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THE WORKING CLASS

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*National Assembly of Workers Against Anti-Labour Policies
15 July 2002, Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi*

- Defend the economic sovereignty of our country from the hegemonistic onslaughts of the IMF, World Bank and the WTO.
- Struggle for economic self reliance. ● Defend the public sector.
- Defend the trade union rights of the working class

NEW LABOUR MINISTER SPEAKS...

SPEECH: 1

In a clear shift in stance from his predecessor, the new Labour Minister, Sahib Singh Verma, may overturn the line adopted by Sharad Yadav on the interest rate on Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and on the radical law for lay-offs envisaged in the last year's budget. He (Verma) supports the finance ministry recommendation that the interest rate should be reduced. "I strongly feel that the recommendation is rational and the matter will be discussed on Tuesday by the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of EPF." Verma told PTI on Friday. On the controversial amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act (the proposal is to allow companies employing up to 1000 workers to effect lay-off, retrenchment and closure without Govt permission), he did not subscribe to the view that the proposed changes in the Act would amount to 'hire & fire' system in the country. Except for the term, 'hire & fire', he felt that there was nothing wrong with it. In his first interview after assuming office, he said, while referring

to the matter "It is not so. If someone is incompetent, he should be given a chance to improve. If he does not, he should be removed as he becomes a blot on the workforce."

(Business Line, 6-07-2002)

SPEECH: 2

On the day following the oath-taking ceremony, the new labour minister said in an interview (in Hindi) given to ZEE-news channel that there is nothing wrong with hire and fire policy. Only incompetent (Nikammi) worker should be afraid of 'hire & fire'.

(ZEE-NEWS)

SPEECH: 3

New labour minister clarified on Saturday that there was no move to reduce the interest rate payable on Employees Provident Fund (EPF) from 9.5 per cent to 9 per cent.... "There is no question of changing the rate of interest on EPF. Rather the Govt is keen on providing more benefits to EPF account holders." He said in a news conference.... Answering a query about the proposed changes in the Industrial Disputes Act, for making closure of factories easier, he said, he would study the recommendations of the Second National Labour Commission in this regard...

(The Financial Express, 7-07-2002)

(Meanwhile, the meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the Employees Provident Fund was held on 9th July, 2002. The interest rate issue was not in the agenda even. The Labour Minister, in his capacity as Chairman, while addressing the meeting stated, inter-alia: "I consider it my duty to ensure that benefits available to the working class including return on their deposits is protected and not reduced". Thus, the earlier decision of the CBT declaring an interim rate of interest for the year 2002 - 03 stands, as of now).

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

AUGUST 2002

EDITORIAL

SANGH PARIVAR'S GAMEPLAN

The *sangh parivar* has unfolded its game plan.

The RSS has, in the recent period, tightened its grip over the BJP led Government at the Centre, as well as the BJP party apparatus. The Cabinet reshuffle effected by the Prime Minister Vajpayee has ensured that the saffron brigade, of which there are 56 Ministers out of the total 77, controls all the crucial Ministries. L.K.Advani had been anointed the Deputy Prime Minister and he would be calling the shots henceforth. The NDA allies have all been sidelined and yet the lust for holding on to power keeps them hanging on to the BJP bandwagon.

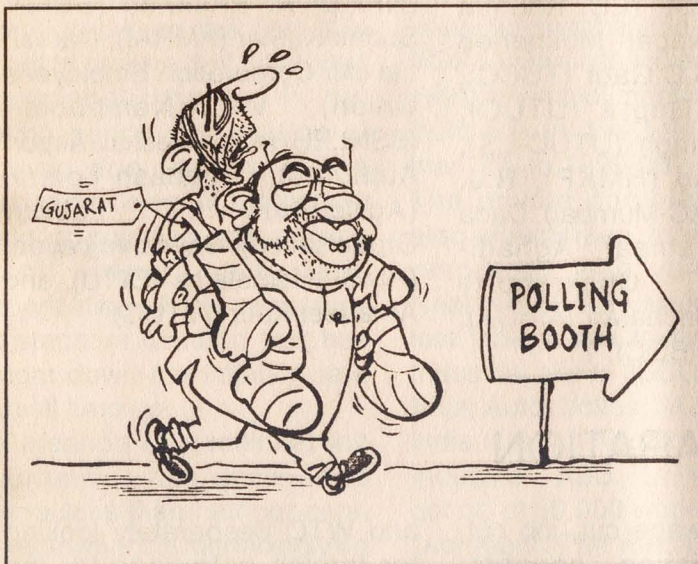
In the name of revamp of the party, the new look BJP central leadership had been entrusted to hard-core ideologues of the rabid majoritarian fundamentalism. The Bajrang Dal chief Vinay Katiyar, had been assigned the job to steer the BJP in the State of U.P., where the VHP has held out blatant threats of going ahead with the temple construction at the disputed site. The sangh parivar has brazenly declared that neither the laws of the land nor the judicial verdicts would be binding on them. The learned apostles in the judiciary, who chose to convict Arundhati Roy for contempt in a different context, have curiously not taken note of the *sangh parivar* outbursts!

And now, Narendra Modi, who is the architect of the Gujarat carnage and abettor of the most

horrendous crimes being perpetrated there, had moved for dissolution of the State Assembly and opted for early elections. The Vajpayee - Advani dispensation at the Centre seeks to oblige him in his horrendous move to reap electoral gains over the heap of the corpses of the minority community there.

The refusal of visa to a team of the Amnesty International, which wanted to visit Gujarat to study the human rights situation there, speaks volumes of the skeletons in the cupboard of Narendra Modi. Yet, the Home Minister claims that the situation there is not only conducive for holding of elections but asserts that Modi would return with the 'certificate' of the people.

The country is being led down the communal fascistic lane by the sangh parivar. Gujarat, as has been claimed by them, is their testing laboratory. It is the paramount task of the working people and the democratic masses to ensure that the game plan of the sangh parivar is squarely defeated not only in Gujarat but throughout the country.



Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WORKERS CALL:

UNITEDLY RALLY TO DEFEAT ANTI LABOUR POLICIES!

A massively attended National Assembly of Workers, held today at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium in Delhi reiterated the resolve of the entire spectrum of the trade union movement to resist the labour law reforms, privatisation of public sector, policies leading to job losses, unemployment and other anti labour measures of the government of India.

The National Assembly was conducted by a presidium comprising of J. Chittaranjan (AITUC), E. Balanandan (CITU), Shiv Gopal Mishra (HMS), Guman Singh (INTUC), N.M. Thomas (AICCTU), D.N. Jha (TUCC), Satyapalan (UTUC) and D. Sudreshan (UTUC-LS).

The BMS had been actively involved in the preparatory work in the runup to the National Assembly. It, however, regretted its inability to participate in view of their own action programmes in the period ahead.

The Assembly was addressed by Gurudas Das Gupta (AITUC), M.K. Pandhe (CITU), Umraomal Purohit (HMS), R.C. Khuntia (INTUC), Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU), S.C.Gaur (TUCC), Sunil Sen Gupta (UTUC), Satyawan Singh (UTUC-LS), Sharad Rao (HMKP), R.J. Karnik (TU JAC-Mumbai), Dada Samant (Kamgar Aghadi-Mumbai), T. Chakraborty (AIBEA), R.Sridharan (AIBOA), K.D.Khera (AIBOC), T.I.

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DECLARATION

This National Assembly of Workers being held at Talkatora Indoor Stadium, New Delhi with more than 5000 delegates representing the Central Trade Unions, Federations and independent labour unions on behalf of the broad section of the workers and employees of the country raises its indignant voice of protest against the new economic policies of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation of the Central Government and firmly opposes the reckless reform that seek to pass the entire burden of the economic crisis on the working masses,

resorting to wage cut, job cut, cut in existing benefits, aggravating poverty and unemployment.

The National Assembly, now in session, notes with deep anguish that the central govt. despite all round rising wave of massive national protests led by the trade unions, even after its policy did not succeed to rejuvenate the economy does not appear to be in a mood to review the policies and look for alternative path for reviving the economy, did not think it fit to call the trade unions for talks. It is clear, Government working at the behest of the World Bank

and WTO desperately looking for foreign patronage for the implementation of its economic programme has turned insensitive and refuses to accept the realities of the fiasco of its policies. While the central govt. is bartering away the economic sovereignty of the country, the national economy dips into further crisis. The down turn in the industrial production continues unabated. The worst hit are the small-scale units due to the policy of dereservation. The latest Economic Survey dishes out the sordid story of increasing closing down of industrial enterprises throwing

out of job lakhs of employees and workers. As on March 31, 2001, 2,52,947 large, medium and small units had turned sick, many of them have already been shut down. Sickness in the industries is on the rise and the govt. must take an objective view for their revival. While the industries become sick, the promoters turn rich.

With slow down all round, market demand remaining stagnant, additional investment tapering off, off take of bank credit going down, job cut on the rise, it is difficult to believe that economic growth shall improve in the coming period. Stagnation of demand due to loss of the purchasing power of the people due to job cut, wage cut, decline in job opportunities and pauperization of the peasantry. It is stagnant demand that has brought down the inflation rate to an all time low.

