjee M. P., Secretary CITU visited the colliery with Comrade Chandi Prasad, Secretary, Bihar CITU many local T. U. leaders emphasised that the accident was not due to natural or unforeseen causes as was sought to be made out. It was the inevitable result of collous neglect of mine safety and indiscriminate blasting ordered by the management despite repeated warnings by workers and even some overseers.

It is also reported that a few days before the Chasnala disaster, the INTUC sent a memorandum on safety to the Manager of the colliery, but no action was taken on the same.

In his speech in Parliament on January 12, Com. Samar Mukherjee voiced the demand of the mine workers and other sections of the people for a thorough probe into the causes of the accident to bring out the truth. In the Rajya Sabha also, Com. Mathew Kurian, M. P., raised a similar demand.

Not an isolated incident

The Chasnala disaster has pinpointed the shocking neglect of safety measures in Indian mines which has become a national scandal.

Since independence over 650 workers lost their lives in eight serious mine accidents occurring between 1954 and 1973, besides many other deaths and injuries in less serious accidents. Between August and December, 1975 alone, 30 miners lost their lives in mine accidents besides the victims of Chasnala. Even after the Chasnala disaster, some more accidents have taken place leading to loss of lives. Our coalmines, according to many, have become veritable slaughter houses for miners.

According to experts, the causes of most mine accidents are three-fold: recklessness in working of mines, lapses of the management in taking safety measures and faulty and defective equipment. It is well-known that, in their lust for more profits British and Indian mine owners had all along recklessly over-worked the mines to get more output without giving scant heed to safety considerations. Even normal safety measures like sand stowing were neglected increasing the danger of cave-in or roof collapse. Even after nationalisation, things have changed very little as is shown by the growing incidence of mine accidents in the last three years.

Many of these issues were

raised at the Conference on Mines Safety held in 1974, when representatives of Trade unions including the CITU submitted a number of suggestions on safety in mines.

Although a number of proposals submitted by the CITU were not accepted, whatever recommendations were made by that Conference still remain unimplemented.

It is also unfortunate that the Mines Act Amendment Bill 1972, which had been approved by the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament way back in 1973, has not yet been enacted. Many of these accidents could possibly have been averted and many precious lives saved if the Government had shown greater seriousness in adopting the Bill.

A similar accident occurred in 1973 at the Jitpur Colliery (another captive mine of IISCO) where 47 miners lost their lives. The commission of enquiry under the Chairmanship of Sri R. C. Dutta had made several recommendations. But the officers found guilty of criminal negligence by the enquiry commission are still carrying on merrily and the recommendations of the commission are yet to be implemented.

Was the accident inevitable ?

According to official report the disaster occurred, when a 80 feet thick roof separating Chas-nala mine from an abandoned open-cast mine caved in and over 110 million gallons of water gushed in trapping the hapless miners. Various theories are being advanced as to the causes of the roof collapse,



They lost their dear ones.....

Questions are being asked whether the roof separating the two mines was really that thick. According to a report in Times of India (January 3, 1976), "One theory gaining credence in some circles is that the Map of the old mine was incorrect and that in fact, the old works extended much deeper. If so, the mine tunnel was perilously close to the old workings."

But it is being asked over and over again—Had all safety measures been taken to prevent

accident? Could the accident have been averted if safety measures had been taken and the warnings given by various quarters been given timely heed?

It is reported by workers and T. U. leaders that a deep chasm was noticed at the level No. 1,535 feet below the surface, much before the accident and the workers had time and again refused to carry out orders for blasting it for fear of a cave-in. Even on December 26 the workers of the night shift stopped working there

and complained to the management. The overseer of the night shift refused to blast at the chasm as directed, fearing an accident.

According to Press Reports, the Central Mining Research Station of Dhanbad had warned of the danger of a slide down and possible inundation of the new workings at Chasnala in their report for 1974-75, submitted nine months back.

Besides, the Mining Inspectors who visited the colliery in May last year, had recommended closing down of pit No. 1 (where the accident occurred) before the onset of monsoon in June.

The conclusion is inescapable that, but for the callous disregard of these warnings and recommendations and utter neglect of safety rules the disaster could have been averted and hundreds of precious lives saved. In fact, the management's attitude towards mine safety could be easily surmised from the report that the present Chief Executive Officer of Chasnala, one Mr. Ohri, had been committed to sessions in 1974 for his responsibility in another mine accident.

