

THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

EDITORIAL

Massacre in Red Bank Tea Garden

Martyr's Blood In Banarhat Will Not Go In Vain

The gruesome murder of 13 CITU plantation workers in the Red Bank Tea estate on 15th June at Banarhat in West Bengal by the INTUC gangsters has shocked the whole India. Thirty five workers were injured in the cowardly attack and condition of some of them is serious. This heinous crime coming in the wake of left front victory in Panchayat elections in West Bengal only shows how the frustrated INTUC leaders are resorting to gangster tactics with a fond hope of checkmating CITU'S GROWING influence among the tea plantation workers in Darjeeling hill region.

When over a thousand workers in the Red Bank tea plantation were peacefully demonstrating that day on their immediate demands, 25-30 INTUC hoodlums suddenly attacked them with swords poisoned arrows, bombs spears and rods. It was a preplanned attack meant to finish off as many CITU activists as possible.

Some INTUC ruffians were earlier trying to tease some young girls living in the plantation workers colony. When the girls boldly challenged them they retaliated by attacking the workers. These gangsters set fire some residential quarters of workers with a view to create a reign of terror in the entire areas.

The police have arrested so far 17 INTUC gangsters for this premeditated attack on the peaceful workers. The INTUC leadership in West Bengal which

is always talking about CITU terror has not condemned it which only highlighted their complicity in the murderous attack. The capitalist press is trying to create an impression that it was a clash between the CITU and the INTUC workers in order to cover up the real culprits behind this crime.

If the INTUC leadership thinks that the CITU can be cowed down by such terror tactics they are grossly mistaken. CITU will not allow such elements to destroy the trade union movement of the tea plantation workers in North Bengal.

Despite terror tactics adopted by divisive forces led by Subhah Ghising the CITU held the red banner high in the Darjeeling region. The tea garden workers remained solidly behind CITU despite difficulties. They will not allow the INTUC gangsters to drown their movement in blood by their new terror tactics.

Vimal Ranadive, Secretary CITU and President, All India Plantation Workers Federation visited Banarhat immediately on hearing the news of the ghastly killings. She met the victims and was shocked to learn about the atrocities perpetrated by the INTUC gangsters. She met the wounded in the hospital and heard from them the INTUC machinations to wipe out CITU from the regions through murderous attacks.

If murderous attack on trade union leaders and

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**14th July—Forward to Nationwide Strike of the
Workers in Unorganised Sectors**

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

E. Balanandan

Dear Comrades,

At the outset let me express our profound grief and anguish at the cowardly killing of Com. Chris Hani, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party in Johannesburg on April 10 by right-wing racists who want to perpetuate the apartheid regime in South Africa. The whole world was shocked on hearing this and squarely condemned the dastardly attack on one of the tallest figures leading the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Com. Hani has shown his ability in leading the armed struggle against apartheid and also his skill in mobilising all fighters against apartheid to join the peaceful negotiations for finding out a solution. This admirable role being played by him made him the target of attack by the enemies of the people. His loss cannot be easily made up.

The people of South Africa have lost another legendary leader Oliver Tambo, who died after prolonged illness on 24th of April. He was considered to be the father figure in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. On behalf of all of you, I pay our homage to these leaders and convey our solidarity with the ANC, SACP and COSATU.

Comrades, I also express our grief on the premature death of Com. Madan Bhandari, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and Com. Jivraj Ashrit, a member of the standing committee of the party in a mysterious jeep accident. These comrades were leading the party and people of Nepal and the movement was developing to new heights. This unfortunate incident is a serious set back for the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the people of Nepal and the international democratic movement. We sent our condolences to the CPN (UML).

After the Bangalore General Council many important personalities passed away whose memory will remain in the minds of our people. Sri Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, the outstanding Marxist philosopher died in Calcutta on May 8. Eminent poet Shri Shamsher Bahadur passed away on May 12. Comrade Sohail Singh, editor of Lok Lehar died of severe heart attack on 8th March. I condole the passing away of all these outstanding personalities on your behalf. Many of our valuable comrades have

also passed away during this period. I pay our homage to their memory.

Dear comrades,

This meeting of our working committee is being held for finalisation of the Organisational Report which has been prepared on the basis of our discussions at the Bangalore General Council held on 19-21 of February, 1993. We have to devote our time for finalising this report which will have a crucial bearing on the development of our organisation. Therefore I am limiting myself to bring to your attention certain important developments after the Bangalore General Council.

The crisis in capitalist economy:

I have referred to the economic crisis in the developed capitalist world in my address at Bangalore. During these three months there has not been any sign of improvement but on the contrary, the situation has been worsening. As per the latest data the unemployment rate is on the increase, while the industrial production and G.D.P. are showing a declining trend in most cases.

% change at annual rate

	industrial production		G.D.P.		unemployment
	3 months	1 year	3mts.	1 year	% rate
Australia	+12.4	+3.5 Feb	+2.8	+2.5	10.7 Apr 10.4
Belgium	+0.3	+0.6 Oct	n.a.	+1.6#	9.2 Apr 8.1
Canada	+5.4	+4.2 Feb	+3.5	+1.3	11.4 Apr 11.0
France	-11.9	-2.4 Feb	-2.0	+0.7	10.7 Mar 10.1
Germany*	-13.8	-10.9 Mar	-3.3	+0.2	8.0 Apr 6.5
Holland	-5.1	+0.1 Feb	-0.3	+0.5	5.2! Apr 4.4
Italy	-2.7	-4.5 Feb	-2.3	-0.3	10.4 Apr 10.1
Japan	-1.2	-2.2 Mar	-0.3	+0.2	2.3 Mar 2.1
Spain	-17.2	-7.0 Feb	n.a.	-0.2	16.5 Apr 15.0
Sweden	-12.2	-3.7 Feb	-10.8	-3.6	7.7 Apr 4.6
Switzerland	-15.5	-3.3 Q4	-1.3	-0.9	5.0 Apr 2.6
UK	+1.1	+1.5 Mar	+1.1	+0.6	10.5 Mar 9.4
USA	+4.0	+3.5 Apr	+1.8	+2.9	7.0 Apr 7.3

* Average of latest 3 months compared with average of previous three months at annual rate.

G.N.P., ! Average of latest 3 months

Source: The Economist dt: 28th May, 1993.

In all cases the figures show an increase of unemployment. The industrial production too in majority of the countries is declining with a marginal increase in some cases. Same is the position with regard to G.D.P. also.

The number of unemployed in Britain is three million and the rate of unemployment is 11%. In European Community countries it is 17.4 million, i.e. 10.2% and expected to go high to 11%. Total number of unemployed in developed capitalist world is 34 million.

The new trends in the recession:

The recession always brings in unemployment in capitalist societies but this time it has the following special features. The lost jobs will not return when the economy picks up because of the changes in technology and organisation of industry together with stiffer competition from other countries. For example, in America recovery has slowly started during the last year but however the employment did not rise very much. This is termed in the U.N. Development Report 1993 as "jobless recovery". American firms are engaged in slashing their pay rolls. High unemployment rate is becoming more or less of a permanent nature in the richest countries today. In the previous recessions, the jobs of blue collar manufacturing workers bore the brunt of cut. But this time white collar jobs in the services sector from banks to advertisement are being slashed down where for the last two decades more employment was created.

The government's policy of de-regulation exposed the previously protected industrial services to competition which resulted in reduction of many jobs. Computers are replacing clerical staff and middle managers. Another feature is that while output is on the increase, the employment generation is on the decline.

Changes are taking place in the nature of work force. The number of machine operators and clerks are being reduced drastically while professionals and technicians are on the increase. Fewer workers will find full time employment. Part time, temporary, contract and self-employed workers will replace permanent work force. Everywhere, the employers want employment protection laws to be taken away and also want complete reduction in non-wage expenditure i.e. social welfare amenities. This is a developing trend.

In Great Britain out of five workers, two are part

time, temporary or self-employed. At the same time, the British government has taken steps to squeeze unemployment benefit in comparison with wages and also imposed harsher conditions for its eligibility. Therefore, the jobless people have no other go than be compelled to accept all conditions imposed by the employers.

In Europe serious discussions are on, how to completely slash down the non-wage benefits enjoyed by the workers. The International Herald Tribune reported in its May 27th issue that the forthcoming meeting of European Community leaders scheduled to be held on 21-22 June at Copenhagen will consider "Labour Market Reforms". In this connection the European Community Economic Policy Committee has already endorsed the line of reducing rigidity (job security) and costs (benefits of the workers) in the labour market. The employers argue for fundamental changes in Europe's social welfare system and its financing. Europe's average hourly wages in the manufacturing sector was 10.4 dollars which was lower than U.S.'s 11.23 dollars as per the 1991 statistics. The non-wage cost i.e. insurance, pension and health care boosted total labour cost in Europe to 17.6 dollars for one hour compared with U.S.'s 15.45 whereas Japan's hourly wage was 8.39 dollars and non-wage expenditure is 6.20 dollars. Therefore, the employers want slashing the non-wage expenditure including the facility of 4 to 6 weeks annual paid holidays. Thus the agenda of the capitalist world today is to cut down all the social benefits of the workers and get freedom from all labour protection laws which have been achieved by the working class through innumerable struggles.

In the developing world too things are not better. The situation in developing capitalist world is projected in the world development report, 1993 in the following terms: "Developing countries experienced 4.5% growth in G.D.P. during 1960-73 but employment only half as much". But today with liberalisation and globalisation brings in still lesser employment growth.

The miseries of unemployment, poverty and attendant decadence is on the rise for the whole of capitalist system. The attack against the working class and the people are carried out with impunity after the set backs suffered by the socialism in erstwhile Soviet Union and Eastern Europe claiming that socialism is lost and the only answer is capitalism.

The working class and their trade unions in different countries are increasingly on the move to resist these attacks. However, they are not found effective in many cases not only due to their organisational weaknesses but also due to the ideological subservience of its leaders to the ideas of capitalism, which

was further strengthened by the set-backs suffered by socialism. No fight can be effectively organised without a clear cut ideology, which is a pre-condition for strengthening the organisation itself. Therefore comrades, the fight for ideology assumes importance today.

However, the recent steel workers strike in erst-while East Germany needs to be mentioned. The issue raised by them was that their wages should be made equal over to that of their counterparts in the West. 4 lakh steel and metal workers were involved in this strike which started on 3rd May and finally settled after 3 weeks. The settlement conceded to raise the steel workers wages in stages to the level of the West by April, 1996. This definitely is a major victory for them especially in the prevailing condition of serious recession haunting Germany though there is a clause that less productive steel workers will be exempted.

