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THE WORKING CLASS

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(The four left parties viz. CPI(M), CPI, RSP and Forward Block jointly organised a national convention against communalism at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi at 20th February, 1999. The following declaration was adopted unanimously on which one crore signatures will be collected in the country. - Editor)

THE PEOPLES CONVENTION AGAINST COMMUNALISM

Never before has india faced such grave challenges that threaten to tear asunder the unity of our country and the integrity of its social fabric.

The Communal virus assiduously nurtured by the British through their notorious divide and rule policy was admirably aided by communal elements within the country. For nearly a century, hate and animosity were patronised as official policy, which eventually led to the tragic and painful partition of our country. Our people foiled all communal designs and adopted secularism as a fundamental feature of our Republican Constitution. with supreme patriotic fervour, we strengthened our great country's unity, integrity and secular fabric. This is the proud legacy that we inherit.

Rabid communal intolerance is, however, now being pursued with greater vigour following the installation of the present BJP-led government. The fascist methodology of propoganda, fabrication and inhuman violence adopted by the

communal forces not only constitute an open defiance of our Republican Constitution but mount a vicious attack on the entire secular democratic edifice of India, apart from tarnishing India's image round the world.

Some of the coalition partners of the BJP-led government, who call themselves secular are contributing to the strengthening of the communal and fascist forces.

Notwithstanding formal statements of condemnation, the present BJP-led government is in fact patronising organisations like the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and other RSS affiliates that continue to perpetrate violent crimes as recently witnessed against the Christian minority in Gujrat, Orissa and elsewhere. No amount of public outcry appears to inhibit these forces from continuing to ravage our society. This Central government's complicity in deepening the communal divide, disrupting social harmony among people belonging to different faiths and the consequent insecurity are gravely endangering our country's unity and integrity.

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M K Pandhe
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We, the people of India

Reaffirm our commitment to safeguard and strengthen the secular democratic foundations of the Indian republic,
Commit ourselves to protect our pluralistic cultural and syncretic civilisational ethos that evolved over many centuries,
Are determined to defend our motherland and preserve its unity and integrity from the depredations of such vile forces,
And in the spirit of supreme patriotism,
Pledge unitedly to fight and defeat the gravest challenge ever faced by independent India.

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU ORGAN

MARCH 1999



At this rate he'll have no Budget to present on the 27th!!

Siddhir Tailang.

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

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MASSACRE OF LANDLESS POOR MURDER OF DEMOCRACY

Bihar had witnessed two gruesome incidents - one, the numerous attacks by the Ranbir Sena - the upper caste militia of feudal land barons, and the second - the grievous assault on democracy by the BJP-led Government at the centre.

The Ranbir Sena killed 23 landless dalits on January 25 in Shankarbigha and 12 more on February 11 in Narayanpur. Using this as a pretext, the Vajpayee Govt. sought recourse to misuse of Article 356 to impose President's rule in Bihar.

The President, who returned the earlier recommendation of the cabinet, had, this time, accepted the same when the cabinet sent it back once again.

In Bihar, the upper caste landlords had created the monster of Ranbir Sena to take on the movement of agricultural labourers for higher wages and for land reforms. Over the last two decades the Sena had claimed the lives of around 500 innocent rural poor, mostly dalits.

The land question is the basic cause of the tension prevailing in rural Bihar. Neither the Congress Party or the others who ruled Bihar ever since independence had cared to initiate any genuine measure for land reforms or protection of share-croppers' rights. Both the Congress and the BJP have always aligned with the landlords in the state. That is why, despite fiery criticism of the BJP Govt.'s all round failures, the Congress is refusing to make its stand clear on imposition of President's rule in Bihar.

RJD Government in Bihar, first under the scam-tarred Laloo Prasad Yadav and later, his wife Rabri Devi, did not lift even a little finger to disarm the unlawful Ranbir Sena.

That dismissal of the popular Govt. in Bihar is no solution to the woes of violence marred rural Bihar, is proved by subsequent events.

The high-moral plane which the BJP rulers in Delhi seek to assume is laid shattered by the shocking news that a notorious gangster Rajan Tewari was arrested from the official residence of Gangaram Koli, the BJP MP from Rajasthan! It is to be noted that this criminal, an accomplice of dreaded gangster Shukla, was involved in the murder of Ajit Sarkar, CPI(M) MLA, who spearheaded numerous struggles of the landless workers and poor peasants in Bihar. The BJP- Samata Party combine in Bihar has been backing the banned outfit Ranbir Sena!

The working class must rise in protest against the massacre of rural poor and murder of democracy.

STRUGGLE FOR RECTIFICATION OF FRAUDULANT PRICE INDEX

The high rate of inflation that is engulfing India is daily making the life of the Indian people difficult. Though the successive central governments have miserably failed to check the prices of essential commodities they have been resorting to several manipulations to keep the Consumer Price Index at a lower level.

The Consumer Price Index Numbers Review Committee known as Rath Committee was appointed by the Janata Government in 1977 to go into the question of price index which found several irregularities in its compilation. The unanimous recommendations have not been fully implemented by the Government of India. Even the 8 point correction of Index of 1960 series was not given effect with the result that workers continue to suffer due to non-correction of index.

Some of the irregularities corrected were superticiously brought into operation later again making the price index highly unreliable. Industrial workers are deprived of hundreds of crores of rupees of DA every year due to the faulty index.

The seriousness of the situation prevailing in the Labour Bureau could be understood from the fact that the Director of the Labour Bureau during the work of the Rath Committee had to be removed from the post because

the Memorandum submitted by the Indian Jute Mills Association on price index to the Government was drafted by the Director of the Labour Bureau. The Government of India could discover it only when it found that the IJMA memorandum was word by word tallied with a technical note prepared by the Labour Bureau submitted for consideration of the Government. It was seen that the Director secretly gave his note to the IJMA since he had secret dealings with them.

I had an occasion to see the register of the Labour Bureau from which the final index is prepared. I was shocked to see

M K PANDHE

the tampering of the data done in the register and I had pointed it to the then Director Labour Bureau who admitted the fact.

The Rath Committee recommended that trade unions should be associated with the monitoring of the preparation of the index, price collection machinery and conduct of family budget surveys. However the Government did not implement the recommendations in true spirit with the result that the Labour Bureau was given a free hand to tamper with the data concerning with index.

As a member of the Rath Committee I was shocked to find out that some of the shops mentioned in the Price collection machinery were non-existent.

Even one officer who was supposed to supervise the collection machinery drew salary for 56 months but did not inspect a single shop during the entire period. Such glaring irregularities can be checked in time only if the trade union representatives are associated with the work of the entire mechanism of preparation of index.

The Monograph on Consumer Price Index Numbers published by the Labour Bureau in 1960's graphically explains the methodology to be adopted by the Index Collection Authority. The ILO statisticians conferences have also periodically given correct guidelines to scientifically work out the price index figures.

These guidelines have been trampled underfoot by the Index Collection Authorities which has depressed the index drastically and ordinary worker feels from his own experience of market behavior that the index does not correctly reflect the rise in prices. Earlier when a big agitation developed in Mumbai for rectification of index, The Economist (London) correctly noted that a housewife knew more about the prices than the official statisticians.

The ILO has repeatedly emphasised the need to ensure confidence of the workers in Price Index compilation machinery. The confidence is getting eroded since the prices

go up much higher in the market than reflected in index figures. There have been occasions when the prices go up in the market but index shows a drop or remains stationary. Whenever the trade unions raised the question of reliability of index, the government always pointed out that it was the job of technicians who take necessary precaution to ensure correct reflection of prices in index. Whenever trade unions agitated for correction of index the technicians always justified the methodology. However when expert committees have been appointed they always found faults in the price collection machinery of the government. The substitution of inferior item used in the base year. The reduction in quantity of material in a fixed item of consumption, imputing cheaper varieties to originally costlier items, repeating the same prices for months without collecting prices of a particular item, non-inclusion of black-market prices where things go in black market and take only official prices, - these are some of the methods adopted by the index compiling authorities. Cases of nexus between employers and the labour bureau officials to keep the index down has already been noted earlier but this is not the only instance to be quoted. Employers are thus getting associated with index compiling machinery through various underhand links. The opposition comes only when trade union demands their rights to supervise the price collection machinery.

The trade union movement has not accepted the 1982 series because it was worked out without adequate consultation with trade unions. The defects in the series were not corrected despite repeated demands by the trade unions. Most of the public sector undertakings have signed agreements with 1960 as the base year though it is a derived series from 1982 series. The conversion factor was worked out arbitrarily. When the government was publishing data for 1960 as well as 1982 series it was found that the new series was moving at a slower rate than the old series. When this was noted without consulting trade unions the central government discontinued the 1960 series and perpetuated the faulty index. This resulted in grievous loss to the workers who received less DA payment. The Government of India without correcting the existing series with 1982 as the base year has decided to introduce a New series with 1998 as the base year. The Central Government of India without calling a meeting of central trade unions to consider all issues concerning introduction of New Series resorted to the holding of meetings in different states. Though in most of these meetings the CITU representatives informed the Labour Bureau Officials to have consultation with the central trade unions prior to holding of state level meetings, the issue was deliberately skirted by the Labour Bureau officials. The process of consultation was thus merely made as a ritual by the

Labour Bureau officials. This unilateral method of conducting family budget studies and fixing places of market in different centres central trade unions were clearly bypassed by the central government. No meeting was called by the Union Ministry of Labour also to discuss the matter with the central trade unions.

It is the ILO directive that while fixing the base year great care should be taken to ensure that the price are stable during the year. However the year chosen was an year when prices fluctuated drastically which naturally affected the outcome of the family budget survey as well as the outcome of compilation of index.

The sample chosen for the family budget studies must be representative otherwise it gives as distorted picture of the family leaving and affects the preparation of the basket for the purpose of compilation of price index. Trade Unions were kept completely in the dark about all these matters. All these aspects need to be looked in to so that faith of the working class in the price index is restored. However, the Labour Bureau was totally unconcerned about various aspects of consultation with trade unions the unanimous recommendations of the Rath Committee and trade unions should be consulted at all stages and levels was purposefully ignored.