It is also an admitted fact that industrial relations at the Dhanbad—Asansol Coal-belt is far from normal. Even before nationalisation colliery owners used to employ antisocials and musclemen to curb the legitimate activities of Trade Unions. There has been little change after nationalisation. To keep up their corrupt practices in collusion with contractors, managements continue to employ musclemen to terrorise workers and T. U. activists.

Complaints submitted by CITU and other Trade Unions regarding malpractices and corruptions in mines or lack of safety measures are not only ignored but sometimes invite threats and punishments from the management side.

How many perished ?

It is officially reported that on that particular day, 412 workers of two shifts had gone down for work of whom 40 workers had come up before the disaster occurred. This puts the figure of workers tarpped underground at 372.

But according to report of workers who had come up before the disaster not more than 6/7 workers had come up leaving more than 400 permanent workers underground. Moreover, there is no record of the number of contractors workers who may have been working underground at the time.

Aftermath of the Disaster

The dewatering of the ill-fated mine goes on and it is yet not clear how long it will take. But already the workers are faced with several problems of serious nature.

It is true that substantial monetary relief is being promised by the authorities for the families of victims of the tragedy. But with the working of the mine stopped the other workers who were not inside the mine at the time of the accident, are now out of job. The question uppermost in their mind is security of their job.

The adequacy of the monetary relief offered to the family members of the victims is also being questioned. It is hoped that the authorities will consult the Trade Unions before determining the quantum and mode of distribution of the relief.

A far more serious problem is posed by the moneylenders who are reported to be active even in the midst of such desolation and misery. They are out to grab the lion's share of the monetary reliefs received by the affected families in repayment of their loans. Even forcible collection of debts from these unfortunate families are being reported.

According to the Times of India (January 5)—

“Almost 70 per cent of the miners in the Bihar coalfields are in the grip of moneylenders and they have virtually no hope of escape.

“There are laws against this sort of extortion but these are useless as the moneylenders rarely worry about legal mechanism to secure payment. They own illicit arms and hire hoodlums to beat the miners into submission. Murders are common in the area.

“Employees of the mines are themselves in the money lending racket and collude openly with gangster kings. Miners cannot turn to the police, who allegedly get a cut from the big moneylenders. Some policemen are also alleged to be moneylenders.

“The security guards at the mines are themselves the toughest and cruellest of moneylenders. Many of them were musclemen

hired by private mine owners to subdue labour. After nationalisation, they have been given jobs as security guards.’

Unless the activities of the moneylenders are curbed ruthlessly any relief paid to the affected families will only go to fatten the pockets of these human sharks.

Judicial Enquiry

The Government has appointed an Inquiry Commission to conduct a judicial enquiry into the causes of the disaster. However, in order to ensure an impartial enquiry officers involved in the accident in any capacity must be removed before the enquiry starts so that they may not be in a position to influence the course of the enquiry. Above all, the industrial relations in the area must be improved to enable all Trade Unions including the CITU to carry on their normal functions. Conditions of normalcy must be restored so that workers may fearlessly depose before the enquiry commission.

The Government has also appointed a high power committee to investigate into the safety measures in mines. While welcoming this, it must be pointed out that immediate steps for the enactment of the Mines Safety Amendment Bill, 1972 and implementation of the recommendations of the Mine Safety Conference 1974 will go a long way in averting mine accidents in future. Unless all possible steps are taken to improve mine safety, Chasnala may not be the last of its kind.

Number of Jobless Rises In Britain

The number of unemployed in Great Britain has risen to a post-war peak of 1.43 million (over 14 lakhs) with no prospect of decline in the trend. The monthly official statistics showed that 6.1 per cent of the labour force are now without work. Economic experts believe that the number of unemployed is expected to rise to almost 1.75 million by the middle of this year.

(The Statesman,
January 22, 1976)

Provident Fund Arrears Exceed Rs. 28 Crores

‘The total amount of default in deposit of the Employees’ Provident Fund by industrial concerns including exempted categories under the relevant Act was over Rs. 28 crores till the end of October last.’

‘Giving this information in the Rajya Sabha during question time, Labour Minister K. Raghunatha Reddy admitted that the bulk of the default in deposits of provident funds related to companies in West Bengal.’