The sufferings and the increasing discontent are being utilised by divisive and fascist forces in many parts of the world in the absence of a strong organised resistance. In Europe, Fascism is raising its head, besides, ethnic strife is also increasing. Right wing reactionary forces are utilising this discontent in different ways in different areas. Religious fundamentalism is being encouraged in the middle east and other countries with a predominantly Muslim population.

Comrades, I do not wish to deal with the other developments in the international arena except bringing to your attention on one or two points.

Under the facade of globalisation and liberalisation of economy what is actually going on is acute trade war between main centres of capitalism viz. U.S.A., Japan and E.C. under the leadership of Germany. Each one of them are imposing restrictions on the imports to their countries while preaching complete liberalisation theories to others. The decision of recent meeting of the G-7 countries to re-energise the G-7's cooperation under American leadership did not anyway reduced the tension in the field of trade war among them.

The U.S. has now want Japan that they should cut down their trade surplus to 50% within three years. It is reported that Mr. Clinton himself is going to undertake a journey to Japan to convince the U.S. prescription for Japanese trade surplus reduction. Japan is not taking it easily. They have decided to take retaliatory measures to counter the American plan. The U.S. also wants to impose restrictions against Germany and France in the matter of trade. The GATT discussions are blocked due to U.S. insistence on intellectual property rights etc. The Germany steel imports to U.S.A. is being opposed by them. Thus while everyone preaching liberalisation which

they themselves do not practice.

The USA is using world bank and IMF and GATT negotiations to shift the burden of the crisis in its economy on other countries especially on the third world. The world bank and I.M.F. are being used to grant loans to the third world subjecting them to severe conditionalities through which they are getting an excess to the total wealth of these countries. The debt burden which increase year after year put them under the shackle of world bank from which they cannot easily outcome.

Comrades,

The CITU has been exposing the new policies being pursued by the government under world bank dictates and also taken steps for mobilising the united resistance of the working class against it. However, the government is going ahead with its plans ignoring the voice of protest registered by big section of our population including the working class. The recent budget and the policies sought to be implemented together with of taking the country further backwards to the pre-independence scenario. The prime sectors of our economy are being opened up to the foreign multinational penetration. The public wealth created through the development of public sector is quietly being transferred to the private hands - foreign and Indian. The country's external debt liabilities have increased further and is being plunged into a serious debt trap. Closures and sickness are on the increase lakhs and lakhs are sent out of employment. The prices of all the necessities of life have increased to unbearable levels while the government is claiming they were able to control price rise.

The country's unity and integrity is being threatened by communal and divisive forces. The government and the ruling parties failed to take steps against them. The challenge from Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists is on the offensive. The people of the country are being divided on the basis of religion and caste. This seriously erodes the unity of the working class too. Therefore, the fight against communalism becomes a priority job. Taking the total situation into consideration, the CITU took steps to widen and strengthen the fight against these policies. On the basis of that the Sponsoring Committee of trade unions took initiative to consult the other mass organisation of peasants, agricultural workers, youth and students, women and scientific workers etc. to join in a broad front of resistance to fight back these policies. Hitherto our struggle was confined to towns and cities. Now it is going to cover all the villages of the country and all social stratum of people. This is a unique in itself that the working class is taking the lead for uniting all sections of the society in the fight

against the danger of communalism and the retrograde economic policies which compromises our hard earned freedom. The Convention held on 15th April at New Delhi took stock the whole situation and after serious discussion decided to form " a platform of mass organisation against government's economic policies and communalism". Besides adopted a twenty point charter of demands. The convention decided to launch a phased programme to culminate in a massive strike and bandh on 9th of September 1993. I know our state committees are taking steps for the successful implementation of the programme accepted by the convention.

Though you all know the importance of the decision I wish to emphasise once again the importance of the campaign prior to the bandh and strike. The government with its propaganda machinery and the propaganda unleashed by the bourgeois press in India and abroad are capable of deceiving the people to a very large extent. Therefore, it is incumbent on our part to approach every citizen and properly explain the various aspects of the dangers confronting the nation. The work should be so organised to cover every village and town. Committees should be formed comprising the members belonging to all the mass organisations. State-wise and district-wise propaganda literature is to be produced and the campaign should be organised in the model of a general election. Leaflets, posters, cinema slides, articles and all possible methods including cultural programmes should be organised to mobilise the people in this great fight. We must see that the Declaration adopted at New Delhi convention reaches every house. This is a fight for national salvation and a fight to protect the interests of the working class and the people at large. Therefore, this must get top priority. The required organisational guarantee should be envisaged. Our state and district level committees should monitor these activities on a day-to-day basis. If we are able to organise this effectively, I am confident that we can force the government to reverse these policies or else we will be able to change the government itself.

We must also take note of the fact that many local and sectional issues coming to the fore. We must not fail to organise sectional, local actions against it. For example, the fight against closures and sickness. We must organise a national and state-wise conventions to decide upon a course of action. This can be organised as part of the programme for September 9. Against communalism simultaneous campaign to be taken up by us.

The disruptive and imperialist agencies are at work for destabilising the country in many ways. The bomb attacks in Bombay and Calcutta are the

latest additions to the same. Therefore, these kind of imperialist manoeuvres should also be exposed thoroughly by the working class.

After the budget the government is pushing forward with proposals for austerity. The 10th Finance Commission and the Planning Commission have had discussion with the trade unions too in this regard. The CITU strongly opposed many of them. A ministerial committee appointed by the NDC under the chairmanship of the Orissa Chief Minister Sri Biju Patnaik with four other chief ministers viz. Kalyan Singh, Bajanlal, Geong Apang and H.R. Bharadwaj, union minister for Planning and Programme as members. It has come out with 17 item proposals for adoption in various sectors. I do not wish to deal with the whole range of proposals here. Firstly, this committee is talking of resources mobilisation. The government's policy of reduction of taxes to the wealthy and encouragement to the tax dodgers is a known reality today. The parallel black economy which is scuttling the total planning itself is allowed to continue with immunity. Year after year, the finance ministers announce schemes for bringing a portion of the money to the government treasury. No scheme had any worthwhile effect. Of late, Mr. Manmohan Singh announced Gold Bond scheme offering more concessions to the black money holders than the legal money owners. The government has in the budget and through the other policies gave concessions to the capitalists in a big way. At the same time, they want to attack on wage-earners in the name of austerity. The proposals include the freeze of employment in central and state governments and public sector, cutting of subsidies etc. Item 3 of the proposals says: "For a period of one year there should be no further release of additional D.A. both at the Centre and in States. ... This policy relating to D.A. should also cover public sector undertakings as well as organised private sector. There should be no pay revision in government during this period. ... There should also be an examination of the D.A. formula that is currently in operation. No bonus should be paid to government servants. There should be no encashment of surrendered earned leave except at the time of superannuation. Leave travel concessions other than home travels also should be discontinued". These suggestions are to be seen in the background of actual erosion of real wages of workers during the last years. The Economic Times of May 1, 1993 in its editorial comment has projected the results of study conducted by their research bureau as follows:

"The share of salaries and wages earned by the employees of the organised private sector in value of output and value added have shown a declining

trend since 1986-87, but the really sharp fall came in 1991-92. Thus, while the share of salaries and wages in value of total output of the private corporate sector came down from 12.0 per cent in 1986-87 to 10 per cent in 1990-91, it went down to 8.7 per cent in 1991-92. The corresponding ratios for share of salaries and wages in net sales were, 12.1 per cent, 10.2 per cent and, in 1991-92, 7.8 per cent. The greatest damage to the real incomes of the salary and wage earning classes was inflicted by inflation, with the consumer price index rising by about 4 percentage points more than the growth in nominal wages. In other words, the decline in the share of wages in value-added was accompanied by a decline in the real wage. This trend should be a cause for concern not just for workers and employees but the industry and the government as well".

Further: "A study of a sample of 284 major companies shows that for these companies, personnel cost went up by 12 per cent during 1991-92 implying a decline in real terms since the rate of inflation that year was nearly 15 per cent rate, while net sales went up by a whopping 24 per cent despite the overall stagflationary macroeconomic conditions. These trends are a comment on the nature of industrial growth that has been taking place in the organised industrial sector in recent years, whereby a capital-intensive process of industrialisation has not increased employment opportunities and wage and salary incomes have come under pressure. This despite the fact that at the top of the pyramid the private corporate sector has not been doing too badly. It appears the fruits of the Seventh Plan growth recovery have not been equitably distributed".

Those preachers of austerity should understand that the wage earners of the country are not idlers. They are creating wealth for the country through their sweat and labour. But their share has been showing a declining trend throughout the 7th plan period was proved by the above quoted study of Economic Times. Of all the persons, I thought Sri Patnaik could very well understand that the dearness allowance meant only to compensate erosion of wage due to price rise and therefore freezing of D.A. is nothing else but imposing a wage cut. However, the working class of the country must oppose this with their full might.

In this connection, comrades I wish to bring before you the attitude of certain trade union leaders which goes against the interest of the workers. In a recent meeting of the central government employees, the Secretary General of National Federation of Telecom. Employees Mr.O.P.Gupta has suggested in a written statement that the trade unions should accept the proposal of impounding of the D.A. with "pro-

test". He along with the B.T.E.F.(B.M.S.) and F.N.T.O. signed an agreement of cadre restructuring in telecom on 4th May, 1993. About this agreement Mr. Pitroda, a telecom technocrat, wrote an article in the Times of India in which he claimed: "a beginning has been made with agreement with the telecom. labour leaders to stop hiring any more people for the next ten years while quadrupling the number of telephones from five million to 20 million by 2000 AD. This required restructuring of all our telecom cadres...". As per this restructuring agreement out of 2,10,840 workers 61,028 posts will be abolished from which 31,700 posts will be created and 29,328 workers will be surplus. Therefore, not only there will be any fresh recruitment but also surplus workers will be bundled up in the so-called safety net of Manmohan Singh and packed out of employment.