The Government of India prepared a new series of Consumer Price Index Numbers with 1970 as the base year. In

(Cont. on page 23)

More a Ritual Than Anything Substantial

Ardhendu Dakshi

Deliberations in the 35th session of the Standing Labour Committee(SLC) showed the Government of India's attempt to convert the leading Tripartite Committees into a mere ritualistic show without making them purposeful. Most of the decisions taken in the previous meetings have remained unimplemented, reducing tripartite consultation to a mere farce. The SLC was being held after 17 months during which period the country witnessed intensified turmoil in its industry, in the labour front or broadly in the entire economy. The country is reeling under an economic recession. Govt. policies have made a large number of industries, big and small, sick. Thousands of workers have lost jobs, many more are not getting wages, net employment is falling constantly when millions of young boys and girls have joined their elders in the job market.

MINISTRY INDIFFERENT

When the crisis has assumed catastrophic proportions, the captains of industries and, the Multi-National Corporations are demanding a disciplined workforce willing to work on their terms only. They demand that the labour laws be immediately rationalised, meaning scrapping of all the provisions that provide some nominal protection to the workmen, in order to ensure their absolute right to loot. The Labour Ministry is obligingly out to satisfy them. It is no more interested in providing fair wages, social security and decent service and living conditions for the vast multitude of workers.

The Labour Ministry deals with and determines life and living of agricultural workers, construction workers, small scale and tiny industrial workers, plantation, home-based industrial workers as well as the workers in big and organised industrial establishments. Total number of people whose wages, social security benefits and service and living conditions are governed or supervised by the Labour Ministry is about 350 millions, that is well over the entire population of Europe and yet the Ministry has remained stoically indifferent

without making even a feeble attempt to address those problems.

After a lot of persuasion, the Ministry called the meeting of the second highest tripartite body, namely, the Standing Labour Committee(SLC) on 6th February 1999 at the Vigyan Bhavan presided over by the Union Labour Minister, Satyanarayan Jatia.

Apart from the Labour Minister and officials of Labour Ministry, the SLC was represented by Ministers and highest officials from state governments, mainly from Labour Ministries. Senior leaders from the Central Trade Unions and also the representatives from the employers' bodies comprising large, small and tiny sectors were present. In this meeting, the CITU was represented by M K Pandhe, General Secretary and Chittabrata Mazumder, Secretary, as delegates and Ranjit Basu and Ardhendu Dakshi as Advisers. This meeting was supposed to look closely at the problems currently agitating the labour in particular and the industry in general. It was supposed to come out with concrete steps towards implementing the decisions of the last Indian Labour Conference held in September'97.

A DAMPSQUIB

What transpired was a damp squib, absolutely frustrating. The Ministry seemed nowhere near the problems, much less having a grip over them. Pandhe, speaking on behalf of CITU, thoroughly castigated the Labour Ministry for downgrading its own position by itself. It has reduced itself to be a post office sending representationS to other Ministries, who have no love lost for labour. As a result, other important Ministers and employing Ministries have completely ignored this meeting of highest tripartite forum which deals with the fate of more than half of our population. Pandhe asserted that SLC is not a debating platform, it is a body that sits in between two sessions of Indian Labour Conference and takes concrete decisions on vital matters, sets guidelines in the functioning of entire gamut of labour and industry.

INDUSTRIAL SICKNESS

He emphasised that the greatest problem today is industrial sickness. Sickness is growing everyday both in public and private sectors, thousands of workers are losing jobs, those in the jobs are not getting wages, they are sacrificing their many benefits. Uncertainty has gripped the employment scenario. SLC has failed to come out with any analysis of the situation, let alone any suggestion to solve these problems. He mentioned that the Ramanujam Committee on Sick Industries was about to finalise a report when it was denied a marginal extension for a month or so, and therefore, there was no report. The second Bipartite Committee also failed to bring out any unanimous conclusion because the employers wanted a legal framework only to advance their pursuit for so called globalisation which Trade Unions will never agree. In such a situation sickness is growing. BIFR has proved to be ineffective and is functioning only as a liquidating agency. He severely criticised that the Govt. is dilly-dallying with the Agricultural Workers Bill on one pretext or the other, for several years. Why not the Govt., he asked, place the Bill in line with the Kerala Act in the Parliament and seek suggestions, amendments there itself? In Kerala, as the Act was passed decades back and is working well, then we should go for it immediately. He charged that it is the landlord lobby which is stalling the bill and the Labour Ministry is sitting silent over it.

LABOUR LAWS IN DISARRAY

Pandhe criticised that the Labour Ministry has taken no cognisance of the recent Supreme Court judgements on sexual harassment on women workers in workplaces and before that, on contract labour in the Air India case. It should have come out with specific guidelines for employment and service conditions.

In the matter of reviewing and revising of existing labour laws, Dr. Pandhe lambasted the Govt. for ignoring the fact that implementation of the laws are on the decline, enforcement is still poorer. A large number of provisions in different acts are defaulted by the employers. Talking about amendments only to suit the purposes of the employers will only complicate the situation instead of improving it. The Govt. must be cautious

about it. But, he hastened to add that, some enactments have become obsolete, like the payment of Bonus Act, as the ceiling has not been revised with the time. Now only unskilled workers, and in some cases not even they, are eligible for annual bonus. Even productivity linked bonus has the same ceiling applicable. This has to be rectified if we want the workers to give their best.

TRIPARTISM UNDERMINED

Pandhe referred to statements by some others that a continued dialogue is necessary to sort out differences and severely criticised the Govt. on this score. He pointed out that there are nearly 50 tripartite bodies which are supposed to actively discuss and decide on several important matters. Some of them never met, some have not met for the last 5 years and the rest are equally infrequent. Tripartite mechanism is being deliberately undermined, degraded. The Labour Minister finds time to meet the employers but he rarely meets the labour representatives. Labour is not in the agenda of this Govt. That is why important Ministers in the Govt prefer to skip ILC or SLC. In earlier days Textile Minister, Finance Minister, Industry Minister, even Prime Minister, used to attend and address such Tripartite Committee meetings. Now they think labour to be irrelevant in their governance schemes. This is deplorable. He specifically mentioned that the special Tripartite Committee to study and discuss the impact of reforms on workers did not sit for a long time, though the situation is alarming. This shows the lack of concern and anxiety of the Labour Minister on this crucial matter.

He pointed out that Small Scale Industries should be given more representation in these tripartite meetings as, they are by far the largest employers and also they make 50% or more of our exports. In recognition to their activity in our economy, they deserve a bigger say in such meetings.

Referring to the inspection of EPZs (Export Promotion Zones) Pandhe welcomed the move as a good beginning and requested to keep up the drive because the EPZs, secluded from other industrial centres, became spots where employers indulge in all anti-labour activities. He urged that TU leaders also should be allowed to visit EPZs and passes be issued for this purpose.

On the Govt. decision to set up 2nd National

Commission on Labour, Pandhe wondered why the composition and terms of reference were not discussed at tripartite level in advance. He said that the SLC should have decided on the formation of 2nd National Commission on Labour and its terms of reference and not the Labour Ministry. We have come to know about it through press only. The representation of only 2 in the Commission from labour side is simply inadequate, it should be increased. The terms of reference also should take care of labour's points of view. He demanded a thorough discussion before the Commission is actually constituted.

Pandhe finally urged that there should be conclusion on some of the issues brought before us instead of reducing ourselves to a body only to fix agenda for next ILC. His views were supported by many others.

CRITICISM BY OTHERS

Altogether 25 speakers addressed the meeting from all the three sides, viz., Govt, Labour and Employers. Several issues were highlighted by them requesting for urgent action. Mahendra of AITUC criticised the Govt. for unilateral steps like investment of PF money in stock market through private sector thus risking the money totally, the Govt's move to amend Section 25(0) of I.D. Act, thus giving a freehand to employers to close down their establishments, to amend Contract Labour Act to allow more contract workers in jobs hitherto done by regular workers in the name of non-core sector. He criticised the existing corruption in many areas where workers welfare bodies work. Govt. He drew attention to the denying 12.5% interest on FPS/PF corpus slow progress in Textile Industry revitalisation, DA freeze by Jute Mill owners, and Bonus ceiling matters.

Many speakers including Ministers of some states criticised the functioning of ESI scheme, the quality

of treatment and problems of administration. They demanded immediate steps from the Government to improve its functioning.

Umraomal Purohit of HMS stressed the need for immediate settlement on recognition process issue. He demanded secret ballot. He pointed out the "Ministry of Labour and Employment" as it was called in earlier days has shed "Employment" from its purview and also the allocation of fund of only less than 1% of the central budget shows the Govt's concern for labour matters. These show the Govt's priorities. He mentioned that the Govt. (DPE) guidelines for wage settlement in central PSUs will invariably make settlement anywhere impossible.

G. Sanjeev Reddy highlighted the issues like Agricultural Workers Bill, non-implementation of Construction Workers Act'96, delay in fixation of minimum wage and linking it with Consumer Price Index. He criticised the Govt. decision to divert PF money to share market without the knowledge of Central Board of Trustees. He, of course, preferred 'check off' system to recognition through secret ballot.

On the other hand, the employers unanimously demanded that all protective measures inbuilt in different statutes should immediately be removed and they may be given free hand to do whatever they like. They were obviously inspired by the Govt's open stand against the labour and in favour of the employers to help them become competitive in the global market. They opined that in the context of so called globalisation, our labour laws have to be restructured to give them unfettered right to hire and fire and abolish Govt. controls in all other matters. They want not welfare but development, not protection (labour) but promotion (of industry). The existing labour laws are junk from British days and should be replaced by 'modern'

PENSION CASE: APEX COURT HEARING ON 13.4.99

The case against EPS-95, or more popularly known as "PENSION CASE", was fixed to be heard on 9th February last. But the case could not be taken up for hearing for want of time. The hearing has now been fixed for 13th April, 99 to be taken up as the first case in the list and will be heard till completion. The case was being fought by IEL Employees Union and Steel Workers Federation of India; now many more unions including those from Philips, Hind Motors, BHEL, OTIS etc., have joined the fight.

The unions are taking all necessary steps to effectively fight the EPS-95 in the legal arena.

system and, of course, fast.

However, the trade unions jointly opposed such ideas and demanded the 2nd National Commission on Labour should not work to oblige the employers in any way.

