



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## FAREWELL COM. EMS!

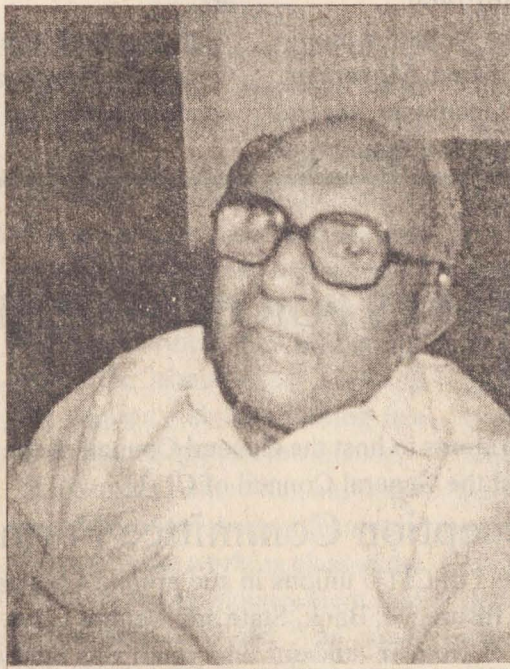
Com.EMS is no more, the living legend of India's left, democratic, and Communist movement has passed away. A veteran freedom fighter, one of the founder leaders of the Communist Party in Kerala, first Chief Minister of the newly formed State, heading world's first elected Communist Govt, long time General Secretary of the undivided Communist Party and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) of which, also he was a founding leader, and a foremost theoretician of the Communist movement in the country. Comrade Elumkulam Manakkal Sankaran Namboodiripad has breathed his last at 3.25 pm on Thursday, the 19th March 1998 in a Trivandrum Hospital short while after his admission for breathing troubles. He was aged 89.

Known even beyond the national borders for his single minded devotion to the cause of the freedom of the nation as well as of the emancipation of the people from exploitation, his utter selflessness and sacrifice, his modesty combined with firm adherence to principle, his simple living and his uncommon integrity in private and public life earned him immense respect from his friends and foes alike. His contribution in application of the Marxist theory to Indian conditions, his voluminous

writings, books and articles, touching every facet of our national life in general and that of Kerala in particular, gained wide recognition for him as a great Marxist theoretician of the contemporary world. All

this made him legend in his life time.

Born in 1909 in an orthodox and brahmin landlord family, he became early in his life an activist in social reform movement against caste. He left his studies in 1931 when doing his graduation to join the civil disobedience movement and was arrested. In 1934 along with other leaders he founded the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala and became the all India joint secretary of the party and later became the General Secretary of the Kerala Pradesh Congress. It was while leading the Congress in Kerala that EMS became acquainted with Marx-



ism. He was one of the five members who formed the founding group of the Communist Party in Kerala. EMS worked underground to build the Communist Party during the period 1939-42. Once again he had to go underground during the period 1948-50. Already in 1941 he was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India. In December 1950 he became a member of the Polit Bureau of the Party and in 1962 he became its General Secre-

tary.

When the Communist Party of India had split, EMS joined the CPI(M) and was elected a member of the Central Committee at the 7th Congress in 1964. In 1977 he was elected the General Secretary of the Party and continued to lead the Party in that capacity till the 14th Congress in 1992 when he stepped down due to ill health.

He was elected to Madras Provincial Legislative Assembly in 1939. In 1957 election to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala State which was formed as a result of a powerful movement in which EMS and the Communist Party had important contribution, communists emerged as victorious and EMS became the Chief Minister. Most important of this government was the path-breaking land reform legislation and other democratic measures. The ministry was dismissed in 1959. EMS again headed a United front Ministry in 1967 and continued till 1969.

His voluminous theoretical works include a monumental volume on History of Freedom Movement, a famous work on Gandhi and Gandhism, several writings on economic and political developments of

the country, a number of volumes on socio-economic and political history of Kerala and on various other subjects besides innumerable articles which came out of his pen in endless flow which stopped only with his last breath. Even hours before he was admitted to the hospital he dictated an article on "Hung Parliament—from the perspectives of class politics" for the Party daily Deshabhimani. That was his last write-up.

As a rare embodiment of honesty, integrity, simplicity, modesty and firmness in adherence to principle, his utmost selflessness and sacrifice who without hesitation donated his entire property to the party, his love for the country and the people, his single minded devotion to their cause—for all these he ceased to be just an individual but became an institution, which will ever remain an example to be emulated by generations of social and political workers.

With profound grief the CITU bids final farewell to Com.EMS Namboodiripad and convey its heartfelt condolences to the members of his family. \*

## CHENNAI PREPARES FOR CITU GENERAL COUNCIL

Chennai city has begun its preparations to host the General Council of the CITU in April 22nd - 25th. This is the first time Chennai is to host the General Council of CITU.

### Reception Committee Formed

A well attended meeting of leaders of CITU unions in and around Chennai along with leaders of fraternal Trade Union organisations from Insurance, Bank, State and Central Govt. employees, medical representatives and also the organisations of women, students and youth was held in Chennai on 10th March. T.K. Rangarajan, General Secretary of CITU presided over the meeting. A.K.Padmanabhan, D. Janakiraman, A. Soundrarajan, S. Chandrasekharan and other state committee leaders attended the meeting.

150 member reception committee with A Soundrarajan as Chairman was formed E.Ponmudi and D. Janakiraman were elected secretary and treasurer respectively. Leaders of all the fraternal organisations have joined the reception committee. Many of them addressed the gathering and assured their full cooperation in hosting the General Council.

### Mass Rally

A mass rally will be organised in Chennai city on the evening of 25th April to be addressed by the Central leaders of TU movement.

# “NATIONAL AGENDA” OF THE BJP-LED COMBINE LABOUR TOTALLY IGNORED

Swadesh Dev Roye

At the end of loud noise on their resolve to finalise a national agenda before forming the Government, the jambo size BJP-led grand combine has actually produced a mouse of the mountainous exercise. The eight pages matter can be anything but the effective agenda for the combine which has promised to give a ‘stable and able’ Government to a country of India’s size, dimension and diversity. It is rather a cruel joke with the country men. The unprincipled, opportunistic partners of the combine like the AIADMK and Trinamool Congress stand all the more exposed by their melodrama of conditions to protect the interest of their respective states. There is not even any passing reference to that effect in the agenda and still they are comfortable in the combine. The hurried superficial exercise is nothing but an eye wash to project the opportunistic combine a programme based alliance.

The so called ‘national agenda’ is evasive, ambiguous and elusive in narration, concealing and hush hush in character and expression of some pious wishes. It is mockery to the promise of the BJP to give a transparent Government to country. This agenda has hardly anything in common with the major issues, let alone a summary of, the 55 pages voluminous election manifesto of BJP. While such a so called agenda cannot be a real guide to governance, it is obvious that BJP shall impose their

election manifesto on the alliance government. It has been reported in news paper that while releasing the ‘National Agenda’ to the press, except Shri Vajpayee, other alliance leaders were barred to reply questions by the press.

In the current short discussion, we propose undertake a quick examination of some specific issues concerning the working class and trade union movement as brought out in the ‘national agenda’.

## LABOUR TOTALLY IGNORED

In March’98 issue of the ‘Working Class’ Com. Tapan Sen noted briefly the issues of the workers expected to receive the priority attention of the new Government. It is a matter of insult and serious concern for the trade union movement of the country that the BJP-led Government has totally ignored the labour issues. Saving the caption ‘labour’ nothing has been mentioned in the agenda.

The Government which has nothing to say about the problems confronted by the working class of the country, the pronouncement that labour will be made; “an equal and proud partner in the production of the nation’s wealth” is nothing but hypocrisy of the BJP and allies and causticity towards the labour. The BJP wants labour to produce wealth but nothing to say about the share in the wealth produced at the cost of the sweat and blood of the workers. The trade union movement of the country shall watch the role of the

Government regarding the bill on ‘Workers’ Participation in Management’ pending in Parliament. The agenda proposes to; “review of all laws and regulations relating to industry ... institute a system of voluntary compliance with ...”. Such a statement read with Shri Vajpayee’s declaration to continue with the process of going liberalisation simply complies with the dictates of the Fund/Bank and MNCs and signals further decline of tripartism and more deregulation of the existing labour legislation’s. The agenda is completely silent about legislation for Workers’ Participation in management, Secret ballot, legislation for Agricultural labour etc.

## INDUSTRIAL POLICY

True to their class character, the BJP agenda has come out openly in favour of private sector and against the public sector. The ‘national agenda’ has clearly extended invitation to MNCs in the name of FDI in core sector and of course, ‘discourage’ FDI in non-core areas. The catch is that the definition of core and non-core has already been diluted by the Disinvestment Commission. They shall do well if they take the pain to let the nation know their definition of core and non-core sectors.

Again in their declaration of encouraging foreign investment in core areas, they did not clarify and rather preferred silence whether they would encourage foreign investment in core areas ( say en-

ergy sector ) in the 'Enron' way by giving counter guarantees for project on an artificially inflated investment figure, as they have not failed to give clearance in their thirteen day tennure of governance last year. And such silence conjures the concurrence of the BJP-led Government to the Fund/Bank design of handing over the most sensitive sector of the economy and industry to the hand of foreign capital, despite their tall talk of the principle of "India shall be built by the Indians."

In the name of "expediting comprehensive reform and restructuring," public sector is going to be dismantled and privatised through disinvestment route. There is no commitment to revive the sick industrial units. There is no doubt that 'redressal of industrial sickness' shall be found in closing down the units. They have clear commitment for 'meaningful interaction between industry and government' but they have no concern for labour. Bravo ! the capital friendly government

The BJP is making too much of noise about the Swadeshi thrust in their economic policy. The hollowness of such propaganda is exposed from the fact that in their agenda commanding role of public sector in the national economy has been totally negated. Thus, the Swadeshi thrust of BJP is aimed at providing faithful service to the private capital of the country and in that scheme, the working class, toiling people and economic self-reliance have no room.

It may be worth mentioning that BJP has declared that the financial sector including Insurance

should be opened to the private sector of the country. The 'Swadeshi-walas' are not unaware that their Swadeshi friends - the monopoly capital of the country are wedded to the MNCs and are eager for joint venture with the latter.

The so called 'national agenda' has not clarified how they could maintain their "Swadeshi" character in the face of desperate bid of the 'Swadeshi Capitalwalas' to have foreign collaboration, and the game of take overs being played by the MNCs in the Indian soil. Without concrete measures regulating those gray areas, simply sounding 'Swadeshi' slogan remains to be a hoax.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT

A pious and catchy slogan of 'Berozgaari Hatao' has been incorporated in the agenda. But how do they propose to attain that ? The agenda notes ; " Our new investment and institutional thrust to agriculture, the self-employed, the unincorporated sector, infrastructure development and housing will act as the vehicles for massive employment creation at all levels."