You might all know that the Government of India kept all wage negotiations in the public sector pending for a long period. The D.A. committee's proposal though finalised in July, 1992 was also kept pending by the government. Raising these and some other demands, the central public sector trade unions(CPSTU) decided to go for a 72 hours strike sometime in the month of April. Brisk preparations were on for the strike and the response of the workers was very good. This unnerved the authorities and they brought INTUC in the field. They came with a strike threat for 16th of March more or less raising the same demands. This being a pre-arranged show, Mr.Sangma, the Labour Minister had consultations with INTUC leaders and finally came to an "agreement". As per the agreement the ban on negotiations is lifted and the D.A. committee's proposal of the @ Rs.2 per point increase over 800 points of the 1960 series of all India Consumer Price Index was also agreed to with effect from 1.1.89 and there was no strike for which they had no intention. The CPSTU has again to intervene to settle the anomalies on the question of D.A. and other issues which the minister had to agree to negotiate. The CPSTU thus deferred the strike. Mr.Sangma and the leaders of the INTUC still are under the notion that the public sector workers are not able to understand the trick of this mock fight. Further, I wish to bring before you that the government's direction for public sector negotiations is that it must be without additional cost. We have to hit back this pre-condition.

It is reported that the Labour Minister is ready with his labour market reforms i.e. amending the Industrial Disputes Act. The amendment is intended to remove the hurdle for sending out the so-called surplus labour and to ensure freedom for the employers to close down the industry whenever they want without going through the process of getting

government's permission etc. The meaning of which needs no explanation. In the new scheme of things freedom of employers to amass profit is the top most concern and any amount of job killing does not matter!

It is reported that the Central cabinet has now finalised the proposals for buying thirty 6,000 h.p. electric locomotives from the Asia Brown Boveri Ltd., a Swedish company against the recommendations of the Parliamentary Railway Convention Committee. The committee has made detailed study and recommended for the 5000 h.p. electric locomotives developed by the Chittaranjan workshop of the railways. The committee noted that our track needs extensive change with huge investments if at all we have to use 6000 h.p. locomotives and the higher cost factor and therefore the government should not go for the A.B.B.'s proposal. According to Hindu dated 2nd June, 93 while the cost at Chittaranjan be less than rupees seven crores, the imported will cost Rs.25 crores per unit. There is no evidence that this decision to import locomotives is based on any technological assessment or in order to meet the needs of the railways. The government which is talking about the austerity have conveniently forgotten the cost factor in this case. While the railways own factory can meet our demand the government is going for foreign locomotives. This is the new dictum of world bank which is being put into practice leaving our own technological competence and infrastructural facilities.

The government is going for privatisation of Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) inspite of the opposition from all the trade unions. The assets worth Rupees 16,000 crores are going to be transferred to Mukand, a private company which has noexpertise in steel production

at a reduced value of Rs.134 crores. The alibi taken for privatisation of the company is modernisation. Modernisation is necessary. But it can easily be entrusted with the Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) which has considerable experience in the field. Authorities of the SAIL are willing to take up this task provided the government permits them. The amount of Rs.3000 crores required for modernisation of the company could be mobilised by SAIL. But the Finance Minister and the government want it to be transferred to the private capitalists. The reasons of which is again a mysterious one.

Comrades,

These and other policies being pursued by the Cong(I) government have to be fought by the working class mustering all its strength. The unity of the T.U. movement has vital importance today. We must

try our best to uphold the same while raising our friendly criticism against those who do not uphold the interests of the workers. The broad front emerged by the collective efforts of all should be further strengthened.

Before I conclude, I must congratulate the people of Tripura for squarely defeating the Cong.(I) in the Assembly elections held on 3rd of April, 1993. The landmark victory of Left Front in Tripura gives further strength to the democratic movement of the country. The Cong.(I) has been again mauled by the people in the by-elections held on May, 19. In the Cong.(I) ruled states it has been given a big thrash by the people. Their unpardonable subservience to the world bank, the corruption which is being promoted from top to bottom, their behaviour in the Justice Ramaswamy's corruption case, their failure in protecting the secular fabric of the country and submission to the communal pressures etc. were in the minds of the people when they went to the polls. I congratulate them on your behalf for giving a defeat for the Congress(I).

The results of West Bengal local body elections further heightens the prestige of the Left movement in the country. The people of West Bengal reposed their faith in the L.F. and gave them a thumping victory. I, on behalf of you, congratulate the people of West Bengal and the Left Front. With these words I conclude.

(From Front Page)

activists is accepted as a weapon to settle the inter-union differences, a serious situation will emerge in the country and the entire atmosphere will get vitiated. Let the INTUC leadership ponder over the dangerous consequences of the step their local unit has taken in Banarhat. The growing use of anti-social elements by some trade unions in our country is a serious threat to the trade union unity.

Let Banarhat not be repeated anywhere in India in future. Trade union movement must be more vigilant at the prevalent gangsterism and be prepared to fight it out. The entire T.U movement in the country must out right condemn this heinous crime. The guilty must be punished severely so that gangsterism is curbed effectively. The united movement of the working class must be strengthened to fight more effectively the criminalisation of T.U movement. This is the message given by the workers who had to shed their blood when the assassins murderous weapons hit them. The precious blood by the heroic martyrs will not go in vain.

CITU Finalises Organisation Report Commanding Role of Socialism Reiterated

Jibon Roy

The Bhubaneswar session of CITU Working Committee which met during June 4-6 1993 has adopted the report on organisation. It is expected that the Secretariat would be able to release the document after inserting the recommendations made by the WC within next one month. This organisational document is the fruit of a wide discussion at various levels of organisation. As referred by the Bangalore General Council of CITU which met during Feb. 19-21 the Working Committee while finalising the report has also gone through all the suggestions and recommendations made by the State Committees and accepted a large number of them.

It is good that at a point two years preceding the 25th anniversary of its foundation, the CITU could come out with an organisational instrument arming its affiliates, and the leading bodies. This will fulfill a long awaiting demand of CITU ranks. Probably this is the first time after its foundation when CITU has undertaken a collective discussion on the matter of its organisations, thoroughly reviewed the existing organisational condition at different level, made number of recommendations to tide over the difficulties arising out of its expansion, and new complexities in socio-economic condition .

THE BASIC DIRECTION OF THE REPORT

The Working Committee has urged upon the affiliated unions, State Committees and all other leading organs to seize immediately with the task of re-orientation of the functioning at all levels in direction as formulated in the report. The report has detailed almost all the aspects concerning (a) functioning deficiencies (b) basic roots of such deficiencies (c) the basic approach to overcome them and (d) recommendations. It is not intended here to detail the report as such. Just an outline of organisational approach the report desired to focus is discussed.

The CITU has recorded consistent expansion since its Foundation Conference. Its membership has increased from a base of 8 lakh to 25 lakhs. In real sense its influence was several times more. No other trade union centre in our country could make such spectacular advance in this period. But close introspection will reveal that the pace of balanced expansion

has receded during last ten years. Scrutiny of membership has further revealed that the pace of expansion recorded in current years has been more in unorganised sector and that too is not commensurate with its rate of growth.

It is expected that in a situation of an all round deceleration of industrial economy accelerating rate of computerisation and contracting out of jobs, will have their negative impact on the T.U memberships in organised and basic sector. In the case of CITU it was not the case because the very base of membership figure was not very high.

It is therefore felt that unless the membership is increased in all sectors, its composition quality is balanced in a short span of time it would be very difficult for the CITU to discharge its responsibilities as leading centre of Indian Trade Union movement.

But it will be self defeating to believe that at the present unorganised level in India some improvement in the CITU alone will be able to rouse the working class to the level which enable it to effectively respond the current socio-economic reality. Report has therefore emphasised that the CITU movement must get strength within a shortest possible time but with the task of uniting and radicalising the entire class . The united trade union movement should reach the height and confidence so that it can challenge the increasing offensive falling over them and the people, effectively confront the politics of communication and criminalisation of politics and emerge as the leading force to safeguard national independence and unity.

TRADE UNION UNITY

Thus, the basic thrust of the report and discussion had been towards the attainment of broadest possible trade union unity. The matter of strengthening the CITU of course found the paramount importance, because it is the only instrument which at this moment of time can play the pivotal role in accomplishing this task.

On the question of Trade Union unity the Working Committee has once again called upon its affiliated and friendly trade unions who are really subscribe the idea of uniting the movement to carry

forward the campaign for the formation of a Confederation of Trade Unions as an intermediate step towards total unity. Such Confederation can be formed maintaining the individual identity of national trade unions and unanimities may be the core of any decision.

On the matter of expanding the trade union unity in the grass root level the Working Committee has further reviewed the possibilities of going for a single union in a single factory. Working Committee felt that the qualitative improvement and expansion of united activities and militant working class actions will gradually lead the movement towards the transformation into total or near total unity which itself will create the basic condition towards total merger of all unions in a single industry. In the meantime, wherever possible the state leadership should explore the feasibilities of forming such single unions. While considering such merger the fundamental principles of trade unionsism must be upheld i.e. the commitment to fight the workers interest and observance of democratic principles in trade union functioning.

The organisational report has also considered the possibility of merging different industrial federation in an industry under single umbrella. The working committee has observed that at present there are such Federations or Co-ordination Committees functioning and functioning to a level of satisfaction, working committee recommended merger of Federations into a single body on the basis of some agreed norm.

The report and the participating comrades have reposed great confidence on the Sponsoring Committee for emerge as a most powerful vehicle of trade union unity and leading force of democratic movement. The formation of united platform of mass organisation which has given call for 9th September Bharat Bandh has been the result of the united activities of working class. The report has called upon the affiliated and friendly trade unions and all leading committees to carry forward this unity of mass organisations down below and form joint committees in the ground levels.

CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION

The report has called for consolidating further the areas where CITU has already expanded and emerged as a powerful organisation. Galvanisation in the areas where CITU has already grown helps its expansion in the surroundings. Number of comrades have stressed the need of taking immediate organisational steps to break through the stagnancy in industrialised areas like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat and it has been decided to extend all possible

help to the concerned state committees. Similarly, the matter of expanding the organisation in Hindi belt found prominence both in discussion and report.

Comrades have asked for better strategy to penetrate further into basic sector of industries and imposed utmost importance to organise the unorganised section of workers. Organisation must expand amongst the most weaker section of workers i.e unorganised and contractor workers whose working condition has remained semi-slavery till today.

ROLE AS A SOCIAL LEADER:

The report has reviewed that organisation in Hindi speaking areas has remained weak. Continuance of semi-feudal socio-economic atmosphere has got a strangling hold over the very advancement of democratic movement in those areas. Without liberating the people out of this clutch CITU movement cannot go a long way. Caste division and communal problems are sought to burst to such a proportion that it is standing in the way of class unity. The report as well as the general discussion have laid great importance CITU's leading role in developing peasant and land-reform struggles. Sooner our trade unions will be emerging as the champion of the peasant cause, guiding force in the struggle for right to work as a fundamental rights and all such issues which directly effects the interest of the people both the working class and democratic movement will emerge stronger.

