

## **Presidential Address**

### **General Council Meeting of CITU**

### **Dhanbad, September 23 - 25, 1988**

Comrades,

At the beginning I offer my homage to the memory of Comrade P.R., founder of our CITU and the first General Secretary. Months have passed since his demise, but the poignancy of the loss has not lessened and day day it is becoming clear that the void created by his passing away cannot be easily filled in. Comrade P.R. was one of our historic link with the infant period of the trade union movement and the earlier period of our national struggle. He embodied in his activities and consciousness the deep experience of both these movements together with deep Marxist-Leninist awareness. Comrade P.R. played a unique role in building the anti-imperialist, the working class movement and the communist movement in our country.

I pay my homage to the memory of Comrade Krishnapada Ghosh, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the leader of the trade union movement and the CITU.

Comrades,

On behalf of the CITU I express our solidarity with the victims of earthquake which shook Bihar last month. Thousands of houses have collapsed. Tens of thousands have been rendered homeless. There has been severe loss of lives. This was the severest earthquake experienced by the state since the earthquake of 1934. The CITU condemns the attempts to belittle the extent of ravages done

by the quake and calls on the Central and State Govt's. to spare no efforts in relieving the distress of the affected people. All our trade unions should do their best to send relief to the affected districts. On behalf of the CITU I express our solidarity with the flood affected people of Assam where perhaps the death toll may run into hundreds and distress and misery may affect millions. Let all men of good will and all our trade unions do all that is possible to relieve the misery and distress of the people in Assam. The CITU express its sympathy and solidarity with the flood affected people of West Bengal. There is no doubt that the left front Govt is doing everything possible to meet the situation. The trade unions in West Bengal are also in the forefront to help the affected people.

Comrades,

The events since our last Chandigarh meeting have revealed the great danger of authoritarian attack against our people and our democratic rights. The 59th Amendment Act passed by the ruling party holds the sword of emergency over the entire country; falsification of Tripura election and the terror regime established in that small state and the inhuman lethal attack on Com. Nripen Chakrabarty constituted another grave warning that the ruling party led by Rajiv Gandhi will observe no constitutional norms to suppress the democratic forces in order to remain in power; and lastly the new Defamation Bill to throttle the voice of the press and suppress exposure of financial scandals touching the highest in the administration and prohibiting the exposure of danger to the security of the country involved in corrupt defence deals have evoked justified and mighty wave of protest all over the country. There is no doubt that the Government is afraid of this united action and indignation of editors, journalists, press workers, leaders of public opinion and all political parties and it is preparing to retreat. If the popular resistance continues and gathers strength, the Congress(I) government will be forced to withdraw the bill. But these three measures are not the only weapons to scuttle democracy and prepare for one party rule. The new anti-trade union bill prepared by the government is intended to attack collective bargaining, trade union freedom and the right to strike. It is an offer to foreign multinationals, which are being wooed by the government, assuring them that the field will be cleared for their exploitation of the workers and their profits will be completely safeguarded. This trade union bill together with the hospital employees bill which

also bans strikes constitute new attacks on the liberty of the mass movement and the struggle of the working class. They are intended to scuttle the basic democratic rights of the people and should be considered by all sections as an attack on the fundamental rights of freedom of organisation and strike. The unity that is witnessed on the question of the Defamation Bill should be maintained to fight the other two bills so that the democratic rights of all sections of the people are protected unitedly.

When we talk about democratic rights of the people, the trade unions, the working class and all democratic forces must strongly bear in mind that so far as the common man in India's rural areas is concerned he stands deprived of every democratic right and has to face every day the collusion between the police, landlords' gangs and dacoits. Democracy in India is more and more reduced to the formal right to vote every five years without any control over the bureaucracy or the State. The State of Bihar is a classic instance where landlord gangs indulge in free murders of agricultural worker, harijans, adivasis and the most exploited strata of the rural masses. The repeated massacres of Harijans in Bihar are never followed by any punitive measures against those guilty of the monstrous crimes. On the other hand those who have the courage and the conscience to protest against these barbarous inhuman acts are promptly arrested and even charged with all kinds of criminal offences. I have in mind the case of Virodhi, the Hindi poet, who is now in jail charged with serious offences for daring to protest against the murder of innocents. Of course, he resorted to the extraordinary method of blackening the face of the Chief Minister which only showed the emotional anger of a well-meaning poet. All men of goodwill and entire trade union movement should demand immediate release of Virodhi and ask the Bihar Government not to stultify itself by launching criminal prosecution against the poet.