Dr. L Mishra, Secretary (Labour) accepted that there is much to be desired in the functioning. He hoped that in many areas, because of massive computerisation, quality of work will improve. Policy problems, he said, are cropping up to take immediate steps in cases of say, IDPL or Textile industry. His Ministry is interacting with other Ministries. He hoped that NRF will be utilised in a better manner to make retired life of employees more productive, remunerative and removing hardships.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The SLC meeting finally came out with the following stereo typed conclusions:

- 1) The composition and terms of reference of 2nd National Commission on Labour will be decided in a tripartite meeting.
- 2) Employment generation will be given priority and small and medium sectors will be the thrust area.

3) Indian industries will be helped to prepare themselves for competition in a period of 3 years.

4) As in the case of sugar, some import tariff to be imposed to restrict or stop imports.

5) Beedi industry should be given protection from the attacks of cigarette multinational giants.

6) The Bill on Agricultural Workers to be pushed through urgently.

7) Other Ministries should give due importance to tripartite committees and be involved in these meetings.

8) Modification of SICA will be taken up and action to stop industrial sickness and steps to improve BIFR functioning will be speeded up.

9) Implementation Committee will oversee implementation of ILC/SLC decisions.

10) All tripartite committees at central and state level to be activated.

11) A separate Tripartite body will look after unorganised sector.

It was decided in the meeting that the next Indian Labour Conference will be held on 8th and 9th April 1999 and the main thrust areas will be removing Industrial Sickness and Generation of Employment.

CABINET DECISION ON COAL MINING FLAYED

The Government of India decision to allow participation of private sector in mining of coal and lignite, and to amend the Coal Mines Nationalisation Act towards this effect is reprehensible. This has been the subject matter of discussions between the Central Trade Unions and the Government since 1996, when the then Prime Minister I K Gujral intervened to initiate the dialogue. The present Govt by going ahead unilaterally with the move by way of a Cabinet decision, ignoring the unions is highly condemnable.

The coal industry in India is presently undergoing a period of crisis. There is dumping of coal by foreign countries. There has been drastic reduction of import duty on coal by the Government. Huge stockpile of coal at pitheads of coal mines have been reported as lifting of coal by NTPC and State Electricity Board had considerably declined. This clearly establishes that the plea of the Govt. of India regarding shortage

of domestic coal availability is highly misleading, as the same is based on wrong projections to justify privatisation/private sector participation.

The Government assurance that there would be no change on the nationalisation of original mines can hardly be of any consolation. There is already a move to close down 64 mines under the Eastern Coalfields Ltd endangering the jobs of 72000 workers.

The five federations in the coal industry had written to the present Prime Minister in this regard. But regrettably, the PM has not chosen to reply even. We demand of the Government of India to reverse the Cabinet decision and not to proceed with the proposed amendment to the Act. The coalminers all over the country and the general trade union movement will resist this attempt to liquidate the indigenous coal industry by united industrial actions.

(Statement issued jointly by the Central Trade Unions including the CITU on 18th February, 1999)

CITU OPPOSES GOVT. GUIDELINES

JIBON ROY

The Govt. of India have issued a set of guidelines in respect of wage negotiations in Public Sector Units through the Department of Public Enterprises (see box). CITU has strongly criticised the Govt. move.

The guidelines are derogatory in

nature and we are opposed to the basis of these guidelines. These are intended to practically put a stop to the ongoing negotiations in most of the Public Sector Enterprises. We give below, briefly, the reasons for our opposition to the recommendations.

1. These guidelines are even worse vis-a-vis the Mohan Committee's report on Pay Revision for Public Sector Executives. The Govt. has used two different yardsticks to revise the wages, one for the executives other for the employees.

Policy for the Sixth Round of Wage Negotiations in Public Sector Enterprises

The Govt. of India have decided that the next round of wage negotiations (which fell due on a general basis from 1.1.97) with the workers of Central Public Sector Enterprises may be commenced by the Managements of the Enterprises with the Trade Unions/Associations subject to the following conditions:

i) The management of PSEs would be free to negotiate the wage structure for the employees not covered by the Justice Mohan Committee, keeping in view and consistent with the generation of resources/profits by the concerned enterprises.

ii) No budgetary support for the wage increase shall be provided by the Govt.

iii) For PSEs which are monopolies or near monopolies or operate under an administered price structure, it must be ensured that any increase in wages after negotiations does not result in any increase in administered prices of their goods and services.

iv) The wage revisions shall be subject to the condition that there shall be no increase in labour cost per physical unit of output. There may be exceptions where units were already working at optimum capacity considering industry wide norms, in such cases the administrative Department may consult DPE.

2. As regards sick units registered with BIFR, until BIFR approves revival plan of such enterprises in which provisions have been made for additional expenditure on account of pay revision, no revision of pay would be allowed to the employees of such enterprises.

3. The public enterprises may implement the negotiated wages after confirming to the administrative Ministry and the Department of public Enterprises that the revisions are within the approved parameters, and that it has been ensured that such negotiated wages would not come in conflict with the wage revision of officers and non-unionised supervisors of public enterprises.

4. The Justice Mohan Committee, Which has already submitted its recommendation regarding pay package and perquisites for officers and non-unionised supervisors have recommended pay revision in every 10 years instead of 5 years that has been in practice. In the event of govt. accepting the recommendations of the Justice Mohan Committee in this regard, the revision of wages for the workers should also be effected once in every 10 years, in order to ensure uniformity. This aspect may also be kept in view.

5. The wage settlements should be negotiated by the PSEs in accordance with the above parameters. The administrative Ministries/Departments are requested to issue suitable instructions to the public sector enterprises under their administrative control on the above lines, under intimation to this Department.

(These guidelines have been issued of way of an office memorandum signed by Dr. S Banerjee, Joint Advisor)

2. These guidelines stipulate that there should be no increase in labour cost per unit of output. This is an absurd condition. Even rise in DA raises per unit cost of production.

3. The guidelines suggest a 10 year agreement in line with the Mohan Committee recommendations and /or 5th Pay Commission. We do not agree to it. There is already a big gap in wages as new DA formula on percentage basis in PSEs has been effected after 5 years of 4th Pay Commission. That lag is still persisting. By these, this lag will be perpetuated.

4. About pay revision of sick units the Mohan Committee suggests:

a) All PSEs under central DA pattern and eligible for 5th Pay Commission recommendation should get revised wages irrespective of their financial health.

b) Loss making PSEs ".... may have to be provided additional funds to meet the requirements of enhanced scales..." (It implies that budgetary support may be extended for these units).

c) for sick industries under BIFRthe Committee thus perceives an anomalous situation in which employees in different categories of PSUs are treated differently for no fault of theirs: Equity demands that there should be a more transparent approach to the whole problem".

As per our information the DPE has accepted the above recommendations of the Mohan Committee unaltered. So the executives in sick units may get the benefits like others in viable units. In case of workers in such PSUs engaged in vital manufacturing and service sector, the same DPE's guidelines put a ban on wage revision. This is absolutely discriminatory and therefore, not acceptable to us.

CITU unions in PSUs should widely campaign on the above discriminatory steps by the Govt. of India through DPE and prepare for agitational programmes against these "guidelines".

DIVERSION OF PF, PENSION FUNDS OPPOSED

The Expert Committee, jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Invest India Economic Foundation, headed by S.A. Dave has made uncalled for incursions into the realm of investment of PF and Pension Funds. The Central Board of Trustees of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation, is, at least for the record, an autonomous body entrusted with the administration of these funds. These are essentially matters under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour. It is beyond anyone's comprehension why a different Ministry should indulge in this Committee exercise behind the back of the CBT, which is a tripartite body.

The Finance Minister who was presented with the report of the Dave Committee had chosen to deplore the low rate of return on

these funds and commendably urged that they must get higher returns. In fact, it is the Ministry of Finance that is keeping over Rs 12,000 crore under wraps, in public account, paying an abysmally low interest of 8.5%, refusing to release the same for investment by the EPF, as per Govt's own guidelines.

Last year, during budget presentation, the Finance Minister notified a change in the pattern of investment, without any consultations with the CBT, providing for 10% accretion of funds in these funds to be invested in private sector bonds. This was taken exception to by the CBT and at the last meeting of the CBT, the Labour Secretary assured that action as per sentiments of members of CBT would be taken. The Finance Minister also, during his pre-budget consultations with the trade unions, termed this only

as a recommendation and did not insist on the same.

In this background, the Expert Committee has gone a further step by recommending placement of these hard earned funds of the workers in the highly speculative and volatile stock market. While maximisation of yield on investments must be kept in focus, the safety and security of these funds cannot and should not be compromised.

The penal measure of imposing restrictions and also a tax on withdrawal of PF moneys by workers, under specific conditions, is also condemnable.

The Govt would do well to hold its hands away from meddling with PF and Pension funds for private benefit and reject the Dave Committee report.

(Press Statement issued on 18.2.1999 by W R Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU and Member, Central Board of Trustees, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation.)

NPMO DEMANDS WITHDRAWAL OF IRA & PATENT BILLS

A largely attended National Convention held in the IMA Hall, New Delhi on 7th February, 99, under the aegis of the National Platform of Mass Organisations, demanded withdrawal of the Insurance Regulatory Authority and Patent Amendment Bills and called for observance of an All India Protest Day on 22nd February, 99, coinciding with the commencement of the budget session of the Parliament.

The convention was chaired by a presidium comprising Niyogi (AICCTU), Rostogi (AITUC), Manchanda (CITU), Nagpal (HMS), Rajendra Sastri (TUCC) and Sharma (UTUC-LS).

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, placed a draft declaration and initiated the discussions. Pandhe observed: "The BJP-led Government at the centre was not even content with the introduction of the IRA and Patent Bills in the last session. In their overzealous command-obedience to the IMF-WB-WTO regime, the Govt. resorted to promulgation of an ordinance, immediately after the last session concluded, to put the Patent Amendments in place. The BJP today stands fully exposed as they have totally discarded even the mask of Swadeshi". He cautioned that the two bills, if allowed to be passed by the Parliament in the ensuing session, will spell disaster for the country's economy.