The creation of additional job opportunities has declined to meagre less than half per cent. Unemployment is menacingly on the rise threatening to destroy the social fabric of the nation. Moreover, millions of workers are rendered jobless by closure, VRS and downsizing. Nearly 2 crore workers have been thrown to streets, in course of economic reforms. Only in the factory sector, 700,000 workers have lost jobs in two years. Add to this the decision of the Central Govt. to reduce its strength by 10 per cent. More than 40,000 have been displaced in central public sector undertakings recently. The Annual data of Central Statistical Organisation indicates a fall of the number of

employees in the country by 5 per cent on the top of 3 per cent in the previous year. The decline of employment by 8 per cent in two consecutive years is alarming.

The Second Labour Commission report submitted to the Govt. says "According to one estimate we may add 70 million unemployed in the next ten years. There are limits to which agriculture can absorb new entrants. Thus there is a "jobless" growth and the rate of unemployment as measured by NSS surveys has increased after 1991, unemployment increasing from 6% in 1993-94 to more than 7% in 1999-00"

The private corporates have also downsized their human resources with vengeance. Nearly 3,90,000 workers have lost jobs in the textiles alone. Industrial giants IISCO, TELCO, Bajaj Auto, Voltas, ACC, Philips India, Larsen Toubro, Reliance Industries, ABB, Unilever have got rid of 50,000 workers in last two years. The much hyped IT sector has axed 10,000 jobs last year.

Women are the worst victims of economic reforms - underpaid, discriminated, harassed, thrown out of job more easily than men. The shift of employment in the

informal sector is tremendously on the rise. The outsourcing of jobs by the employers has accentuated the process of informalisation. Workers in agriculture, rural industries, beedi industry, construction handloom, shop and establishment, restaurant and hotels, migrant workers and head loaders are compelled to work without minimum wage and statutory benefits. Even then the Govt. refuses to make laws to protect the interests of unorganised labour and provide social security.

Government's unashamed appeasement of the Indian corporate and transnational companies is appalling. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act is being amended to facilitate outsourcing and cut down labour cost.

The Govt. has refused to amend the Payment of Bonus Act denying payment of deferred wages to the vast majority of workers and employees. The rate of interest on Provident Fund is being brought down year after year. The leave travel concessions are suspended. The fringe benefits available to the workers have been dragged into income tax net. The

ACTION PROGRAMME

1. 19th August, 2002 will be observed as a Day of Pledge for relentlessly carrying on the battle against the economic policies of the Govt. and a campaign for developing public awareness in support of the demands of the workers from 19th August to 24th August, 2002.
2. District level mobilization - 23rd to 28th September, 2002
3. State level joint rallies - 18th to 23rd November, 2002
4. Massive SATYAGRAHA in all the States - 8th January, 2003
5. March to Parliament on the 3rd day of Budget Session 2003.

payment of minimum wage, even dearness allowance is sought to be linked with productivity. The reduction of interest rate on small savings has gravely hit the working population. While violation of labour laws are allowed to be done with impunity, govt. seeks to further amend the labour laws to benefit the employers and allow intensification of exploitation. The National Assembly of Workers opposes the anti-labour recommendations of the Second Labour Commission and calls upon the trade unions to collectively fight against the dilution of Industrial Disputes Act, Contract Labour Act and increase in the daily working hours in the factories and reduce the factory holidays. The National Assembly of trade unions deeply deplores the projection of privatisation as the panacea for all the economic ills of the country as advocated by World Bank-IMF-WTO combine.

The Govt. of India is now in a selling spree of even blue chip and potentially viable public sector undertakings with huge asset base unmindful of the harm it causes to the economy. The public sector undertakings are national assets, built over years with people's money and the precious wealth of the nation is being handed over to the greedy private corporates for a song. Without a strong and powerful base of the public sector, economy cannot advance and basic human problems cannot be addressed. The National Assembly of Workers unequivocally condemns the campaign that the public sector units are economically loss making and perennially dependent on budgetary support and, therefore, must be closed down or privatised. Contrary to this propaganda, what is found out is that net profit of the PSUs has increased, return on equity has

augmented, investments improved, even the combined turnover has expanded. While the private corporates are guilty of tax default of over 62,000 crores, the contribution of public sector to the National exchequer is up by 4,821 crores. Even the foreign exchange earnings have registered an increase. The reckless disinvestment also privatisation is nothing short of criminal betrayal of national interest.

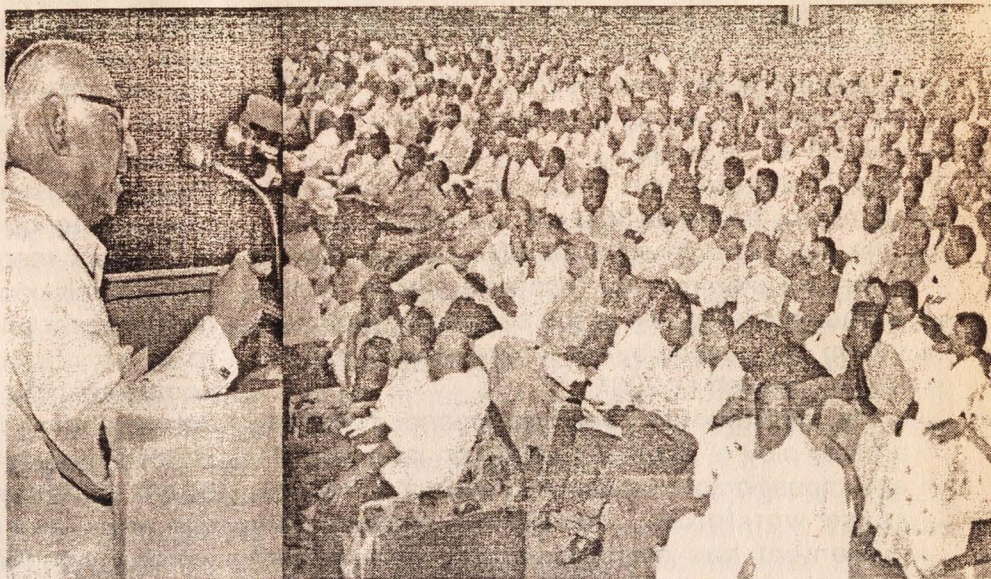
Agriculture is the mainstay of our national economy. It provides employment to nearly 60 per cent of the country's economically active population. Agriculture is in shambles. Aggressive liberalisation has deprived the farmers and agricultural workers of the little protection that was available resulting in large scale unemployment and pauperisation of the rural masses. The Indian government has withdrawn the agricultural subsidies. But the advanced countries had been doling out subsidies to their own national agriculture and as such the withdrawal of quantitative restrictions has resulted in the easy import of agricultural commodities to the great detriment of our rural economy. The dumping of cheap foreign agricultural products seek to ruin India's agriculture. The farmers are in deep distress and suicides in Andhra, Karnataka, Orissa and even in Punjab are pointers to gravity of the situation. The National Assembly strongly deprecates the delay in bringing a comprehensive bill for agriculture workers.

THE DEMANDS

1. Halt to privatisation of profit-making and potentially viable public sector undertakings.
2. No changes in the Labour laws, including the Industrial Disputes Act and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act favouring the employers and against the interest of workers.
3. Restoration of quantitative restrictions on imports, the removal of which is much to the detriment of industry, agriculture and national interest as a whole.
4. No policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment and evolving nationwide employment generation policies and programmes.
5. Well thought out social security schemes including an unemployment insurance scheme.
6. Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for Agricultural workers.
7. Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings.
8. Restoration of 12% interest on the P.F. deposits.

The National Assembly of Workers puts on record that the present economic policies not only hurt the working masses as never before, it grievously hurt the interest of the nation, stalls economic advance, breeds unemployment and poverty and automatically results in economic slow down. When crisis has overtaken the economy and lack of resources stand in the way of development, government has no concern to mop up internal resources. It allows non-performing assets in the banking system to rise, default in the payment of taxes by the rich to continue and the volume of black money swell. The new economic policy spells doom for the nation.

The National Assembly believes that it is the bounden duty of the Indian working masses to fight for their rights unitedly all over the country and having that



(M K Pandhe addressing the National Assembly)

perspective in view it adopts the following programme of action. Presented by the Central Trade Union Organisations - AICCTU, AITUC, CITU, HMS, INTUC,

TUCC, UTUC and UTUC-LS - and adopted unanimously by the National Assembly of Workers on 15th July, 2002.

TEXT OF THE PLEDGE TO BE TAKEN ON 19TH AUGUST, 2002

We, the workers of _____, as a part of
(The name of the establishment/factory and the place to be filled up) the working people of our country, pledge today that

- We shall defend the economic sovereignty of our country from the hegemonistic onslaughts of the IMF, World Bank and the WTO.
- We shall struggle hard to reverse the disastrous policies of the Government of India, which are stifling economic self reliance
- We shall defend the public sector, which has been built over decades creating valuable national assets
- We shall defeat every attempt to encroach upon the hard earned democratic and trade union rights of the working class
- We shall make endeavours to secure for all sections of the toiling people a comprehensive social security net.
- We shall, together with the other patriotic sections of the Indian people, fight for building an India without hunger, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.
- We shall preserve people's unity, national integration and the pluralistic culture of our country.