It is amazing that they want to generate employment in agriculture and increase the purchasing power of the people ! But they are consciously silent about land reform. So the pro-landlord political combine are eager to give birth more and more agricultural labour. But mind that they have nothing to do with a comprehensive law for the agricultural labour. They have high sounding assurance for promoting small scale sector without any effective

law like MRTTP Act ( since dismantled under the market driven economy ) to protect this sector. They want us to believe that without effective land reform, without expanding and strengthening the public sector and protecting the small scale sector, they will eradicate unemployment !

#### THE TASK AHEAD

With the 'national agenda' coupled with the manifesto of the BJP and installation of the BJP-led jumbo alliance government at the centre, the die is cast. In the forthcoming days the working class are bound to confront serious challenges from the labour apathetic pro capital BJP-led government on all front. Hosts of burning issues have been agitating the workers. Let alone solving the pending problems, they are going to be compounded under the new government. With the declaration by Shri Vajpayee, the Prime Minister that the on going Fund/Bank dictated 'economic reforms' will continue it has become incumbent upon the working class to carry forward the fight against the disastrous economic policies.

The various united fora of class and mass organisations like National Platform of Mass Organisations, Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions, Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions must not only be immediately activated with renewed vigour, but further expanded and consolidated. The self-reliant economic development, particularly protection of public sector, economic sovereignty, communal harmony, secular democratic foundation and national integrity of the country must be protected at any cost. \*

# HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

MK PANDHE

On the occasion of the one hundred fiftieth Anniversary of the Manifesto of the Communist Party the working class all over the world has every right to be jubilant to assert its faith in Scientific Socialism. This assertion has become much more important because of the virulent bourgeois propaganda that Socialism has no future and capitalism is the only answer to all the contemporary problems facing the world. The dismantling of socialism in USSR and Eastern European countries has given grist to the mill of this capitalist propaganda and a section of the working class is swayed by it!

The significance of the Communist Manifesto can never be obliterated because it has given a philosophical world outlook to the working class of all the continents. In this Manifesto Karl Marx and Frederick Engels for the first time in the world explained the real nature of capitalist exploitation and underlined the historical role of the working class "as grave diggers of the capitalist class" to abolish this exploitation through intensification of class struggle.

Engels while explaining the fundamental proposition of the Communist Manifesto in its preface to the English Edition in 1888 clearly pointed out:

"The Manifesto being our joint production, I consider myself bound to state that the fundamental proposition which forms its nucleus, belongs to Marx. The proposition is:

- that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organisation necessary following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of each epoch;

- that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and the exploited, ruling and the oppressed classes;

- that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class - the proletariat - cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class - the bourgeoisie -

without, at the same time and once for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitations, oppressions, class distinctions and class struggles."

Following this scientific proposition, the Communist Manifesto analysed the rise of the capitalist class which played an important role in abolition of the feudal mode of production since it was not serving the growing wants of the market. The rise of modern industry and the world market was a significant phenomenon in the period. In this process as the Manifesto puts it, "The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part."

"It has however not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones." it observed.

The Manifesto had therefore dealt at length with the nature of capitalist exploitation and antagonism it created with the working class. It further elaborated how the bourgeoisie had been continuously revolutionising the instrument of production and thereby relations of production and with them the whole relations of society. "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle every where, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere".

Even those who state that Marx has become outmoded will find it difficult to brush aside this characterisation of development of capitalism by founders of Marxism. There have been several developments in capitalism after the publication of the Communist Manifesto particularly after introduction of automation and massive mechanisation in production process which have to be taken into account in analysing the contemporary capitalism. However, basic character of the nature of capitalism remains valid even 150 years after publication of the Communist Manifesto.

F. Engels had compared 'the contribution of the propositions of Communist Manifesto to the science of history with the contribution made by Darwin to the science of biology. This analysis of historical process is valid even to-day.

In a period of globalisation when world capitalism is

trying to save itself by intensification of the exploitation of workers and the common people all over the world, it is only creating the objective conditions for more severe class struggle. If the working class unites and jointly fights against all forms of exploitation it can certainly not only challenge the exploitation but also the very system of exploitation by the capitalist class. What Communist Manifesto wrote about the character of the working class is very much valid even today.

“Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie to-day, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product”.

The Communist Manifesto further pointed out that the capitalist class cannot advance the production forces beyond a certain level. It characterised that the enforced distinction of mass productive forces by capitalist class paves the way of crisis of production in the system itself. Every new crisis becomes longer in duration and the ability of the capitalist class to prevent the crisis is diminishing on a continued basis. Therefore the Manifesto correctly visualised that the weapon with which the capitalism fought the feudal society have now turned against the capitalist class itself. Hence it noted,

“But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself, it has also called into existence of the men who are to wield these weapons - the modern working class - the proletarians”.

The Communist Manifesto criticised several utopian socialist ideas which prevents the working class from achieving revolutionary transformation of society. It condemns the attempts by those who were trying to find out ways and means within the framework of capitalist social system. Instead of fighting to end exploitation, they were

trying to compromise with the exploitation itself. The Communist Manifesto therefore called upon the working class to carry forward the class struggle till its logical conclusion i.e. abolition of all forms of exploitation.

In the present world when the capitalist offensive has assumed most ferocious character, a section of the working class leadership is shamelessly supporting the depredation of multi-national companies, divides the working class and advocates class collaboration instead of class struggle. This policy has led to disarming a section of the working class in their struggle against capitalist class. Here comes the question of the need to fight the influence of the capitalist ideology in the working class. If the class, which has the historic responsibility of intensifying the class struggles against capitalist exploitation, itself is having illusion about the capitalist system the struggle cannot be effective. This question assumes seriousness since global capitalism is striving to strengthen its stranglehold all over the world. It is under these circumstances that Fidel Castro, revolutionary leader of the Cuban people has pointed out that in the contemporary world the capitalist class is more class conscious than the working class. He was pointing out the need for developing international class consciousness among the working class without which it will not be able to play its historic role.

Capitalist system is unable to utilise the development of new technology for strengthening of the productive forces. The rate of growth in capitalist countries is either stagnant or marginally increasing while unutilised capacity is increasing at a high level. The Ajobless growth@ of capitalism is increasing huge army of unemployed all over the world while poverty and destitution in the third world countries are increasing in menacing proportions. The natural environment is getting destroyed day by day with pollution levels increasing alarmingly. Ecology is under

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## ERRATA

In the article titled ‘ Historic Significance of The Communist Manifesto’ following corrections are required to be incorporated:

1. Column 2, Page 16, last line      vide              to be read as              vile
2. Column 2, Page 7                      From 6th para beginning with 'Though the Communist Mani festo....' till the end of the article—entire portion should come immediately after 45th line of page 6 Column 1 beginning with separate paragraph.

severe threat of capitalist development. The recent UNDP study has characterised this as futureless growth.

The silver lining in the situation is that the working class all over the world is realising the dangerous consequences of the depredation of monopoly capital. A new wave of class struggle is emerging in all the continents. In almost all advanced capitalist countries the working class is resisting the severe cuts in their social security benefits and other attacks on their standard of living. The South Asian crisis has opened the eyes of the working class in the developing countries. The package imposed by the IMF and the World Bank is coming under severe opposition all over the world.

The Conference against Globalisation and Neo-Liberalisation held in Havana in August last year has given a clarion call to the working class all over the World to observe 1998 May Day as the Day against globalisation. A new unity among the working class against imperialist offensive is increasing rapidly.

Despite dismantling of Socialism in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the socialist system is still prevailing in China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea and it is recording great advance. The strength of the Socialist countries is immensely contributing in the struggle of the workers against imperialist offensive and capitalist exploitation. These revolutions stand today as living monuments of the concepts developed by the Communist Manifesto hundred and fifty years ago.

The Communist Manifesto is not a dogma but a guide to action. The concepts have been further developed in the world surging revolutionary movements and their thinkers. This itself enhances the validity of the propositions initiated by the Communist Manifesto.

Under these circumstances to carry the message of the Communist Manifesto is assuming much more importance on the occasion of its 150th Anniversary. Making Working class aware of its historic mission in strengthening of the class struggle is of paramount importance in the world today. The pontiffs of capitalism who advocate that Communist Manifesto is outmoded today have themselves become outmoded in the present world.

Without fighting class collaborationist tendencies within the working class the struggle for intensifying the class struggle all over the world is not possible. The teachings of the Communist Manifesto even now become a weapon in the hands of the working class to fight penetration of the capitalist ideology within the working class movement.

The relevance of the Communist Manifesto for the

working class movement is greater than ever before. The working class of India should study the valuable document and assimilate its contents. The CITU unions should try to educate the members of the unions with the teachings of the Manifesto since it chalks out the path for the revolutionary movement of the working class.

In India no social transformation is possible without having a leading role for the working class in the political movement. Without inculcating political consciousness among the working class it will not be capable of playing this leading role. Indian working class with its revolutionary traditions is capable of playing this crucial role. The future of the revolutionary movements will be decided by the role the working class will be playing in intensification of the class struggles in the country. It has also to fight for abolition of feudal exploitation which underlines the need for building worker peasant alliance.

The working class in India must be champion of all the toiling masses who can join hands in fighting capitalist landlord exploitation.

The Communist Manifesto has correctly concluded by saying "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win".

One hundred and fifty years ago the Communist Manifesto gave the famous slogan "working men of all countries, unite". This slogan will in today's circumstances again inspire the working class all over the world and galvanise the revolutionary movement of the working class.

Though the Communist Manifesto was originally drafted as a Declaration on behalf of the party, it had inspired several revolutionary trade unions, political activists and social groups all over the the world. It blazed the trail of Marxism as a social science advocating complete emancipation of the entire human society under the leadership of the working class.

It was the Communist Manifesto whose ideals inspired the revolutionaries in czarist Russia which ultimately overthrew the yoke of capitalism for the first time in the history. The slogan given by the manifesto "working men of all countries unite" became the battlecry of the revolutionary trade union movement all over the world. The evergrowing class struggles in all the continents where capitalism and the monopoly of power was challenged by the working class in every country.

The historic Chinese Revolution,, the peoples democratic revolutionary movements in Cuba, Vietnam

*(Cont. on page 16)*

# VULTURE CAPITALISM

N C Menon

At a Press briefing in Washington in December 1997, a Fund-Bank official was asked whether the south-east Asian crisis did not bear out the soundness of India's policy of hastening slowly with its fiscal reforms. The official, not trying to hide a degree of irritation, snapped back that India had no reason to gloat over south-east Asia's difficulties, which were temporary. The region would bounce back. But India would not be able to realise its full potential unless it accelerated the rate of its liberalisation and reforms.