SHAMELESS SURRENDER

Arun Ghosh, a leading economist, termed these bills to be the product of the policies championed by a small creamy layer in the society, who have no sense of shame kneeling down before the IMF-WB. This is to be halted here and now. He pointed out that the moneys invested in insurance sector belong to our people and the Government had no right to hand the people's funds to private sector and MNCs who want to grab the same. He referred to the the very same advanced capitalist countries, who insist on India opening up every sector of its economy, placing every plausible hurdle for our exports. He asserted that ours is a

100 crore people strong nation, we need not fear anybody, our scientists are capable of meeting any challenge. He cautioned that if these bills are passed, we would be losing whatever capabilities we have and the country would face a dark future. S.P. Shukla, a former Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, ridiculed the Government claim to have succeeded, in bargaining from the WTO a transition time of ten years. "These are essentially matters concerning the future of development process in India, and there is no point in biding for time", he said.

B.P. Keyala, Convener of the Working Group on Patent Law, debunked the Government claim of having provided for enough safeguards in the Amendment Bill. Once you grant exclusive marketing rights to foreign patent holders, any talk of safeguards is absurd", he pointed out. He also castigated the Government for deleting Article 39 of the Patent Act, which prescribed obtaining of a local patent as a pre-requisite to patent any product elsewhere in the world. He exhorted the mass organisations to build up resistance to such a height that these bills, which compromised national interests, are not allowed to be enacted.

PROFITEERING, MNCs SOLE AIM

Dr. Amit Sen Gupta of the Delhi Science Forum termed the Patent Bill to be a conspiracy against the nation. He deplored that the benefits of advancement of science is sought to be cornered by the MNCs for the sole aim of profiteering. He visualised that the next few years could witness just five or six MNCs controlling the pharmaceutical industry in the entire world. "These MNCs would have nothing to do with people's health but bring out products like the much hyped 'Viagra'. If obligations under the WTO regime is sought to be advanced as a justification, then the question comes, who permitted the Government and the negotiators in WTO to undertake such obligations behind the back of our people? The process of liberalisation means only one thing -

our Government being very liberal to the MNCs and not to our own people", he lamented.

K L Mahendra, General Secretary, AITUC, pointed to the growing instances of suicide by farmers in several parts of the country and said allowing the product patent would only serve to drive the farming community to the brink of disaster.

Dipankar Bhattacharya of AICCTU said: "Financial globalisation is the most dangerous phase of neo-liberal globalisation. It will only establish the speculative network of imperialism. Hence the insistence by the U.S.A. for India to open up the insurance sector. This highlights the importance of defeating these bills".

The convention was also addressed by A D Nagpal (HMS), Rajendra Sastri (TUCC), Asutosh Banerjee (UTUC-LS), N M Sundaram (AIIEA) and Sudhir Kumar (FMRAI).

CALL FOR CAMPAIGN

The declaration which was finally adopted demanded the Government to withdraw the two bills and abandon all the moves in these regards. It said:

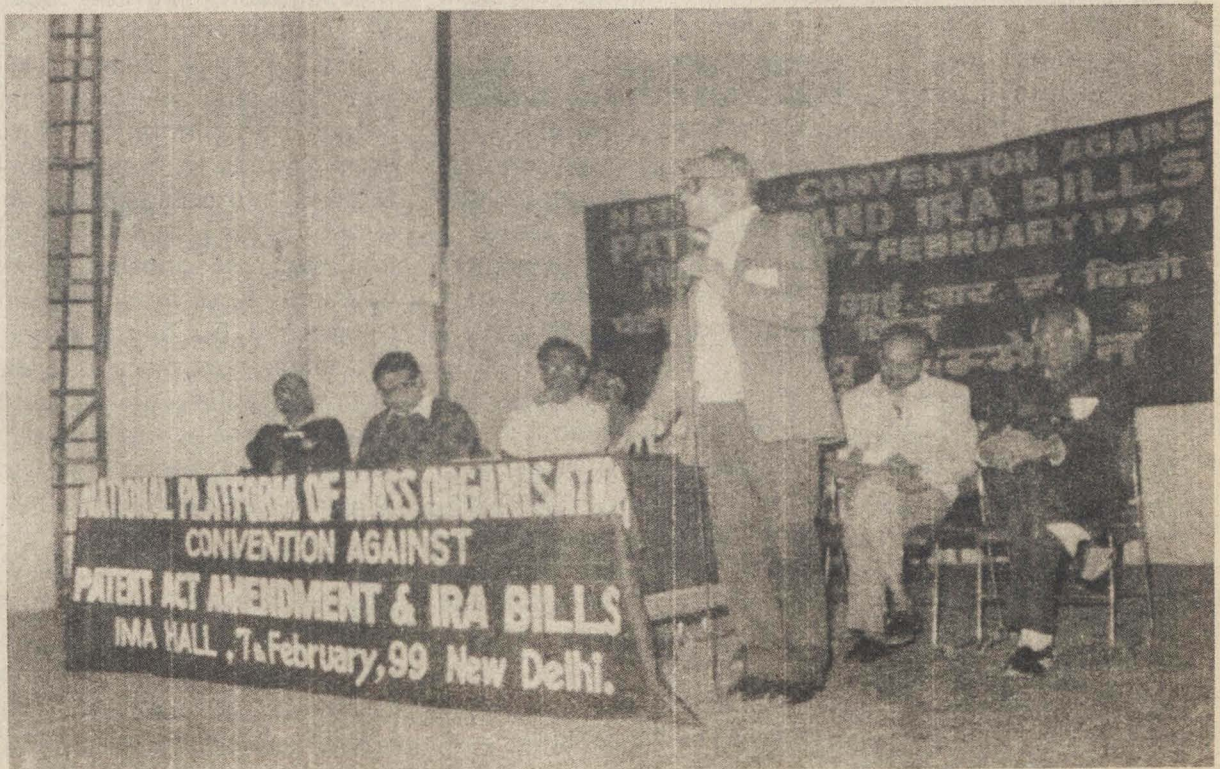
"The leading party of the coalition ruling at the Centre viz., the Bharatiya Janata Party, while in

opposition, had opposed both these bills. But now, while in government, the BJP is taking the plea of fulfilling its obligations under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regime, so far as the Patents Bill is concerned. Since there is no such obligation in the case of IRA, it only reflects the process of steady surrender of India's interests, now further spurred pursuant to the Strobe Talbott - Jaswant Singh parleys.

The Congress (I) has played a despicable role in goading the BJP-led Govt. and collaborating with the ruling party from the stage of introduction of these two bills to getting the Patent bill passed in the Rajya Sabha. The Congress and BJP may gang up again to repeat the same dubious act in the ensuing session of Parliament, in utter disregard for the country's sovereignty.

This convention denounces the Congress for its nefarious role.

This convention resolves to launch further widespread campaign and movement by trade unions and mass organisations, scientists, economists, jurists and other professionals and the patriotic forces for the preservation of the economic sovereignty of the country."



ESI SCHEME: A THOROUGH OVERHAUL NEEDED

The ESI corporation is supposed to be an autonomous body but it is the Government of India which exercises overall control on all matters from recruitment of staff to utilisation of funds. But Govt of India does not contribute a single paisa to the ESI scheme. At the initiative of the CITU, a unanimous resolution was adopted in the ESIC Board, requesting the Govt of India to contribute for the scheme at par with the State Govts or at least to bear the administrative expenses, but the proposal was straight away turned down by the Govt of India.

Further, the ESIC at the instance of Govt of India, deposited about Rs 2500 crores with the Reserve Bank of India in the Special Deposit Account. The interest paid is meagre 8.5% only, which is far below the market rates. Of late, Central Govt have issued a directive that the Corporation will not be allowed to withdraw any amount from the said Special Deposit Account; they will only be allowed to withdraw the annual interest.

WOES OF WORKERS

By exercising various administrative and regulatory control, the Govt of India and ESI Corporation are restricting and restraining various benefits to the workers. The workers are unnecessarily harassed. They are forced to move from pillar to post to avail of the medical as well as cash benefits.

To be entitled to sickness benefit and disablement benefit due to

employment injury, a worker is to wait for two days. The inherent idea being that absence of such provision will encourage absenteeism on false pretext. It is to be noted that a day's loss of earnings is much higher than the sickness benefit.

A condition has been imposed on the State Governments that, if the average number of sickness exceeds 5 days (earlier it was all India average of the current year) in a year, then excess payment made by the corporation will be adjusted from the States' share. This is a penal abuse, purported to pressurise the State Govt, so that the doctors restrict their medical leave certificates.

DEFAULT BY EMPLOYERS

The ESI Scheme is a contributory scheme. Non-payment or delayed payment of

KALI GHOSH

contributions disentitles an insured person from medical benefit, sickness benefit and maternity benefit. Quite a sizeable section of the workers suffer for no fault of their own, because some errant employers wilfully disregard their responsibility to deposit the contributions collected from the wages/salaries of the workers along with employers' contribution due to ESIC. The Act provides for penal as well as dues recovery action from the defaulting employers. Callous and inept handling of the matter has completely failed to give a shock, rather it is on the

increase. Many employers are also taking shelter behind section 22(1) of the Sick Industrial Companies Act. Not to speak of payment of arrear dues, they are not even paying the current dues. The ESIC is supposed to realise the defaulted amount and in many cases they do get it, though belated. However, it is not understandable why a worker and his family members should suffer for non-payment of contributions by the employers and when the said dues are realisable by the ESIC?

Workers and members of their families are supposed to get full medical care, free of cost including free supply of drugs and dressing, pathological examination, specialised investigations like CAT scan, MRI, ultrasonography etc., and super speciality treatment like heart surgery, neuro surgery, kidney transplantation. If the scheme fails to provide such facilities and treatment for any reason, the cost of such treatment or diagnostic facilities or purchase of medicines are reimbursed. But due to various regulatory controls and timely non-availability of the fund, workers are unnecessarily harassed and they are to wait for long even for a petty payment.

CORRUPTION RIDDEN

The ESI administration is inert, indisciplined, inefficient, self-gratifying and corrupt at important places of their activities. All conveniently forget

that they earn their bread and butter from the contributions the workers and their employers make towards the scheme. The way the scheme is functioning, the workers have become very apathetic and the scheme has become very unpopular.