LABOUR COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Second National Commission on Labour (SNLC), headed by Ravindra Varma, presented its report to the Prime Minister on 29th June, 2002. The then Labour Minister was also present at the event.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), in a statement issued on 30 June, expressed concern over the manner in which the SNLC had practically given the stamp of its recommendation on the already declared text of the so called 'labour law reform' announced by the Finance minister in his budget speech of 2001.

In fine, whatever has been recommended signifies a nasty ploy of atrocious attack on labour rights and imposition of casualisation and slavery on the entire workforce. The entire trade union movement has already voiced their united opposition to such anti-worker machinations of the Govt to please the employers and foreign-capital lobby, through countrywide strike and other actions and has been planning for further actions in the days to come.

The Labour Commission has completely okayed the Govt move to bestow practically total liberty to the employers in respect of retrenchment of workers, closure of units and deployment of contract labour in all kinds of work as reported by the press. Exemption from the provision of Govt clearance for retrenchment/closure was given to all establishments employing upto 300 workers (from the present level of 100) thus pushing out more than 90% of the factories/establishments and around 70% of the workforce in the organized sector out of the purview of labour legislation. And in case of lay-offs exceeding one month even in

the units employing more than 300, no prior clearance from the Govt is required and employers are allowed to apply for clearance post facto. The attitude of the Commission on retrenchment and closure is revealed by its own observation: "In these circumstances (in the event of Govt's delay in granting quick permission for closure or employer's resorting subterfuges to close down), the Commission came to the conclusion that the more honest and equitable course (?) would be to allow closure, provide for adequate (?) compensation to the workers..." And so far compensation is concerned, the Commission echoed almost the same as already made public by the Govt (or even worse in some cases) which can in no way compensate for job-loss of the workers. And the so-called 'safeguards' provided for the contract-work bears no tangible meaning. The Commission's recommendations also include drastic curtailment of holidays, and increase in working hours as the press report reveals. Further the Commission recommended for taking out the workers in supervisory categories irrespective of wage level out of the purview of labour laws. It has recommended a single labour law in lieu of Industrial Disputes Act, Trade Unions Act and Industrial Employment (Standing Order) Act and also repeal of other Acts relating to wage fixation.

CITU called upon the trade unions and the mass of the workers irrespective of affiliations to resolutely resist the offensive being planned by the Govt on the entire working people at the behest of the employers lobby, both domestic and foreign, through countrywide united action.

LABOUR COMMISSION DISSERVICE TO LABOUR

(With much fanfare the Report of the Second National Commission on Labour (SNCL) was submitted to the Govt. even after four weeks of its presentation, the Report of the SNCL has not reached us. But we have, however, received the reports of the various study groups constituted by the NLC. It will not be totally wrong to presume that the final report of the Commission would be more or less in the direction of the study group reports. In that case the report of the SNCL has ominous portents for the working class. We are reproducing below some flashes/quotes from one report of the SNCL study group on "Review of Laws". - Editor)

ON COVERAGE OF LABOUR LAW

After considerable discussion, the study group

agreed necessarily not unanimously, that establishments employing 50 or more persons

must be governed by the general law while the smaller establishments will have self contained set of provisions that will be applicable to them.

(Para 19, page 8)

The Study group thinks that it would be logical to keep all the supervisory personnel, irrespective of their wage/salary, outside the rank of workmen and keep them out of the purview of the labour laws...

(Para 22, page 10)

We had indicated our intention to have a separate dispensation for establishments having an employment size of 49 or less number of persons.... Provisions in respect of such establishments can be in the form of a separate law named Small Entrepreneurs (Employment Relations) Act or be included in the general law as a separate chapter.... A system of self-certification has been introduced to offset the criticisms of Inspector Raj.

(Para 66, page 30)

ON EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

...We recommend that the provisions of all these laws [Industrial Disputes Act, Trade Unions Act, Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, Sales Promotion Employees (Conditions of Service) Act, Working Journalist and Other Newspaper Employees Miscellaneous Provisions Act etc and related State level Acts] are judiciously consolidated in a single law, namely Law on Employment Relations...However we would carve out a section of these workers who are employed in establishments with an employment size of 49 and below, for a different kind of dispensation....

(Para 27, page 13)

The settlement with a recognized bargaining agent must be binding on all workers....

(Para 29, page 14)

(To decide on recognized bargaining agent), the check-off system is the starting point and if the check-off shows any union as having 50 percent or more of the workers in the establishment/industry/region etc as its member, that is to be declared as the bargaining agent. On the other hand, where none of the unions have 50 percent or more of the workers as their members, then the unions are arranged in the decreasing order of their membership strength and a secret ballot is conducted among the two of the largest unions...

(Para 38, page 20)

Unrecognised unions will not have any powers

conferred on them under the law except to appear on behalf of their members in disciplinary cases...even this may be made applicable only to unions having a membership strength of at least 15 per cent of the workers or 150 whichever is less....

(Para 39, page 20)

Check-off system must be made compulsory for all the registered trade unions....

(Para 41, page 21)

There need be no statutory obligation for the employers to give prior notice, in regard to items 10 (rationalization and standardization of technique which is likely to lead to retrenchment) and 11 (reduction of number of persons employed in any occupation, process or department or shift) of fourth schedule as is the position under sec 9A (of the Industrial Disputes Act.)

(Para 48, page 23)

(On Chapter VB of the Industrial Disputes Act)...the study group is of the view that prior permission or post-facto approval is not necessary in respect of lay-off and retrenchment in establishment of any employment size. (For) closure of establishments...the study group recommend restoration of original limit of 300 (i.e., no permission is required for closure of establishments employing up to 300).

(Para 50, page 24)

We recommend that strike could be called only by the recognized bargaining agent and that too only after it had conducted a strike ballot amongst all its members, of which at least 51 per cent support the move of the strike.

(para 60, page 27)

CONTRACT LABOUR

In essence, the SAIL judgment has overruled the Air India judgment thus leading to the position that on the abolition of contract labour by the appropriate government under section 10 of the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act 1970, the principal employer is under no obligation to absorb the contract labour concerned as his regular employee...

(para 68, page 31)

We have examined the present position.... We feel that the decision to abolish contract labour should not be an executive one, based on the recommendation of the Advisory Contract Labour Board concerned, but must be a judicial one. In the scheme of industrial adjudication that we have

proposed, we think that demand for abolition of contract labour must be adjudicated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) having jurisdiction.... We would also strongly recommend that law be amended also to empower the LRCs to order absorption by the principal employer such number of contract labour, as the LRC considers just and reasonable....

(Para 69, page 31)

As far as regulation of contract labour is concerned...the rule may be amended to provide that in such cases, the wage rate (for the contract workers) shall not be less than the minimum that a regular employee of a comparable category will be receiving in the principal employer's establishment.... we are again fortified in our view by the fact that the Central Govt has made this a condition in cases where the contract labour system is allowed to continue.

(Para 70, page 32)

JUST A FEW CURSORY COMMENTS

There have also been various intentions like coverage of a wider social security system to all workers irrespective of the size of the

establishment, provision of minimum bonus equal to one months pay to workers of all establishments irrespective of size etc. The study group report also posed to recommend strongly (?) "the workers in these establishments must be enabled to organize themselves into trade unions of their choice" and "collective bargaining should be encouraged". But at the same time each and every recommendation as quoted above in respect of coverage of laws, dilution of the Industrial Disputes Act by introducing unfettered rights to employer to hire and fire, legitimizing contract work in all jobs, will all only create much more deterrents to formation and functioning of trade unions at every stage and make the right to collective bargaining and even the right to have hearing by the appropriate forums meaningless. Hence all those expressions of good intentions are nothing but a ploy of deception and a camouflage to their shameless subservience to the employers' lobby. The recommendation of the Commission is not expected to be anything different either.

CITU CONDEMNS PM'S CALL FOR LABOUR 'REFORMS'

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), in a statement issued on July 11, took strong exception to the prime minister's call for 'reforms' in labour laws. The prime minister has declared that his cabinet would "vigorously pursue" the labour 'reform' agenda. He made the Government's intention known in his advisory Council on Trade and Industry, in an interface with leaders of the corporate lobby on July 10, which has become an intermittent event. His call for consensus on the issue was also dubious.

Possibly the Prime Minister was carried away by the report of the Second National Commission on Labour, presented to him recently. But its recommendations are not the last word on the subject. The Prime Minister would do well to remind himself that there are dissenting reports appended to the Second NLC report.