The Bihar Congress(I) government and the Bihar administration has become a by-word for complete maladministration, corruption and landlord domination all over the country. The CITU at this General Council Session must strongly denounce the atrocities against the Harijans and adivasis and call upon the entire working class movement to raise its mighty voice of protest against the misdeeds of police and landlords in the state. No other state perhaps has witnessed a mass dismissal of University Vice-chan-

cellors to appease the political appetite of a few ministers. Even the audit, the Central Audit Commission of the Government of India had to denounce the Bihar Government for its total negligence towards obtaining the release of bonded labourers and their rehabilitation.

Comrades,

The General Secretary's Report refers to the attack of divisive forces and the urgent necessity to fight them. The working class of our country and the trade union movement, even now do not recognise the seriousness of the challenge coming from the communal, divisive and secessionist forces. Behind this challenge stands the hand of imperialism out to re-enslave our country. The Khalistani terrorists, it is known, are trained and financed from abroad and the government of India repeatedly mentions Pakistan in this connection, when the real culprit is US imperialism. But very few in our country including the bourgeois opposition parties really recognise this danger. The same divisive forces create trouble between Hindus and Muslims to smash the concept of Indian unity, to smash the consciousness that we are first Indians. They also seek to destroy the solidarity and unity of the working class and the toilers irrespective of religion and caste. The RSS communalists and the Muslim fundamentalists, whatever may be their pretensions about culture or religion only play the game of dividing the people and serve the cause of imperialism. The CITU is committed to fight this menace and save our nation and its unity. Its leaders and cadres are fighting the Khalistani secessionists in Punjab and sacrificing their lives. The tea garden workers rallying under its banner in Darjeeling fought the Gorkha secessionists and the same is true of our CITU cadres in Assam and Tripura. But this fight against divisive forces is to be carried by the entire trade union movement and not by the CITU alone. It should be the duty and privilege to see that the increasing influence of CITU and its unions unite the entire trade union movement to defeat the divisive forces and strengthen and maintain national unity.

A significant victory has been won in this fight against divisive forces with the signing of the Accord between the leaders of the agitation and the West Bengal and the Central Government. It is an important victory won for the cause of national unity, won because of a correct policy adopted by the Left Front Government of West Bengal led by the CPI(M). The Left forces in West Bengal did not

put exclusive reliance on the law and order machinery knowing that vast sections of masses were for the time being affected by the secessionist appeal. While using the administrative machinery to curb the mischief of the disruptors they carried on political agitation to win over the masses. They braved physical attacks from the secessionists and also sacrificed their lives and at the same time they showed full preparedness to meet the genuine demands of the people arising out of the backward conditions created by the capitalist path. It is this combination of correct democratic approach towards the masses and use of administrative power towards the disruptors and leaders and that in the final analysis enabled the people to score a victory over the divisive forces. It should be noted in this connection, the Congress(I) organisation in West Bengal remained a mere spectator in this great fight, sometimes even supporting the secessionists' scandals against the Left Governments. In fact it had earlier hoped to reap some political advantage while backing the separatist agitation but realised that it would discredit itself completely if it did so. A major political party which refuses to play any active role and defending national unity against secessionists reveals its bankruptcy and its total incapacity to run the government of the country.

We should also note that because of its bankruptcy and the selfishness that the Punjab problem continues to evade democratic solution. Today because of the continuous murders of innocent men at the hands of the Khalistani secessionists they stand completely isolated from the people. But the Congress(I) Party is unable to take advantage of the situation and inspire the confidence of the mass of people to fight the terrorists. It therefore chooses to rely on one or the other suspicious groups of Akali communalists working hand in hand with the terrorists.

These developments impose certain tasks on the CITU and the trade union movement, the task of defending national unity, isolating all communal forces exposing the game to oust the Congress(I) from power. In this struggle the CITU and the trade union movement find most reliable ally in the Left parties and the Left forces whom they must continuously support. It is necessary for the trade unions to defeat the conspiracies of the Congress(I) party against the two Left Front Governments, West Bengal and Kerala and popularise the various measures they have taken to defend the interests of the people. It is all the more necessary to

defend the trade union movement and the people of Tripura now under the terror regime of Congress(I). All over India our CITU and affiliated unions must fully expose the suppression of democracy and the Left forces in Tripura and rally popular opinion in support of the working class and people of Tripura.