It has been the general impression that CITU cannot any longer maintain its leading role without totally breaking the limitation under pure trade unionism.

Our trade unions could emerge as a leading body only through remoulding itself ideologically and culturally. Large number of comrades has called for restructuring of activities in a way so that it can effectively address both the economic and cultural problem of the working class and their families.

ORGANISM BETWEEN THE LEADERSHIP AND WORKERS TO BE IMPROVED

In the organisational discussion the matter of restructuring of leadership came up as a matter of great importance. Quite substantial number of comrades have added strength to that section of the draft report which calls for drawing larger number of workers into the leading bodies as a matter of a system.

ON DEMOCRATIC FUNCTIONING

The debate has re-inforced the formulation made in draft report on the matter of democratic functioning. The general experience is that whichever ad-

vancement is made in this respect has not touched its essence. It is still largely a ritualistic regimentation, inhabiting little more irrespective of level of leaderships. In union level condition has gone worse in many places. Lack of collective discussion, meaningful job distribution, absence of a systematic reporting system, irregularity in holding union conference and failure to involve general members in trade union functioning are all the symptoms of bureaucratic way of functioning. The list can be made longer and longer. So long our movement will be faltering to view the Trade Union democracy as the main vehicle first to activate the most mobile vanguarded section which will in turn activate the entire class, the trade union democracy will continue to remain just formal. In such a situation the real organism between the leading centres and the factory gate can never be systematised. Activation means in real sense the fullest involvement in day to day work including in the decision making process.

ROLE OF LEADING COMMITTEES

The Bhubaneswar Working Committee has discussed the procedure concerning the election of office bearers and WC in CITU union. It has opined that respective union will conduct the election according to union constitution. However, it has strongly felt that the leadership should oversee that the sense of imposition does not exist. In overcoming possible constraints the working committee preferred to avail the system of secret ballot.

The weakness in the Trade Union movement in India is largely subscribed to the deficiency in the role of leading centres. It is not surprising phenomenon that the affiliates of reformist Trade Union centres and others function mostly in a self-styled way. They even dare not to respond to united call. CITU is comparatively well placed on the matter of functioning in leading centres. State bodies are by and large functioning. In between the state and affiliated unions the district committees have assumed great importance for co-ordinated action and organisational leadership in grass roots level. Role of Industrial Federation and Industrial Co-ordination Committees also play very important role. Above all, the CITU centre is responsible for ideological and organisational leadership at all levels. The draft organisational report itself has made a thorough self-critical review of functioning in leading bodies including CITU Centre and called for thorough overhauling. In course of debate many new points have emerged. The WC has recommended that functioning has to be improved ensuring collective work, developing collective understanding introducing proper distribution of jobs and a systemic check up system, elevating

new cadres in leading positions. And above all it has to be the primary responsibility of any leading committee to oversee that the committees below its level duly activate organisational report.

In course of discussion comrades have mentioned also about adversities in keeping the leading bodies activated through out the year. Besides the problems of political vendetta of ruling parties and reactionaries. Financial precariousness is shown as a great impediment in maintaining the centres in weaker states. Dearth of experienced cadres is a problem all over. It is demanded that the strong centre should extend some regular basis.

CADRE TRAINING

All through the course of debate there has been powerful demand for an institutional arrangement of cadre training in state, Industrial Federation and central levels. Secretariat has assured that with whatever resources it is having under its possession cadre training programme will be initiated at the central level. It will see that a syllabus is released within a course of three months. However no cadre training can reach its objective unless it is linked to elevate comrades new cadres in the leading position.

IDEOLOGICAL LINKAGE

The importance of ideological command in organisation building have been elucidated both in the inaugural speech of president and the summing up speech by the General Secretary at the Bhubaneswar Working Committee.

CITU President explained that no struggle can attain its desired level so long proper coherence between ideology and organisation in one hand and the struggle to the other is established. He said that the working class and its trade unions in advanced countries in Europe, USA & Japan are increasingly coming out in the general resistance against increasing unemployment and job cut. He added, however, these working class actions are not found effective in many cases due to ideological subservience of their leaders to the ideas of capitalism. Com. General Secretary also in his summing up speech has emphasised the importance of linking the ideological work to organisation building. Any of the basic contents in the organisational report i.e. strengthening the class unity, democratisation of organisation, strengthening of leading centres and leading role or working class in democratic movement etc, can hardly be achieved unless the goal of socialism, as enshrined in CITU constitution is given a commanding position in organisation building. Com. Pandhe elucidated.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

The Bhubaneswar session of the Working Committee of CITU has emerged significant because of its adoption of organisational report, which was under discussion at various level of organisations during last seven months. Discussion has been initiated in Delhi Working Committee when it met during November 27-28 1992.

Com.E Balanandan, President of CITU initiated the programme through hoisting of red flag and placing wreaths in martyrs column just at half past ten of 4th June at Yatri Niwas, the venue of the meeting.

Inaugural Session

At the outset the chairman of the Reception Committee, comrade Sivaji Patnaik, MP and President of the Orissa State Committee of CITU welcomed the delegates in a brief address. Then Com.E Balanandan, delivered the inaugural address. In his speech he narrated briefly all the major developments that took place both in the international and national stage since the Bangalore session of General Council. While drawing attention towards the international arena he asked to take note of the continuing recession in developed countries, economies of which are decelerating with no respite. He pointed out that resistance struggle in many of these countries are picking up specially against sky rocketing unemployment. But these struggles are not getting desired momentum because of ideological limitations of the leaderships. Com.Balanandan in his address has further cautioned against the imperialist machinations, specially of USA to re-colonise the third world nations as a means to overcome the trade competitions which are raging amongst three leading centres of international trade i.e. USA, EEC and Japan.

In this context he called upon the trade union movement to intensify the struggle against the economic policy and communalism. He asked the trade unions to carry forward the unity which has been formed in the national level through coming together of all the mass organisations into the ground level and to make the 9th September Bharat Bandh and General Strike a grand success. (Text of presidential address published in this issue)

Inaugural session has been greeted by Shri Ram

Chandra Khuntia, Orissa INTUC President, Shri Prafulla Samal, Labour Minister, Orissa, Shri Mangal Kisan, Environment Minister of Orissa.

Then two resolutions were moved. Resolution on 9th September Bharat Bandh has been moved by Com.Chittabrata Mazumdar and seconded by Com.M M Lawrence. Commenting on the resolution speakers have called for making widest preparation in support of the Bharat Bandh and jail Bharo on 19th August a massive success.

The resolution in support of 14th July all India strike of unorganised workers has been commended by Com.P K Ganguly, Secretary and seconded by Com.Chandra Sekhar. Following comrades spoke in support of the resolution. Com.N Prasada Rao and S.Suryanarayana Rao, Vice Presidentns, Vimal Ranadive, Secretary, Kali Ghosh, Bengal and N Parameswsaran, Tamilnadu.

Discussion on Organisational Report

Com.M K Pandhe, General Secretary introduced the draft report duly updated after Bangalore General Council meeting immediately after the inaugural session. He also introduced the reports sent by the State Committees recommending various amendments to the draft and also new suggestions. After the placement of the report the session was concluded for the day.

Discussion on the report began since the morning of 5th June and continued whole day till late night and again in the morning session of 6th June. In all 26 comrades representing states and industrial federations participated in the discussion. Large number of amendments were suggested concerning the strengthening of all India centre, strengthening CITU in Hindi belt and some of the industrialised states where CITU is comparatively weak. The matter of strengthening the class unity and united movement emerged as the focal point of discussion. Comrades were also vocal about developing institutional network for cadre training.

Discussion summed up:

Comrade MK Pandhe General Secretary summed up the discussion. He accepted good number of amendments. In his summing up speech he an-

nounced that within a course of one month the organisational report will be released. Then came the question of implementation. He pointed out that there is no guarantee other than the organisation which can ensure the implementation of the report. At the very outset he said that we should altogether create the organisational guarantee so that every leading committee make it compulsory to check up the functioning of the committees it is heading and the organisational report is implemented to its true spirit. He called for all out attention on the matter of strengthening the composition of leadership though continuously blending young comrades and workers. Comrades coming from backward section of society and working women. Finally, he said that the driving force in organisational re-orientation is the basic approach of transforming the society. If this ideological approach is diluted or delinked organisation also get slipped into dilution.

Finally report was adopted with the amendments approved by the Working Committee.

The Treasurers report was then place by Com. Ranjit Basu and was passed.

Discussion on sickness and closure

Com M K Pandhe, General Secretary initiated the discussion on sickness of industries and situation arose out referment of 56 central public sector industries. In total ten comrades spoke on the report placed by Com. M K Pandhe.

Com Umanath, vice president intervened in the discussion. It decided to organise an all India convention of sick industries at the earliest possible time to draw a course of united action of resistance. At the working committee has expressed concern at the conspiratorial way of dealing the cases referred to BIFR by the central government representatives. Govt representatives are creating condition towards blanket privatisation or liquidation in all cases. Despite the Prime Minister's assurance in cases whereever rehabilitation plans are submitted jointly, the government refusing to give due clearance.

The Working Committee then review the preparation of the September strike and decided to intensify it further. On the question of holding the 8th conference of CITU it is decided to hold it in the first quarter of 1994. The Secretariat is authorised to finalise the venue and date.

The Working Committee adopted the report of credential committee. Working Committee passed four more resolutions. Then it accepted audited report for the year..... concluded the session with vote of thanks

COSATU Delegation on Study Visit in India

A four member delegation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions(COSATU) visited India in the later half of May 1993. The aims of the visit was to share experiences with Indian colleagues on adult education .

Adult basic education is of paramount importance among the black people of South Africa where 60% of the population is unable to read or write. These people have been denied, under the apartheid laws of the racist regime, basic education. COSATU together with African National Congress have therefore undertaken a massive programme for the elimination of illiteracy in South Africa.

On the morning of May 19 the delegation arrived in Delhi from Bombay. During their six day stay in Delhi they held extensive discussions with CITU, INTUC, HMS and AITUC leaders and met a number of adult education activists and visited the headquarters of Bharat Gyan-Vigyan Samiti and Delhi Saksharta Samiti, and also a literacy centre run by Delhi Saksharta Samiti at Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi.