**The response was just one indication of the International Monetary Fund's single-track preoccupation with its one-size-fits-all economic programme that it blithely trots out in any crisis. Simply put, the IMF formula is: tighten your belts, and open your markets — the wider the better. If you agree to comply, the IMF will step in with financial aid, often in the billions. If a country in crisis declines the IMF nostrum, it goes into default and faces worse calamity. Besides, the IMF is generally seen as working in close collaboration with the US Government. No wonder victims of Fund conditionalities often see it as Washington's handmaiden.**

It is ironic that the IMF was established in 1944 expressly to prevent precipitate falls in currency values and the contagion effect of financial panics that deepened the great depression. The Fund was

intended to anchor monetary stability, contain crises and discourage currency speculation. Over the years, however, the IMF has evolved into a powerful and unaccountable institution that is an instrument of deflation. Take South Korea. As in the case of Thailand and Indonesia, South Korea is expected to accept the prescribed level of economic austerity. Seoul will have to boost interest rates, raise taxes, reduce government spending and lower economic growth from six per cent to 2.5 per cent.

As Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs observed the other day, one is forced to wonder how much the IMF really knows about countries over which it is supposed to exercise friendly financial supervision. Before the south east Asian crises, the IMF regarded South Korea and Thailand as models of capitalism. The IMF's 1997 annual report praised "Korea's continued impressive macroeconomic performance" and "enviable fiscal record." Similarly, it was all praise for Thailand's remarkable economic performance and consistent record of sound macroeconomic policies."

Nonetheless, US and IMF officials have now begun to judge South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand in harsh terms. They attribute the plight of South Korea, for instance, to its state-corporate conglomerations which were the very institutions that brought the nation in three decades from third world destitution to first world affluence.

They prescribe heavy doses of free market liberalisation and globalisation. As Professor James Tobin of Yale University, winner of the Nobel Prize for economics, puts it, "It is hard to escape the conclusion that the countries' currency distress is serving as an opportunity for an unrelated agenda—such as the obtaining of trade concessions for US corporations and expansion of foreign investment possibilities." And thereby hangs a tale.

It was on Christmas eve that US treasury secretary Robert Rubin did a volte-face and approved 10 billion dollars in emergency aid for South Korea. The main purpose was to provide Seoul with enough fast cash to enable its banks to pay off insistent creditors—mainly Japanese, European and US banks. The move obviously calmed the ravenous creditors, for, just three days later, American banks announced that they would roll over their loans to Korean banks. That sounds helpful and generous, but wait until you read the fine print: the loans are to be rolled over in return for Korean government guarantees of the new loans at interest rate up to six per cent higher than the old rates. Talk about usury.

That is not the end of a sad story. US banks are now on the verge of getting South Korea to issue 20 billion dollars in bonds and to give the bonds to US bankers in exchange for South Korean bank debt. The US bankers would thus

exchange questionable debt for good debt, backed by the IMF, which in turn is partly backed by US taxpayers. **There are more wheels within wheels. Seoul is planning to use the bailout money to buy out Korea first and Seoul bank. It will then clear the bad loans and sell the institutions. And who are the prospective buyers? Citibank and Chase-Manhattan.**

**Under the regimen of the survival of the fittest, as Korea's plunging currency and stock prices play havoc with its economy, an average of 45 companies a day go under. But that might not be bad news for everyone. Transnational corporations are poised to sweep in and snap up many of these attractive assets. They are attractive because when the US corporations buy up the companies at rock bottom bankruptcy sale prices, they will find that Korea's debilitated currency will make the dollar wages of the Korean workers half of what they were in July.**

#### **US Transnationals Win**

The richest and most mobile of US companies can shut down their US plants and move their production units to Asia where wages, already below US levels, have been halved. US transnationals are clear winners in the crisis because they are now in a position to pick off South Korea's most priceless assets one by one. US banks too have much to celebrate: their unwise loans will be made good by the IMF bailout and the rolledover loans will yield higher rates of interest with more solid guarantees.

US banks will also be able to make a grab for Korea's banking sector at distress-sale prices. As former Republican presidential aspirant Patrick Buchanan puts it, "the vulture capitalists will be feeding on Korea's carcass a long, long time."

South Korea had the world's most impressive rate of economic growth until 1996, with its economy and living standards doubling in a decade, to make it a global economic power. The productivity of its workers was high, it had high domestic rates of savings and investment, and it made quality products. The only aspect that stuck in the gullet of American economists was that Korea's development strategy included a large role for the state. Korea was indeed successful, but it was not supposed to happen under the aegis of the government.

The US and the IMF are now resorting to I-told-you-so. Government-led and financed development will, they claim, eventually lead to bad investment decisions, corruption, excess capacity and a crash. The IMF now wants Seoul to let its tottering institutions fall, as they are supposed to do under Western capitalism. The same procedure is suggested for Japan. In other words, the south-east Asian economies are being remade in the US image.

#### **Hypocritical Behaviour**

What is hypocritical about the whole process is that the medicine is applied very selectively, only when it affects other people. When in the early 1980s US banks were next door to insolvency as a result of avaricious third world

loans, the federal reserve allowed them to fudge their books in order to avoid panic. The federal reserve had another rescue act during the 1987 stock market crash, pumping in funds so that no large institution would collapse. The principle of purging the powerless obviously does not apply at home. **There is now evidence—and this is something that India should take to heart—that what wrecked the South Korean economy was too much market liberalisation too soon.** Massachusetts Institute of Technology economist Alice Amsden, an expert on South Korea, observes that only when the South Korean government, under pressure from international institutions, loosened controls on banks, did speculative pressures against its currency become a serious problem. **Nations do need to open their economies, but at a viable pace and not at the risk of a deep depression.**

Meanwhile, despite the glow of happiness pervading the transnational scene, the fact remains that America is not immune to the deleterious effects of the south-east Asian failures. America is on a roll and the predictions of happy days persist. But the Asian nations in crisis are desperate for dollars and they will attempt to export aggressively. They will send in cheap products to America and at the same time cease buying American products. That could put downward pressure on US wages and prices and squeeze the profits of US companies.

**South Korea and other Asian countries are being punished for**

*(Cont. on page 17)*

# Domestic Workers or Slaves?

Ranjana Nirula

**D**ogs and domestic servants not allowed” states a notice outside the lift of the 20 storeyed Rajul Apartments in Mumbai’s posh Walkeshwar suburb. Some of the most successful stockbrokers in Mumbai live in these apartments, and since many have pets, now a concession has been made for dogs, but servants are still not permitted to use the lifts. This attitude towards domestic workers- ‘servants’ as they are called is indicative of the low esteem in which they are held, in society.

## Composition and Background

In Mumbai alone, more than eight lakhs work as domestic workers; in Bangalore 13% of the population, i.e. about 11 lakhs, lives in slums, and most of these slum-dwelling women are domestic workers, as is the case in Delhi, where there are more than 1000 slum clusters with over 40 lakhs living there. In fact, in every metropolitan city there are large numbers of domestic workers and their number is increasing, since with the growing nuclearisation of families and with more and more middle class women going out to work, domestic staff is needed, in household work and for child care etc.

The majority of domestic workers in most cities come from families settled there for many years, but there are large numbers that come from other states like Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, or even Nepal, where they have left their families. The increasing pauperisation, lack of employment or underemployment in rural areas compels them to migrate to cities, in search of a livelihood. In cities, with retrenchment and casualisation of labour, and steep price rise due to the structural adjustment policies adopted by the government, many women are forced to do domestic work in people’s homes, to supplement the family income.

A survey done some years ago found that 78% of the domestic workers in 12 cities, were female. A field survey in Delhi indicated that only 20% of the total men who migrated to Delhi were involved in domestic work. Employers prefer young women, who they perceive as more reliable, obedient and efficient in domestic work, and especially in taking care of babies and the elderly. Women also tend to

stick to the job for a longer period and agree to work for lower wages, besides being easier to control. Some of these reasons are why child workers are also preferred.

On their part, women are either forced by circumstances, or choose to become domestic workers for a number of reasons:

1. they have no skills or training for any other work
2. they are usually poorly educated or illiterate
3. they are able to do domestic work which does not require specialised skills
4. often they get employment through friends, relatives or religious organisations in the city.

Women domestic workers are usually single, young, widows, deserted, or married with alcoholic, sick or old husbands. In many cases, they are the main breadwinners in their families. Frequently they are accompanied by their young daughters who help them in their work.

Domestic workers are generally from the lower castes, and those who are Dalits are not allowed to cook food in the homes where they work. Many tribal women from Chotanagpur in Bihar migrate to Delhi to work in homes - most of them are unmarried. But they face a problem in getting married, later, as the men in their villages treat them as outsiders and are not prepared to marry them.

## Types of Workers

There are broadly three types of domestic workers. Some are full time, live-in workers, who live in the employer’s home or in a quarter provided by the employer. Others work full time but live in their own dwellings, which are usually in the slums or working class colonies, coming to work in the morning and returning to their homes in the evening. The third type is part time workers who work part time in several houses. In Delhi, where accommodation is scarce and expensive, employers in some colonies get domestic workers to do all the household work in exchange for a quarter, sometimes paying them a pittance or nothing at all.

## Types of work

1. sweeping and mopping the house
2. washing utensils
3. washing clothes
4. cooking
5. taking care of

babies and the elderly 6. marketing and running errands.

### **Conditions of work**

The domestic service sector is a highly unorganised one, characterised by arbitrariness. Everything depends on the personal relations between the employer and employee, on the nature and temperament of the employer. Wages are determined by the wish of the employer and bargaining capacity of the employee, since there is no minimum wage nor any defined rules and the Minimum Wages Act does not cover domestic workers. Leave is again dependent on the whims of the employer. In situations of crisis such as deaths, accidents, illness, about half of the women interviewed in Delhi said that their employers were considerate enough to give them leave. However, leave was given only to those who had worked for two or three years, and many had to leave their jobs at such times. Very few domestic workers get a weekly holiday. As a part time worker Saroj said: "What is the use of a weekly holiday? When I go back to work the next day I have too many utensils and clothes to wash and too much work to do." Even on festivals employers do not like to give domestic workers any leave. They forget that their maids also have their own families with whom they would like to celebrate Deepavali or Pongal. When the domestic worker falls ill and is unable to come to work, she is scolded, often her wages are cut or she is thrown out of the job. Working hours are long, with no fixed maximum nor any compensation for the extra hours worked

For live in maids there is no definition of the specific tasks they have to perform. They are on call all the time and often work very long hours - and do whatever they are asked to do. They may have to live with inhuman and humiliating treatment and often have to confront sexual harassment. Part time workers, in addition to these problems, have to deal with many masters adjust to varying circumstances and atmosphere. In both cases, whether full time or part time maids, they have to look after both their employer's and their own families. It is a tragic irony that the maid has to take proper care of her employer's children but has hardly any time to devote to her own.

### **Child Labour**

There is no count of the number of children employed

as domestic workers nor is there any legislation governing their employment in this informal sector. Girl children start working in others homes, along with their mothers, even at the tender age of six. They assist their mothers in domestic work, washing utensils and clothes, sweeping, dusting, etc. and by the age of ten years they are capable of managing an entire household.