The Government of India is yet to make the report public. It has not even bothered to circulate the report to the Central Trade Unions, not to speak of initiating a dialogue with them. The Indian Labour Conference (ILC) - the apex tripartite forum in the country, which normally meets in the second quarter of every year, is yet to be convened. The ILC meeting last year, where the Prime Minister exhorted trade union leaders to cooperate with the liberalisation and labour reforms policies of the Government had to end without adopting any conclusion because of the total rejection of the Government policies by all the trade unions, without exception.

In this background the Prime Minister's arbitrary declaration before the corporate lobby only reflected the "ethical deficit" in the style of his governance, which deserves denigration as seriously as that of his own fulmination against a similar deficit on part of the business class.

The Prime Minister and his cohorts go on repeating ad nauseam that "labour reforms will create more employment opportunities". Such an illusion is not substantiated by ground realities anywhere in the world.

The CITU called upon the workers and the trade union movement to stoutly oppose the prime minister's unilateral declaration and unitedly rally to defeat the retrograde labour 'reform' moves.

COMRADE SURYANARAYANA RAO

We regret to record the death of Comrade S Suryanarayana Rao, Vice President, CITU, President, CITU, Karnataka State, who passed away on July 1, 2002 at Bangalore. He complained of chest pain and was admitted to Narayana Hrudayalaya where he succumbed to a massive heart attack in the evening. He was also the Secretary of the CPI(M) Karnataka State Committee and a member of its Central Committee.

Comrade Suryanarayana Rao was born on August 24, 1924 at Arakalgudi, Hassan district. His father Swami Rao was a small industrialist. Comrade Suryanarayana Rao was attracted to the student movement as part of freedom struggle in the early period of his life. He became a leader of the All India Students Federation and led the movement in Karnataka along with the late Comrade M S Krishnan. He plunged into the movement to liberate India from the British Colonialism. He was jailed by the British for 18 months for his participation in the Quit India movement.

Looking at his zeal, energy and commitment, Talakere Subramanya, then president of Karnataka Congress invited him to join the Congress party in 1945. Refusing the offer, Com. Suryanarayana Rao chose to join the Communist Party of India in the year 1946 firmly believing in the ideology of the working class.

Com. Suryanarayana Rao along with others like H Y Sharada Prasad, former advisor to prime minister Indira Gandhi built and led the movement for responsible government against the princely state of Karnataka. His actions attracted wrath from the rulers and he had to go underground for three months in 1948.

He joined Hindustan Aeronautic Ltd as an accountant but left the job within two years to take a plunge into active politics. He became a leader of the students movement once again and struggled to secure opportunities of education to the poor and depressed sections of the society. He founded the Students Aid Society and established a hostel along with others for the poor students.

Com. Suryanarayana Rao organised the working class in Karnataka. He led the historic struggle of the Ramkumar Mills and the Hotel workers in 1967. He became a household name for providing leadership to the 3 months long strike of MICO employees in 1979. He led another successful strike of ITC workers in 1980, which lasted for over 3 months. He successfully led the 75 days strike of Escort Workers in 1991 and in the recent period provided the leadership to the glorious strike of the L&T workers.

He contested the assembly elections in 1983 and won the Varthur assembly constituency. He endeared himself to all in the constituency through his tireless work as a MLA.

Com. Suryanarayana Rao opposed the imposition of emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975. He organised the working class to fight the atrocities of emergency regime. For this, he was arrested and jailed. In order to integrate the workers struggle, Suryanarayana Rao participated in various international conventions of trade unions held in China, France, Soviet Union and South Korea. Com. Suryanarayana Rao influenced thousands of cadres through his commitment and self-sacrifice. He was a towering colossus, one of the tallest leaders of the working Class movement in Karnataka. His untimely death has left a big void difficult to fill. The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' pays tearful homage to the immortal memory of COMRADE S Suryanarayana Rao.

M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, went down to Bangalore to pay homage to COMRADE S Suryanarayana Rao and joined the thousands of workers there at the funeral.

90th INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE: ISSUES DELIBERATED IN COMMITTEES

TAPAN SEN

As per usual practice, four separate tripartite committees were constituted representing Govt.s, Employers and Workers to discuss on four different subjects. They are: 1) On application of Standards(ILO Conventions), 2) On Decent Work and Informal Economy, 3) On Promotion of Cooperatives, 3) Resolutions Committee.

APPLICATION OF STANDARDS

Application of Standards Committee discussed and examined the Report on Committees of Expert based on complaints of violation of ILO conventions in various countries. Said deliberation and examination exposed as to how in the name of flexibility or addressing the problems of so called rigidity in labour laws, the representatives of the employers and most of the Govt.s have been trying to dismantle the labour legislations in vogue in different countries in order to give unfettered power to the employers to hire and fire. K J Thakkar (BMS) represented Indian workers group in the said committee.

ON COOPERATIVES

The Committee on Promotion of Cooperative also produced a report detailing out the approach of ILO in promoting Cooperatives and Cooperative movement as one of the tools to promote decent work and development and fight social exclusion. The Report on Cooperative urged upon all the

constituents to promote the Cooperative movement and also urged upon the Govt in particular to ensure a conducive legal, institutional environment for the same. Ravi Raman (BMS) represented the Indian workers' group.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

The Committee on Occupational Accidents and Diseases finalised a the text of Protocol to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981(No 155) and also a Recommendation covering new list of occupational diseases and a new mechanism for updating the list. The Protocol once accepted by the Conference will be binding on the ILO member countries. In the Committee the Employers group tried to block the drafting of the Protocol but did not succeed as they have been voted out. When the Text on Protocol and the Recommendation, finalized by the Committee where the employers group also participated, were placed in the plenary session of the Conference, the employers' group again tried to defeat the Protocol but miserably failed. The Conference adopted both the Protocol and the Recommendation. This will be a useful tool with the Trade Union movement in our country as well. H Mahadevan (AITUC) represented the Indian workers group in the said committee.

RESOLUTIONS

The Committee on Resolution

witnessed hot debate on which resolution to be taken up first among a number of resolutions already submitted to ILO as per procedure. They are on 1) Tripartism and Social Dialogue, 2) Sustainable Development, 3) On conditions of workers in the occupied territory in Palestine and remedy thereof, 4) Gender Equity, 5) Asbestos etc. The Resolution on Palestine received the priority in the Workers Group as opined by the majority of the members in the Workers Group meeting although some leading members of the workers group tried to avoid the same by making a plea of tactics and pragmatic approach. Ultimately, there had been secret ballot in the tripartite Committee to decide the priority list of resolutions, according to which the resolution on Tripartism and Social Dialogue was decided to be taken up first. The Committee deliberated on the Resolution in detail. The proposed draft with ILO contained many points not congenial for the trade union movement. The NGOs have been given too much importance over the trade unions. And in pursuit of that line, the role of advocacy was being given more importance than the organised struggle and intervention by the working class against the policies of globalisation.

Secondly, there was a clause proposing involvement of ILO with Brettonwoods institutions

and other international agencies indicating IMF, World Bank and WTO. The argument of even some of the leading members even in the workers' group was that involvement of ILO with the IMF, World Bank and others was to be there for making them sensitive on the workers' problems and on social issues. There had been hot debate and stiff opposition particularly from various workers' representatives to such an approach including from the Indian worker's representative. It was pointed out that expecting sensibility on workers and social issues from the agencies like IMF, World Bank mainly guided by the dictates of the rich industrialized nations is nothing but a utopia or a ploy to introduce "social clause linking labour standard with trade" through the backdoor. Ultimately both the issues could be addressed properly. The Resolution proposed selection of the NGOs and other agencies for involving them in ILO activities in consultation with the tripartite constituents only. Secondly in the face of stiff resistance in all the three groups, the clause relating to involving Brettonwoods Institutions in the Resolution has to be dropped altogether. Thus the Resolution on Tripartism and Social Dialogue as adopted by the Conference stressed on Tripartism and Social dialogue in decision making process not only in workplace but also on general economic and social issues both at national and ILO level. Tapan Sen (CITU) represented the Indian workers'

group in the Resolutions Committee.

INFORMAL ECONOMY

The Committee on Decent Work and Informal Economy also has drawn attention in the ILO conference. Notable is that in this committee, besides the representatives of workers, employers and Govt, at least 48 NGOs from all over the world were allowed to participate. The discussion paper prepared by ILO, while noting the widespread emergence of the many economic units in the informal sector in the background of globalisation, pointed out that workers in these sectors are deprived of decent work standards including below-subsistence wages, no social security benefits and job-insecurity etc as mostly they are not covered by any labour or social-security legislation.

The intervention made by the workers group maintained that the priority action for addressing the problems of the informal economy workers must be to make good the governance deficit first, i.e., to bring those workers under labour legislation to regulate their wages and service condition, and ensure right to organize and provide for the suitable legal and institutional frame work for them. This should also be accompanied by suitable economic policy measures to prevent the trend of informalisation of the economy. The conclusion drawn by the Committee, inter alia, focused on the issues of Governance as pointed out above, besides their effective representation, social

protection and poverty reduction. But there remained one shortcoming in the conclusion. The conclusion recommends ILO to involve and work with Brettonwoods institutions and other international agencies. Many representatives from the workers group and some Govt.s as well opposed this; but ultimately they were voted out. Christine Nathan (HMS) was Chairperson of the workers group of the said committee and Renana Jhabwala (SEWA) was also a member of the said committee from Indian workers' side.