On May 21st the delegation made a courtesy call to the Union Labour Minister P A Sangma at his office. In the forenoon of 24.5.93 Delhi State Committee of CITU organised a visit to two factories at Ghaziabad. In the evening a public reception was organised by the Indian Trade Union Committee Against Apartheid in their honour at the CITU central office. The reception was attended among others by the ANC representative M.Mpehle who gave a brief account of the valiant struggle of the people of South Africa against the apartheid regime and for the establishment of a non-racial democratic society. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, B D Joshi, Acting General Secretary of AITUC Vireshwar Tyagi, Secretary HMS, Ramachandra Khuntia, vice president of INTUC also spoke expressing solidarity of the Indian working people with the struggling black people of South Africa. In the function a High-speed photo copier was presented by the committee to the ANC Diplomatic Mission in India.

A tastefully crafted brass peacock was also presented to each member of the delegation. Later O K Ganguly, Secretary WFTU Asia Pacific Regional Office, hosted a dinner in honour of the visiting delegation. The delegation left Delhi for Cochin on 25th May '93.

Forward to Countrywide Strike on July 14

P K Ganguly

July 14, 1993 will be a turning point in the history of the struggle of the workers in the unorganised sector of industries, when they will launch the first countrywide strike in pursuance of 22-point charter of demands. The strike decision was taken in the All India Convention of Unorganised Workers convened by the All India Coordination Committee of Unorganised Workers (CITU) at Calcutta on November 1-3, 1992. The Convention actually called for observing the strike in March. But due to the vandalism created by the RSS-VHP-BJP by demolishing the Babri Masjid and the communal holocaust that followed thereafter, the strike could not be materialised in March. Later the Coordination Committee fixed the date of July 14 in its meeting held at Calcutta in April.

The decision of the strike by unorganised workers was taken in the background of several years of intense struggle by the workers in various sectors of unorganised industries on some vital issues confronting them and in protest against the criminal callousness of the Government to ameliorate their grievances despite all crocodile tears shed by it for them. Workers who particularly came to the forefront of militant struggles were those from the handloom and powerloom sector, beedi and tobacco workers, construction workers, contract and casual labour in various Government and private industries and mining, brick-kiln and quarry workers, small chemical and tannery workers and large sections of other small scale and ancillary units and in various shops and establishments.

Deplorable Condition:

The condition of these teeming millions in the vast unorganised sector of industries that constitute nearly 90 percent of the total workforce in India has been deplorable and going from bad to worse. Although their conditions demand complete overhauling of their service and working conditions, yet the one single demand for a minimum wage, sufficient to make the both ends meet, vindicates the entire situation. With the pittance of wages they receive, they cannot even make two square meals a day for the family. Apart from that, they do not have the protection of the labour laws, they are out of the purview of the Factory Act, and Social Security measures like

ESI, PF, Gratuity or Pension are unknown to them.

Denial of Need Based Wage:

Being a party to the unanimous decision of the 15th Indian Labour Conference held in 1957 for need based wages and nutritional formula prepared by Dr Akroyed, the Government of India now refuses to implement the same. It has not even followed the minimum standards being called for by the ILO through its various conventions, which the Government of India refuses to ratify. These Conventions are related to the question of minimum wage as per needs and being commensurate with the cost of living; related to fixation of a criterion for determining such minimum wage, conventions related to the question of social security measures, application of labour laws, discrimination against women, child labour, etc in the unorganised sector of industries. This entire area concerning the service and working conditions of the unorganised sector workers and their related problems have been left totally uncared for by the subsequent Congress Governments for years together despite repeated representations and agitational approaches by the workers. Coupled with the absence of any national wage policy, this has resulted in a totally chaotic situation in the area of minimum wage in the unorganised sector. Minimum wages vary from state to state, from industry to industry and in the same state and in the same industry. All minimum wages prescribed are below the poverty line and that too is not being implemented. Over and above this, as majority of the workers belong to the backward castes and minority and weaker community, they are subjected to ruthless social oppression also.

Militant Struggles:

In this background, the CITU began to concentrate on the unorganised sector since more than last one decade. Unions were formed in several states in several sectors of the unorganised industries. Militant struggles were launched. Apart from statewide struggles in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Punjab and Delhi, industrywise struggles of handloom workers, powerloom workers, brick-kiln workers, stone quarry workers, beedi

and tobacco workers, loading and unloading workers, construction workers, contract and casual workers in these states, as well as in the Hindi region like UP, Bihar, Himachal, Rajasthan, MP, Haryana, etc took militant forms including strike struggles. Workers faced ruthless repression by the employers, their armed hirelings and the police. Several workers were also killed in different states. Lakhs of signatures on minimum wage were collected and submitted the Central Labour Minister in mid-eighties. After this, Delhi State CITU launched the most militant struggles. Their 3-day strike in 1987 and 7-day strike in 1988 created a big impact all over the country.

The CITU came to the position of launching all India strike in 1989 itself. A decision to this effect has also taken. However, for a united struggle involving all the trade unions, an All India Convention was organised under the banner of the then NCC at Delhi. The Convention however proved to be a damp squib and a joint strike could not be materialised due to reformist tendencies in some other trade unions.

Make the Strike a Success:

The responsibility thus came back to CITU again to organise and carry forward the militant struggles in various sectors of the industries. While fighting the reformist tendencies, the CITU in various states and industries went on mobilising the workers at grass root level and forging trade union unity at the top. The All India Coordination Committee of unorganised workers was formed in the process during the Seventh conference of the CITU at Calcutta in 1991. Although during the period several State administrations were compelled to make some increase in the minimum wages, yet these were far from the need and the recalcitrant attitude of the central Government towards these sections of workers remains unchanged.

Moreover with the new economic and industrial policies the fate of these workers are further sealed. The big monopolists and the multi-nationals are being allowed to penetrate into these sectors to turn them into mere ancillaries of the big foreign industries. Closures and sickness have already started in the small scale and tiny sectors aggravating the unemployment situation. To give further benefit to the monopolists the Government of India has also taken a move to take out the small scale sector completely out of the purview of the Factory Act and other labour legislations and social security measures.

The strike decision has therefore been taken to press the vital demands of the 90 percent workforce of the country, the uncared—for proletariat, by championing the cause of whom a new turn can be given to the trade union movement in the country. The

CITU must mobilise all the trade unions at the state and industry level in this strike. This is all the more important in the background of the IMF-prescribed new economic and industrial policies of the Narasimha Rao Government against which the 9th September Bharat Bandh preparations are on. Let the 14th July strike by the majority of the workforce be the first salvo and a big step forward for the success of the forthcoming Bharat Bandh. The Working Committee of the CITU has already taken this decision endorsing the strike in a resolution adopted in its Bhubaneswar meeting.

CITU & Plantation Workers Federation Condemn Murder of CITU Workers By INTUC Goondas

17.6.93

The CITU and the Plantation Workers Federation of India have issued the following statement:

The CITU and the Plantation Workers Federation strongly condemn the gruesome murder of 17 workers of CITU by the murder gang of INTUC who in the course of their attack also injured scores of other CITU workers in Banarhat tea garden area in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The attack was clearly unprovoked and pre-planned: while attacking the CITU meeting under cover of darkness. The murderers did not forget to cut off escape routes even. Besides attacking the meeting they also raided several villages in the area. The attack carried on with fire arms, bombs, arrows and other lethal weapons continued for several hours and all arrangements were there to make police action difficult.

Perhaps the short sighted local leaders of the INTUC enjoying the blessings of state Cong(I) did not realise that this murderous act of their will vitiate the atmosphere for healthy trade union movement which may create a situation highly detrimental to the interest of the working class movement in general. The CITU hopes that the higher leadership of INTUC will not fail to look into it and not only shall condemn this heinous attack but also restrain their followings in future.

The workers have rightly voiced their protest through bandh at local and district levels. The CITU and the Plantation Workers Federation call upon workers to register their protest against this brutal massacre.

The CITU and the Plantation Workers Federation demands exemplary punishment to the culprits and adequate compensation being paid to the injured and the families of those killed.

The CITU and the Plantation Workers Federation extends heart felt sympathy to the injured and condolence to the bereaved families.

Resolution On All India Strike by Workers of Unorganised Sector of Industries

This meeting of the Working Committee of the CITU held at Bhubaneswar from June 4-6, 1993 endorses the decision of the workers of the unorganised sector of industries to go on a one day countrywide strike on July 14, 1993 in pursuance of 22 point demands formulated in the all India convention held in November last at Calcutta.

The meeting notes with serious concern the deplorable condition of the workers in the unorganised sector of industries in the country, which have further deteriorated in the past two years of the IMF prescribed new economic policy being pursued by the Narsimha Rao Government.

While there is a steep rise in the prices of the basic necessities of life the Govt of India has failed to ensure even a subsistence wage to this section of workers, not to speak of need base wages as decided in the 15th Indian Labour Conference. Even minimum wages fixed by the Govt which is without any criteria, are not implemented. Whatever paltry wages they get are not linked with consumer price index to neutralise the price rise.

No labour laws or the Factory Act are applicable to these workers. Social security measures like PF, ESI, Pension, Gratuity etc are denied.

In pursuance of the new industrial policy of deregulations and allowing infiltration of the monopolists in the small scale sector, the Government of India has taken a move to withdraw the small scale from the purview of the Factory Act and other labour legislations and Social Security measures. This will spell ruin of this sector, increase unemployment and throw large number of workers into the unprotected unorganised sector of industries.

There is no security of job or full employment. Besides, they are victims of social oppression and repression. Women workers are discriminated as against their male counterparts. Their specific demands are not met with despite militant struggle launched by them in various industries in the unorganised sector.

In this background, despite repeated representation made to the Govt for amelioration of the condition of these workers who constitute about 90% of the work force in India, the Government of India did nothing in this regard to determine either need based

wages or to ensure application of labour laws or social security measures to them.

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Unorganised Workers, therefore took the decision of observing one day countrywide strike on 14th July to press the demands. The workers will strive for launching the strike action unitedly with other trade unions. The strike will be preceded by a series of programmes like conventions, other united action programmes at local levels and submission of petition to the Lok Sabha etc. This meeting extends full support to the strike and calls upon all the state committees to take steps for the success of the strike. The Working Committee appeals to all other trade unions to actively support the strike in the interest of these workers.

Rashtriya Ekta Abhiyan calls to Observe National Unity Week

The Rashtriya Ekta Abhiyan (REA) held its full fledged meeting on June 2 wherein it has been decided to observe August 9 to 15 as Defend National Unity week throughout the country. During the week vigorous campaign has to be organised against the danger of national independence and the disruptive forces of communalism.