The story of Ramalingamma is one of a childhood lost in domestic service. She was born to a landless agricultural labour couple in village Bankapuram in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh. At the age of eight she was sent to Hyderabad as a full time domestic worker to a newly married couple. In fact Ramalingamma was a part of marriage goods given to the couple as it is a custom to send a maid along with the bride. She came to Delhi when her employers shifted from Hyderabad to Delhi. She is eleven years old now and works full time in their house in Sarita Vihar. She works for an average of fifteen to sixteen hours per day and is paid Rs. 1300 for the whole year. The salary is paid not to her but to her father once in a year. When the maids in the houses of the friends of the employer do not turn up, she is often sent to work there as well. She worked for a month in a house apart from her own employers house, for no pay. She starts her day at 5 am by sweeping and mopping the house, washes utensils, scrubs bathroom and toilets, washes clothes, helps in the kitchen, goes to the market, and runs errands. She does not get rest during the day. She sleeps on the floor as she has no mattress or quilt. She does not have proper space to keep her things - she is given some space in the kitchen. She has no holidays and it is more than a year since she visited her village. She gets scoldings regularly and beatings occasionally. She has no freedom to play and her watching TV depends upon the moods of her employer. She has no freedom to wear what she likes nor can she do her hair to her liking. She feels like studying if ever she has some free time but she is discouraged. Whenever she takes out her books she is given some work to do. Like other children she wants to play and go to school. But unfortunately her childhood is being spent in doing domestic work for others and she cannot aspire to a better future.

### **Attitudes that prevail**

Underlying all these problems are the basic attitudes

towards domestic workers. They have the lowest status amongst workers and in society. They suffer from low self-esteem and whenever possible, domestic workers often prefer factory jobs "which offer more respect and dignity" even if the pay is less and there are no benefits of payment in kind. Employers are generally mistrustful of domestic workers and any theft or loss is blamed on them. Police harassment is a common phenomenon, and they opposed the recent police proposal for registration of all domestic workers because they naturally do not want their record to be kept in the police files, along with criminals. Abuse, beatings and violence, especially with child workers are increasing. Along with physical violence, abusive language is commonly used by employers who try to humiliate and subdue their domestic workers, and especially child workers, in a bid to get implicit obedience from them. A shocking incident came to light in Delhi, where Nirmala, a thirteen year old maid working with a couple was beaten with iron rods for having broken a glass. In another case, several domestic workers were tortured and beaten by their employers, in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Delhi, on suspicion of theft. They were so badly injured that they had to be hospitalised. Sexual harassment of women domestic workers is frequent but unfortunately many of these cases do not come to light because the women are afraid of losing their jobs. Shanti, a domestic worker, was subjected to sexual harassment by her employer and when she reported the matter the lady of the house simply refused to believe her and instead blamed the girl for defaming her husband, and threw Shanti out of the job. In Delhi, a nine year old daughter of a rickshaw puller who went to work in a home, in place of her mother who was ill, was raped by her employers son, while they were away. Frail Sheila, 24 years old, who is 6 months pregnant, sat trembling on her hospital bed as she recounted a tale of accusations, beatings and mental torture at the hands of the affluent jeweller in whose house she was working, in New Delhi. She was accused of stealing one lakh of rupees, and beaten and threatened that her husband and children would be chopped into little pieces if she did not confess to stealing the money. Her neighbours and members of her community went and rescued her and her husband and children from

her employers house. It is evident that even the basic human rights of domestic workers are not respected.

### Organisation

There is an urgent need to organise domestic workers. However, this is a very difficult task. First and foremost, most domestic workers do not even see themselves as 'workers'. They are not ready to fight unitedly because they lack this basic class consciousness. Apart from this, they do not have any spare time or much opportunity to interact with other workers, since their work schedule is so tight. From early morning till late at night they have to work like machines, so they have neither the time nor the inclination to get organised. Added to this is the fear of losing their jobs, and the knowledge that others are ready to step into their places at lower wages. Since the families of many women are dependent on their earnings. They do not want to take any risk of being dismissed.

However, some attempts have been made to organise domestic workers in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. The main demands of domestic workers are:

1. recognition of domestic workers as 'Workers'
2. fixed minimum wages
3. welfare benefits such as bonus, maternity benefit, health insurance, creches for their children and housing facilities
4. fixed hours of work and wages for overtime work
5. rest periods, weekly holiday and annual leave.

There is a pressing need for legislation on domestic workers. Some voluntary organisations have prepared a bill in this regard, which was submitted to the government in 1994 but no action has been taken on it so far. This bill incorporates the above demands and seeks application of the Workmens' Compensation Act, Minimum Wages Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Equal Remuneration Act and Weekly Holidays Act to domestic workers. It is also necessary to organise these workers in whatever form possible, whether in savings groups which will give them security, or as part of organisations of working women, which can take up their demands. A tripartite redressal body consisting of employers, domestic workers and womens' organisations can also help to improve their conditions of work. But to gain their dignity, respect and rights as workers, domestic

(Cont. on page 17)

# South Asian Workshop on Occupational and Environmental Health

P K Ganguly

A South Asian Workshop on Occupational and Environmental Health was organised by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) at Kathmandu from March 17-20. The workshop was attended by two representatives each, including one woman participant from CITU, AITUC, HMS and INTUC from India; four including one woman from GEFONT, Nepal; one each from NTUC and DECONT, Nepal; two including one woman from Lanka Jathika Estate Workers' Union, Sri Lanka; one from Bangladesh Jatio Shramik Federation and one woman participant from Pakistan National Federation of Trade Unions. One each from Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad and Centre for Child Study and Development, Kathmandu and three including one woman participant from PRIA also attended the workshop. The CITU was represented by P K Ganguly, Secretary, and K Hemlatha, Working Committee member.

The workshop discussed various issues concerning environmental and occupational health, which workers are directly and immediately facing and confronting with in the workplaces, both in the organised sector and in the unorganised sector. It discussed various chemical hazards, Threshold Limit Values (TLV), dust related lung diseases, other lung and skin diseases, noise induced hearing loss, impaired eye sight, safety,

social security measures, various laws and the vulnerable sections like women and children.

Lively discussions were held on each subject. The participants narrated their experiences in the work places and the negligence of the managements and their anti-labour attitude. Discussions were held on various diseases, preventive measures, on non-availability of protective equipments and safety measures, on biological and engineering monitoring, an accident analysis and safety audit, etc. A separate discussion took place on the vulnerability of women and children in work places both in the organised sector, and in unorganised sector, in which everybody participated. Hemalatha focused on the specific problems of women workers, who are more susceptible to health problems and the managements pay scant respect to these problems. She pointed out that apart from several common problems and diseases and conditions, there are separate problems for women, which require interventions by the managements and the unions. Their problems are specifically aggravated due to physiological structure, malnutrition, anaemia, child birth, working shifts, speed of machines and additional burden of domestic work. The physiological factors, chemicals, gases, organic solvents, etc affect their reproductive functions, fertility, the foetus, etc. This all is apart from sexual harassments.

There was a discussion on the

problem of child labour and how the children are affected by occupational health, particularly in the unorganised sector. The question of poverty, minimum wages, social security, etc came up in the discussion. All participants contributed on the subject.

Environmental health was also discussed, which was mainly participated by Vivek Khadpekar of Centre for Environment Education, the participants from PRIA and P K Ganguly, who also submitted a paper. The discussions pinpointed to the connection between environmental health and economic and social development. On the last day, after discussions the workshop drew certain conclusions. It came to consensus that the trade union movement must take up environmental and occupational health as a regular agenda in their activities. It is necessary that the trade unions must insist for participation of workers in decision making at all levels of production process. The cases of women workers and children have to be taken up specifically. The workers must study the industry and the various production processes and make demands accordingly. Joint trade union committees have to be set up at each level of production with the power of decision making. United struggle is absolutely necessary for this. Occupational health, both inside and outside the work places, concerning disposal of toxic wastes, are necessary to be focused. On environmental issues campaign

with other organisations is necessary connecting it with economic and social development.

At the end of the workshop, the Centre for Child Study and Development, Nepal, took the participants to a Child Labour Rehabilitation Centre at Kathmandu, which had released a large number of child labour from the carpet industries and rehabilitated them successfully.

### **Paper by P K Ganguly**

#### Linkage between Environment and Development:

Occupational and Environmental Health is a very important subject not only for the trade unions, but also for various other organisations and institutions. It is very vast and diversified and closely linked with world economic and social development. Development cannot continue if the environment and natural resources deteriorate and environment cannot be protected if economic growth ignores the cost of environmental destruction.

Therefore, development cannot be sustainable if it makes populations more vulnerable to crises. It is being observed that since more than the last two decades the world is going through a series of crises - growing poverty and hunger, spread of unemployment, ill health, illiteracy, social tension, political instability, industrial accidents and destruction of ecology and environment. The gap between the rich and poor, North and South is widening. The global market and regional markets are replacing national markets. Jobs, working conditions, living conditions, social security measures,

security during illness, old age and unemployment, human rights and human welfare, all are under threat. All this is going on in the name of "development".

For development to be sustainable, it has to meet the needs of the present without upsetting the ability of the future generation to meet their needs. We cannot therefore think of environment and economic and social development as separate issues. The trend of poaching into the environmental health and exploitation of the environmental resources is being accelerated with the acceleration of the policies of liberalisation and globalisation - all to satisfy the hunger for profits by the industrially advanced North.

The environment as an issue in development came up for debate in the early 1970s when UN conference on Human Environment was held in Stockholm in 1972 to discuss the rights of human beings to a healthy and productive environment. Environmental degradation was first seen as a problem of the advanced capitalist countries as a result of industrialisation. It was also seen as part of downward spiral of linked environmental and economic decline in the developing countries which are trapped in it. Thereafter, the UN World Commission on Environment and Development was created in 1983. This Commission in its report, "Our Common Future" prepared in 1987 focused world's attention to the links between environmental problems, pattern of economic development and social and political factors. The Commission pointed out that the global

economy had to meet people's needs and legitimate desires and that growth had to fit within the planet's ecological limits, and that, humanity had to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

#### The Earth Summit

The process initiated by the UN led to the holding of Earth Summit in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro. The Rio Declaration in the Earth Summit, apart from an agreement on climate change and on Biological Diversity and a statement of forest principles, brought the "Agenda 21", an action programme for the 21st century, to be undertaken globally by Governments, workers' and employers' organisations and other NGOs.

The "Agenda 21" said, "Humanity has reached a turning point. We can continue with present policies, which are deepening economic divisions within and between countries - which increase poverty, hunger, sickness and illiteracy, and cause the continuing deterioration of the ecosystem on which life and Earth depend; or we can change course. We can act to improve the living standards of those who are in need. We can better manage and protect the ecosystem and bring about a more prosperous future for us all. No nation can achieve this on its own. Together we can - in a global partnership for sustainable development".

The Earth Summit did raise people's hopes and awareness of environmental problems and to broaden the concept of environ-

ment from a narrow focus on pollution to a broad range of issues related to both environment and development. It also showed that environmental problems are global as well as local in nature.