The Workers Group also adopted unanimously a joint Statement expressing concern on the 'escalating situation of the border dispute between India and Pakistan in Kashmir' and urging both the Govt.s for a peaceful solution through dialogue.

PERNICIOUS TRENDS

Certain pernicious trends have also been noticed in the conference, which conference reflected widespread resentment against globalisation. A move is afoot for cooperation and coordination with Brettonwoods institutions both at international and country levels. This theory is being sought to be pushed through in the conclusion of various committees. Secondly, the effort to marginalise and undermine the role of the trade union intervention and focus more on NGOs' advocacy was witnessed all the three groups. The Trade Union movement can ignore these trends only at their peril.

ECONOMY DERAILED !

SCAMS, FRAUDS AND ACTIONS...

It took a statement from Xerox to awaken the Indian Govt to come out with statements promising action against those found guilty. These statements basically amount to sweet nothings as our track record in going after scamstars is pathetic.... Scams in India get buried in joint parliamentary committees or some closed door commissions, eventually to gather dust in public memory. Why is that? It is because, where there

is a giver, there is also a taker and thus it is in the interests of both that nothing comes out.... Why are we forgetting how the Dabhol (Enron) mess happened in the first place? Who were the people responsible for the deal? Remember the \$20 million educational expenses? The \$700,000 that the Xerox claims to have spent is peanuts compared to that amount...

(Editorial, The Financial Express, 5-07-2002)

XEROX-MODICORP BRIBE-SCAM.... WHO PAID IT ALL?

Xerox Corp of the US or its representatives in India may not have been out of the loop when bribes were being doled out to the babus in New Delhi.... Sources associated with Xerox's Indian operations since the time prior to the multinational's acquisition of majority stake suggests that Xerox should have been in the know

of the transactions by virtue of its management role in the company. In 2000, the year for which Xerox has reported 'improper payments' in the region of \$600,000--\$700,000, Xerox was in full management control of the company...

(The Economic Times, 5-07-2002)

NEOLIBERAL GLOBALISATION:

LESS GOVERNANCE, LEAST REGULATION MORE FRAUDS AND SCAMS...

The phenomenon of 'vanishing companies' is perhaps unique in India in terms of the number of such companies duping investors off thousands of crores of rupees and for the alarming regularity with which this phenomenon has occurred. The root of this phenomenon can perhaps be traced to 1992 when, in the name of 'liberalisation', the government abolished the office of the Controller of Capital Issues (CCI) and asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to monitor the capital market....

No wonder then that between April 1992 and March 1996 more than 4000 companies raised more than Rs 54000 crore from investors through public and hybrid issues. Another 1500 companies

raised over Rs 34000 crore through rights issues at very high premia. With practically no supervision from either the SEBI, the stock exchanges in which these companies got themselves listed, or the Department of Company Affairs acting through various Registrars of Companies (RoCs), most companies simply vanished in thin air in no time, leaving investors high and dry...

It would also appear that SEBI had all along been trying to abdicate its own responsibility.... And how, the Department of Company Affairs, acting through various RoCs and having adequate powers in prosecuting erring promoters and companies, performed over the years? The less

DISASTER AHEAD !

said, the better. Apart from issuing periodic statements to the effect that it is taking action against these companies, the DCA seems to have done nothing significant in booking the guilty...Consider the fact that as against thousands of companies which have disappeared,

gobbling up thousands of crores of rupees from the investors, the High Level Committee set up in this regard lists only 229 companies as 'vanishing companies' with the amount involved shown as only Rs 800 crore....

(S Sivakumar, Business Line, 7-07-2002)

IN WTO ON AGRICULTURE.....

Despite what the WTO has done, it has failed to provide an even field for the developed and developing countries. For one thing, developing countries like India were outwitted by the developed countries at the time of negotiating the global agreement on agriculture(AoA). Fixing the reference date for compliance with the market access and subsidy reduction obligations is a case in point. At 1986-88, the benchmark is inherently tilted in favour of the developed countries. This was the period when commodity prices were very low and consequently, the export and production support (read subsidy) was rather high. Thus they merely had to bring it down from unrealistically high level. This apart, they also resorted to

transferring support expenditure from the amber box (that needed a cut) to the green and blue boxes where no such cut was required.

The same was the case with customs tariff rate commitments. While the developed countries opted for bound rates as high as 100 per cent to 300 hundred per cent, India committed for zero duty for no less than 17 items and moderate tariff for the rest....Our negotiators surely lacked foresight....Furthermore, the developed countries managed to include in the AoA provisions like sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards and others that could effectively be used as non-tariff trade barriers to deny market access....

(Editorial, Business Standard, 5-07-2002)

WTO COMMANDS FURTHER REFORMS

"...Tariff and tax reform are also crucial to address the problem of high fiscal deficits, which have continue to grow despite efforts to reduce public spending. Moreover, with the customs tariff accounting for some 30% of net government tax revenue, further reform of the tariff may depend on major tax reform.

The report notes that the authorities are firm in their view that improving the economic growth rate requires further structural reform. As restrictions on trade and competition have been reduced, constraints associated with infrastructure and regulatory bottlenecks have become increasingly evident and need to be addressed urgently both through regulatory reform and through increased investment. Despite further liberalization of the FDI regime, India's record in attracting investment remains disappointing, with FDI accounting for some 1% of GDP. The government has also taken various steps to improve enforcement of intellectual property rights, which should help to attract FDI. ...

(The WTO Secretariat report at the third Trade Policy Review (TPR) of India by the Trade Policy Review Body of the WTO on 19 and 21 June 2002)

UNITED TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND THE BMS

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, (BMS), which had joined the united actions by all the Central Trade Unions since May 2001 had not participated in the National Assembly of Workers Against Anti-Labour Policies' had on 15th July, 2002.

In this connection the BMS President, Has Mukh Bhai Dave, addressed a letter to all the Central Trade Unions on 27th June, 2002. The CITU had been in continuous dialogue with the BMS leadership since then. M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, had addressed a detailed letter urging the BMS to reconsider their stand.

We are reproducing the texts of the correspondence exchanged between the CITU and the BMS.

1.Text of BMS letter (No. BMS/D-7/949/2002 Dt. 27.6.2002) to the General Secretaries of all the Central Trade Unions on the subject "JOINT AGITATION OF CENTRAL TRADE UNIONS - Inability of BMS to continue with the joint front programmes including the proposed Assembly of Workers on 15th July 2002

Dear Brother,

At the outset kindly accept our greetings on eve of forthcoming BMS foundation day. This year BMS has planned the celebrations of foundation day across the country in all the industrial centres and district centres, as a phase of campaign.

In the joint meeting held in New Delhi on 10th May 2002 we had explained to you the BMS's plans to go for mammoth demonstrations against the anti-poor, anti-labour policies of globalisation and against the menace of WTO.

We plan to observe a protest week from 25th Sept 2002 to 2nd Oct, 2002 on state level, the preparations are on, and as we had told you we are absolutely busy with this ambitious programme.

In the wake of the said pre-occupation, we do not find it possible to go along in the joint front programmes commencing from 15th July 2002.

The resolve of BMS to generate awareness among the people on new scales, expressed at the ALL INDIA CONFERENCE in Feb, 2002 has left no elbow room for us to participate and take over the additional set of programmes, though we had expressed our reservations on the nature of the joint programmes, which may shape up in future, as eventual outcome of the ASSEMBLY.

As we do not intend to take to the ASSEMBLY and the programmes consequential to that in the coming months, we do not consider it proper to raise the antenna of disagreement at this juncture and leave that exercise for some time in future.

However, please note that BMS commitment to continue the joint struggles on the industrial level depending upon the need of the situation shall continue as was in the past.

Please acknowledge.

BHARAT MATA KI JAI

Yours brotherly,
HASMUKH BHAI DAVE
President, BMS

2.Text of CITU letter (Dt. 18.7.02) addressed to Hasmukh Bhai Dave, President, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, BMS New Delhi.

Dear Friend,

We are surprised to receive your letter No.BMS/D-7/949/2002 dated the 27th June, 2002, expressing inability of BMS to continue with the joint front programmes including the Assembly of Workers on 15th July, 2002.

Our Secretary, W.R.Varada Rajan, spoke to you over phone on 28th June, pointing out that there was no independent programme of BMS on 15th July and therefore requesting you to reconsider your stand and at least come forward to participate and address the 15th July meet. You had informed him that since the office bearers of BMS took the decision, you would again consult them and respond. Yet, there was no response and the National Assembly of Workers held yesterday was not participated by BMS.