Comrades,

The months since our Chandigarh meeting have witnessed an enormous deterioration in the economic and industrial situation forcing thousands of our workers to undergo suffering and misery beyond measures. The jute and textile and engineering industries have borne the burnt of this spreading misery. At the same time more than 1.5 lakhs small industrial concerns have become sick and lakhs have been deprived of their jobs. Traditional industries like handloom, coir and others have further witnessed intensified misery.

Our CITU express the deep sympathy and solidarity with the workers of jute and cotton textile industries and of the small industrial concerns. It is a fact that the crisis is of such a dimension that mere trade union agitation could do very little to prevent its consequences. It shows the helplessness of the working class and the people without political power in their hands to meet the onslaught of the property owners and profit gatherers supported by the government. The cotton textile crisis at least can be easily solved if enough purchasing power is put in the hands of the people especially in the rural mass. At least 27 crores of Indian people have very little to do with the market, purchase and sale. That is how national income is distributed in India. All the profits of green revolution, increased agricultural production are siphoned by big landlords and landed interests creating a crisis in demand. In Bihar where old feudal relations reign supreme you will find landlords having hundreds of acres of land. They treat peasants and agricultural workers worse than bonded labourers, even slaughtering them whenever they protest. What chance has market and textile industry when such a situation exists? In jute industry a similar situation exists with so many mills closed. The Central Government adds to the crisis by encouraging the use of artificial fibre endangering the living conditions of both jute growers and jute workers. In the cotton textile industry also there is encouragement for the use of man-made fibre to make the industry independent of the supply of cotton from the cotton growers. This need to

promote man-made fibre both in jute and cotton textile industry arises out of the needs to export Indian goods. Both the cotton and jute growers and the workers are ruined.

Comrades,

The period since our meeting at Chandigarh has seen further accentuation of the misery of the working class, accentuation of the attack of lock-outs, closures and increased loss of jobs with the bourgeois-landlord government sitting on its haunches or contributing further to our misery. The situation promises to worsen further unless Rajiv's policies of economic management are defeated.

These policies are leading India into a foreign debt-trap with the danger of abject dependence of our economy on recurring foreign loans. We shall soon be forced to borrow more exclusively to pay old loans like our indebted peasants with no escape route whatsoever. The foreign debt has mounted to more than Rs. 50,000 crores and the debt service ratio has risen to 24 per cent, beginning of a debt trap. 20 per cent ratio is considered to be a safe limit though many years back the World Bank and the economists used to give warning signals when the ratio exceeded 6 per cent. Every year our need for foreign loans seems to invite further onerous conditions from the World Bank and the foreign investors. Day by day concessional aids from World Bank and governmental sources are decreasing and the country is being forced to raise foreign commercial loans which charge very high interest rates resulting in heavy increase in debt obligation. These developments distort the perspective of Indian economy and sacrifice everything including workers' wage and employment to the need for exports. Now the purpose behind the economic and industrial advance is not so much the welfare of the workers, increased national income, increased employment to the people, increased good for public distribution among the people, but increased exports to make debt repayments, increased products to satisfy the demands and needs of people abroad and that too at the lowest rate and cheapest prices. This priority for debt repayment and exports over the immediate interests of the Indian people expresses the dependence of our economy on foreign countries. It is because of this that cotton textile industry, mills providing finer varieties for exports are doing well and the exports of Indian cloth are increasing whereas the majority of the mills providing for the needs of the common man are

languishing. The NTC mills are running at a loss and the workers are threatened with new closures. Many mills are already closed. The textile crisis is mainly due to the robbery of the peasants by governmental taxation, landlords and money-lenders exploitation, manipulations of prices, enforcement of adverse terms of trade on the peasant and lack of economic protection to the agricultural workers. With the addition of widespread drought last year, the purchasing power of the rural masses was further reduced. The peasant was unable to buy foodgrains concentrated in government godowns. How could he buy cloths?

The danger of debt-trap is accompanied by an adverse balance of payments position. Debt-payments, imports bill all have increased with great speed while exports lag behind. Foreign exchange reserves have come down and crossed the danger mark. Any sudden upset in the international trade, price crisis development in connection with the oil may throw the entire economy out of gear throwing fresh burdens on the people, increasing unemployment and closures.