REVIEW NEEDED

Despite all its deficiencies and administrative lapses, the corporation has grown and the growth is colossal. Appropriate measures should be taken to decentralise its operation. But taking advantage of the malfunctioning of the scheme by the State Govt, there was an effort to take over the administration of the medical scheme from the State Governments. However, due to opposition from various quarters, this attempt could be stalled. To avoid bureaucratisation of the administration, some kind of popular control with the involvement of workers has to be thought of.

The scheme is for the workers, funded by the workers. Crores of rupees are being spent but the benefits of the scheme do not properly reach the beneficiaries. Unless the scheme is reviewed thoroughly and improvement in the working of the scheme is made substantially and a new approach is thought of, the scheme will not become popular and cannot succeed.

CITU DEMANDS

For overall improvement of the ESI scheme and for redressal of genuine grievances of the insured persons, we demand

that:

* The ESI corporation becomes autonomous in its real sense with power to add/amend and/or alter existing schemes, introduce new schemes and benefits without interference from the Govt of India.

* The corporation should have full control, over its own fund.

* The ESI Corporation should be reconstituted so that workers' representatives on the corporation have effective control over the functioning of the corporation.

* The administration of the scheme should be decentralised. State level subsidiary corporations be formed with decision making powers.

* The Government of India should contribute for the operation of the scheme at par with the State Govts and the entire cost of administrative expenses be borne by them.

* Contribution from workers side be gradually abolished.

* Pending that, workers contribution be reduced to 1.5% of the basic pay and DA only.

* Workers earning wages below poverty line be exempted from making any contribution.

* Standard benefit rate be raised to 0.75% of the pay with consequent increase in other benefits.

* No worker and his family be debarred from any benefit of the scheme including cash benefits due to failure of the employer to deposit contributions to the ESI authority, i.e. a coverable worker shall get and continue to get all benefits irrespective of contribution condition.

* Condition of '2 days waiting' period be waived for entitlement of cash benefits both for sickness and disablement.

* The penal clause of stoppage of benefits for joining the strike be withdrawn.

* Both indoor and outdoor medical services including super speciality treatment be improved.

* Rules and regulations to avail of the medical and cash benefits be simplified.

* The arrangements of medical services i.e. services by the IMP's service dispensaries and RBO's be so made that it is available on all the days.

* If for any reason the scheme fails to provide or the IP fails to avail of (due to unforeseen circumstances) medical treatment and other diagnostic facilities, rules be framed so that an advance can be made to IP or members of his family subject to adjustment. This is necessary for costly treatment and diagnosis.

* Rules of reimbursement be simplified and small payments can be made from the local offices.

* No employer be allowed to escape taking shelter under Sec.22 of SICA Act.

* Prompt and stringent actions be taken against the defaulting employers.

* Initially the medical benefits under the scheme be extended for workers and members of the family of the unorganised sector with provision for nominal contribution.

* Expenditure on this scheme be equally shared by both central and state governments.

ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS: ILO SOUNDS ALARM

Releasing a report, entitled *The Asian Financial Crisis: The challenge for social policy*, the ILO has warned that the deepening economic and social troubles in the region are unlikely to be reversed in the near future and urged governments and policy-makers to take unprecedented emergency and long-term measures, especially establishing unemployment insurance for the mounting number of newly unemployed.

The report finds that one in every five formal-sector jobs in Indonesia has been wiped out in 1998 alone, shattering decades of progress made towards modern industrial employment in that country along with the lives of 4 to 5 million Indonesian workers and their families. An additional 20 per cent of the Indonesian population, approximately 40 million people, is expected to have fallen into poverty in 1998.

In South Korea, one in twenty workers lost their jobs during the nine month period from November 1997 to July 1998 and open unemployment in the country is expected to increase threefold, from 2.3 per cent to 8.2 per cent. An estimated 12 per cent of the Korean population is expected to have sunk below poverty line in 1998.

In Thailand open unemployment levels are forecast to have tripled from 2 to 6 per cent in 1998, with partial information indicating a rapid acceleration in the rate of job losses in the last quarter of 1998. As access to jobs and income dry up, it is estimated that 12 per cent of the Thai population will sink into poverty in 1998, adding significantly to the nearly 16 per cent of Thais already living in poverty.

In Hong Kong and China, unemployment rose from 2 per cent to over 5 per cent in the first three quarters of 1998, an estimated net loss of some 75,000 jobs. In Malaysia, unemployment levels are expected to have doubled to 5.2 per cent by end 1998. However, both Hong Kong and Malaysia dipped into recession only 1998, indicating a relatively rapid rate of job losses in a comparatively short period of time.

But the report finds that unemployment statistics tell only part of the story, citing evidence that "the adverse impact of the labour markets of these

countries has been more widespread (...) apart from open unemployment, the number of discouraged workers (number of people of working age not in the labour force) also seems to have increased".

In South Korea, for example, the labour force participation rate fell from 63.1% to 61.5% between the second quarter 1997 to 1998: "This represents a decrease in labour force participation of 1.6 million workers compared to what it would have been had the pre-crisis trend in labour force growth continued."

Among the fore-mentioned countries, only the South Korea provides laid-off workers with any unemployment benefits at all, and these are usually at a low level and of short duration.

The ILO report insists that it would be "foolhardy" to ignore the lessons for social policy that have been so painfully driven home by the crisis: "A fundamental rethinking on the social dimension of economic development is as important as the purely economic and financial issues that currently occupy centre stage. Asia needs a new and better social contract."

The ILO raises the question: Can Prescribed Remedies Cure the Ills? It says that "socially provided relief still falls far short of requirements". In these countries there has been substantial increase in expenditures on mitigating the negative social effects of the crisis, large parts of which take the form of increased foreign aid that is earmarked for social relief. In particular, large social sector loans have been granted to Indonesia and Thailand.

But, examine what proportion of Asia's needy will be helped by such efforts, the report concludes that "only a small proportion of the unemployed can expect relief through public employment-creation schemes." In Thailand "only 7 per cent and in Indonesia (at best) only 10 per cent of the unemployed can expect to obtain a job in these schemes." In contrast, "this figure is much higher in South Korea where approximately 24 per cent of the unemployed are able to count on this form of employment."

The ILO questions whether such schemes and

other forms of direct relief on offer "can properly be called social safety nets." The resources deployed thus far "proved relief to only a small fraction of those in need."

The ILO report says that in light of current circumstances and prospects, major policy initiatives will be needed, chief among them is the establishment of a meaningful and affordable system of unemployment insurance.

Will our "reformers" wake up to the alarm bells sounded by the ILO?

Increase in Unemployment Rates (%)

	Pre-crisis	Latest
Indonesia	4.9 (Aug. '97)	15.0*
Thailand	2.2 (Feb. '97)	6.0*
S. Korea	2.3 (Oct. '97)	8.4 (Sept. '98)
Malaysia	2.6 (end '97)	5.2*
Hong Kong	2.4 (end '97)	5.0 (3rd quarter '98)
Singapore	1.8 (end '97)	4.5 (Sept. '98)

*Estimate. Government Sources

CUBA MARCHES DEFYING US BLOCKADE

Cuba celebrated the 40th anniversary of the victory of its Revolution on January 1, 1999. Cuba attained independence 40 years ago putting an end to the crimes, tortures and abuses of the repressive forces. Land was distributed among the peasants and factories were put at the service of the nation, institutionalised racism was eradicated and a battle was begun against discrimination of women.

In spite of the fact that in January Cuba also commemorated the 40th anniversary of the economic, political and ideological war imposed by the United States - today Cuba is also able to exhibit a number of social and economic victories that cannot be ignored even by its enemies.

In 1998 - under the conditions imposed by an intensified, brutal and internationalised blockade, and defying natural disasters such as intense droughts and hurricanes - the Cuban economy continued its recovery processes which began in 1995 and grew by 1.2 per cent.

During 1998 all sectors of Cuban economy grew, with the exception of the sugar industry.

The industrial sector grew by 4.1 per cent, including nickel (12 per cent), steel (10 per cent), oil (13 per cent) and tobacco (22 per cent). The revenues generated by the tourist sector increased by 18 per cent. Aquicultural produce increased by 17 per cent and lobster by 23 per cent. In spite of the adverse weather conditions, the production of vegetables and tubers grew by 15 per cent.

Another outstanding element is that investments grew by 7.4 per cent, even in the midst of harsh economic conditions. The consumption of fuel dropped by 1.9 per cent and the average salary increased, while Cuban people continued to enjoy the highest ratio of doctors and teachers per inhabitant in the world. The Budget for 1999, which was examined and approved by Cuban Parliament, contemplates an increase of the expenses for social security, education and health care. The last two items have been allocated 39 per cent of the total budget.

A true indicative of the unyielding will of Cuba to provide health care, one of the most important basic human rights, is reflected through its infant mortality rate of 7.1 per 1000 live births, the lowest in the history of Cuba and comparable to that of highly industrialised nations.

Nor did the attempts of the imperialistic policy to isolate Cuba succeed. 1998 began with the successful visit of the Pope to Cuba and throughout last year, several Heads of States, Foreign Ministers, political leaders and important personalities visited Cuba.

Rather it was the USA which stood isolated. At the General Assembly of the United Nations, 157 countries voted in favour of a resolution to lift the US blockade on Cuba - with only two votes against its passing, namely, the United States and Israel. At the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, an anti-Cuban exercise - after seven years of constant harassment and pressures by the United States Government - was defeated.

Cuba shows the way patriotism, perseverance and determination can stand up and defy the mightiest!

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CITU MAKES RAPID STRIDES IN A.P

The eighth conference of AP CITU, held in the background of the remarkable advance made in the state during the last four years, has decided to continue with the process of reorientation of the methods of work to meet the new challenges. It gave a call to all its cadres to work hard in a planned way to build all round unity of the working class to resist the onslaught of global capitalism.

Presenting the report, B V Raghavulu, General Secretary, reviewed the experiences gained in implementing the decisions of the 7th conference. The CITU state committee made a determined effort to develop the CITU as a state wide force and in the process made rapid strides into new sectors, new areas and among new sections of the working class. Extensive statewide campaigns and militant struggles took the CITU flag to many a remote village of the state.