‘Earlier, replying to the main question by Mr. N. C. V. Buragohain the Minister said the total amount of default in deposit of provident fund by Bengal Potteries, Calcutta amounted to Rs. 4 lakhs.

Answering another question, Mr. Reddy said prosecutions had been launched for default in deposit of provident fund in 4000 cases.

Information conveyed by the

India Against Revised Wage For seafarers

‘Mr. H. M. Trivedi, the Union Minister of State for Shipping and Transport, today ruled out possibility of India accepting the international minimum wage for seafarers. He was speaking at the two-day meeting of the International Shipping Federation Council here (Bombay). He appealed to all interested parties to avoid ‘academic insistence on an international minimum wage’.

Mr. Trivedi said that the demand for the international minimum wage was ‘unrealistic’ because there was wide disparity in living standards and general wage levels between maritime nations and even more so between developing and developed countries.

The Minister told the inaugural meeting of the council that the sole consequence of such insistence would be diminishing employment for seafarers in developing countries.’

(The Statesman, January 20, 1976.)

Labour Minister at the Rajya Sabha also pointed out that in West Bengal 140 companies have defaulted in the deposit of provident fund amounting to over Rs. 585 lakhs. Out of them, 15 big companies account for arrears totalling over Rs. 232 lakhs. The balance Rs. 354 lakhs is accounted for by other 125 companies.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, January 24, 1966 and Ganashakti, January 28, 1976.)

(From Page 9)

Advance. Workers in all three mills formed a joint action committee to resist this offensive. However, the management dropped the notice after the intervention of the Labour Commissioner.

In Madurai, the management of Karumuthu Group of Mills have issued a notice for cut in D.A. and wages on the lines of the SIMA. The notice created great resentment and the workers of Meenakshi and Paravai Mills actively protested against this action. They resumed work only on the advice of the unions.

Assam

AOC Workers win Victory

The workers and employees of Assam Oil Company at Digboi have been getting food ration at concession prices since before independence. In the last few years the management have reduced the quantum of ration and increased the prices. Recently, after the promulgation of Emergency, the management tried to stop giving ration altogether. The workers, led by the AOC Labour Union, stood firm and united and ceased work in protest. The management was forced to revise its decision.

The AOC Labour Union is an independent union and is a constituent of the Joint Council of Trade Unions (JCTU). There are two more unions affiliated to INTUC and AITUC.

Retrenchment at Dhubri Match Factory

There are 2000 workers working in the Match Fac-

tory in Dhubri. They are organised in four unions, two affiliated to INTUC and CITU and two are independent unions. At the call of their all-India Federation, the workers of all the unions went on a united strike in March last which lasted for three months. The strike was ultimately called off at the mediation of a local Minister and it was agreed that the issues would be settled through negotiations and there would be no victimisation. But after the promulgation of Emergency, since July last, the management have started retrenchment and there has been no negotiation as agreed to. Demonstrations and meetings can not be organised now.

CITU Strength Growing in Plywood Industry

There are in all 28 Plywood factories in Assam, some of them owned by monopoly houses including two by Birlas. The industry employs about 10,000 workers. The CITU has enrolled about 2000 workers as members and under its leadership workers have gained some victories. In many of the factories, workers have been paid only 4 per cent bonus this year, although in some factories, where the CITU is strong, the workers have won up to 20 per cent bonus.

However, the State Govt. has recently constituted a Wage Committee for this industry with only INTUC and AITUC. The CITU has protested against its exclusion from the committee

and has demanded representation in the Committee and rupees eight as minimum wage for Plywood workers.

Plantation Industry

Following the promulgation of the Ordinance on "Equal pay for equal work", the Plantation owners in Assam are taking advantage of some loopholes to deny benefits of equal pay to women workers. Although the CITU is relatively weak in the Tea gardens of Assam, it is gradually winning the confidence of the workers through consistent championing of their causes even in the midst of the present difficult conditions.

In recent months, some movements of workers have been led by the CITU on the issue of workers' rights and bonus in several gardens including Kacharigaon Tea Estate (Darrang) and Hugrafuli Tea Estate. Joint movement with INTUC was organised in Bohani (Jorhat district) and Tulbari Gardens.