You may recall that the present phase of joint action programmes were initiated during May last year and the issues and actions were decided at a meeting of all the Central Trade Unions held in the BMS office itself on 24th May, 2001. We had jointly decided on a nationwide campaign and to intensify the struggle including countrywide strike action. That phase culminated in massive demonstrations on 24th July 2001, including the one before Parliament in New Delhi. However, you expressed some difficulty in joining an all India general strike but were willing to continue other forms of joint actions short of a general strike at all India level, besides joining industry wise and State level movements. All the Central Trade Unions took into consideration this stand of yours and have for the last one-year or so been carrying out action programmes, other than a general strike.

Just a week prior to your writing the letter under reply, all the Central Trade Unions met in the office of the INTUC on 22nd June, 2002, wherein BMS representative was also present. Detailed planning for holding the 15th July event was drawn up and the programme of action to be chalked out was also decided then. Your representative expressed full agreement with the decisions and expressed no reservations whatsoever. This being the factual position, your letter citing the BMS plans, informed during the 10th May, 2002 meeting of all the Central Trade Unions, for separate programmes as preoccupations for not to go along in the joint front programmes commencing from 15th July, 2002 is beyond our comprehension.

We fully appreciate your emphasis on generating awareness among the people against the anti-poor, anti-labour policies of globalisation and against the menace of WTO. The demands commonly accepted during May, 2001 and updated with inclusion of a few more this year and the action programme jointly decided do address these concerns. In fact, the BMS preferring to append a note of dissent to the report of the Second National Commission on Labour presented to the Prime Minister on 29th June, 2002 was very much in tune with the theme of the July 15th meet viz. 'National Assembly of Workers Against Anti-labour Policies'.

We are at a loss to understand where is the scope for the BMS to consider it not 'proper to raise the antenna of disagreement at this juncture and leave that exercise for sometime in future'.

We are also dismayed at the report appearing in "The Economic Times" issue of 12th July, 2002 under the caption "BMS softens stand on labour reforms". We have unfortunately not yet come across to any denial from your side to that report. The very same newspaper followed this up the next day with

a report under the caption "INTUC gives in to labour reforms". The thrust of these reports is to paint a picture that the trade unions are divided and to suggest that two major trade unions have distanced themselves from the united trade union opposition to 'labour reforms'. While the INTUC participating in the 15th July Assembly of Workers and endorsing its call has helped to contain the damage sought to be inflicted by the media reports, the BMS staying away has only added grist to the media mill of creating a divide in the trade union movement. We trust that you will agree that this is not the message the BMS would like to give on the eve of going in for your own mass awareness programme and the protest week.

We draw your attention to the Prime Minister's declaration at the meeting of his advisory council on trade and industry held on 10th July, 2002 that the government would 'vigorously pursue labour reforms', widely reported by the media. In this backdrop, your statement "things are different now as the government is going about the reforms issue the proper way" (in The Economic Times report cited above), has only given an undesirable twist to the whole issue.

All the Central Trade Unions have all along been conscious that our views on different political or ideological questions are at variance with each other's. Yet, we had successfully identified the most burning issues of the workers and the poor people and decided on common demands for joint movement. We feel that any independent action by one or other Central Trade Unions ought to be in the direction of supplementing these common demands and adding further strength to the united movement. We are, therefore, deeply concerned over the divergent views recently ventilated by the BMS in your letter as well as the Press interview. We intensely desire that the BMS should seriously think over these aspects and come forward once again to be a part of the mainstream struggle of the united trade union movement of the country.

We trust that you will view our observations herein in the proper perspective.

We enclose a copy of the Declaration adopted unanimously by the National Assembly of Workers on 15th July, 2002 and the related Press Release for your information and look forward to your response in taking forward the united movement.

I had personally talked to Shri Bagatji, a senior leader of your organisation, in the matter and particularly the pledge to be taken by the workers on 19th August, 2002 requesting him to ponder over whether it would be desirable for the BMS workers to stay away when all the other workers assemble and take the pledge to defend the economic sovereignty, public sector, workers' rights etc. Similarly the action programme extends beyond October 2, 2002, by which time the independent programme of the BMS will be over. Why not the BMS consider joining united movement at least in the post-Oct.2 phase?

We ardently desire a positive response from you.

With best regards,

Enc: as above

Yours fraternally,
M.K.Pandhe
General Secretary

ALL INDIA CONVENTION OF EPZ/SPZ WORKERS

An all India Convention of EPZ/ SEZ workers was organised by CITU on 30th July 2002 at Visakhapatnam. This was the first ever effort by a trade union to develop a nationwide coordinated movement of the workers in the Export Processing Zones and Special Economic Zones in the country. Around 100 workers employed in the Cochin Special Economic Zone, Madras Export Processing Zone and Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone participated in the Convention. Representatives from Santa Cruz Special Economic Zone and Noida Export Processing Zone, where CITU has affiliated unions, could not attend the convention due to some problems. M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, inaugurated the Convention. Ch. Narasinga Rao, Secretary, Andhra Pradesh State Committee of CITU presided. Representatives from HMS and BMS greeted the convention. Export Processing Zones/ Special Economic Zones are industrial zones established with the objective of attracting investment to the country, particularly foreign investment. This is supposed to create jobs, raise the living standards of the people, transfer improved technology to the country and help in economic development. To attract investment, the Government of India has given several incentives to the investors, like tax holidays for up

to 10 years, duty free imports and exports, infrastructure, strategic locations, and market access.

At present, there are four Export Processing Zones in the country - Madras EPZ, Noida EPZ, Falta EPZ and Visakhapatnam EPZ. In 2000, the Government has announced setting up of Special Economic Zones. The EPZs in Kandla and Surat in Gujarat, Santa Cruz in Maharashtra and Cochin in Kerala have been converted into Special Economic Zones. The Government has sanctioned 13 more SEZs in the country in the State and joint sectors. It has also decided to establish Agricultural Economic Zones.

INTENSE EXPLOITATION

Around 1-lakh workers, most of who are women in the age group of 18-25 years are employed in the EPZs/ SEZs in our country. They are subjected to severe exploitation as the employers flout all labour laws with impunity, with the tacit support of the Zone administration and the Government. In fact, in addition to the financial concessions, the Government itself invites/ encourages the investors to exploit the workers by advertising about the availability of 'abundant cheap labour'. Though all labour laws are applicable to the units inside the zones, the zones are declared as 'public utility services', which in effect bans union activities and application of the labour laws. Workers who are

perceived to be involved in forming unions are immediately dismissed from service. The workers are not allowed to interact with outsiders or even with the workers in the other units. Employers refuse to talk to the unions, even with those having majority of workers as their members.

It is common for the employers to utilise all the benefits for 5 years, then close shop, and start the unit in some other zone or even within the zone with a new name. Appointment letters, pay slips, are not given. Minimum wages are not implemented. Workers are employed on contract basis. Overtime is compulsory but overtime wages are not paid. On the other hand, wages are deducted if the workers fail to meet the high production targets fixed unilaterally by the employers. Safety equipment/ apparels are not provided, as that would increase production costs and reduce the speed and output. Women are made to work in night shifts without providing proper conveyance to their residences. They are not given maternity leave. On the other hand, women found to be pregnant are removed from service. Crèches are not provided. Young and unmarried women are only preferred. The use of toilets is controlled by issuing tokens. Sexual harassment is very common. Inaugurating the convention, M.K. Pandhe observed that the conditions of the workers in the

EPZs have become worse after the BJP led NDA Government came to power. The Commerce Minister in the Government himself announced that labour laws would not be implemented in the EPZs and SEZs and that women must work in the night shifts. The 35th Indian Labour Conference unanimously recommended that workers' representatives should accompany the labour inspectors when he visits the units in the zones. But instead of implementing this, the Ministry of Commerce, which administers the zones, has directed that labour inspectors cannot inspect the units in the zones, without prior permission of the Ministry.

DECLARATION

K.Hemalata, Secretary, CITU, Presented the 'Declaration', with the Charter of Demands and future action. The Declaration was unanimously adopted after several representatives from all the Zones spoke on it.

The Declaration pointed out that even after utilising all the concessions from the Government, the EPZs could not achieve the export targets. Their share in exports was only around 4%. It noted that 'giving concessions to the foreign and national employers at the detriment of the interests of the workers cannot develop the economy of the country or improve the performance of the EPZs. Smooth industrial relations, recognising the Right to association of the workers, and implementation of labour laws will only help in increasing

the efficiency of the zones.' It called upon the Development Commissioners to ensure that all the labour laws are properly implemented, instead of mortgaging the rights of the workers in the name of attracting investment.

The Convention decided to conduct a campaign on the conditions of the workers in the EPZs and SEZs in the country through leaflets, posters, meetings, house-to-house campaign etc and to conduct local level conventions with all trade unions. A delegation will meet the Labour and Commerce Ministers of Government of India and submit a memorandum with the Charter of Demands adopted at the Convention, during the monsoon session of Parliament. The Convention appealed to all the trade unions and democratic people in the country to extend support and solidarity to the just demands of the workers in the EPZs and SEZs.