The Earth Summit however remained in paper only. On the contrary, with the acceleration in the process of globalisation and liberalisation, the environmental problems worsened, as well as the conditions of the people. And, the developing countries have been on the receiving end more and more in all these respects. As the policies of the advanced capitalist countries are responsible for this, the issues of occupational and environment health have to sharply focus on the need to organised struggle against these policies.

Environmental problems therefore have to be examined in relation to many major issues which are effected by the future course of development. They include poverty, exploitation of resources, degradation of land, air and water, urbanisation and industrialisation and of-course, basic human and trade union rights, good quality employment, safe working conditions, social security, education, freedom from discrimination, etc. Environmental issues are many and varied. They include protection of national resources, whether these are oceans, seas, coastal areas, or forests and land, or energy resources, biodiversity, etc. etc. Most of these issues can have impact on environment not only at local level, but on global level also.

But all these are specialised issues and cannot be the subject matter

of one type of organisation. Collective action by various specialised organisations and institutions is required to meet the challenges.

### Working Environment and Trade Unions

As trade unions, our closet connection with environment is through our working environment. With growing industrialisation in India, the problems of occupational health and safety have also surfaced. With the on-going structural adjustment programme in pursuance of the new economic policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the problem is getting accentuated not only in the organised sector, but more so in the vast unorganised sector (informal sector), which cover about 92 percent of the workforce. We have seen the Bhopal disaster in Union Carbide in 1984, which killed over 4000 people and workers and maimed several thousands more. A number of mini-Bhopal disasters have occurred before and after it in the organised sector, both public sector and private sector. Coal mines in particular have become regular killers. Lakhs of accidents take place every year and large number of workers die while working, or are incapacitated. The rate of industrial accidents are about 8 to 10 times more than in the industrially advanced countries. The number of accidents in the Construction industry in India is the highest in the world.

A large number of workers in different industries suffer from various types of diseases which are directly caused by the production process. These arise from dust, hu-

midity, chemicals, noise, locomotion, postures, radiation and so on. The situation is even worse in the vast unorganised sector in industries, like in slate pencil, beedi, mining, brick kiln, small chemicals, brass, glass, tannery, fire works, matches, etc. Although the Government has marked 22 hazardous industries as such, the list is almost never ending. Killer diseases like Silicosis, Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis, Asbestosis, etc. affect thousands of workers including large number of children who work in these industries. Pregnant women are extremely vulnerable to such diseases which affect the foetus.

Large number of agricultural workers and peasants die of pesticides and insecticides. Studies by National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) and Industrial Toxicology Research Centre (ITRC) have revealed that apart from above, large sections of workers in the organised sector, unorganised sector, as well as in the agricultural sector are affected by Cardio-vascular problems, gastro-intestinal problems, cancer, stunted growth of children, deformities, blindness, diseases of the liver, dust related lung diseases, nervous system, burns, impaired eye sight and hearing, muscular degeneration and even impotency.

### Trade with Toxic Wastes

The problem of occupational health is not confined within factories or work paces only. Environmental pollution both through smokes coming out from the chimneys of factories and power houses, and disposal of wastes in

nearby lands, rivers and streams are also extremely important factors.

It is a horrifying reality that the advanced capitalist countries have resorted to trade with the toxic wastes and imposed it on the developing countries. This nefarious practice led to the adoption of the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, banning shipment of hazardous wastes from the OECD countries to the non-OECD countries. But the World gendarme of imperialism, the USA has not ratified it, and unfortunately India has also not ratified it. Ignoring the Basel Ban Convention, the US exports highly toxic wastes to Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The ships laden with such highly toxic sediments of Poly Chlorinated Biphenyle (PCBs), asbestos, zinc, etc. are broken in the Alang ship breaking yard in Gujarat. It is reported that about 3 or 4 workers die there every week working under horrendous conditions.

According to ILO, about 5.2 million people in the world, including 4 million children die from diseases caused by improper disposal of hazardous wastes every year. America alone generates about 300 million tonnes of hazardous wastes every year and it is likely to increase four to five fold by 2025.

Another ILO study has revealed that while environmental and occupational health problems are generated by the industrially advanced countries with capital intensive technologies and they impose it on the third world countries, coincidentally they are identified with the worst record of human and trade union rights. The ruling capitalist clique in the third world countries follow suit. Any country that knowingly exploits and pollutes environmental resources for short term gains, will not think twice about ignoring the rights of its citizens or repressing the concerned workers and the trade unions. Besides the problem of closure of industries due to pollution cannot be ignored by TUs.

### Need for Organised Struggle

Democracy therefore is the theme which recurs here starting for the workers, asserting the right to organise and the right to participate in decision making in the enterprises. This right to participate in decision making has to be extended to the sphere of protection of occupational and environmental health. Since as already stated, occupational and environmental health are linked with social and economic development, trade unions have also to launch struggles for the same, concretising the demands to the employers and the Government for occupational and environmental health in each and every level of production in both the organised and unorganised sector of industries, as well as for eradication of poverty, for right to work and gainful employment, social security, education, better working and living conditions, old age pension and the like. The CITU is making conscious efforts to educate and organise the workers in this direction. \*

*(Cont. from page 7)*

had behind them the ideals of the Communist Manifesto. Despite dismantling of socialism in Eastern Europe one can say with pride that there is not a single country in the world where working class is not inspired by the ideas of the Communist Manifesto. The history of the last 150 years after the publication of the Communist Manifesto is the history of revolutionary struggles of the working class and organisations of revolutions all over the globe. Therefore trade union movement in all countries in the world have every right to rejoice on this occasion and remember the revolutionary contribution of innumerable martyrs who gave their blood for the noble ideas stated in the Communist Manifesto. This

document is not to be worshiped but studied carefully and plan revolutionary actions as developed in this historic guide to action. The validity of the scientific document will continue to be asserted in the world despite wide attempts of the capitalism to suppress it. \*

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**crimes they did not commit.** With inflation and government budgets under control, they are more sinned against than winning. **They are the victims of a flawed international exchange rate system which, under US leadership, makes the mobility of capital the highest priority. Succumbing to that siren song simply makes it too easy for banks, governments, businesses and speculators to buy and sell huge chunks of a country's currency in panicky moments, throwing the country literally overnight into a crisis. If India had acquiesced in making its currency fully convertible, it could have been listed among the countries in crisis today.**

### Seesaw of Trade

Normally, a country pegs its currency to a hard currency—the dollar, yen, Deutsche mark or a “basket” of them, mainly as a way of promoting international confidence in its own currency. Its central bank pledges to buy or sell its own currency in foreign exchange markets for hard currency at pegged values. To meet the commitment, the central bank holds reserves of hard currency. If a country's exchange rate is pegged too high, its exports are costly for foreigners and imports become cheap for residents. A trade deficit then arises which can progressively get worse. A government's inflationary monetary and fiscal policies can often make a pegged currency

(Cont. from page 12)

workers will have to unite and struggle, as has been proved by the house workers of Jogeshwari: “Resisting attempts to rape her, cost Sapna a night behind bars at the police station. The charge: theft. By the next morning, scores of women, all domestic workers like her, thronged the police station. In the process they conveyed to all their employers that they would not return to work until they secured Sapna's freedom. Sapna's employer found himself isolated and he had to apologise for his misconduct. For the houseworkers of Jogeshwari - all of them part-time workers - this was a major achievement. Their spontaneous action gave them the courage to think of the unthinkable: of employing their collective strength to bargain for their welfare. The move paid off and in a matter of days, they registered themselves as the Ekta Gharlamgar Mahila Sangathan. “It was not as easy as it would seem to you. Many of us were fired

over-valued, but external events can also have an impact.

Because of Japan's weakness, the dollar has appreciated 56 per cent against the yen over the past two and a half years. The south-east Asian currencies, pegged to the dollar, rose against the yen, damaging their industries' competitive position in Japan, the region's largest market. Simultaneously, Japan's depression brought its imports down. Whatever the reason, if speculators begin to suspect that a peg would not hold, that the central bank would not have sufficient reserves to convert its own currency into hard currencies on demand, they are likely to move in and quickly clean out a central bank's currency reserves.

**Nobel laureate James Tobin holds that “events like those in south-east Asia call into question the claims that liberalisation and globalisation of financial markets are the path to prosperity and progress”.** Until leaders of the global economy find ways to make the currency exchange system less volatile, **India would do well to maintain its justified caution about full convertibility. Runaway reforms and grab-all globalisation are like economic steroids: the sudden boost they give is inevitably followed by the big let-down.** (Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*)

because we refused to show up to work. But this sacrifice came with a sense of unity and none of us went to work with the families that fired a servant during this agitation. Since the families needed a servant, they had to retrace their steps. By the evening of the first day itself many residents began pressurising the errant employer to admit to his mistake. If anyone had gone to work in place of a fired servant, our unity would have been broken.”

Now, the houseworkers of Jogeshwari have come to a stage where they can bargain for their wages. And even today, if an employer sacks a domestic servant, nobody goes to replace her without the organisation's consent, which follows a thorough discussion with the employee and employer.”

*(Acknowledgement: a large part of the material above has been taken from the Labour File -Vol.3 Nos.7 and 8, July and August 1997.)*

## SUSPENSION OF WORK IN DUNLOP FACTORIES: A CONSPIRACY BY MANAGEMENT

The management of Dunlop India Ltd., had declared 'Suspension of Work' in its factories at Sahaganj (West Bengal) and Ambattur (Tamilnadu) from 8/9th February 1998. Prior to suspension of work more than 7000 workers of Dunlop India were being denied even monthly salary from November 1997 onwards.

The unscrupulous move of the Dunlop India management headed by infamous Manu Chhabria even prior to suspension of work in the factories revealed the conspiracy of consistent siphoning out company's resources by the Chhabarias and render the company sick. And on January 1998 the Board of Directors of the company passed the resolution to refer the company to BIFR, as its networth was found to be negative by the Board of Directors.

It is curious that the Board of Directors could assess company's networth to be negative without finalising its audited accounts for the year ending on 31.3.98, to decide for reference of the company to BIFR, which is in total violation of the provision of the concerned Act. Moreover, the company has written back an item of revenue of about Rs.170 crores which was changed to profit in the Accounts of 1996-97 and company also declared 10% dividend to its shareholders based on such profit. The previous years revenue income of Rs. 170 cores was gen-

erated by taking into account the value of proposed sale of land/building and other Assets of the company. The proposal has not been abandoned, and, in fact the company has already taken renewed step to sale/lease more prime assets of the land and building at places like Mumbai, Calcutta, Bangalore, Goa etc. which would fetch them not less than Rs.500 crores at conservative estimate. It is clear from above that the networth of the company can in no-way be negative as being decided by the Dunlop management. Interesting to note that in the meeting of the Board of Directors of the company held on January 1998, the representative of the LIC/GIC holding 21% stake in the company was not present and decision to refer the company to BIFR was taken in his absence.

It has also been observed that there has been continuous financial mismanagement and planned asset-stripping by the Dunlop management during past years, and in fact, the Chhabarias heading the company have already earned expertise in financial irregularities which has also been revealed in the affairs of M/s Shaw Wallace and Co, headed by the same Chhabaria Group.