The notable feature of the decision is that during the weeklong campaign, different mass fronts should observe each day separately. The programme chalked out is as follows:

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|-----------|---|---------------------------------------------------|
| August 9 | — | To be observed by youth and student organisations |
| August 10 | — | Women's organisations |
| August 11 | — | Trade Unions |
| August 12 | — | Kishan and Agricultural Labour Organisations |
| August 13 | — | Cultural & Intellectual organisations |
| August 14 | — | Political Parties |

ON 9th SEPTEMBER BHARAT BANDH

The Working Committee meeting of CITU held at Bhubvaneswar on 4-6th June 1993 extends full support to the decision of Bharat Bandh, including Industrial Strike, adopted from the historic national convention of all the mass organisations held at New Delhi on 15th April 1993. The Bandh has been called to demonstrate the firm and united opposition of the people and working class of the country against the anti-national economic policy of the Narasimha Rao Government and communalism.

The meeting also notes that the formation of the "Platform of Mass Organisations Against Government's Economic Policies and Communalism" is absolutely in consonance with the need of the hour and is to be considered as a significant achievement for the united democratic movement of the country. The Working Committee(WC) calls upon the working class to carry forward this historic unity and do everything possible to further strengthen the same.

The WC appeals to all the secular democratic people, the working class and mass organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women, scientists, artists etc of all affiliations to actively participate in full might to the agitational and popaganda programmes for making the Bandh a resounding success. The campaign for the Bandh must reach the different sections of the society at every nook and corner of the country to ensure widest possible participation in the Bandh. The trade union movement shall have to discharge special responsibility in line with the example set by it by launching the action programmes against the policies.

The WC calls upon the CITU State and District Committees, the Unions and Industrial Federations to take initiative alongwith others constituents in constituting the state level committees of the new platform and in organising the conventions at state, district, taluk and sub-division levels involving all the mass organisations and also in taking all other necessary steps for effective implementation of the programmes including the court arrest on 19th August, chalked out at the national convention, aimed at mobilising the people for the Bharat Bandh.

In this connection it must be noted that the court arrest programme should receive priority attention and it should be ensured that millions of people from all walks of life participate in the programme.

The importance of the 9th September Bandh has to be viewed from the fact that despite two one day token strikes and historic demonstration by a million workers before the Parliament on 25th November 1992 organised by the Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions, the Government of India is going ahead non-challantly with the anti-national policies without bothering for the distinctly visible adverse effect on the country's economy. On the other hand the communal forces are continuing their disruptive activities aimed at materialising its evil design. In such a situation nothing short of united action of the mass organisations, involving all sections of the society, would be able to effectively fight to save the country from economic and social disasters. Therefore any slackness in the preparation for the Bandh and other connected programmes will be harmful to the united movement and this in turn will inflict a severe blow to the movement against the said dangers.

The Working Committee, therefore directs all the CITU units to attach top priority to the historic task fallen on it in carrying forward the Delhi declaration, take immediate initiative for a vigorous campaign to generate a fighting mood amongst the masses all over the country for a successful Bharat Bandh paving the way for still bigger action of the people to defeat the conspiracy of the imperialist powers and their wings like IMF, World Bank and multinational companies and guard the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

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M.K. Pandhe (*Chairman*)
P.K. Ganguly (*Working Editor*)
Niren Ghosh, M.M, Lawrence,
Vimal Ranadive, Ranjit Basu

MASSIVE PREPARATIONS ON FOR BHARAT BANDH

The meeting of the Platform of Mass Organisations was held on 15th June 1993 under the presidentship of Com. Tara Reddy, National Federation of Indian Women at 15, Talkatora Road, New Delhi. It was attended by the representatives of Central Trade Unions, National Industrial Federations, Confederations of Govt Employees who are constituents of Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions and organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women, etc.

The meeting reviewed the preparations for the Bharat Bandh on 9th September 1993 and Massive Court Arrest on 19th August 1993. The meeting has expressed satisfaction at the stepped up preparation of the Bandh and called upon the mass organisations to further intensify the preparations. The meeting has decided to bring out propaganda materials highlighting the anti-people aspects of the NEP and their impact on the different sections of the society and also the danger of communalism. Posters shall be printed at the Central level and shall be distributed to the states for reprinting in the regional languages so that the message of the call of the platform is spread to every nook and corner of the country and even widest sections of the people are brought under the fold of the united platform.

The meeting has decided to gear up the massive preparations for the success of the court arrest programme to be participated by lakhs and lakhs of people from all walks of lives.

The meeting has endorsed the call for observing the countrywide one-week campaign from 9th August to 15th August at the instance of the Rashtriya Ekta Abhiya to defend national unity and economic independence of the country.

The meeting took note that state level joint conventions has been held in few states and dates for many others have been fixed and preparation for the padayatra and jathas are also going on.

The next meeting of the platform will be held on 5th July 1993 to take stock of the preparations and decided further necessary steps.

TAMIL NADU NEWS LETTER :

Tamil nadu prepares for Bharath Bendh

A.K. Padmanabhan

Trade Unions and other Mass Organisations in Tamilnadu has begun their preparations for the Bharath Bandh on 9th September against the Economic Policies and against Comunalism. In a meeting in Madras, state leaders of 24 Mass Organisations in the state discussed in details about the preparations for the Bandh and the preceding struggles.

The meeting was presided by T.K. Rangarajan, General Secretary of State CITU, A.K. Padmanabhan (CITU), A.M. Gopu (AITUC), C. Kuppusami (LPF), and leaders of UTUC (LS), AICCTU, Kisan Sabha, Agricultural Workers Unions, Unions from Banks, Insurance and Telecommunications state government employees unions, Teachers Organisations, Youth and students organisations, and AIDWA participated in the meeting.

The meeting welcomed the decisions taken in the 15th April Convention at Delhi. The meeting decided to conduct a wideranging campaign all over the state, explaining the demands.

It was decided that preparatory meetings will be held in all districts by the end of June and district conventions will be held by 20th July. All through July and up to first week of August, extensive campaigns will be conducted all over the state by holding gate meetings, street meetings, squad campaigns, posterings, distribution of leaflets, wall writings etc.

Thousands of people from all walks of life will participate in the court arrest programme on 19th August.

The next phase of campaign will conclude with the Bendh on September 9th.

It was decided that the Tamil version of the declaration of the 15th April Convention will be printed in large numbers and will be distributed all over the state. Various organisations will also bring out pamphlets and leaflets, explaining various issues and appealing for the successful implementation of the programme.

The meeting has also appealed to all Trade Unions and mass organisations to participate in this campaign and struggle against Economic policies and against communalism.

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State Convention of Mass Organisations Against Govt's Economic Policies & Communalism

ASSAM

Braving inclement weather, more than 700 workers, Students, Youth, Peasants and women participated in a state level Convention held at District Library, Guwahati on 19.6.93 in response to the call of the Delhi Convention of "Platform of Mass Organisations against Govt's Economic Policies and Communalism". The convention was presided over by a presidium consisting of Dhireswar Kalita(AITUC), Sasha Kamal Handique (CITU), Indibar Kownar (HMS), Indu Bhaumik (UTUC-LS) and Tolan Bhoraly (AICCTU).

Inaugurating the convention Com. Shanti Ranjan Ghatak, Labour Minister of West Bengal Govt. emphasised the need to fight unitedly the present dangers posed by the new Economic policies of Cong(I) govt and the communalism propped up by the Sangha Parivar under BJP leadership. Ghatak narrated the experiences of West Bengal pointing out how the conspiracy of the multinationals to replace jute by artificial fibre was foiled by the united struggle which saved both the growers and workers engaged in jute.

Com. Dipankar Dutta (AITUC) introduced the declaration of the convention which urged the toiling masses to implement 4 point of programme of action including mass arrest on 19th August and Bharat Bandh on 9th September in support of 20 point demands for reversing the present economic policies and sustained struggle against communalism. Golap Borbora (HMS) highlighted the corruption of the ruling party and maintained that inspite of enormous natural resources the industrialization of Assam will not be possible for New economic policies of Govt. Kalyan Chadhuri (UTUC-LS) explained the harmful effects of new economic policies and alerted the toiling masses that communalism is the weapon of the ruling class to divide the masses. Com. Amal Ghosh Dastidar urged that proper importance should be given to the declaration and the toiling masses with complete dedication should take up the struggle against communalism and new economic policies whose adverse affects are already felt in Assam. Com. Suhas Sen of AICCTU urged all out efforts to implement the program chalked out in the declaration.

On behalf of the peasant organisations Com.

Uddhab Barman. MP and Nazmul Haque, MLA supporting the declaration apprehended that entire rural economy will be ruined if the present policies are not reversed. They also cautioned against communal danger. Besides central Trade Unions representatives numbering 36 from various Trade Unions, Industrial Federations of Rlys, Banks, Defence, Post and Telegraphs, Insurance and other state and central govt employees etc. and the representatives of other mass organisations like student. Youth, Kisan, and Women with the lone exception of N.F. Rly Mazdoor Union (AIRF) in their address lent full support to implement the programme.

MADHYAPRADESH

The state level convention was held at Gandhi Bhawan, Bhopal on the 12th of June '93 organized jointly by several mass organisations declared their firm resolve to carry out a massive state wise campaign against the Governments Economic policy and against communalism.

Inaugurating the convention Com. M.K. Pandhe, the General Secretary of CITU said that the new economic policy of the Govt. of India in a step towards de-industrialisation of the country. By opening the Indian market and making the deck clear for Multi-national penetration the Indian Industries are being ruined. Dismantling the public sector is going on in a planned way at the dictate of IMF & World Bank. He called upon the participants to prepare for the mightiest programme of Massive Court Arrest on 19th August and finally the Bharat Bandh on 9th September '93.

On behalf of AITUC Com. Atul Kumar Anjan, the Vice-President of All India Youth Federation in their speech warned against the communal forces trying to destory the unity of the nation and called upon all to unite the masses and fight against these forces. Giving details of the pathetic conditions of the toiling massed in the state the Secretary of CITU state committee of Madhya Pradesh Com. Badal Saroj told that 60 thousand textile workers in the state are on the streets, the unorganised labour is deprived of minimum wages and labour laws. Over and above this ruthless curb on trade union activities initiated by the previous BJP govt and presently carried out by the administration under governors rule are helping the

employers. He said, the present fight should not be a mere formality but should be with full strength of the working class so that they can force the govt to withdraw the anti-people, anti-working class policies.