Gains in Assam Hard Board

Although there is huge demand for its products at home and abroad, the factory stopped production for the last six months and the workers were not getting any wages. By exerting pressure on the State and Central Governments, the CITU Union has been able to force the management to clear 60 to 70 per cent arrear wages of the workers and employees and production is expected to start soon. The INTUC Union has practically disappeared.

J. K. Jute Mill Workers Submit Memorandum To U. P. Governor

Led by the J. K. Jute Mills Mazdoor Panchayat (CITU), the workers of J. K. Jute Mills, Kanpur have submitted a memorandum to the Governor of U. P. on December 20 last urging his immediate intervention for a just settlement of the workers' demands. The memorandum was signed by over 2000 workers.

Following the work-stoppage organised by the workers on September 29 in protest against the refusal of the management to honour the agreement reached on August 29 last for the payment of 8.33 per cent bonus (see report in December, 1975 issue), the management have been continuing its policy of victimisation and arrests with a view to suppress the workers led by the CITU Union. Fourteen leading workers, including some

office bearers of the Union, have been illegally dismissed, several workers and union officials have been arrested and false cases started against some others. Taking advantage of the Emergency, they have also increased work-load of the workers.

The memorandum urges the the Governor to intervene for an immediate settlement of the workers' just demands which include reinstatement of the 14 dismissed workers, release of the arrested workers and withdrawal of warrants and cases against others, implementation of the Bonus agreement of August 29 and stoppage of operation of double-loom in the weaving department.

A deputation of the CITU union also met the Mills management on December 26 on the same demands.

Working Class Struggles In Italy Mounting

Working-class struggles in Italy against unemployment, mass dismissals and closure of enterprises and for changes in the Government's economic policy are steadily mounting. The latest major strike struggles took place in Milan in the north and in Calabria in the south. Both were in response to a call from the Trade Union Federation uniting the General Union of Italian workers, the Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Italian Labour Union.

The Milan strike was joined by more than one million industrial and Office workers. The eight-hour strike in Calabria

completely paralyzed all business activity. Workers, handicraftsmen and peasants from various parts of the region gathered in Catanzaro, the provincial centre, to protest against the threat of cuts in appropriation for industrial development in the backward South.

According to the Italian press, the country now has a million totally unemployed, a large number of semi-unemployed, and nearly a million Industrial and Office workers who have been temporarily laid off because of crisis. Three million Italians have emigrated in search of work.

CITU Application On Pre-Censorship In Calcutta High Court

On the ex parte application of Dr. M. K. Pandhe, Editor of the Working Class under Article 225 of the Constitution, Mr. Justice P. K. Banerjee issued a Rule upon the Censor Officer of the Government of the State of West Bengal and others to show cause why an appropriate writ shall not issue directing them to cancel and/or withdraw the order prohibiting publication of a Legal Note entitled "A noteworthy case" on the judgement delivered by the Delhi High Court releasing Shri Kuldip Nayyar from detention under MISA.

It was contended on behalf of the applicant that the article did not come within the mischief of the order made by the President under Rule 48 of the Defence of India Rules, because that order specified certain subjects or classes of subjects publication relating to which required pre-censorship and the Legal Note concerned did not relate to such specified subject or classes of subjects.

It was further contended that the order prohibiting publication of the article was arbitrary and capricious and not according to the law.

Shri Arun Prokas Chatterjee with Shri Rabi Lal Maitra conducted the proceedings.

Declining Trend In Utilisation Of Industrial Capacity

THE fact that the country is confronted with a colossal loss and waste of resources due to under-utilisation of capacity in Indian industries is adequately borne out by official statistics, statements of Government officials and newspaper reports in recent period. (See January 1976 issue of *The Working Class*).

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, September 1975 has published a study on the trends in the index of potential production and utilisation of manufacturing industries in 1973, prepared by the Department of Statistics. According to the study, the main features of the trend in the industrial sector during 1973 were "a lower rate of growth in the index of potential production and a decline in the level of potential utilisation and a fall in the output of manufacturing industries, compared with the previous year".

The study defines 'potential production' for any given industry (or group of industries) as the peak (maximum) level of monthly production attained by that industry at the point of measurement or prior to it. 'Potential utilisation' ratio for an industry (or industry-group) is defined as the percentage ratio of the average monthly production index to the potential production of the industry during the period of one year.