The perspective of these struggles was to unite the working class beyond the frontiers of affiliations, without giving scope for a sectarian approach. Yet another significant feature was the effort made to take up such issues that give CITU a statewide character. For example, concentrating on such sectors as power, state road transport corporation, anganwadi and village servants, efforts were made to make the presence of CITU felt throughout the state. At

the same time our fraternal links with the traditional sectors like public sectors banks, insurance etc. was also sought to be moulded according to the new orientation. The various statewide campaigns against privatisation, against pension scheme, against closures and for minimum wages and other demands of the unorganised workers helped in forging unity of the working class cutting across union and political affiliations.

This period saw a conscious effort by the state CITU to intervene in every problem faced by the workers class and employees, to whichever sector they belonged to. Whether the workers perceived the problem or not, the CITU was there warning them of the consequences of the various policies and decisions of the government. Irrespective of whether it was invited or obstructed, the CITU approached the workers and expressed solidarity with their struggles. Spontaneous issues were also taken up and statewide campaigns conducted. Privatisation, pension scheme, mothers committees in ICDS were some such issues, which helped in the expansion of the influence of CITU. The consistent and continuous activity in the power, public transport and among the middle classes, not only helped the CITU to penetrate into these sectors, but drew the workers in these sectors into active

struggles.

Attempts were also made to integrate microlevel and sporadic struggles and give a statewide and militant character to the movement. Emphasis was laid on evolving such forms of struggles which ensure maximum involvement and participation by the concerned workers. Depending upon the readiness of the workers, various forms of agitation starting from passive forms like pamphlets and signatures to more active forms like rallies dharnas, rasto roko, picketing etc., were taken up. This democratic method helped in making ordinary workers look upon these struggles and campaigns, as their own.

Efforts were made to study the problems faced by the workers concretely and to evolve concrete demands, as is illustrated by the survey conducted among the 1,42,000 unorganised workers. By linking the struggles with the CITU's overall programmatic and ideological understanding, efforts were made to prevent the working class from being trapped in economism.

UNITED ACTIONS

The CITU state committee made earnest efforts to bring together various trade unions into united actions. At the same time, the vascillating and compromising stands of the reformist unions were exposed. Efforts were made

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to combine united actions and independent initiative and to implement the Leninist doctrine of working independently and striking unitedly.

The experience of the struggles during this period brings out the fact that meticulous planning of campaigns, concrete study of informations through surveys, allotment of cadre exclusively for the purpose with concrete work division are indispensable for a successful campaign.

Another important experience of this period was that, agitation and propaganda, yield greater dividends if they are properly integrated. The state committee made an attempt to impart political education during the course of or immediately after a campaign or struggle. Consciousness of the workers was also sought to be raised through solidarity actions, particularly to the struggles of agricultural workers. In the last 2 years, the CITU contributed about Rs. One lakh to the state agricultural workers' union. Special efforts were made to collect donations for this purpose from the SC and ST sections of employees, as majority of agricultural workers belonged to these sections. Through this effort, the state CITU tried to approach these sections of employees who were outside the general trade union movement. The leaders of SC/ST associations were invited to address the conventions and seminars organised by CITU district

committees in support of the wage struggles of the agricultural workers' union. In '97 and '98 CITU cadre directly participated in the wage struggles of the agricultural workers. Similarly, joint rallies were organised with the Kisan Sabha on the issue of privatisation of the electricity board, and 1,35,000 leaflets were distributed in support of the 'save farmers' rally.

CITU also took active part in the campaign of the committee against caste discrimination. Immediately after these campaigns, the active participants were given political education. The state committee tried to make this a continuous process.

Work among the village workers, anganwadi workers and gram panchayat and municipal workers increased the influence of CITU among the dalit sections. Efforts were made to reach the minorities by concentrating on beedi workers and lorry transport workers.

INCREASED MEMBERSHIP

Expansion was the goal during the period and as the membership increase in the affiliated unions indicate, and the state CITU has achieved this to some extent. The membership in 1994 was 1,25,681 in 404 unions. By 1997, it has increased to 2,14,163 in 726 unions; all the districts in the state have CITU affiliated unions; from 124 industrial centres CITU has expanded to 219 industrial centres; the number of full time and part time workers of CITU has also increased. But the report

cautioned that, "we are yet to develop as the major force in the public sector, in the big and medium industries and in many key sectors. Out of the 1140 mandals we have contacts only in 598 mandals and we could allot cadre in only 395 of these mandals. Though anganwadi union could be consolidated, the work among other sections of working women has not increased much. Many districts did not allot full time women comrades to work among working women". All the district committees were urged to pay more attention to working women, allot women full timers and concentrate on organising the DWCRA women. After a thorough discussion, the general secretary's report was unanimously adopted, which gave a call to intensify the ideological and anti-imperialist struggle and raise the consciousness of the working class and to further expand the influence of CITU by proper planning and by allotting cadre and increasing the ideological and organisational capacities of new cadre.

The conference, after electing the new office bearers, placed on record the services of nanduri Prasad Rao, Parsa Satyanarayana and balaji Das (who have since stepped down from the state office bearers posts) for their services since formation of CITU in 1970. The conference also conveyed its greetings to K Hemalata who was relieved from state responsibilities to join the all India CITU centre.

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CENTRAL TRADE UNION CLASS

On 12-15 February '99, Central Trade Union class for Hindi region state level leaders was held at New Delhi. 33 leading Comrades from Bihar, UP, MP, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh attended the Trade Union Class.

Of the various subjects dealt in the four-day long session, the History of trade union movement,

Political, Economy, the Liberalisation and Globalisation Policy and its impact on Economy and the working class, CITU policies and task on Organisation were the major ones. The last day was devoted on interaction and workshop on various problems and steps to be taken for developing and broadening the trade union movement in Hindi

region states, where all the participants and CITU Secretariat members took active part. Of the various suggestions put forth by the comrades, special emphasis was given on continuous and sustained effort on imparting regular trade union education at various levels, on organisational and ideological issues.

CONVENTION ON IISCO MODERNISATION

A convention was held on 24th January '99 at Burnpur by the "SAVE IISCO Committee" on the issue of IISCO modernisation. It was a large gathering of workers and their families addressed by leaders of all trade unions of Burnpur and Kulti. The convention demanded immediate steps to modernise IISCO without

any further delay. Chandra Sekhar Mukherjee, who presided, regretted that the news of a move by the Govt. of India to modernise IISCO in collaboration with T.P.E. of Russia has come to them only through the Press. Previously all ministers had taken SAVE IISCO committee comprising CITU, AITUC, INTUC, BMS and HMS

in confidence on such matters. However, he demanded that govt should take steps to remove the hurdles at the earliest and start the work without any delay, and also demanded that steel minister should call the SAVE IISCO committee to ensure full participation of workers in the programme.

HARYANA: PROTEST AGAINST VICTIMISATION

At the initiative of NPMO, Sarv Karmachari Sangh of Haryana and the All India State Government Employees' Federation, a rally and dharna was held on 3.2.99 at Chandigarh to protest against the massive victimisation launched on the employees of Haryana on the occasion of 11 December, 1998 nation-wide strike.

Besides a huge number of employees of Haryana, leaders

and workers of other trade unions like CITU, AITUC, UTUC, Punjab Subordinate Services Federation, AIIEA, BEFI and several other unions participated in the dharna. E. Balanandan, M.P. and President, CITU, and Sukomal Sen, General Secretary of AISGEF participated in the dharna and addressed the rally. Besides, some MLAs of Haryana belonging to BJP, Lok Dal, Chautala group and Congress also

addressed the rally and expressed solidarity with the struggle against victimisation in Haryana.

A delegation comprising S.N. Solanki, Satvir Singh, Prabhat Singh and Azad Singh met Mahavir Prasad, Governor of Haryana and handed over a memorandum. Another memorandum on behalf of AISGEF and NPMO was sent to the Chief Minister of Haryana demanding withdrawal of victimisation measures.

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STATE GOVT. EMPLOYEES' STRUGGLE

The National Executive of the All India State Government Employees' Federation which met at Nagpur on 28-29th January, 1999, called upon the State Employees to intensify their struggle against disastrous economic policies of rampant

privatisation, reckless computerisation, closing down of sick industries, abnormally rising prices and formidable rise of unemployment. It also called upon the employees to build countrywide united movement against the communal social

policies with the slogan of Hindutva.

A mass campaign programme during March 1999 culminating in countrywide rallies and demonstrations on 23.3.99, had been planned.

PROTEST DAY IN ASSAM

In Assam a procession with flags, festoons and banners and shouting slogans paraded main streets of Guwahati on 2.2.99. The processionists also protested and shouted slogans against recent

price hike of cooking gas cylinders, rice, wheat and sugar under PDS.

A memorandum addressed to Prime Minister was submitted through the Deputy

Commissioner, Kamrup District. Deban Bhattacharyya, General Secretary, CITU Assam, addressed the gathering before the DC office at Guwahati.

CITU DELEGATION VISITS BANGLADESH

A two-member delegation of the CITU consisting of P K Ganguly and Kali Ghosh, Secretaries, visited Bangladesh on invitation from Jatio Shramik Jote—Bangladesh to attend their Annual Conference, held at Dhaka on 10th and 11th December 1998. The conference started with an open session on 10th December, which was addressed by P K Ganguly and Kali Ghosh from CITU, Ranjan Das Gupta of AITUC and several other trade

union leaders of Bangladesh. The report of the General Secretary and address by the President exhaustively dealt with the adverse effects of globalisation, which aggravated closures and joblessness in the country. The delegates expressed their determination to carry forward their struggle against these policies which undermined the sovereignty of the country. The WFTU Secretary Deb Kumar Ganguli also attended the

conference on the second day. The conference affirmed its determination to further consolidate international working class solidarity against the imperialist imposed policies of liberalisation and globalisation. The conference reelected Abdul Kader Hawladar and Badal Khan as President and General Secretary respectively. During their stay the CITU leaders held discussions with the leaders of other central trade unions of Bangladesh also.

BANK EMPLOYEES ON WARPATH

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) comprising nine national federations of employees and office bearers has called for two days strike on 25-26 Feb'99 followed by an indefinite strike from 17.3.99. An UFBU delegation met the Finance Minister on 9.2.99 in a bid to avert the strike, if the Govt. would advise the Banks to settle the demands amicably. But there appears to be no improvement in the situation.