That is why, Sri Dipankar Mukherjee MP and working committee member of CITU, has written to Union Minister of finance and company affairs giving all

facts, demanding urgent intervention to stop the conspiracy of the Chhabaria's to make use of the Sick Industrial Companies Act (SICA) for his personal financial gains, and render a vibrant, profit making company like Dunlop India artificially sick. Shri Mukherjee has observed "It appears that the company is trying to get the company enlisted in BIFR through backdoor manoeuvres to derive undue benefits at the cost of investors, depositors, creditors and employees of the Company".

Sri Dipankar Mukherjee, MP also demanded upon the Financial Institutions like LIC, GIC, UTI and others holding about 33% stake in the company to intervene effectively to stop the Chhabarias dubious bid to render the company bankrupt through desperate financial mismanagement.

Meantime, Shri Bidyut Ganguly, the Industries Minister, Govt of West Bengal stated in the Assembly that the West Bengal Govt had drawn the attention of the Centre regarding the state of affairs with a request to intervene in the matter of both Dunlop and Shawwallace, both under the management of Manu Chhabaria. Ganguly has also said that in the context of the fact that the current situation has arisen from mismanagement of the company by the major shareholders and not due to other factors, some drastic actions

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were called for. He also stated that steps for filing complaints about

non-payment of wages and starting prosecution against manage-

ment were also being taken soon as reported by Business Standard.

## PROTECT DOMESTIC INDUSTRY - SAYS ASSOCHAM

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) has suggested that the country should take recourse to protective tariffs under Article XVIII of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to modify or withdraw tariff bindings on specific products to ensure a level playing field for the indigenous industry.

The chamber is of the view that the adoption of 'bound rates' of tariffs under the market access provisions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has created an apprehension among a section of the domestic industry that the inability of the Government to raise tariffs would lead to "uneven competition".

Assocham, in a study on 'Binding rates of import tariffs accepted under the WTO agreement', has pointed out that the domestic industry is already facing the brunt of inordinate interest rates, high incidence of sales tax and inverted duty structure in raw materials.

While India has adopted two levels of bound rates i.e., 25 percent and 40 percent, the tariff rates had been brought down below the WTO commitment in a large number of items, particularly in the capital goods sector.

The chamber says that while fixing the import duty rates, various types of levies imposed on the domestic manufacturers and the cascading effect of taxes on imports have been ignored.

This distortion, according to the chamber, would adversely affect the domestic industry.

To safeguard the interests of the domestic industry, Assocham has suggested freezing of tariffs at the current levels, selective imposition of safeguard measures, including duty or quotas, prevention of dumping through anti-dumping duty and rationalisation of tariffs wherever possible.

The study also said that developed countries, such as the US and some in the EU do make use of safeguard mechanisms and levy higher import duties. Tobacco is a case in point where the US has slapped 350 percent duty, it noted. (*Professional Workers; February, 1998*)

## COAL WASHERY WORKERS AGITATE AGAINST CLOSURE

Nearly 800 workers of Dugda Coal Washery are on agitation under the leadership of Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union against the sinister design of the BCCL management to close down the plant and force the workers to accept VRS.

The Dugda Coal Washery (Plant 1) under BCCL was suddenly

closed down on 28th October '98 and that too when the washery just a day prior to the closure had given an output of washing 3400 tons of coal. As a sequel to this, 129 workers were transferred to Madhuban Washery far away. This apart transfer orders are served on 127 more in February '98.

The workers are demanding

immediate opening of the Dugda Coal Washery plant 1, immediate calling back of 129 workers already transferred to other coal Washery, cancellation of fresh order of transfer served to 127 more workers, and stringent action against the officers involved in corrupt activities amongst other demands.

## WORKERS DEMAND JUDICIAL ENQUIRY

The Lal Jhanda Bhatta Mazdoor Union, Haryana (CITU) has demanded judicial inquiry and stringent punishment to

those who mercilessly murdered a Nepali Brick Kiln worker.

In a memorandum submitted to the Governor of Haryana the

union has laid bare the ruthless oppression and severe repression let loose by the management and police combine on the helpless work-

# REPORTS & EVENTS

ers of Haryana to-day.

Deb Bahadur, the Nepali worker working in Kali Ravan Brick Kiln, after whole days work had prepared food for the masters at night. His only fault was that he could not serve hot food to the masters.

He was tied behind a tractor and was dragged on the rough road for few kilometers. Then the drunk master and his cohorts started jumping on the body of Deb Bahadur who was half conscious and bleeding. When the poor

fellow could not tolerate the torture and died, his body was thrown in a river nearby.

The incident created a deep resentment in the area and subsequently the police had to file FIR and lodge a case.

## RAJASTHAN

### WORKERS AGITATE AT ATOMIC ENERGY PLANT

The workers of Atomic Energy Project, Rawatbhatta have been on the path of agitation to press for their demands for abolition of the Contract Labour System and revision of wages of the workers and others.

On 5.2.98, a day long dharna (from 8 AM to 5 PM) at the gate of Rawatbhatta project was held jointly by Paramanu Vidyut Karmachari Union, Rajasthan

Anushakti Karmachari Union and DPS Staff Association, where 100 employees participated. The Dharna was concluded by a massive workers' demonstration in the afternoon at the Factory gate. The same was addressed among other by Rabindra Singha, President, PBKU, B.L. Verma (PBKU), S N Mishra (RAKU) and Sri Pagare (DPS Staff Assn.).

As decided by National Federation

of Atomic Energy Employees, the a three day long relay hunger strike was organised from 10.2.98 to 12.2.98, where leaders of all the three trade unions in the sector took active part and on 12.2.98, the relay hunger strike ended with mass meeting of the workers in the evening. The agitations evoked good response from the mass of the workers.

### INDAL WORKERS OPPOSE TAKE-OVER BID

The Workers of the Indian Aluminium and Co.(INDAL) are planning to build up strong resistance against the take over bid of the wellrun profit making company by M/s Sterlite Industries Ltd. The move of the Sterlite to purchase 20% shares of Indal have evoked strong protest by the workers in general as they see through this, a game of take over of the company which has become so common in the post-liberalisation scenario.

The Indal Union's all India Coordination Committee representing around 10000 plus workers of Indal has expressed strong apprehension that the Indal after such

take over may go the 'Shaw Wallace' or 'Dunlop' way, given the track record of the Sterlite, and EGPL trying to take over their premier manufacturing company in the Aluminium Sector. It was Stated that the Sterlite was bought over in the 1980s by one M/s Rainbow investment at a very cheap price only to make money by selling Scrap of the company as reported by Times of India. It was also reiterated by the union that the real value of Indal's assets is much more than what was written on the books. The union has also gone on record saying that "many good companies have been brought to destruction after such

take over" and "one should keep this mind while considering such offer" - in a memorandum submitted to Financial Institutions owning substantial share of Indal.

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Indal Unions have also planned meetings and agitations/demonstration in all their units spread all over the country on the matter.

**Please send reports of struggles & events for the publication in The Working Class before 15th of every month. Photographs are also welcome.**

# REPORTS & EVENTS

## CONFERENCE OF BHEL MAZDOOR UNION, JHANSI

Jhansi, March 21, 1998, the BHEL Mazdoor Union's conference was held at Jhansi, with great enthusiasm. On the occasion of conference, the statue of Late Com. Bundiwal, who was martyred by CISF/Police onslaught while leading the BHEL workers struggles at Jhansi installed at the union office at Jhansi was formally unveiled by Com. Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU amidst huge gatherings of mass of the workers.

The conference began with flaghoisting by Com. Sukhdev Singh, president, BHEL Mazdoor Union.

Around 150 delegates participated in the conference, which was presided by the President of the

Union. The conference was inaugurated by Com. Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU who, while outlining the political development and the developments in the economic and industry scenario, with particular reference to BHEL stressed on the urgent need to build up greater awareness and consciousness among the mass of the workers and wider unity to fight back the onslaught of communalism and casteism on the one hand and the disastrous impact of the liberalisation policies on the industry and the working class on the other.

In the conference the General Secretary's report was placed by Com. J P Kushwaha detailing the activities of the union and the problems and challenges being

faced by the movement and the industry. About 10 delegates participated in the discussion and made important suggestions.

The conference took important organisational decision regarding formation of workers' council at shop level and constitute and General Council of workers comprising the members of all the shop councils to guide the executive committee and to ensure greater involvement of the common workers in trade union activities. The conference elected unanimously a thirteen member executive committee with comrades Sukhdev Singh as president JP Kushwaha as General Secretary and G Hasan as treasurer.

## BPCL WORKERS TO GO FOR COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE

All the major trade unions operating in the Public Sector Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) all over the country met in Calcutta on 10th and 11th March, 1998 to review the latest position regarding the proposed restructuring of Bharat Petroleum. The unions noted with dismay that despite strong reservation and genuine apprehension of the unions expressed through letters and resolution on the issue of restructuring of the Company and despite complete work stoppage for a day by most of the workmen of BPCL to record their protest, the top management of BPCL remained adamant and are bent upon com-

pleting the restructuring in their own way totally disregarding the views and suggestions of the Unions.

With the objective of safeguarding the future of a leading Public Sector Undertaking (BPCL) and its employees, the Unions, responsible as they are to their constituents and the nation, requested the C&MD of BPCL to review his decision, as the Unions, were firm on their conviction that disintegrating the company into six separate and smaller units in the name of restructuring will only be perilous, but all the pleadings went unheeded.

It was also noted that the whole

design of restructuring and dismantling BPCL in to six separate units would weaken the public sector company considerably rendering substantial part of it in dire operational and financial difficulty, threatening their existence. It was however resolved unanimously by the Unions that failure on the part of the top Management to response favourably to the constructive approach of the Unions, will compel the unions to go in for direct action. As such it was unanimously decided to observe again a one day countrywide token strike in all the units of BPCL on 7th April 1998.

## J & K GOVT./PSU EMPLOYEES' STRIKE

The J & K Govt. employees alongwith the employees of State PSUs struck work for two days on 9-10 February '98 to demand full implementation of the 5th Pay Commission recommendation as committed by J & K Govt. earlier.

The J & K Govt., after the implementation of the 5th Pay Commission award for the Central Govt. employees has backed out from its earlier commitment and implemented only the 5th Pay Commission's pay scales for the state gov't. employees, but not the provisions relating to HRA and other allowances. Not only that, while doing to the J & K Govt. has withdrawn

the provision of Time bound promotion won by the employees through hard struggle.

The Joint-action Committee of J & K Govt./Public Sector Employees, denouncing such a step by the J & K Govt has declared strike for two days on 9th/10th February 1998, which evoked widespread enthusiasm among the employees and workers.

Meantime, in order to create disruption in the united movement of the employees, the state gov't, called only the civil sectt. 'Now Gezatted Employees' union for a meeting and announced the implementation of the provision of HRA only partially the issue of

Time bound promotion and the enhancement of wages for the daily-rated employees were ignored.