In other words, the index of

potential production indicates the level of peak production attained by the industry and the level of *potential utilisation* indicates the percentage of peak production actually utilized on an average during the year.

It is well known that, by and large, installed capacity in any industry in the country is rarely utilised in full. It may therefore be assumed that peak level of production in any industry mostly falls short of the installed capacity. But according to this study, the level of utilisation of even this production shows a declining trend over the years and particularly during 1973.

The study covers manufacturing industries—comprising of Basic industries, Capital goods industries, Intermediate goods industries and Consumer goods industries—which together account for 82 per cent of the Industrial Production included in the official Index Numbers with base 1960=100.

The following tables show the trends of Index of Potential Production and level of Potential Utilization in manufacturing industries covered by the study, for the period 1960 to 1973.

(For Table See Page 17)

It will be seen from Table 1 that, while the Index of potential production for all manufacturing industries shows a steady rise from 107.6 in 1961 to 210.6 in 1973, the rate of growth has not only been uneven excep-

ting a few years, it shows a marked decline over the years, from 9.1 per cent in 1962 to 2.2 per cent in 1973.

All other main industry groups also show a similar trend. The decline in the growth rate of potential production is particularly sharp in the case of Basic industries group (23.8 per cent in 1962 to 2.3 per cent in 1973) and capital goods industries group (21.3 per cent in 1962 to 1.4 per cent in 1973). Although the growth rate in the case of Consumer goods industries shows considerable fluctuations, nevertheless that declining trend is noticeable. From 2.9 per cent in 1962 the growth rate rose to 6.7 per cent in 1964, sharply declined to 0.9 per cent in 1967, showed a further rise to 6.9 per cent in 1971 and again declined to 1.9 per cent in 1973.

Steady decline in Utilisation of Industrial capacity

In the case of level of potential utilisation, however, Table 2 shows a positive decline not only in respect of manufacturing industries as a whole but also in respect of the main industry groups.

Thus, for all manufacturing industries covered by the study, level of utilisation shows a steady decline from 87.7 in 1960 to 77.9 in 1973 with a marginal rise during a few years. The decline in level of potential utilisation is quite sizeable in case of Capital goods industries (76.8 in 1960 to 61.6 in 1973) and consumer goods industries (90.3 in 1960 to 79.8 in 1973). In the case of

Basic industries and intermediate goods industries also the decline in level of utilisation shows a similar trend

Overall decline in 1973

The declining trend in potential production and rate of utilisation of industrial capacity became particularly pronounced during 1973 as compared to 1972. The RBI study itself sums up the industrial situation in 1973 as characterized by "a lower rate of growth in the index of potential production of all manufacturing industries".

According to the study, "there was a marginal decline in the output of these industries compared with the previous year, the significant increase in output of capital goods industries having been more than offset by the decline in output of other main industry groups."

The rate of potential utilisation also declined from 79.6 per cent in 1972 to 77.9 per cent in 1973 for all manufacturing industries. Excepting capital goods industries, all other

industry groups contributed to this decline. Even in the case of Capital goods industries the rate of utilisation continued to be low at 61.6 per cent.

According to the study, the

Table I: Index of Potential Production
(Base 1960 = 100)

Year	Manufacturing Industries		Basic Industries		Capital Goods Industries		Intermediate Goods Industries		Consumer Goods Industries	
	Index	% rise	Index	% rise	Index	% rise	Index	% rise	Index	% rise
1960	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1961	107.6	—	111.0	—	114.5	—	106.7	—	105.2	—
1962	117.4	9.1	137.5	23.8	138.9	21.3	113.5	6.4	108.3	2.9
1963	127.7	8.8	155.2	12.8	158.7	14.3	122.9	8.3	145.5	5.7
1964	138.6	8.5	165.0	6.3	182.4	14.9	133.3	8.5	122.2	6.7
1965	149.5	7.8	174.2	5.6	216.0	18.4	139.5	4.7	130.2	6.5
1966	157.3	5.2	186.4	7.0	227.3	5.2	146.6	5.1	136.3	4.7
1967	160.5	2.0	194.8	4.5	230.5	1.4	150.6	2.7	137.5	0.9
1968	168.0	4.7	206.4	5.9	237.7	3.1	157.1	4.3	144.8	5.3
1969	177.0	5.4	220.5	6.8	238.3	0.3	169.0	7.6	152.6	5.4
1970	186.8	5.7	244.4	10.8	253.2	6.2	174.8	3.4	159.9	4.8
1971	197.5	5.7	257.2	5.2	269.7	6.5	182.7	4.5	170.4	6.9
1972	206.0	4.3	263.9	2.6	295.6	9.6	184.9	1.2	178.7	4.9
1973	210.6	2.2	270.0	2.3	300.0	1.4	190.6	3.1	182.2	1.9