Side by side with this the liquidation of public sector, handing over all profitable units to private parties including foreign concerns continues. The workers of BEL have launched a protest against the Central Governments bid on BEL Taloja unit into a joint sector. According to the representatives of workers the unit was doing well but the government has chosen to sell its shares to a private company with only 20 per cent of the shares to be retained by the BEL. After transferring majority of the shares to the private, the concern does not remain a joint concern but becomes a private concern. It is to be noted that the shares are being transferred to an American multinational company. This is not only privatisation but handing over vital strategic concerns to foreigners selling safety and security of the country. Rumours circulating about this deal allege that the American company is in alliance with an Indian company which is owned by people who have got very thick relations with the highest in the Cabinet. The liquidation of public sector in India has this meaning. It is not a question of choosing between socialism and capitalism but one of choosing between independence versus dependence of economy. The public sector in India was built with the aid of socialist countries and mostly in strategic industries without developing which India would have been abjectly dependent on Western capitalist countries. It is

because of this that the World Bank wishes to destroy it. It is openly demanding that the entire steel industry should be handed over to the private sector. Rajiv's obliging policy destabilises our economy and in the bargain hands over the workers at the mercy of the foreign multinationals or Indian capitalists. The foreigners, besides demand scuttling of labour protection legislation, curbs on strikes, on trade union rights and collective bargaining. The anti-trade union bill prepared by the Rajiv Government is an assurance to foreign capitalists that labour will be curbed and their profits will not be endangered. Both national interest and the minimum interest of the workers are at stake and the policy must be fought unitedly with firmness by the entire trade union movement. But the INTUC as yet refuses to join hands with us to save the country and its economic independence. The trade union movement cannot be said to have given its deep thought to the problem of fighting the basic policies of Rajiv Government. While the workers and their organisations are taking it easily new collaboration agreements with foreign companies are being arrived at jeopardising the country's future. At the end of August it was reported in the press that foreign collaboration approvals during the first six months of the current calendar year showed a substantial increase in the tie ups with Japan, West Germany, UK and the Non-resident Indians compared to those for the whole of 1987. In all during January-June this year as many as 450 foreign collaborations were approved against 853 for the whole of 1987. What is of interest, however, the press said, is the fact that there has been a sudden spurt in collaboration with Japan and West Germany. This is attributed to the fast channel opened by the Union Government. In need of foreign capital from any quarter India has now approached the two affluent capitalist economies for aid.

The policy of import liberalisation which was announced with great fanfare and was supposed to improve the competitiveness of Indian industry abroad and promote more exports has produced contrary results increasing our dependence and endangering many Indian concerns. It is clear that it was accepted under duress, under World Bank pressure and had very little to do with protecting Indian interest or Indian economy.

Comrades,

It is in conditions of increased accentuation of the situation with nearly two lakh concerns big and small going on the sick list,

in conditions of extreme anxiety and uncertainty of retaining jobs that our working class has been waging heroic battles through strikes, through struggle against lockouts to protect its interests and above all its organisation. It had often to wage a dogged and courageous fight against victimisation of trade union leaders. The following figures shows the prolonged character of the courageous fight of the workers.

Year	No. of strikes	Mandays lost due to strike
1985	8,77,945	11,486803 (11.4 million)
1986	14,44,397	18,823648 (18.8 " )
1987	14,94,613	14,026522 (14.0 " )
1988 (Jan-May)	4,63,225	6,401549 (6.4 " )

Eight to fourteen lakhs of workers came into action in the midst of adverse circumstances and carried on a prolonged fight braving hunger and starvation. In 1986 and 1987 the figure of striking workers is nearly double that of year 1985 and the number of mandays lost also increased by 30 to 60 per cent. In January-May, 1988 the strikes seem to have become more prolonged comparing the number of strikes with the mandays lost.

But this does not end the story of the heroism of the working class. It had to face the intensified offensive of the employers in the shape of lock-outs, to break down its resistance. The lock-outs show how protracted was the struggle of the working class to protect itself from defeat.