In such a situation, the Joint Action Committee struck to their decision for two days strike. The employees of both the state gov't. and the state PSU employees responded to two days' strike call on 9-10 February in a massive way which was concluded by a mass rally of several thousands of striking employees on 10th February '98 at the old Sectt. complex; The rally was addressed by Ramkumar, Mohd. Gafoor, Mohd Maqbool among other leaders of the Joint Action Committee.

## STEEL WORKERS EXPRESSES CONCERN ON VRS IN SAIL

In a letter to Chairman, SAIL, on 7.3.98 General Secretary of Steel Workers Federation of India, Sri Ardhendu Dakshi, expressed concern and strongly criticised the approach of SAIL management towards reduction of manpower through VRS as a measure to address the crisis being faced by the Steel Industry. The letter states:

"In fact, SAIL's decision to reduce manpower and introduce a VRS appeared in press as early as the 1st week of January '98, much before the "Core Group" meeting held on 23rd January 98. Dr. M.K. Pandhe, our President had written to you to register his protest against such unilateral steps while a bi-partite negotiating body is actively working in this industry. In the Core Group meeting held

on 23rd January '98 we refused to take note of the VRS and all the members unanimously suggested that workers should be taken into confidence at every stage, to find ways and means, to reduce cost and eliminate wastages. When referred to the sick, infirm and disabled workers in the plant, we suggested that if they prefer to quit jobs then young workers should be inducted in their places. This is not the Scheme the management has embarked upon.

About other measures, we prioritised several steps, like checking of thefts from the plants, corruption in purchases and supply, expenses on CISF and many other wasteful and avoidable expenses which were appreciated by you and we were promised of nec-

essary steps from your end.

But strangely enough, we find that management thinks that VRS is the panacea for the extant financial crisis of SAIL. Not only that, VRS is being stripped of its voluntary aspect, and a lot of veiled coercion, intimidation is being resorted to in the plant which has created panic and resentment among all sections of employees as well as, executives. We do not believe that VRS can solve the present crisis. In some plants the losses far outstrip the total salary bill in the plant. Those plants will continue to make losses even if 90% of the workforce is driven out. Therefore such a step is bound to be counter-productive because this has brought, in its wake, a

*(Cont. on page 26)*

# BANK EMPLOYEES OPPOSED PRIVATISATION AND MERGER

On 26th December 1997, the Government of India, Ministry of Finance, appointed a 9-member Committee headed by Shri M Narasimham who, was also the Chairman of the Committee appointed by the previous government in 1991 to suggest reform measures on the financial system.

The newly appointed committee has been entrusted the task to review the record of implementation of the reforms recommended by the previous Committee in 1991 and chart the reforms necessary in the years to come. The Committee has been asked to submit the report within 31st March 1998.

The nine unions comprising (United Forum of Bank Unions) UFBU, submitted a joint memorandum to the Narasimham Committee on 10.3.98.

The various points raised in the memorandum were highlighted by the union representatives before the committee.

The notable point is that the unions are opposed to merger or restructuring the public sector banks into 3/4 Global Banks, a few all India Banks and the rest local banks. The root cause of the banks' problems lies in mismanagement, absence of accountability, political interference and failure of the RBI and other authorities to monitor and supervise the banks, weak legislation standing in the way of recovery of bank loans aggravated by abrupt introduction of Capital Adequacy and prudential norms on Western model. Merger is no solution and should be discarded. Instead identity of the Banks as it exists now should be maintained with improvement in the quality of management with stringent control.

RBI's supervisory wing should be strengthened and RBI authorities should be made accountable for their lapses in this respect.

All the unions are united in their opposition to privatisation. It has been suggested that there must not be any further dilution of government ownership.

The process of orientation of the banking policy in favour of privatisation, as recommended by the Committee in 1991, should be reversed. Instead, the banking reforms should aim at strengthening public-sector banks with emphasis on solving the problems of poverty, unemployment, development of rural sec-

tor and the weaker sections of the people.

The Unions, also demanded:

a) Publication of list of all defaulters, above Rs.10 lacs. b) Wilful default of banks loans to be made a criminal offence. c) Establishment of Central Banking Audit Commission on the lines of CAG (Comptroller and Audit General) d) Establishment of central Banking Vigilance Commission. e) Stricter supervision of the Banks and accountability of the Banks boards, the RBI as well as the managements. f) Full transparency Banks' Balance Sheets with deletion of 'secrecy' clause.

Unions voiced their firm opposition to 'current account convertibility as recommended by Tarapore Committee assuming it 'disastrous' for country's economy and banks.

Any attempt to retrench the staff or privatise the Banks or put into operation any of the anti-people and anti-employee recommendations of the bank managements will be an invitation to confrontation and industrial unrest as bank unions are determined to resist the same regardless of consequences.

The Bank Employees Federation of India, an important constituent of UFBU stated, in a communique, "We have no illusion that the Committee will accept our suggestions. The impropriety and haste with which the Committee has been appointed at a time when the process of general election process is on, is nothing but an attempt to make it a fait-accompli to comply with the conditions of WTO agreement entered into by the government at the behest of IMF-World Bank.

We should, therefore, remain united and prepared to combat any onslaught on public sector banking and the employees job security or service conditions which may come under the garb of 2nd Narasimham Committee report."

*(Cont. from page 24)*

A separate meeting of the women's organisation was held where Com. Vimal Ranadive and Maya Dastidar spoke. It was informed that in Bangla Desh, about 10 lakhs garment workers are working in export zones, where 90% are women. A call was given to organise them so that their working conditions would be better.

# 5th Conference of Bangla Desh Agricultural Farm

## Labour Federation

Vimal Ranadive

The 5th conference of Bangla Desh Farm Labour Federation was held from 10-12th March 1998 at Dhaka. On the 10th March a colourful rally preceded the inauguration of the conference at the Ramna Botomul ground at Dhaka at 10 AM. The inaugural session was attended by about 8000 farm labourers coming from 64 state farms. Rashid Khan Menon, advisor of BAFLF inaugurated the conference. The session was presided over by Com. Joynal Abedin. The welcome address was delivered by the General Secretary Com. Nurul Anowar. Among the fraternal organisations who greeted the open session were the delegates from Vietnam National Union of Agriculture and Rural Development Workers Com. Huang Trin, Com. Vimal Ranadive, President of All India Plantation Workers Federation and Com. Amal Ghosh Dastidar, Secretary. Meena Patel, Secretary of International IUE, Nirmal Sen, General Secretary of Bangla Desh Krishak Shramik Dal, Mestah Uddin Ahmad, Jatiya Shramik Jute. The open session was followed by a colourful procession which marched through all the main streets of Dhaka city.

On the 11-12th of March there was delegates session attended by 700 delegates consisting of both men and women farm workers. After the condolence resolution, Com. Nurul Anowar, the General Secretary, addressed the session reviewing the work between the 4th and 5th conference. He vehemently criticised the present market economy which the present Hasina Government has adopted while killing thousands of state industries which are being closed throwing a great number of Labourers on the streets. The ruling party has opened the countries indigenous market to the multinational and transnational companies. He noted that development does not mean the building of roads and palaces alone. Actual development means, a change in the living standards of the poor people who constitutes 80% of population of the country.

The fraternal messages from Germany, Netherland, France, New Zealand, Australia, Sweeden, India, China, Korea, Vietnam, Nepal, Hongkong and Philippines were read out. While greeting the delegates

Com. Huang Trin from Vietnam said "Like Bangla Desh, Vietnam is still an underdeveloped agricultural country, suffering under the harsh weather and threats of natural calamities. Out of 96 million inhabitants of the whole country, 80% of them live in rural areas". He further said "after ten years of revolution, under the leadership of Vietnamese Communist Party, our agriculture has seen drastic changes. The agricultural production consist nearly 30% of the total export value of the country."

"The Vietnam National Union of agriculture and rural Development workers is the organization that covers half a million, of which 400 thousands are union members." Com. Vimal Ranadive President of AIPWF while greeting the delegates session said, "the experience of Plantations workers, working conditions and the historical background are in fact the same as in India and Bangla Desh. The British rulers have left, but our conditions did not change much. "In fact the tea production in India was never so high, as per the latest report, "811 million Kg. and gets good foreign exchange. Women constitute 80% in plantation workers, but in many states, there are no equal wage nor they get Maternity leave as per Law. There are more than 20 lakhs workers in plantation, but most of them are casual and temporary. The membership of the Federation is about 2 lakhs. We can strengthen our movement, if we come together." Com. Amal Ghosh Dastidar dealt with the danger of globalisation and market economy under the dictates of the World Bank and IMF and Multinational companies are spreading their net work mainly all over the developing world against the interest of the working class. The working class all over the world should be united to stop the attacks on the working class. Both the speeches from Indian representatives were greeted by the delegates.

30 delegates participated in the discussion. The new Council consisting of 45 members with Com. Joynul Abedin as President and Com. Nurul Anowar as General Secretary was elected by the delegate session. The Executive Committee consisting of 23 members from amongst the Council was also elected.

(Cont. on page 23)

# IRAQ: FACING THE BRUNT OF US GANGSTERISM

Seven years ago, the United States Government with the support of the European powers launched a war against Iraqi people, essentially to plunder their rich oil deposit, of course, under the camouflage to liberate Kuwait. Even after ceasefire, war has been continued to be pursued on Iraq through economic sanctions and blockade, in arrogant defiance of UN decision and the world public opinion.

And now, probably, not satisfied with the 'blockade game' the unstable greed of hegemonic power of the US Administration prompted it to arrogate itself as self-appointed policeman to plan for another military strike on Iraq on the plea of disciplining Iraq for its alleged refusal to UN inspection of US chosen sites in Iraq to trace out weapons.

The so-called custodian of World peace, the United Nations remained helpless spectator of the most uncivilized gangsterism of the US - its blatant intrusion on a nation's sovereignty. Even after the conclusion of the agreement between the UN Secretary General and Iraqi Govt. on UN inspection, the US could defiantly utter that it need not require UN clearance to attack Iraq, if it so desires.

## **Arrogance of Hypocrisy**

US takes the plea of Iraq's alleged refusal to allow the 'Inspectors' at all the sites and the Presidential palace, which is very much within the Sovereign authority of a Sovereign state as Iraq. As such the assertion of sovereign authority by Iraq has drawn the ire of the arrogant US administration. But what does US would have done in the face of same demand for inspection of the weapon-sites in US, made by Iraq or somebody else. The concerned American law (Paragraph 307) stipulates that 'the President of United States can refuse to have a site inspected if he considers that this inspection jeopardises National Security'. The paragraph 303 of the same Senate law precise that "the President retains the right to refuse any person in the inspection teams and this decision cannot be put in question", and "all inspection team will be accompanied by a FBI agent. (Source): The USA-Iraq relations - a model of Hypocrisy by William Blum). Unfortunately, the United Nations are doing precious little to condemn such hypocrisy

of the arrogant US at the cost of its respectability.