Table 2: Level of Potential Utilisation Ratio

Year	Manufacturing Industries		Basic Industries		Capital Goods Industries		Intermediate Goods Industries		Consumer Goods Industries	
	Ratio	%change	Ratio	%change	Ratio	%change	Ratio	%change	Ratio	%change
1960	87.7	—	84.6	—	76.8	—	89.9	—	90.3	—
1961	89.9	(+2.5)	89.7	(+6.0)	80.4	(+4.0)	88.7	(-1.3)	91.4	(+1.2)
1962	88.5	(-1.6)	85.9	(-4.2)	83.7	(+4.1)	89.8	(+1.2)	89.7	(-1.9)
1963	86.7	(-2.0)	90.5	(+5.3)	80.5	(-3.8)	89.3	(-0.6)	85.7	(-4.5)
1964	87.7	(+1.2)	88.1	(-2.7)	84.8	(+5.3)	88.9	(-0.4)	87.5	(+2.1)
1965	87.9	(+0.2)	86.8	(-1.5)	84.9	(+0.1)	89.4	(+0.6)	88.1	(+0.7)
1966	83.2	(-5.3)	85.2	(-1.8)	69.4	(-18.3)	83.3	(-6.8)	86.6	(-1.7)
1967	79.2	(-4.8)	80.9	(-5.0)	63.5	(-8.5)	83.2	(-0.1)	81.9	(-5.4)
1968	80.2	(+1.3)	83.1	(+2.7)	62.9	(-0.9)	84.2	(+1.2)	81.6	(-0.4)
1969	80.4	(+0.2)	87.8	(+5.7)	61.4	(-2.4)	79.5	(-5.6)	84.5	(+3.6)
1970	80.0	(-0.5)	80.5	(-8.3)	59.2	(-3.6)	79.5	Nil	86.2	(+2.0)
1971	77.4	(-4.3)	81.0	(+0.6)	56.9	(-3.9)	77.0	(-3.1)	82.6	(-4.2)
1972	79.6	(+2.8)	86.2	(+6.4)	57.0	(+0.2)	81.4	(+5.7)	83.0	(+0.5)
1973	77.9	(-2.1)	82.0	(-4.9)	61.6	(+8.1)	80.3	(-1.4)	79.8	(-3.9)

decline in the level of potential utilisation was marked in several major industries like cement, iron and steel, basic industries, aluminium manufacturing, Jute manufactures, vanaspati, soap, paper and paper products etc. In a few industries like industrial machinery, railroad equipment, motor vehicles and cotton spinning there was slightly better utilisation of existing potential. But even in these industries, the index of potential production did not show any improvements. It was only in a few industries like fertilizers, electrical motors and furnaces and motor cycles and bicycles, that there was some improvement in both potential production and rate of utilisation.

The overall decline in potential production and utilisation ratio in 1973 has been attributed by the study to "power shortage, shortage of critical raw materials, labour unrest, transport bottlenecks and increase in prices of petroleum-based raw materials which affected the production of a wide spectrum of industries and the demand position in the various industries."

Now Available

THE WORKING CLASS

(Bound Volume No. IV)

September 1974 to August 1975

Price : Rs. 8.00,

Postage : Rs. 4.00 (Extra)

Money to be sent with order to :

The Manager

WORKING CLASS

172, Lenin Sarani
Calcutta-700013

N.B. Limited Copies of Bound Volume Nos. I, II and III available.