CHARTER OF DEMANDS

The Convention adopted the following Charter of Demands:

1. All Labour laws and Social Welfare Benefits should be strictly enforced in all the EPZs and SEZs. Maternity leave and Crèche facilities should be provided.
2. Development Commissioners should not be given the powers of Labour Commissioners.
3. The rights of the workers to form Unions of their choice should be recognised and employers should negotiate with the democratically elected unions.

4. Employment on contract basis in jobs of permanent and perennial nature should be banned.

5. Payment of wages and period of employment should be delinked from global export trends.

6. Piece rated wages should be converted to time rated wages.

7. Safety standards should be strictly implemented.

8. OHS centers and ESI clinics should be established within the zone area in all the zones.

9. Complaints Committees against sexual harassment should be set up in all the zones as per the directions of the Supreme Court.

10. The labour inspectors should regularly inspect units in the zones and the workers' representatives should be allowed to accompany the labour inspectors in their visits.

11. Government of India should form Industrial Committee at the National level on EPZs and SEZs, involving unions representing the EPZ and SEZ workers.

12. For payment of gratuity, the condition of 5 years minimum period of service should not be applied to the EPZ and SEZ workers. All the workers should be paid gratuity proportionate to their service.

The Convention decided to form a Coordination Committee of 13 members, with two representatives from each zone and a Convener from the CITU Centre, to coordinate the movement of the EPZ and SEZ workers in the country.

SURYANARAYANA RAO - A RELENTLESS FIGHTER

M K PANDHE

Comrade Suryanarayana Rao's passing away on 1st July 2002 created a sense of gloom all over Karnataka. Colleagues who knew him in all corners of the country had a feeling of extreme sorrow for his sudden passing away.

I rushed to Bangalore to attend his funeral. The small lane of Sampangirama Nagar was full of mourners even before his mortal remains reached the place. When his body came hundreds of workers shouted, "Red salute to Com. Suri", with tears profusely flowing from their eyes. People from all walks of life came to pay their homage to his memory. Even persons against whom he fought through out his life were there to pay their last respects.

A long funeral procession wended through the streets in the direction to electric crematorium. A grieving woman activist from Bharat Electronics narrated how Suri brought militancy in the activities of the union. A MICO worker was telling how during emergency Suri fought heroically against the attempts of a Congress leader to capture the union with the help of police and State machinery and how workers rallied behind him solidly in all attempts to disrupt the unity of the workers. An employee from BHEL was telling with pride how Suri got 98 per cent votes in the recently held union elections in BHEL. There was expression of such memories by the mourners walking in a procession.

I first met Com. Suryanarayana Rao in 1958 during the AITUC General Council meeting. At that time also he was popularly known as Suri. He was working so hard for the success of the meeting that even Dange appreciated his work. Yet, Suri was very much critical of the two-pillar policy of AITUC and advocated the line of class struggle. During the emergency declared after the India-China conflict and AITUC's support to the blanket ban on strike even if the working class is attacked was also opposed by Suri.

Since his student days in forties Suri became a rebel. He fought in the freedom movement but later on attracted toward Marxism and joined the Communist Party. In the 50s he became active in the trade union movement and became Secretary of the Bangalore District Committee of the CPI. He was closely associated with every trade union struggle in Karnataka ever since. Even in those days, he was continuously travelling all over the state to guide the fighting working class. As a powerful speaker in Kannada he was always in demand to address rallies during strikes in Karnataka.

When Communist Party split in 1964, Suri joined the CPI (M). He was a staunch champion in the struggle against revisionism. During 1964-70 periods Suri was at the forefront in the struggle against reformist policies pursued by the AITUC under Dange leadership.

When CITU was formed in 1970, Suri was President of Karnataka State AITUC. However, he left that post and played a leading role in building the CITU in the State. The CITU's strength grew in the State relying on the fighting strength of the working class.

The Joint Action Front of Bangalore based public sector undertakings signed an unfavourable agreement Suri relentlessly opposed it, though CITU had no recognised union in Bangalore based undertakings. This struggle resulted in CITU gaining supporters in almost all public sector undertakings. In the 80 days heroic strike of public sector workers in Bangalore, Suri played a crucial role outside the JAF. I remember, in several meetings of public sector workers in Bangalore, Suri was always emphasising the need for strengthening the line of struggle. He used to emphasise that the leaders' talk at the table alone does not result in good settlement; united movement of the workers below alone results in achievement at the top. It was through prolonged struggle from outside in Bangalore that ultimately

CITU became a part of JAF and is playing an important role in defence of the public sector. In building up the CPSTU, Com. Suryanarayana Rao was very much active and was regular in attending its meetings.

During the 80s, he was elected as a Vice President of the CITU. He made immense contribution during discussion in CITU's Bhubaneswar resolution on organisation highlighting shortcomings in CITU's work and elaborating tasks to overcome these shortcomings.

I was associated with Com.Suri in more than 30 unions. I remember MICO, ITC, Vikrant Tyres, L&T, Avery, ESCORT, BEL, BHEL, and KGF, since I was associated with their struggles. But there are many more, which are even difficult to remember. Even after he became the Secretary of the Karnataka State Committee and a member of the Central Committee of the CPI (M) he continued his association with all these unions. Despite his advancing age, he was working very hard to carry his TU and political responsibilities.

Though he was a heart patient, he was tireless in

his work. He was forthright in expressing his views and firm in his conviction. Till the end of his life he was working and indeed died in harness. We were discussing even about holding the next conference of the CITU in Bangalore and he was very enthusiastic about it.

Last year in November he attended the conference of Southern Initiative Against Globalisation and For Trade Union Right (SIGTUR) held in Seoul (South Korea). He did not give up his fight on issues he had strong views even during the conference. His wife was also included in the delegation and both of them visited Seoul.

Com.Suri had an insatiable desire to strive for more achievements. After his passing away, the CITU in Karnataka is facing a big challenge to fill the void created by his sudden departure from the scene. The CITU in Karnataka, relying on collective leadership, will be able to overcome all these challenges in fulfilling the tasks left unfinished by Com.Suryanarayana Rao during his life time.

CONDOLENCE MEETING AT B.T.R.BHAWAN

At a condolence meeting held at B.T.Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi, on Saturday the 13th July, 2002, Com. E.Balanandan, President, CITU and others paid glowing tributes to COMRADE S. SURYANARAYANA RAO, a veteran leader of the trade union, left and democratic movement of the country and a Vice-President of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, who passed away on 1st July, 2002, at Bangalore. He was also a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Secretary of its Karnataka State Committee.

Balanandan recalled how Com. S. SURYANARAYANA RAO was drawn to the freedom struggle during his student days and relentlessly worked to defend the interests of the working class and other toiling masses. Com. M.K.Pandhe, Com. Jibon Roy (CITU) Com. H.Mahadevan (AITUC), Com. Suneet Chopra (AIAWU), Com. S.C Gaur (TUCC) Com. Tyagi (UTUC-LS) spoke about the immense contribution made by COMRADE S. SURYANARAYANA RAO to the development of the trade union movement and united struggles at both Karnataka State and all India levels. The meeting observed two minutes silence in respectful homage to the memory of COMRADE S. SURYANARAYANA RAO.

EMPHATIC NO TO LABOUR PANEL REPORT

W R VARADA RAJAN

The retrograde report of the Second National Commission on Labour (SNCL) and the Prime Minister's assertion to pursue the labour reforms agenda, has thrown a serious challenge before the working class of the country.

What is in store for the crores of labourers in the SNCL report is not yet fully known. The national print as well as electronic media had carried certain reports, which, though sketchy..

'The Economic Times' issue dated 3rd July, 2002, claiming to have in its possession a copy of the 1470-odd page report of the Commission, gleefully carried a story captioned "Labour panel recommends hire & fire". It observed that the Commission has "given its thumbs up signal to contract labour, 'hire and fire' policy and closure of units, subject to safeguards." It further noted: "This endorsement of by the second National commission on Labour, albeit qualified, removes a major hurdle in the path of reform".

DIVERSE RESPONSES

The NDA Government had made plain its intention to speed up its agenda of labour market reforms. Sahib Singh Verma, who assumed charge of the Labour Ministry in the immediate aftermath of the presentation of the Commission report claimed as early as on July 5 that he had got all the major labour unions round to the view of the government and there should not be much of a problem in getting the critical amendment through. Even after five weeks of the presentation of the report by the Commission, it had not yet been made public even. Yet, the Minister boasted as if he had performed the final act expected of him on the subject!

The media has been at its usual job, drumming up support to the 'labour reforms'. First it highlighted the PM's promises 'to juice up labour reforms'. Next, it made light of the dissent by the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), the labour outfit of the sangh parivar, citing the decision of the BMS to pull out from the July 15 National Assembly of Workers as an indication of the softening of its stand on labour reforms. 'The Economic Times' (13 July) quoted the BMS President H.B.Dave as

having stated: "things are different now as the government is going about the reforms issue the proper way", which signified 'a break in the TU ranks'. The same daily the very next day published a story under the caption "Intuc gives in to reforms lobby" noting: "After Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the Indian National Trade Union Congress has expressed its willingness to support labour reforms. The development augurs well for legislative support for reform laws in the Rajya Sabha where the ruling National Democratic Alliance has to depend on Opposition to get any law passed." The spokesman of the INTUC, Chandidas Sinha, was over enthusiastic to term the change in BMS stand as 'smacks of immaturity' and recalled his President Sanjeeva Reddy having told the Prime Minister that 'the BMS was taking a grossly unrealistic position on reforms'.