## **US Economic Interest is Involved**

And this violent stance of US is not without any link with its economic interest, and the interest of the US oil companies. Effectively, the announcement of a new American offensive against Iraq coincided with a significant drop in the price of petrol in the international market from 25 dollars in September 1996 to less than 15 dollars per barrel in January 1998. This price drop affects first the economies of those countries with the greatest ties with the United States (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait) who are also the largest buyers of American arms. Under current conditions, if Iraq would have been able to restart its normal oil exports, the drop in earnings of the US oil companies and also the petrol monarchies in the middle east would become a long-term affair, having an equally long-term effect on American arms trade. The United States has imposed a situation in the Middle East where after the Gulf-war, half of the public-expenditure goes on the purchase of arms, that too from America. It is not without reason that USA wants to keep such a situation alive.

## **Iraqi people in immeasurable distress**

As a consequence of seven years long blockade against Iraq, the Iraqi people have become the worst sufferers. The average living standard of the people fell vertically. More than 15 lakhs Iraqi people died because of malnutrition for lack of health care and a near famine situation has been created. According to UN, the child mortality rate has increased from 61 per thousand in 1990 to 117 per thousand in 1996. Percentage of babies under 2.5 Kg. at birth has risen from 9% in 1991 to 26% in 1998. One third of children below 5 years are affected by chronic malnutrition. Dr. Habib Rejeb, representing the World Health Organisation (WHO) explains "The consequence for the present generation is grim. They will never reach their normal height."

According to Iraqi Health Minister, accredited by UN, less than 4% of the necessary drugs are available. Further, electricity network is verging on collapse. One can imagine the inhuman brutality of US machination on Iraq even before starting a military offensive.

## WIDESPREAD PROTEST

Inspite of suffocating blockade and the grim consequences, Iraqi people refused to be on their knees and expressed their resolve to build up resistance. And the whole world's public opinion condemned USA administration's naive design on Iraq. In the USA itself, the New York, Sanfransisco, Boston, Indranapolis, Chicago and other towns witnessed huge demonstration condemning the move of Clinton Administration and demanding lifting of blockade against Iraq. In the forum organised by the US Govt. to enlist support for its disastrous policy, on 18th

## SRILANKAN PLANTATION WORKERS' STRIKE

Continuous strike by Srilankan tea plantation workers have ended after Srilankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga personally intervened to settle the wage dispute.

After a series of talks, trade unions accepted the offer made by company representatives to raise the daily wage of a worker from the current SL Rs.83 (\$ 1.38) to Rs.101 (\$ 1.68). More than 600,000 workers went on strike from February 5 demanding a daily pay of Rs.105 (\$1.75).

The Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) headed by S. Thondaman, said it had to resort to the strike because plantation companies failed to keep their promise of a pay increase from January 1998.

The Planters' Association of Ceylon took the position that if the salary is raised to Rs.105 (\$ 1.75) per day, the companies have to face the problem of

*(Cont. from page 22)*

demoralization in rank and file.

We beg to emphasize that the root cause of the present crisis lie in economic policies, particularly the taxation policies and mindless addition to capacity where planning has been given a go by, and also, in large-scale dumping by foreign producers. The fight for survival should start at the policy making level. Other measures will have only a limited or nominal effect where the goal can never be achieved.

In view of this we request that the management should retrace steps and there should be no forcible Voluntary Retirement Scheme whatsoever. The workers should be taken into confidence to overcome the crisis in an atmosphere of mutual faith and trust and unanimity of purpose."

February 1998 at Ohio University, Madeline Albright, US Secretary of states had to face a hostile crowd questioning legitimacy of US action and condemning its policy of aggression.

Trade Union movement of almost all the countries have condemned the US for its Iraq - policy. And in Europe in particular, in all the countries the protest of the common people, trade unions and other social organisation have compelled the respective Governments in the European states barring UK, to make such statements as would reveal their support to US considerably shaken.

having to raise extra revenues.

However, during the talks, the union pointed out that in the first six months of 1996, the privatised tea companies gained a total income of Rs.1.8 billion (\$ 31.6 million) and the profits after taxation amounted to Rs.294.84 million (\$ 4.9 million)—unprecedented profits.

"Part of the profits should go to the workers who toil", CWC spokesman Arumugam Thondaman argued. He pointed out that recently the companies were exempted from taxes such as ad velorem tax and export tax, which were in effect since 1992.

While Srilanka's tea production in 1995 was 245.9 million kilogram, it increased to 258.4 million kg in 1996. Last year tea production reached a record level of 276.86 million kg. (INDIA PRESS AGENCY)

*(Cont. from back page)*

CITU does not consider that the draft declaration can be amended since we oppose to the basic thrust of the declaration itself. The CITU is also of the opinion that whatever safeguards are introduced in the draft declaration, these will be meaningless because in practice, these will be used against the interests of the Third World countries. The basic thrust of the draft declaration itself is to protect the interests of the developing countries and therefore we are of the view that the Government of India and the Indian representative in the Governing Body should resolutely oppose this draft and also try to mobilise support from other developing countries so that the machinations to impose trade sanctions against Third World countries in the name of protecting the workers living standards is not allowed to be carried forward.

# Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982=100)

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Dec'97	Jan'98	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Dec'97	Jan'98
AP	1	Gudur	378	394	PB	45	Amritsar	321	337
	2	Guntur	366	374		46	Ludhiana	329	343
	3	Hyderabad	344	357	RAJ	47	Ajmer	364	375
	4	Visakhapatnam	358	365		48	Jaipur	359	372
	5	Warangal	377	382	TN	49	Chennai	405	418
ASM	6	D D Tinsukia	330	331		50	Coimbatore	377	382
	7	Guwahati	364	376		51	Coonoor	388	398
	8	Labac-Silchar	315	314		52	Madurai	398	396
	9	Mariani Jorhat	347	353		53	Salem	376	385
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	350	350	54	Tiruchirapally	423	434		
BHR	11	Jamshedpur	358	361	UP	55	Agra	336	360
	12	Jharia	307	323		56	Ghaziabad	353	372
	13	Kodarma	313	333		57	Kanpur	359	378
	14	Monghyr	340	347		58	Saharanpur	328	346
	15	Noamundi	342	348		59	Varanasi	388	427
	16	Ranchi-Hatia	354	361	WB	60	Asansol	334	347
GUJ	17	Ahmedabad	364	372		61	Calcutta	374	383
	18	Bhavnagar	381	399		62	Darjeeling	321	321
	19	Rajkot	353	362		63	Durgapur	388	398
	20	Surat	381	396		64	Haldia	398	401
21	Vadodra	352	360	65		Howrah	371	383	
HRY	22	Faridabad	371	408	66	Jalpaiguri	317	347	
	23	Yamunanagar	341	360	67	Raniganj	325	331	
J&K	24	Srinagar	353	368	CHD	68	Chandigarh	357	368
KAR	25	Bangalore	377	383	DEL	69	Delhi	393	416
	26	Belgaum	392	406	PON	70	Pondicherry	458	464
	27	Hubli-Dharwar	379	399		<b>ALL INDIA</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>384</b>
	28	Mercara	397	400	<b>Additional Serious of Labour Bureau</b>				
KER	29	Alwaye	387	398	AP	1	Kothagudem	387	391
	30	Mundakayam	407	413	HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	351	365
	31	Quilon	383	391	RAJ	3	Bhilwara	360	378
	32	Thiruvanthapuram	424	416	MP	4	Chhindwara	371	391
MP	33	Balaghat	359	366	TRJ	5	Tripura	347	346
	34	Bhillai	337	349	GOA	6	Goa	425	438
	35	Bhopal	398	422	<b>Government of India</b>				
	36	Indore	373	387	<b>Ministry of Labour</b>				
	37	Jabalpur	371	394	<b>Labour Bureau</b>				
MHR	38	Mumbai	422	433	<b>Shimla</b>				
	39	Nagpur	386	414					
	40	Nasik	395	403					
ORI	41	Pune	414	428					
	42	Solapur	383	402					
	43	Barbil	344	345					
	44	Rourkela	353	360					

# DRAFT DECLARATION ON SOCIAL STANDARDS - A DUBIOUS MOVE IN ILO TO HELP MNCS

M.K. PANDHE

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is planning to issue a Declaration in the name of advocating fundamental principles and rights within its mandate and an appropriate follow up mechanism which is being considered in the Session of the Governing Body of the ILO held in March in Geneva is a document which bring the linkage of social clause with the international trade through the backdoor. The CITU expresses its resolute opposition to the very concept of adopting this declaration. If the Governing Body accepts this declaration even with some amendments, it may be brought before the 86th Session of the ILO to be held in Geneva in June, 1998.

In the 85 session of the ILO, the World Bank President has openly advocated working together with ILO the concept of implementing policies of globalisation.

The draft of the proposed declaration is visualising the needs of the globalised economy and trying to serve the interests of the advanced capitalist countries which are frantically seeking to capture the market of the Third World Countries. The draft declaration in the name of protecting the working and the living conditions of the workers seeks to impose sanctions against certain countries who according to ILO do not implement the fundamental conventions of the ILO.

This declaration, however, will not be applicable to advanced capitalist countries like USA who have adopted only 11 ILO conventions while India has adopted 37. Moreover, the US government has not accepted most of the fundamental ILO conventions. However the ILO will not be able to take any action against such countries, but they will pounce upon the Third World Countries in the name of protecting the workers' interest. We have seen how UN resolution on lifting blockade of Cuba or vacating territories of Syria and Labanon by Isreal have remained on paper while UN is used against Iraq to implement US imperialists aggressive policies. This one sided policy cannot be accepted by the trade

union movement of the developing countries and must be resolutely opposed in the 86th Session of the ILO. If the declaration is adopted, the CITU considers that the ILO virtually will be made a branch of the WTO and will have the role of policing the economic development of the Third World countries. We are aware that in India, the Child Labour is a serious phenomena and it must be abolished but without eliminating the poverty, how can one eliminate the Child labour? The poverty in India is the direct consequence of the colonial plunder by imperialist powers and the ILO does not want to take any steps against this plunderers who are responsible for the present poverty and the child labour in India. The ILO still toys with the idea of social labelling which will also hit the interests of the Third World countries. The concept of forced labour has been there in the Third World over a long time. But the US Government is having prison labours which is producing goods worth \$9 billion per year. However, such industries will not be disturbed by the ILO mechanism.

One of the major reasons for the limitations of the ILO's role is that the major capitalist countries contribute 75% of the ILO's funding and industrially ILO is getting influenced by this phenomena and does not speak against the advanced capitalist countries. Naturally, such use of forced labour by the American Government does not come within the framework of the ILO and even if it comes, the ILO will not be able to take firm action against such countries. WTO is also an agency controlled by the advanced capitalist countries and the GATT agreement is imposed on the developed countries by various pressure tactics adopted by them. In view of this, the CITU is of the opinion that there is no need to adopt such a declaration. On the other hand, there is a need to adopt another declaration on the role of multinational companies against the Third World countries while transferring technology but such priority questions are not taken by the ILO which needs to be opposed.

(Cont. on page 26)