Working Class In USA Hit Hard By Unemployment

"For millions of jobless Americans, the recession is far from over despite word from economists that the U.S. is gradually climbing out of its slump." the "U.S. News and World Report" writes in the first of a series of articles on the plight of the 7,800,000 unemployed in the United States

In 135 out of 150 industrial areas the unemployment level has exceeded 6 per cent and is continuing to rise. Especially hard hit are the minority nationalities, unskilled workers and those engaged in the service industries. But skill is no protection against loss of employment; over one million workers in the highly skilled category are reported to be out of work. Over two million office employees are jobless, as are 10 per cent of the workers of the automobile,

engineering and metallurgical industries. Young people are among the hardest hit with 19.3 per cent of all young workers under twenty (and 37.2 per cent of the young workers belonging to minority nationalities) unable to find work.

The U.S. propaganda machine boasts that one can live on unemployment benefits. But the "U.S. News and World Report" rightly asks what happens to workers when jobless pay runs out after the first sixteen months. The answer is "fear, discouragement, desperation". By the end of the year, the journal says, one million unemployed will cease to be eligible for unemployment pay. For them "the loss of benefits often turns an already insecure life style into a battle for survival." People are prepared to accept any kind of work.

Unequal Wages Still Continue In Plantations

Despite the promulgation of the ordinance providing for "Equal Wages" for men and women workers, unequal wages still continue in many industries. Some instances of unequal wages for women workers in the Plantation industry are quoted below.

1. Bahini Cha Bagicha, Khorikatia and Kachjari Cha Bagicha, Tilabar (Assam)

Men Rs. 3.60 Women Rs. 3.02

2. Rangapara Tea Gardens, Assam (Minimum Wages) Men —Rs. 3.53, Women—Rs. 3.36

3. Kerala Tea Estates (Minimum Wages)

Men—Rs. 2.61, Women—Rs. 2.12

4. Bhagwati Tea Estate, North Wynad, Kerala

Men—Rs. 6.65 (including

D. A.)

Women—Rs. 6.13 (including

D. A.)

(After the promulgation of the Ordinance, men workers are not sent for plucking.)

5. Karnataka

After the Ordinance, wages are now fixed on grade system. Men workers are placed on Grade 1 and Women are placed on Grade 2.

Bank Frauds

According to the information available with the Reserve Bank of India the number of frauds in the 14 nationalised banks between April 1974 and March 1975 was 301 involving an amount of Rs. 1.5 crores approximately.

It was not possible to indicate the precise amount recovered.

The Economic Times.

January 10, 1976

Number Of Registered Unemployed

State/Union Territory	Number of Applicants on the live Register of Employment Exchanges at the end of (in 000's)	
	June '74	July '75
Andhra Pradesh	537	591
Assam	112	137
Bihar	1 178	1,071
Gujarat	265	322
Haryana	150	201
H. P.	67	66
J & K	24	26
Karnataka	310	347
Kerala	559	618
Madhya Pradesh	405	495
Maharashtra	692	727
Manipur	20	25
Meghalaya	7	8
Orissa	350	342
Punjab	224	272
Rajasthan	176	268
Tamilnadu	602	732
Tripura	44	47
Uttar Pradesh	794	749
West Bengal	1,603	1,704
Chandigarh	25	29
Delhi	165	176
Goa	22	27
Lakshadweep	2	2
Mizoram	1	2
Pondicherry	20	17
Total (All India)	8,354	9,041

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS

(Industrial Workers)