Year	No. of workers involved in the lock-out	Mandays lost in lock-out
1985	2,00,856	1,77,52,663 (17.7 million)
1986	2,00,485	1,39,24,580 (13.9 million)
1987	2,75,716	2,14,51,733 (21.4 million)
1988 (Jan-May)	79,243	40,48,239 (4.0 million)

With less number of workers involved in lock-outs compared

with the number in strikes, the loss of mandays in lock-outs is much higher than during the strikes this period. In 1985 two lakh workers were involved but the mandays exceeded 17 million. In the same year the number of workers involved in strikes was 4 times the number involved in lock-outs, but the loss was only 11.4 million days. In two years the mandays lost due to lock outs are more than the total loss of mandays in strikes. The lock-outs have become a weapon of class coercion.

While the courageous and united fight of the working class is matter of great pride for our CITU unions which have stood by them to the last, we owe it to the workers to ensure that our conduct of our struggles is flexible enough to ensure needed relief to the fighting workers. Closures and lock-outs, when they continue for months and threaten to drain away the last drop of working class resistance, demand flexible tactics to save the organisation, the fighting spirit of the workers and save as much of their gains as possible. For want of such tactics an appreciation of the situation, lack of understanding of the depth and gravity of offensive, there are some instances of trade unions getting isolated from the workers who are often forced to sign agreements with the managements by-passing their organisation. The workers are often driven to this position because they see no end to their miserable plight with the current tactics of some of our leaders. In these circumstances workers are forced to accept adverse terms, forced to retreat, in fact, often accept total defeat. But if in the circumstances of a retreat the unity of the workers is kept, their faith in organisation remains, then inspite of some of adverse economic terms, the battle is said to have been won. The leadership has to understand the strength of the resistance, mood of the workers and adopt flexible tactics which keeps the class together.

It is true that reformists of all hues take the first opportunity of accepting adverse compromises facilitating plans of retrenchment, pleading that under crisis conditions retreat is essential and inevitable. Their tactics are intended to facilitate the employers' offensive. The CITU on the other hand relies on the workers' strength and resistance and tries to get as favourable a bargain as possible in the most difficult circumstances. In the absence of combining militant resistance with flexible approach based on the resistance capacity of the workers false illusions are created among the workers and they are inveigled into disastrous agreements and are

often robbed of their provident fund earnings in the bargain. Both the Government and the employers often hold out rosy prospects for workers' cooperatives agreeing to run a closed concern. They are also tempted to purchase company's shares using their lives' savings. The workers do not understand that a workers' cooperative is no match against the crisis conditions. Ranged against it in the competition are financial giants supported by the government. On many occasions the workers may be forced to surrender some of their earlier gains accepting wage freeze, workload, freezing of DA etc., but they should be protected against handing over their provident fund money to purchase shares.

Such calamitous results can be avoided during the long period of struggle, if the union is in continuous touch with the workers, knows the level of their resistance and is able to make flexible proposals. At any rate the workers must see that the union is struggling to win a practical way out of the prolonged situation. The workers should not be made to wait till the last drop of their resistance is drained out. We should always remember the following words of Karl Marx : "From time to time the workers are victorious, though their victory is fleeting. The real fruit of their battle is not the immediate success but their own continually increasing unification."

Comrades,

At the same time where the impact of the crisis is not so severe our unions with their militancy secured good victories, good agreements for interim relief, higher wage grades, besides, many fringe benefits. In these negotiations which we had often to carry on along with others, we had to take a firm stand to overcome the vacillations of some of our colleague organisations.

Comrades,

Meeting in Dhanbad, the hub of coal area I express my great appreciation of the fighting coal-miners and their unions and the great work they have done in uniting the workers and securing their demands. Their seven days strike in March was a remarkable expression of their unity stretching over many organisations. All our Steel Unions and other public sector unions deserve high praise for their role in unifying the workers securing their demands and taking a principled stand in their negotiations. They played an important role in making the 15th March Bharat Bandh a success. I am sure that the mistakes discovered in their negotiations which

tended to estrange some sections of workers will not be repeated. Comrades,

It is a matter of some satisfaction that our State Committees are giving greater attention to the question of unemployment and working women. Nonetheless the question of working women, defence of their rights, initiative to organise and draw them into active participation in trade union activities requires much more attention. It has to be recorded that the problem of the trade union movement and that lack of attention towards it invariably weakens working class unity. The feudal mind and outlook persists among many leaders and it must be overcome. Provide a minimum level of organisation and forum for women workers and you will give a new momentum to this important aspect of trade union activity and organisation.