WORKING WOMEN'S FRONT:

ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES' MARCH FORWARD

The All India Federation of anganwadi workers and helpers had decided to launch a countrywide struggle against the Government's decision to hand over the anganwadi centres to Panchayats and also for the long pending demands for regularisation, enhancement of honorarium and other demands of the anganwadi employees. As per reports from different states, about one lakh women participated in the various agitational programmes. The general strike of December 11th was a grand success in almost all the states. Even those Anganwadi Employees who do not belong to our union and also beneficiaries participated in these struggles.

As a part of their efforts to get rid of welfare measures, the central and state governments have been trying various methods to give up the responsibility of implementing the ICDS programme. But more often than not they are forced to retreat due to the stiff and determined resistance from the anganwadi employees. A few instances -

- In Punjab, the state govt. had decided to close down 52 ICDS projects. The union, affiliated to AIFAWH, mobilised the anganwadi employees in a big way, to fight against this decision. A massive rally was held in Chandigarh. Several state

committees also sent telegrams and letters to the Chief Minister of Punjab, demanding that the measure be dropped. Finally, the government decided to continue the 52 projects.

- In Andhra Pradesh the state government had issued a G.O. handing over the anganwadi centres to the 'mothers' committee. According to the G.O., the recruitment, payment of honorarium, supervision of the centres and disciplinary action - were to be done by the mothers committee which consists of the mothers of the beneficiaries, representatives of NGOs, DWCRA/self-help groups and the local sarpanch. The Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi workers & helpers union led the struggle against the G.O. culminating in a massive rasta roko at Hyderabad by over 20000 women. The state government had to beat a retreat and announce that the G.O. will not be applicable to the existing projects, even for new recruits in the vacancies. It has agreed to modify the G.O. for the new projects as well.

- The West Bengal Government has declared that the state government will pay an extra amount to the anganwadi workers and helpers from the state budget. The state finance minister, announced at the rally on 17th November that the state

government will pay an extra Rs.200/-pm. to both the workers and helpers, in addition to that paid by the central government. This will cost the state government Rs.30 crore. Besides, the ex-gratia which is paid every year during the Dasshera festival has also been enhanced to Rs.1,000 for the worker and Rs.800/- for the helper.

- In Karnataka, after a long drawn out struggle extending for about 2 years, carried through various forms like local dharnas, processions, district level mass relay fasts, indefinite hunger strike by the state general secretary of the union and a mass indefinite dharna by about 5000 anganwadi employees at Bangalore, the Karnataka anganwadi employees could finally get their summer holidays for 15 days. Besides, the government has agreed to reserve 45% of the supervisor's posts for the anganwadi workers. Some local problems were also solved. The anganwadi employees have demonstrated that being women and scattered in far off villages cannot prevent them from uniting and fighting for their demands. The Secretariat meeting of AIFAWH decided action programmes such as rail roko/ rasta roko and picketing of District Collectorate etc. throughout the country on 18th February'99.

MURDEROUS ASSAULT ON CITU LEADER'S FAMILY

Kalyan Kundalana, Vice President of Mornoi Tea Estate Unit of Namoni Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (affiliated to CITU in Gossaigaon Sub-division of Kokrajahr district), his wife Anabritta Bala Kundalana and his daughter Toni Kundalana were brutally attacked at about 9 P.M. on 31.1.99 by suspected Adivasi militant outfit Cobra with sophisticated weapons. It is alleged that the Adivasi militant outfit Cobra is in unholy alliance with the INTUC and is being used

against CITU affiliated union. The militants suddenly entered the residence of Kalyan Kundalana and shot at him, his wife and daughter. His wife Anabritta Kundalana succumbed to her injuries on way to Dhuburi Hospital. The condition of Kalyan Kundalana is stated to be serious and he has been struggling for life at Dhuburi Civil Hospital.

The Assam State Committee, CITU has condemned the attack and demanded immediate arrest of the miscreants, provision of

suitable compensation to the family of the victim and posting of police pickets in Mornoi Tea Estate area in order to ensure security to the workers and restore confidence among them.

It may be mentioned that Sagarika Soren, a leader of Namoni Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Mornoi Unit, was dastardly murdered by the miscreants in September, 1996 but no positive action to round up the culprits has so far been taken by the state govt.

(Report from Deben Bhattacharyya)

(Price Index cont. from page 5)

this case also there was no consultation with trade unions. Rath Committee therefore unanimously did not agree to introduce the index series though the Labour Bureau was fully prepared to introduce the series. During the course of discussion in the Rath Committee, several defects in the 1970 series were noted. The 1998 series also is suffering from similar defects and it is necessary to go into this aspect before trade unions accept its introduction.

Unless the defects in 1982 as well as 1998 series are properly rectified it would adversely affect the linking factor between two series and workers will again stand to lose in the end.

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the price index is the price collection machinery. The official price collectors are part timers and in paid and in many cases they do not get sufficient time even to collect the prices of large number of items. On second occasions the shopkeepers do not co-operate if the price collector visit a shop when there are large number of customers. The information given by them is always not reliable and this is not

rechecked by verifying the information from the actual consumers.

The inspection mechanism of the central government is defective and the senior officials do not frequently carry the inspection. At times they just okay the prices collected by the price collection. The Government of India should immediately accept the demand of trade unions to appointment a Consumer Price Index Review Committee at an early date to go in to the entire ramification of the price index numbers. The committee will have to go in the methodology adopted in the price index with 1982 as base year well s the manner in which the New series with a new base year is being worked out.

More than 20 years have passed after the appointment of last Consumer Price Index Review Committee and there is urgent need for such a committee to restore the confidence of the trade unions and the workers on the consumer price index numbers. The employers are already demanding freezing of DA of workers despite steep rise in prices. The Index mechanism should not be allowed to meet their demand partially through statistical manipulations.

REPORTS & EVENTS

MAHARASHTRA CITU STAGES PROTEST

Dharnas by industrial workers in different parts of Maharashtra to protest against governmental apathy towards people's problems, marked the day on 2.2.1999. These were organised by the CITU mainly against the economic and industrial policies of the BJP led Vajpayee government at the centre and the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance government in Maharashtra. As a part of the All India Protest Day call by the CITU, programmes were organised in Aurangabad, Nasik, Solapur, Ichalkaranji,

Nagpur, Puna, Uran and other places. In Mumbai the Dharna was organised in Azad Maidan opposite Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Station (Old Victoria Terminus Railway Station) at Fort.

The participants also voiced their concern and drew people's attention towards the deteriorating law and order situation in Maharashtra and various other states. They also demanded stringent punishment to the anti-social elements who attacked and ransacked the BCCI office at

Mumbai against Pakistani Cricket team. They further demanded arrest and punishment for those involved in the destruction of the memorial column of late Datta Samant, founder President of Kamgar Aghadi at Saki Naka in north-east Mumbai in January'99. The dharna at Azad Maidan was inaugurated by K.L. Bajaj, General Secretary of Maharashtra CITU and addressed by Ahilya Rangnekar, Vivek Monteiro, Suman Sanzgiri and Mahendra Singh, Dada Samant (Kamgar Aghadi) and P.R. Krishnan.

WEST BENGAL: A SUCCESSFUL GENERAL STRIKE

IN West Bengal, the general strike on February 8, called by 26 trade unions and mass organisations to register strong protest against the rampaging price-rise imposed by the anti-people and anti-working class BJP-led government, turned out to be a big success. The people of Bengal demonstrated their vigorous opposition to the BJP-led government's economic and financial policies by giving a hearty response to the strike-call. The organising trade unions included not merely the CITU, AITUC, HMS, various other trade unions and mass organisations but also the INTUC, despite the Pradesh Congress issuing a "whip to the INTUC leadership not to

participate in the Left-led" strike. Chief minister Jyoti Basu said the strike should make the message clear to the BJP-led government that it is time for it to pack up and go, ridding the country in general and the large bulk of the people in particular of a particularly reprehensible form of misrule that has made life unbearable for all but a handful of the rich.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, West Bengal, pointed to the fact that the patently anti-worker character of the central government was made clear once again when no results forthcame from the recent meeting of the Standing Labour Committee. The manner in which the BJP-led government was

paving the way for making a big attack on the ailing industrial units of the state, said Majumdar, made it amply clear that to the present central government, the "directive principles" of economic and industrial policies were forthcoming from the votaries of big capital, both indigenous and foreign.

State INTUC secretary, Subrata Mukherjee, expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the strike-call and dared the Pradesh Congress to take any action against the state INTUC unit.

Congratulations to the people were extended by all the 26 trade unions and mass organisations that had given the call.

As is usual with a strike held under

REPORTS & EVENTS

the aegis of the Left Front and the overwhelming majority of trade unions, all activities virtually came to a halt all over the state. Factories, offices, shops and establishments, both in the public

and private sectors, educational institutions, ports, docks, airports and shipyards bore a deserted look. Calcutta Airport and the Howrah and Sealdah railway stations saw very little activity. A

notable factor in this general strike was the common people's magnificent response despite the fact that the call for the strike came only a few days back.

HIGH COURT INFRINGES EMPLOYEES RIGHTS

ON February 8, a division bench of Patna High Court, comprising Chief Justice Mr B M Lal and Justice Mr Shashank Kumar Singh, declared the strike of the Bihar Civil Courts Employees' Association illegal and directed the employees to join duty forthwith. The order, says the Bihar state general secretary of CITU, J S Majumdar, is "unfortunate."

The CITU leader, in a statement, has recalled that the conventions of International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the

tripartite forum including the government of India, allow the government employees to form an association and resort to strike as their fundamental right. It is a universally accepted right of the workers including government employees. But the High Court order infringes upon this fundamental right.

The statement said the advocates too have the right to strike and have on many occasions boycotted the courts, bringing the latter's functioning to a standstill. Will the advocates of Patna Bar

Association, the statement asked, accept a ban on their right to strike?

The High Court's intervention should have been to look into the rightful and just claims of Bihar state employees and should not have confined itself to only one part, thereby helping the state government to carry on its repressive policies.

The Bihar state CITU has called upon state employees to defend their legitimate and fundamental rights with support from all sections of the democratic people.

RUBBER GROWERS FACING RUIN: AIKS

THE steep fall in price of natural rubber has adversely affected the life of rubber growers and the economy of Kerala.