Com, Prithish Chanda, President of UTUC (LS) said that the bankrupt capitalist path is heaping miseries on the people of this country and called upon all to fight for a change

The others who addressed the convention were Com. Yamuna prasad shastri, Ex-MP(State President of HMS), All India Secretary of Confederation of central govt, employees Com. S.K. Vyas, and leaders of various mass organisations of the state.

The comention gave a call for massive 'Jail.Bharo' on 19th August and undertake massive campaign through 'padayatras' etc. and make 9th September 'Bharat Bandh' a complete success.

Ensuing Bharat Bandh and Railwaymen's Struggle

Kanai Banerjee

Massive preparation is going on throughout the country to make the ensuing Bharat Bandh an unprecedented success. In fact the national convention held at the Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi on 15th April 1993, where the decision was taken for Bharat Bandh on 9th Sept. marked a distinctly new stage in the struggle against the anti-people and anti-national economic policies pursued by the Government of India at the behest of the IMF-World Bank. Prior to this, struggle against these policies, and against their implementation, was being waged almost single handed by the workers and employees of the country. It was natural, too, because it is the working class that was to face the first salvoes fired by the Government and other vested interests in terms of these policies. But gradually it was becoming clear to other sections of people also that effects of these policies were all pervading, they would spare none. All sections were therefore gradually waking up to the serious danger posed by these policies to each of them and to the nation as a whole. It is out of this realisation that organisations of all sections of people such as the peasantry, the agricultural workers, youth, students, women, intellectuals, professionals and so on assembled on one platform along with the trade unions in the convention of 15 April to launch an all out struggle against the disastrous economic policies of the Govt. The first round of the programme of action will culminate in Bharat Bandh on 9th September 1993. All sections of people barring a handful of speculators and the like, almost the entire nation, will be in action on the day.

Will Railwaymen Participate?

"What role will the 17 lakh railwaymen, the largest contingent of Indian Working Class under a single administration, the custodians of the life line of

the country, what role will they play in this great national action?"—this is one of the major questions being inevitably faced at the grass root level by the organiser during the course of their preparatory campaign for the Bandh. And this is not withstanding the AIRF leaders assertion once again from the rostrum of the 15th April National Convention itself that one day strike is not possible on railways. Perhaps the prospects of participation of millions of new people from different walks of life in 9th September action has roused fresh expectation regarding participation of railway workers in the he Bandh. Even a very wide section of railway workers are feeling uncomfortable in the face of this expectation of the fellow workers of other establishments. Is it totally futile to have such an expectation? The answer that can be given to this question at the moment is "may be" and also "may not me".

One day strike "No"

Continuous strike, "Yes"

It is widely known in trade union circles that the AIRF leadership, while stating that one day strike is not possible on railways, always add that they are prepared to participate if call for a continuous strike is given. Nobody takes this part of their statement seriously. It is difficult to believe that the AIRF spokesmen themselves make the statement seriously. Trade union activists know the condition of trade union movement and organisation on the railways too well to be influenced by such statements. Therefore a feeling has come to prevail that this time too the railwaymen will keep clear of the Bandh and industrial strike. But one must not fail to take note some the recent development which may very well open the door for new possibilities.

AIRF decides for indefinite strike

The Working Committee of AIRF meeting recently at Indore took a decision to conduct strike ballot for an indefinite strike on a 21 point charter of railwaymen demands, which would be completed by July end and the Working Committee would meet again in early August to fix a date in the month of September from which the strike will start. It is significant that a strong opinion emerged in the meeting that the railway strike should start a little ahead of the Bharat Bandh day. Specific suggestion was put forward by many for fixing 7th September. This shows the eagerness of a section of leading AIRF functionaries to ensure that the railway workers too remain on strike on the Bandh day. It will have significant impact if this actually happens.

According to report preparation is being made enthusiastically for taking strike ballots, for rousing the workers for a continuous strike through campaigns in various forms, through conventions, seminars and meetings etc.

Why Strike

The June issue of Indian Railwaymen, the official organ of AIRF has published an editorial entitled WHY STRIKE. The article accuses the Railway authorities and the Government of throwing the Neogitating machinery "completely out of gear". It states that a meeting of the National Council (JCM) held in November 1992 had ended in dead lock and was abruptly adjourned, but in spite of categorical assurance given by the Cabinet secretary who is also the chairman of the National Council of the JCM no further meeting has yet been convened to discuss and settle the pending demands. It states further that understandings reached in the earlier meetings are also not implemented, e.g. merger of 51% DA with Pay. Demand for wage review is pending too long. Even some arbitration awards are not implemented, though they are binding on the Government.

What is more serious is that repeated attempts are being made by the Govt to freeze wage revision, DA, PLB, etc. There is arbitrary reduction of workforce, increase in workload, surrender of posts, off loading of departmental work to contractors, exploitation of casual workers etc on which issues railwaymen are extremely agitated.

"On the national scene" the article states "we have become slaves to World Bank and IMF. The demon of privatisation is playing havoc. The never ending rise in prices of essential commodities exists, and retrenchments have spelt disaster in the homes of lakhs of poor workers. There is shameless corruption all round. Thousands of crores of public money

is swindled through Bank Scams and share scandals."

The editorial concluded with a stirring call to railwaymen. "The fight is prolonged and grim. It is between justice and injustice, between the oppressors and the oppressed between the exploited and the exploiter. We know the battle would demand a heavy price. We have to prepare for sweat, tears and too many sacrifices. But that has been the great tradition of the massive AIRF. During this battle between truth and untruth victory of truth is sure and certain. One word of caution. We have to be absolutely united and guard against any attempts of sabotage from our enemies. The voice of railwaymen is the voice of AIRF. Let us implement Indore resolution in toto, Satyameva Jayate."

Are they serious?

The editorial would surely make an impression that the AIRF is extremely serious in their resolve to go on indefinite strike for realisation of their demands. Although the Indore resolution does not even mention the Government policies, the editorial does it emphatically. If the major demands of railwaymen are to be satisfactorily settled, struggle in the ultimate form of strike is unavoidable. And since some of the major grievances arise directly out of the Government's economic policies as implemented on railways, the struggle of the railwaymen needs essentially to be merged with the peoples' struggle against these policies. If editorial is taken at its face value, all this is going to happen. And it is precisely this that every conscious railwaymen, every citizen engaged in struggle against the Government policies ardently desires.

Let us hope for the best

But what is actually going to happen is yet to be seen. Wide gap between rhetoric and actual performance is not unknown in our trade union movement. Such instances are not rare even in railway trade union movement in our country. A small concession, a vague assurance often proves adequate as a plea for retreat from the path of struggle. But let us not be pessimistic, let us hope and act for the best. The railwaymen at large are rapidly coming to realise the seriousness of the danger posed by the economic policies which are being currently pursued by the Government. It is certainly not too much to expect that the railway workers would come forward to march shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the working class in this crucial struggle for survival.

Need Unity & Organisation

However it is one thing to make declaration about

a countrywise continuous railway strike, to carry it out in practice successfully is another matter. The Indian Railwaymen editorial has very correctly emphasised that "The fight is prolonged and grim". One cannot afford to forget the experience of the historic 1974 strike. One must recall how the Government pressed into action its entire coercive machinery to suppress the strike. There is no reason why it will be different today. Any illusion about it will be dangerous.

At the same time this is also to be recalled that the railway workers stood firm for about three weeks braving untold brutalities let loose on them. How was it possible? What was the source of the splendid courage and inexhaustible strength displayed by them? The Indian Railwayman editorial itself points to the correct answer when it states as "one word of caution" that "We have to be absolutely united..." Unity, absolute unity of all those who are prepared to join the struggle in its ultimate form, strike—that is the source of courage and strength and therefore an indispensable condition for the success of a major struggle. During the 1974 strike the leadership was guided by the principle that even if an organisation has only one single person in it will be welcomed to join the composite leadership because to one who genuinely wants a successful strike, the contribution of even a single person is important. It is on this guiding principle that the NCCRS was formed.

One has also to recall that even after sustaining for twenty days, the strike was withdrawn unilaterally. Whether it was correct or not to call off the strike unilaterally at the moment it was done it is nevertheless an incontrovertible fact that the strike started weakening as it was passing through its third week. This fact indicated among other things that strike organisation capable of sustaining as long as necessary even in the face of most barbarous repression was lacking. The future struggle also, as the editorial has correctly stated, is to be a prolonged one. For sure victory in this struggle it is also indispensable to build up an invincible strike organisation, on the basis of "absolute unity".

If the leadership really means what they have exhorted in the editorial, then they cannot do without paying attention to both these aspects without delay. For absolute unity the NCCRS type forum of composite leadership is an absolute necessity. It is almost as important today as it was in 1974. Practice of "untouchability" in this matter may only damage the prospect of victory in the struggle. It is on the basis of this absolute unity that an elaborate network of strike organisation at grass root level through the length and breadth of the country can alone create guarantee for victory.

OTHER RAILWAY TRADE UNIONS

In the days preceding the 1974 strike, the AIRF under the leadership of George Fernandes had taken initiative in building up The "absolute unity" that was symbolised in

the NCCRS. But some other organisation particularly the All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) also shared the initiative. In fact it is the AILRSA which had first approached the AIRF and other organisation for united struggle. While as the biggest organisation of railwaymen the larger share of responsibility to build unity lies with AIRF, it will perhaps be wrong to think that the other organisations have no active role to play in forging unity. Experience of trade union movement has shown time and again that when there is an overwhelming urge among workers for struggle and unity, any organisation big or small becomes a force provided they can faithfully voice the workers feelings. Why should we not hope that the relatively smaller organisations of railwaymen will also duly exert themselves in this direction.

If all sections among rail trade union movement discharge their responsibility sincerely and honestly then there can be no doubt that two decades after the historic 1974 railway strike a new and more glorious chapter will be added to the history of trade union struggle in the country.

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Preparations for 14th July strike:

Workers from unorganized industries in Tamilnadu will also participate in large numbers, in the one day nation wide strike on 14th July. Brisk preparations are going ahead in all districts to make this strike successful.

CITU State Committee, in its meeting at Madras on 23rd and 24th May has given a call to all district Committees and unions to make extensive preparations for the strike. Many district committees and industry wise Federations have already met and chalked out campaign programmes and for obtaining signatures in the memorandum in a massive way. Conventions are being held in many centers. Rallies and demonstrations are being planned in many centres. It is expected that large sections of Handloom, Powerloom, Beedi, Construction etc will participate in this nation wide strike on 14th July.