Regarding unemployment the General Secretary's report deals with our activities and in many States initial steps have already been taken to break the wall between the unemployed and the employed workers. But now it is high time that we took some organisational steps. It is necessary that the trade unions in cooperation with the DYFI and SFI and women's organisations take steps to build an organisation of the unemployed to look after their interests. This organisation backed by the trade unions and others should move to pressurise the government to embark upon policies to check the growth of unemployment and provide additional employment. The trade unions should prepare a document outlining immediate schemes of relief for the industrial and the rural unemployed. It is necessary to expose the claims of the Government that they are fighting unemployment in the rural areas. The question of immediate unemployment relief should be placed before the unemployed as a practical demand while the right to work demand should be popularised through propaganda.

Comrades

While in socialist countries there is no unemployment, in advanced capitalist countries where unemployment prevails there is at least provision for relief. The following figures are revealing when we compare them with the situation obtaining in India :

FRG —63 per cent of former net wage.

Argentina—Upto 70 per cent of the Statutory minimum wage.

Australia—Beneficiary with child 97.90 Australian dollar per week.

Brazil—50 per cent of previous wage.

Canada—60 per cent of average previous earnings subject to a ceiling of 460 dollars per week.

Egypt—60 per cent of previous wage. 30 per cent of previous wage if unemployment occurs during the probationary period.

Spain—80 per cent of average wage during the first six months, 70 per cent during 7th to 12th month and 60 per cent from the 13th month.

USA —Approximately 50 per cent of previous wage, maximum 84-224 dollars per week. Unemployment in the event of collective dismissal due to increased imports 70 per cent of previous wage.

Italy—80 per cent of previous wage. Agricultural wage earners 66 per cent or 40 per cent of the provincial agricultural wage.

Japan—80 per cent of the daily wage. In higher categories 60 per cent of daily wage.

UK—Standard rate per persons below the age of entitlement pension 30.8 pound per week. Supplement for spouse and other dependents adult 19 pounds a week. For child 7.10 pounds a week.

But in India, there is absolutely no provision for any unemployment relief. The provision made by the Kerala Government under the Nayanar Ministry and by the West Bengal Left Front Government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu could be only a small beginning and assertion of a principle. The main resources for the relief to the unemployed have to come from the Centre under Central legislation. There is no sign of any such legislation being passed. Apart from the two states already mentioned, some other states also provide some miserable relief to the unemployed in the cities. The State's responsibility for giving relief to the people is not accepted by the present bourgeois-landlord government. It seems while changing technology and adopting modernisation appropriate to the 21st century, the Congress government is not unwilling to carry the unemployment load of the 20th century into the next century.

Comrades,

The problems before our trade union movement are getting complicated in the background of the crisis and the attack of the divisive forces and yet in our general trade union activities including our membership drive, we still follow old methods and ap-

proaches and do not reckon with the fact that division exists among workers on the caste and religion i.e. the influence of feudal ideology. Unless special efforts are made to approach the minority workers and the downtrodden caste workers taking into consideration their special difficulties because of feudal discrimination the trade union movement will not reach all sections of workers. It has been found that some of our biggest and well-organised unions are not able to attract more than 50 to 55 per cent of the total workers engaged in a big industry. For years the situation continues but no special attention is made to find out why it is so and locate the sources of weakness. In the meanwhile new generations of workers are coming into factories whose mind is already shaped by different types of politics and different types of influences. Hardly any notice is taken of their consciousness and political make up to approach them and overcome their prejudices. It is because of this that in election after election large sections of workers are unable to cross the political barriers that divide them and are unable to unite in a single mighty organisation. The trade union movement will soon reach a dead-end if it did not consciously fight the bourgeois and feudal influences on sections of members which prevent them from joining the common union. It is essential to change our agitational and propaganda approach in view of the increased offensive of divisive forces whose first aim is to break the unity of the working class, the unity of the toilers. I hope, comrades, that during the discussions at this session of the General Council you will throw some light on this particular question as it affects your union and enlighten others whether you are aware of the problem and you are taking some concrete steps to meet it.