Base 1960 = 100

State/Centre	1975			State/Centre	1975		
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.		Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Andhra Pradesh				Orissa			
Gudur	329	327	331	Barbil	322	299	292
Guntur	337	330	335	Sambalpur	345	327	317
Hyderabad	320	320	329	Punjab			
Assam				Amritsar	329	335	331
Digboi	306	301	310	Rajasthan			
Doom Dooma	267	262	255	Ajmer	312	305	301
Labac	260	220	216	Jaipur	329	319	312
Mariani	258	258	260	Tamilnadu			
Rangapara	264	263	250	Coimbatore	333	324	314
Bihar				Coonoor	299	298	300
Jamshedpur	299	299	298	Madras	330	320	322
Jharia	306	310	315	Madurai	363	339	313
Kodarma	356	348	338	U. P.			
Monghyr	340	341	326	Kanpur	309	310	300
Noamundi	329	324	321	Saharanpur	311	308	304
Gujarat				Varanasi	351	345	337
Ahmedabad	296	293	295	West Bengal			
Bhavnagar	314	310	318	Asansol	324	323	325
Haryana				Calcutta	296	301	304
Yamunanagar	319	314	316	Darjeeling	267	269	260
J & K				Howrah	297	298	304
Srinagar	287	285	280	Jalpaiguri	279	266	252
Karnataka				Raniganj	323	316	316
Ammathi	358	354	342	Delhi	333	336	334
Bangalore	338	337	339	Other Centres*			
Chikmagalur	340	341	334	Berhampur ('49)	486	434	439
Kolar G.F.	336	341	340	Cuttack ('49)	382	377	394
Kerala				Jabalpur (1949)	431	418	410
Alleppey	382	394	387	Beawar ('51 52)	345	338	340
Alwaye	353	349	356	Tripura (1961)	259	259	254
Mundakayam	345	339	344	H P. (1965)	227	226	226
Madhya Pradesh				Goa (1966)	214	212	212
Balaghat	335	320	307	Bhilai (1966)	203	203	203
Bhopal	310	308	307	Bhilwara ('66)	200	189	183
Gwalior	331	328	327	Chhindwara			
Indore	337	330	325	('66)	180	175	174
Maharashtra				Kothagudam			
Bombay	301	305	303	('66)	199	208	205
Nagpur	341	337	339	Rourkella ('66)	215	216	217
Sholapur	355	356	349	All India ('49)	388	384	383
				—do— ('60)	319	316	315

* Figures in bracket indicate base year.

(Labour Bureau, Simla)

Railwaymen**Railwaymen Win
Their Cases**

Following the decision of the Supreme Court in Civil Appeal No: 1664 of 1974, Mr. Justice A.K. Mukherjee of Calcutta High Court delivered judgements in three cases involving seven workers of South Eastern Rly., setting aside orders of removal/dismissal under Rule 14(ii) issued after the strike. It was interesting to note that the authorities were not represented by any Counsel. It is understood that the Law Officer of S.E. Railway has sent a note to the Legal Adviser of the Railway Ministry to send their opinion as to how to defend the removal orders in face of the judgement of Calcutta High Court and the Supreme Court.

Mr. Justice Mukherjee has also granted ad-interim injunctions in about 5 cases against removal orders under Rule 14(ii) issued recently.

AISMA Meets

The Central Executive Committee of the All India Station Masters' Association met at Barrackpore on January 18. After reviewing the position, the meeting elected a Working Committee and also drew up a tour programme over South Eastern and North East Frontier Railways.

CHOU EN-LAI

Comrade Chou En-Lai, outstanding leader of the world communist movement, organiser of the great Chinese revolution, builder of Socialist China, comrade in arms of comrade Mao Tse Tung breathed his last on 8th January, 1976 after prolonged battle in the hospital against the deadly cancer. He was seventy eight.

Comrade Chou En-Lai, one of the founders of the Communist Party of China, played a notable role at all stages of the Chinese Revolution. As a revolutionary he encountered every difficulty that came in the way and steered the path of revolution to a successful conclusion.

Keeping in view his tremendous administrative capacity he was given the responsibility of the Prime Ministership in 1949 after

the victory of Chinese Revolution, a post he held till his death. Comrade Chou En-Lai's contributions in overcoming backwardness of Chinese economy and paving the way of building a powerful Socialist economy were rightly considered as unique. He emerged as one of the top-most statesmen of the era, his best qualities in international diplomacy were admitted all over the world.

The CITU and the Working Class join the multitude of humanity in all corner of the earth in paying homage to the great departed leader. The CITU and the Working Class convey heartfelt condolences to the wife of Comrade Chou En-lai, to the working class and the people of China and to the Communist Party of China.

In Parliament**Retrenchment in "Gestetner"**

Several Members of Parliament in Rajya Sabha on 9th January alleged that "Gestetner, a multinational Corporation, shifted its office from Calcutta after retrenching large number of staff and indulged in various malpractices including diversion of funds, nonfulfilment of export-commitments and contravention of foreign exchange regulations".

Union Labour Minister K. V. Raghunatha Reddy replied that the matter essentially fell within

the sphere of West Bengal Government.

Indian Linolium

In reply to another question the same day regarding declaration of lockout by the Birla management of Indian Linolium the Labour Minister replied that since the matter fell in the state sphere, the Central Industrial Relations Machinery had no information about the reported closure as such or about the alleged throwing out of the workers with the help of police and anti-social elements.