There are many reasons for the steep fall in price of natural rubber. The worldwide recession may be one of the reasons. But the wrong steps taken by the central government are the main reason for the steep fall in price of natural rubber. The central government reduced the import duty of polyurethane from 150 to 30 per cent and this step has increased the import of polyurethane. But the

government did not reduce the excise duty on latex products and this has increased the prices of all latex based products. The government is also allowing import of old and new tyres from foreign countries. Rubber is being imported on the basis of advance licence. As per the estimates, rubber production during the year 1998-99 is 6.10 lakh tonnes and the estimated consumption is only 5.84 lakh tonnes. This shows that there is no need to import natural rubber on the basis of the advance licence. This can be stopped for a

shorter period or restriction put on it till the present crisis is over.

The central government should take the following immediate temporary measures to protect the natural rubber growers.

- 1) Increase the import duty on polyurethane.
- 2) Exempt latex based products from excise duty.
- 3) Stop import of old and new tyres.
- 4) Stop import of natural rubber on the basis of advance licence.
- 5) Provide necessary financial assistance to all agencies including STC to purchase natural rubber at bench-mark price.

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	Oct 98	Nov 98	Dec 98	Sr. No.	Centre	Oct 98	Nov 98	Dec 98
1	Gudur	441	450	442	45	Amritsar	406	400	387
2	Guntur	418	421	421	46	Ludhiana	432	417	390
3	Hyderabad	397	399	399	47	Ajmer	415	418	406
4	Visakhapatnam	415	420	409	48	Jaipur	412	408	397
5	Warangal	423	426	415	49	Chennai	440	451	449
6	D D Tinsukia	397	401	387	50	Coimbatore	394	403	403
7	Guwahati	438	443	431	51	Coonoor	406	424	426
8	Labac-Silchar	372	379	371	52	Madurai	412	420	429
9	Mariani Jorhat	429	431	427	53	Salem	415	425	425
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	439	435	423	54	Tiruchirapally	461	494	476
11	Jamshedpur	410	424	414	55	Agra	422	412	400
12	Jharia	386	396	376	56	Ghaziabad	456	454	437
13	Kodarma	401	405	391	57	Kanpur	457	445	427
14	Monghyr Jamalpur	416	437	423	58	Saharanpur	407	403	395
15	Noamundi	399	399	393	59	Varanasi	493	493	470
16	Ranchi-Hatia	435	454	433	60	Asansol	419	428	411
17	Ahmedabad	433	435	424	61	Calcutta	454	470	461
18	Bhavnagar	462	464	449	62	Darjeeling	396	406	400
19	Rajkot	436	434	420	63	Durgapur	461	474	451
20	Surat	458	459	439	64	Haldia	468	472	468
21	Vadodra	422	427	407	65	Howrah	489	506	491
22	Faridabad	459	454	436	66	Jalpaiguri	428	423	407
23	Yamunanagar	410	409	397	67	Raniganj	385	397	388
24	Srinagar	448	452	437	68	Chandigarh	441	452	441
25	Bangalore	400	406	405	69	Delhi	489	482	464
26	Belgaum	436	436	443	70	Pondicherry	464	479	485
27	Hubli-Dharwar	428	426	430					
28	Mercara	434	437	443		All India	433	438	429
29	Alwaye	413	419	416		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
30	Mundakayam	424	432	427					
31	Quilon	401	405	410	1	Kothagudem	453	464	440
32	Thiruvananthapuram	450	455	450	2	Himachal Pradesh	413	415	403
33	Balaghat	396	400	386	3	Bhilwara	422	426	423
34	Bhilai	387	388	377	4	Chhindwara	429	432	426
35	Bhopal	470	465	452	5	Tripura	412	428	419
36	Indore	438	436	428	6	Goa	465	471	471
37	Jabalpur	436	448	434					
38	Mumbai	473	479	475					
39	Nagpur	451	454	446					
40	Nasik	450	451	443					
41	Pune	470	471	469					
42	Solapur	460	469	479					
43	Barbil	398	407	398					
44	Rourkela	418	432	413					

Government of India
Ministry of Labour
Labour Bureau
Shimla - 171 004

(T.K. Ranga Rajan, Vice-President, CITU along with Abdul Samad of CITU, Andaman & Nicobar, represented the CITU at the centennial celebrations of the Egyptian Trade Union Movement. Here is a report from T.K. Ranga Rajan. - Editor)

EGYPTIAN TU MOVEMENT CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

The Centennial Celebration of Egyptian Trade Union Movement was held in Cairo on the 17th of December, 1998.

Fraternal delegations from Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Kuwait, Ethiopia, Organisation of United African Trade Unions, I.L.O., W.F.T.U, TUC from Britain, CGT from France, USA and CITU from India attended the conference. The conference took place in the backdrop of American bombing of Iraq. This dastardly attack on the peaceful people evoked bitter criticism. The whole conference which was attended by 400 delegates condemned this attack in one voice.

The President of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) El Sayed Rashed, pointed out how the industries and the opportunities for new jobs have been affected due to the policy of globalisation. The speakers who spoke one after another bitterly criticised the U.S. imperialism. They raised a pertinent question as to how long the mankind can permit this kind of brutal attack on the peace loving people. The whole conference virtually turned out to be an anti-imperialist conference. It urged the Arab workers to unite and resist the onslaughts of the imperialists with all the strength at their command. More than 40 women delegates participated in this conference as fraternal delegates from various Arab countries.

The first organised strike of Egyptian took place in 1982 and the first trade union was started in the year 1898.

The ETUF was founded on 30th January, 1957. This comprises 23 General Labour Unions. This organisation maintains cordial relations with all the Arab Trade Unions and has fraternal relations with the trade union centres of many countries including CITU.

The ETUF is running schools, computer centres and also tailoring institutes for women. Apart from this,

they are conducting physical training and sports centres. They are also conducting sports events.

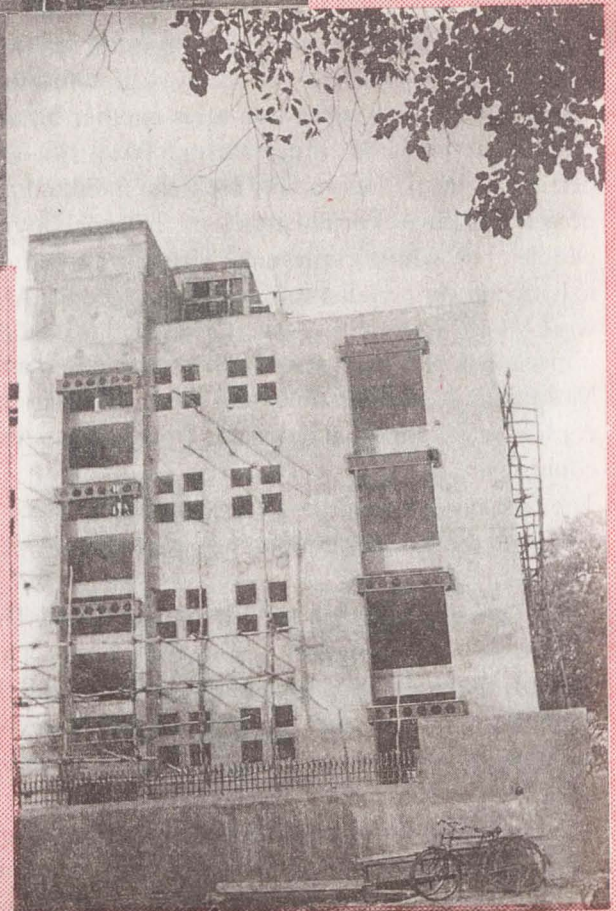
In the economic sphere, one could see many similarities between India and Egypt. Like India, Egypt's foreign debts are increasing year by year and like India, Egypt has to reschedule it. Five year plans, initiated by Nasser, were given a go-by and privatisation is in full swing. A separate law has been enacted to provide legal status for this transfer. 314 public sector units have been removed from Government control and converted in to 16 independent private units. Voluntary retirement is increasingly resorted to. In the field of telecommunications also privatisation is taking place. The Egyptian Government is contemplating to hand over banking industry to the private sector. Shares of the public sector units are being sold to foreign private investors. Economic development is uneven and lopsided. The compulsions of IMF and World Bank are going to further deepen the crisis in the coming period.

In the political sphere also, similar to that of India, Egypt is facing the menace of majority communalism. Muslim fundamentalist forces are indulging in violent terrorist activities. Former President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat was killed by the same fundamentalist forces. Government offices and public places are being guarded by Armed forces and armoured vehicles. The fundamentalists' activities have affected the economy of the country. Tourists inflow from foreign countries has more or less stopped and the country is losing a considerable amount of foreign exchange.

The CITU delegation had bilateral discussions with their Egyptian counterparts and both sides agreed to exchange trade union delegations frequently in the coming period. During January, 1999, a delegation from Construction Workers Federation of India has gone to Egypt.

COM. BTR MEMORIAL FUND

The construction work of BTR Bhavan including plastering, plumbing work & electrical work is nearing completion. We are unable to simultaneously get the interior work completed due to paucity of funds. An appeal was made during the Ahmedabad Working Committee Meeting to complete and send the collections urgently, to be precise by January'99, so that we are able to move to our own building on the next CITU foundation day i.e. 30th May'99. It is really unfortunate that our State Committees have not responded to the continuous appeals being made in this regard. Whatever collections have been made may please be sent to the Trust so that the work can be completed. Details of the collections till date are given below:



RECEIPTS SINCE 15th DECEMBER 1998

93.	Com. Samar Mukherjee, CITU	8,000.00
94.	CITU Maharashtra S.C. Mumbai	1,00,000.00
95.	CITU WB State Committee	2,00,000.00
96.	CITU Assam State Committee	5,000.00
97.	All India Insurance Emp. Asso.	43,500.00
98.	G Janardana Rao, Hyderabad	200.00
99.	BEFI, Karnataka	50,000.00
100.	Punjab Rly. Workers	160.00
101.	W R Varada Rajan, CITU	500.00
		<hr/>
		4,07,360.00
		<hr/>
	Total Receipts upto 15.12.98	1,12,16,459.50
	(January 1999 issue of Working Class)	<hr/>
	Total Receipts	1,16,23,819.50