Comrades,

The CITU, the State Committees of the CITU and affiliated trade unions deserve full congratulations for continuously carrying forward the line of trade union unity some times in face of great provocations, difficulties and narrow sectarian considerations of some of our colleagues. But on the whole it has to be stressed that in spite of minor vacillations the CITU and other colleague organisations of the National Campaign Committee all have put forward consistent efforts to strengthen trade union unity and carried forward the worker's struggles for their immediate demands and against reactionary government legislations. The recent Convention against the Anti-Trade Union Bill of the Government was

another step forward in building and consolidating the unity of the trade union movement. It also attracted new sections who were hitherto holding aloof from the activities of the NCC. The call for trade union unity and the unity of the working class no longer remains the call of the central organisations but is rapidly becoming a part of the consciousness of lakhs of workers who are facing the grim economic situation. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of our organisations to carry forward the struggle to see that organisations which have kept outside this united struggle are drawn into it and larger and larger sections of working class are inspired by it. It is a matter of regret that the INTUC, a section of whose leadership also feels the necessity of unity to resist the attack on the workers, is yet unable to join the common struggle. The Congress(I) government seeks to take advantage of this position, divide the ranks of the trade unions and push through the anti-Trade Union Legislation. It is all the more necessary for the CITU to continue the fight for trade union unity.

Comrades, before I turn to other topics let me on behalf of all of you congratulate the millions of peasants and agricultural workers who have been courting arrest all over India to focus attention on their immediate and basic demands. The CITU lends its support to their demands and wishes them success in their struggle. The CITU has already called upon its unions to actively support the peasants agitation. The CITU and the trade union movement must take initiative to develop joint activity with the rural mass to start the process of building a workers' and peasant alliance.

Comrades,

Before I conclude I must refer to our international responsibilities and express feelings of solidarity for those who are fighting against imperialist tyranny and enslavement. The CITU has repeatedly denounced the apartheid regime of South Africa and recently joined the world working class movement for the release of Nelson Mandela, the voice of South African freedom. All our unions and organisations fully participated in the agitation to demand the release of Nelson Mandela.

Comrades,

We must send our greeting and express our feelings of solidarity for the people and working class of Pakistan, who are still ruled by a military dictatorship. We hope that in the elections the voice

of democratic Pakistan will prevail and parliamentary liberties will be restored to the working class and the people. We must also express feelings of solidarity for the flood affected people of Bangladesh going through extreme distress and victim of ravages of diseases following the flood. The people of Bangladesh have been carrying on a courageous struggle against the military dictatorship and we wish them success in their struggle. Above all, we congratulate the democratic and progressive forces of that country who stood by the principles of secularism and objected to the Islamisation of the Constitution. Theirs was a courageous voice which sought to defend the basic principles of democracy against the hypocritical obscurantists who use appeal of religion to bolster dictatorial rule.

Comrades,

We send our warm greetings to the left and democratic forces of Sri Lanka who have correctly understood the democratic content of the India-Sri Lanka Accord and who are fighting the chauvinists who are denouncing the Accord. The Indian Peace Keeping Force has done a good work in fighting the reactionary LTTE whose activities only objectively help the imperialist conspiracy to divide and enslave Sri Lanka. Those of the Indian Peace Keeping Force who have laid down their lives in fighting the reactionary militants deserve the gratitude both of Indian people and the patriotic forces of Sri Lanka. But for this intervention from India, Sri Lanka would have been over run by imperialist mercenaries. The CITU hopes that the Tamil militants will see reason to lay down arms and participate in the coming elections so that people of Sri Lanka and India jointly continue to resist the imperialist conspiracies against the two countries.

Comrades,

We send our warm greetings to the Soviet Union and the socialist countries who are taking quick steps to see that the world is spared the disaster of nuclear war. The entire humanity supports the various proposals made by the Soviet Union in this direction. But it is quite clear that the imperialists are in no mood to respond to genuine appeal for disarmament, to bury all nuclear weapons and free the world from the incubus of a war. The predatory activities of imperialism all over the world continue. It has no regard for Geneva Accord on Afghanistan. It supports apartheid and the Israeli aggression against Palestinian Arabs. It supports

counter-revolutionary forces against Nicaragua. Every where it intervenes to its further ambitions of global domination. In our sub-continent it pours arms in Pakistan to create tension between the two countries and divert immense resources for military buildup. Those who sow illusions that imperialism is in a peaceful mood do great harm to the anti-imperialist solidarity of the third world countries for whom elimination of imperialism is a life and death question. We from our own experience, the experiences of Khalistani terrorists trained in Pakistan with American money can entertain no illusion about a change in the mood of those who want to be masters of the world. To cherish such an illusion is to betray our country, our people and its freedom.

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