STRIKE BY STATE TRANSPORT WORKERS

The State transport workers in Tamil Nadu observed a one-day strike all over the state on June 5. The strike was against the move of privatisation and the anti-workers agreement signed by INTUC, HMS and AIDMK unions.

True to its anti-worker, anti-people policies the state govt. resorted to intimidatory steps including arrest of 5000 workers of foil strike. But the workers fought with courage and determination and more than 50 thousand workers participated in the strike.

More Revelation On The Anti-Worker Pension Scheme Of The Government

The New Pension Scheme (PS) of the Central Govt has been coming under serious objective criticism from different quarters like trade unions, press, actuaries, etc. ever since the bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha.

Shri. M.G. Diwan, Accredited Actuary and Ex-Chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India made a study of the actuarial report based on which the PS has been prepared and has recorded his comments on the same:

Another consulting actuary, Shri C.S. Kawakar has examined the PS thoroughly and has made detailed comments and has pointed out different anti-worker aspects of the scheme.

The report of actuary plays important role in formulating any truly beneficial pension scheme. We, therefore, produce hereunder the excerpts from the comments of the above noted actuaries.

A very serious point which has been noted by both the actuaries is that the Pension Scheme has been prepared by the Govt. on the basis of the report of the actuary appointed by a multinational foreign bank and that too practically free of cost! —Ed.

FROM THE COMMENTS OF SHRI M G DIWAN

A Bill has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha to amend the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, in order to replace the provisions of the Employees' Family Pension Scheme, 1971 (FPS) by the Employees' Pension Scheme 1993 (EPS). While the full details of the EPS have not been publicised there is general awareness among the various affected groups of the provisions thereof.

While the framework of the new scheme has all the elements of a comprehensive social security to take care of old age and family needs after death, there is a feeling that in this scheme also the benefits provided appear to be too low compared to the contributions indirectly secured from the employees by diverting the employers' contribution portion of the Provident Fund.

It is difficult to guess the compulsion which weighed with the Actuary to allow himself to complete his work on this unsatisfactory database: Curiously enough the Actuary seems to have acted on behalf of a multinational bank whose involvement seems to have unnecessarily generated suspicion and confusion. What role has the Bank played in working out the report is a matter for conjecture.

The details of the benefits payable to widows, children and orphans or other dependents of unmarried employees need a thorough review as to the amounts payable and eligibility conditions. There is a feeling of discrimination between a son and a daughter as in the former case marriage is not relevant in the latter it has been made relevant.

Another point that needs consideration is the

element of compulsion. It is difficult to understand why option could not be given to every employee to decide which way to go. Quite a few employees these days feel that they are competent to manage their own money after retirement. They need not be forced into opting out for a pension which they do not desire.

FROM THE COMMENTS OF SHRI C.S. KAWATKAR:

However, EPS is not a third terminal benefit as expected. It is in lieu of a specified share from the employers' contribution to PF. The specified share is 8.33% of salary (with a ceiling of Rs,3,500\-.p.m. at present). The employees are aggrieved on this, more so as there is a wide spread apprehension that the proposed EPS will take away more from the existing benefits for the promised pension benefits under the EPS. The experience in respect of the FPS is behind them.

Apart from the above drawbacks, there are other questions which will raise doubts about the whole affair. The PF Commissioner paid Actuary fees of Rs.1001\-. only for the stupendous valuation work covering some 120 lakhs members of FPS not to the actuary but to the Grindlays Bank. Of course, the PF Commissioner also paid the computer expenses directly. The above observations have been made so as to judge how casually the whole matter of such serious implications for literally lakhs of members of FPS is dealt with by the PF office. There is therefore no reason to believe that while formulating the proposed EPS any more serious effort would have been

made to arrive at the level of benefits offered thereunder.

Under Voluntary Retirement Schemes, such early retirements may occur several years below age 50 years. Even the VRS formulated by the Government under section 10(10c) of the IT Act, 1961, envisages early retirements at ages 40 years and above. In these cases, pension will not start until attainment of age 50 years. Now consider two employees who retire at age 40 and 45 years, both after rendering 20 years of service on pensionable salary of Rs 3500/- p.m. The quantum of monthly pension commencing from age 58 years earned by them will be Rs 1027/-. Both of them will be entitled to a reduced pension of Rs.527/- only, but the first employee will have to wait for 10 years while the second will have to wait for 5 years. Assuming that their salary progression was identical through out the accumulated amount of the employers' share of contribution will be also identical. On a very conservative estimate, allowing interest of only 9% p.a. on accumulations as against 12% p.a. presently available on PF and assuming a constant salary of Rs.1000/- or Rs. 3500/- p.m. throughout the period of 20 years, the minimum amounts to their credit in PF on account of the employers' share will be Rs.50,000/- or Rs. 1,50,000/- respectively. Therefore, the actual amount might be somewhere close to the latter figure. If the waiting period of another 5 or 10 years were also to be considered, the above accumulated amount of say, Rs. 1,50,000/- will grow to more than Rs.2,25,000/- after 5 years and Rs. 3,55,000/- after 10 years (even at 9% interest p.a.) against which the employees will be entitled to a miserly deferred pension of Rs.5267/- p.m. after 5 or 10 years. What more raw deal could be meted out in the name of social security? The scheme should in all fairness give option to such young members to take lumpsum as in the contingency of "cessation" of service before completion of 10 years of service.

The government may have its own justification for formulating the EPS as it has done but there is no denying the fact that what is being offered as pension is a dismally low return, by way of interest only, on the capital sum accumulated from the employer's share of PF contributions which is sought to be diverted to the EPS, but the said capital sum is permanently lost to them. That is the principal grievance of the employees and legitimately so. The government is morally responsible to evolve a pension scheme which is not only fair and equitable, but which can be transparently seen to be so by the employees. Therefore, if the EPS provides for return of capital on death of a members after retirement in lieu of windows'

and orphans' pension, perhaps the cause for most of the resentment to the scheme will disappear.

The EPS will result in colossal funds being placed at the Government's disposal. As it is, there is a nucleus of Rs.5000 crores being transferred from the FPS to the proposed EPS. In a matter of the next 5 to 10 years, the funds in the EPS might easily swell to over Rs. 20,000 to 25,000 crores. Such huge funds should not be allowed to be dissipated to meet the budgetary deficits of the Government.

FROM WRITE-UP BY SHRI C.P. THOMAS PUBLISHED IN THE ECONOMIC TIMES DATED 19-6-1993

Contrary to popular belief, the number of years of service put in by an employee under the Family Pension Scheme (FPS) will not be considered for calculating the pension amount under the new Employees Pension Scheme (EPS) introduced to replace it.

A majority of the 1.5 crore members of the FPS thus stand to lose because they have been led to believe that their years of service under the old scheme will also be taken into account.

A close look at the new scheme shows that an employees years of service under the FPS will be considered only for determining eligibility under the new scheme but the same will not hold true when calculating the pension due to employees.

The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry in a letter date 4-5-1993 to the Union Labour Minister has noted that :-

Apart from the foregoing, general, reservations on grounds of equity, the provisions of the amending Bill are fraught with serious practical difficulties, besides suffering from ambiguities and confusions. It is felt that the Bill would neither serve the interest of the employees, as they would stand to lose financially, if the new provisions are introduced nor would it reduce the burden on the employer, who would be saddled with yet another bureaucratic machinery with which to deal.

As it is, when the experience with the administrative machinery of the existing Provident Fund Authorities leaves much to be desired, there is no guarantee that the proposed new bureaucratic set up would be of any real benefit, either to the employees or to the employers.

The new concept, as presented in the Bill, will spell a radical difference from the present system. The provident fund scheme would not be a contributory fund any more. For these employees who have

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CITU FOUNDATION DAY OBSERVED

The 23rd anniversary of the Foundation of CITU was observed at the Central Office at Delhi. A public meeting to celebrate the occasion was held at the office lawn under the presidentship of Com.E Balanandan and attended by about 400 workers mobilised by the Delhi State Committee of CITU. The meeting was preceded by hoisting of the CITU flag by Com.Balanandan and succeeded by video film show.

Addressing the meeting Com.M K Pandhe recalled as to how within a period of 23 years of its existence the CITU has become the champion of the united movement of the working class of the country. The CITU since its foundation not only has grown in size and sphere of influence but has also achieved the recognition of the working class as a fighting trade union centre for the cause of the exploited workers. He also noted the leading role played by the CITU in forging broadbased unity of the trade union movement in fighting the various anti-working class issues came up before the movement from time to time. Com.Pandhe also gave an account of how the relations of CITU with international fraternal organisations has grown significantly despite the unfortunate developments in the socialist countries.

He also dealt with the current political situation in the country with concrete reference to economic policies of the Narasimha Rao Govt. While appreciating the role of the CITU and the working class in organising the two strike actions and the historic demonstration of 25th Nov 1992 he called the CITU unions to attach priority importance in strengthening platform of Mass Organisations and spreading the message of the historic convention of all the mass organisations and various central trade unions at New Delhi on 15th April 1993. He urged upon the working class to leave no stone unturned for a reverberating success of the jail Bharo programme of 19th August 1993 and Bharat Bandh of 9th September 1993 which has to demonstrate the firm determination of the different sections of the society to fight the Fund Bank dictated economic policy and the danger of communalism.

Com.E Balanandan in his short presidential speech draw the attention of the comrades to the special character of the danger confronting the country and the working class in the background of unprecedentedly prolonged and deep rooted, all em-

bracing crisis of capitalism. He cited different examples as manifested in the advanced capitalist countries to show as to how the working people are increasingly coming under severe attack on the questions of employment and standard of living and trade union rights. He said the struggles of the working class are also consequently on the increase. He said that CITU has to play a different role than other trade union centres in as much as CITU in discharge of its class responsibility has to address the entire working class and not only the affiliated ones.

The meeting was also addressed by Com.Chandra Sekhar, General Secretary, Punjab State Committee of CITU and Com.Mohanlal of CITU Delhi State Committee. The music squad of Jananaty Manch presented a number of revolutionary songs in the meeting.

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to compulsorily join the pension scheme as also those who have opted for it, the accumulated provident fund would comprise their own contributions only as the contribution from the employer, matching the employees own contribution, would be transferred to the pension fund. This is fraught with serious difficulties. Once the Employees Pension Scheme, as envisaged, comes into force, almost the entire employers share of provident fund would no longer be available to the members and this would seriously affect their capacity to mobilise resources after retirement. In other words, the corpus of the new pension fund will be provided by the employers' contribution. This perse would change the nature and extend of the conditions of service in so far as retirement benefits are concerned.