From the employers' forum ASSOCHAM had responded that the Labour Commission had not done enough! It complained: "the Second National commission on Labour has not effectively and squarely dealt with the strategic areas that need labour reforms". Its main grouse was that the limit for exemption under the Industrial Disputes Act was not kept at 1000 as decided earlier by the Vajpayee Cabinet. That would have freed the employer class from any obligation to seek government clearance in respect of over 96 per cent of the establishments in the country from whatever protective arm of the law that exists to less than 4 per cent of the workforce.

Prem Shankar Jha, writing in "The Hindu" (9 July) commented: "... in the present state of the economy the short-term costs far, far outweigh the long-term benefits. In a nutshell, when industrial growth has been halting for six years and has, to all intents and purposes, stopped during the past 16 months, and when corporate profits have dropped by over 40 per cent in six months, the slightest freeing of the labour market will see such an avalanche of retrenchment that it could easily sweep the political system away." The entire trade union movement, barring the BMS has said an emphatic no to the affronts thrown at them.

REPORTS & EVENTS

TAMILNADU: MASSIVE COURT ARREST BY WORKERS

More than 50,000 workers, including thousands of women, courted arrest in more than 100 centres all over Tamilnadu on 23rd July. The Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU had given the call for the court arrest programme, to protest against the ESMA enacted by the State Govt. and the various anti people policies of Central and State Govt. The issues raised by CITU included privatisation, sickness in industries, labour law amendments, social security to unorganised workers and denial of bonus and other existing benefits to workers. The court arrest programme was the culmination of 2 months

campaign conducted by the CITU unions all over the state.

J.Hemachandran, MLA and President, State CITU, led the volunteers in Nagercoil. More than 5000 workers including 1000 women were arrested. In Chennai, A.Soundrarajan led more than 5000 workers including 1000 women. In Madurai town, T.K.Rengarajan, General Secretary, State CITU led more than 2000 volunteers including 300 women. T.A.Latha, Secretary, State CITU led the volunteers in Madurantakam in Kanchipuram district. Office bearers and executive committee members of state CITU led the volunteers in various districts.

A.K.Padmanabhan, Asst.General Secretary, State CITU, while congratulating the workers who bravely courted arrest, declared that the CITU would continue the struggle on its own as well as jointly with other unions.

A joint committee of Central TUs and Associations of Central and State Govt. employees and teachers has already been formed to struggle against the anti labour policies of the Central and State Govt.s. As a first phase of the programme, demonstrations in all district centres were held on 30th July.

(Report from A.K.PADMANABHAN)

MINIMUM WAGE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

The first meeting of the reconstituted Central Minimum wages Advisory Board was held on 27th June. The then Minister for Labour, Shard Yadav was in Chair.

The Committee included 12 representing employees. BMS has 4 representatives, INTUC - 2, and one each from CITU, HMS, AITUC, UTUC, UTUC-LS and NFITU.

The Agenda for the meeting was 'Disparity in the rates of Minimum wages in various regions in the country.'

The note circulated by the Ministry

while referring to the norms for fixation of minimum wages noted that the minimum wage Act has not laid down any norms / Criteria. It also notes the concepts of living wage fair wage etc as laid down by the Committee on Fair Wages (1948).

It also referred to the decision of fixing the so-called floor level minimum wage.

It was suggested by the Govt. that the Board deliberate the following.

i) To give directions to the state Governments in matters relating to fixation, revision and enforcement of minimum wages, so as to

minimise disparity in minimum wages.

ii) To consider incorporation of the definition of minimum wages and norms / criteria for fixation / revision of minimum wages in the Act through an amendment.

iii) To discuss the methodology followed by the States in fixation revision of minimum wages.

iv) To explore the possibility of adopting the national floor level wages as statutory minimum wage. All the TU representatives expressed views against the floor level minimum wage concept. It was also pointed out that the ILC

REPORTS & EVENTS

had not decided about it.

The meeting of the Board was being held after 12 years. A.K. Padmanabhan, representative of CITU in the Board, refereed to long gap in holding the meeting and pressed the need to hold regular meeting of all tripartite committees / Boards. The floor level minimum wage could not be accepted. He urged that the 15th ILC decision should be the basis for fixing minimum wages and the Supreme Court verdict in the Reptakas Brett and Co. should also be taken into consideration along with it. It was also pointed out that the present practice in Tamilnadu is to fix the minimum wage without any basis. Different wages being fixed for identical jobs in different

industries has become one of the reasons for the courts to grant stay the order of the Govt. In the fixation of D.A. also, there is no standard procedure. While the Govt. of India fixes different D.A. rates for unskilled, semiskilled and skilled, in Tamilnadu only one rate is being fixed. This is unscientific. Regarding enforcement, it was pointed out that whatever was existing of the enforcement machinery, it is being dismantled. It was also demanded that the minimum wages should be included in the IX schedule of the constitution to bar the judicial intervention in the implementation of minimum wages.

The Labour Minister in his remarks opined that this is one of

the most important issues in the country to day and it is also a difficult problem and we have to find a way-out. He suggested the formation of a small committee to prepare a note so that the Board can have a detailed discussion.

Some of the employer representatives, while expressing feeling of the necessity to legislate for the welfare of poor workers, were insisting on the point of capacity to pay and suggested fixing the floor level minimum wage as statutory. It was finally decided that a small committee of seven members with the adviser to the Ministry as convener and the Govt. would nominate two members each to represent the Govt.s, employers and employees.

(Report from A. K. PADMANABHAN)

ALL INDIA CONVENTION OF NTC WORKERS

The All India Convention of NTC Workers was held at Hindi Bhawan, New Delhi on 16th July, with Haribhau Naik (INTUC), Gopal Bhattacharjee (CITU), Abdul Mannan (AITUC), R K Tripathi (HMS), S C Gour (TUCC) and Sunil Sengupta (UTUC) in the presidium. 85 delegates attended the convention from Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Assam, Bengal, Maharashtra, MP, UP, Punjab and Rajasthan, representing the CITU, AITUC, INTUC, Kamgar Aghadi, HMS, AICCTU, UTUC and TUCC. P K Ganguly placed the latest situation on the question of revival of the NTC mills. Although

originally about three years before the Govt had decided to revive only 12 mills out of 119, but due to continuous agitations and joint demonstrations at Delhi, the Cabinet had now taken the decision to revive 53 mills. But they have not started the revival process of these 53 mills even.

The convention reiterated the resolve to carry forward the joint agitations to press for the demand of the JAC to revive 76 mills and starting the process of revival of the 53 mills as already decided by the Govt. It further demanded that at least two more mills from Kanpur, three more from Bengal, one more from Indore, two more

from Mumbai and one from Nagpur should be revived in the first phase.

Agitational programme was as under was chalked out:

1. Signature campaign on the proforma sent earlier to be completed soon. Joint demonstrations and rallies in all NTC Centres in the country observing a week from August 1 to 7, with signature campaign.

2. Mass deputation of NTC workers from all NTC centers in the country at Delhi on 8th August, when the signatures will be submitted to the Textile Minister.

(Report from P K Ganguly)

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	430	440	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	554	555
	2	Guntur	453	463		39	Nagpur	491	495
	3	Hyderabad	462	466		40	Nasik	508	508
	4	Visakhapatnam	462	466		41	Pune	521	530
	5	Warangal	487	496		42	Solapur	477	485
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	395	396	Orissa	43	Barbil	419	426
	7	Guwahati	475	477		44	Rourkela	411	415
	8	Labac-Silchar	375	373	Punjab	45	Amritsar	413	413
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	404	402		46	Ludhiana	421	422
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	411	408	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	466	465
Bihar	11	Monghyr	423	421		48	Jaipur	438	433
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	403	404	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	501	508
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	474	472		50	Coimbatore	465	471
	14	Bhavnagar	489	494		51	Coonoor	466	469
	15	Rajkot	442	442		52	Madurai	445	454
	16	Surat	478	481		53	Salem	453	461
	17	Vadodra	462	463		54	Tiruchirapally	515	507
Haryana	18	Faridabad	472	475	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	429	428
	19	Yamunanagar	434	434		56	Ghaziabad	466	473
J & K	20	Srinagar	546	546		57	Kanpur	448	450
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	420	421		58	Saharanpur	434	433
	22	Jharia	367	365		59	Varanasi	474	481
	23	Kodarma	381	382	West Bengal	60	Asansol	452	451
	24	Noamundi	405	400		61	Darjeeling	387	388
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	424	423		62	Durgapur	544	549
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	445	445		63	Haldia	578	577
	27	Belgaum	507	509		64	Howrah	536	541
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	460	462		65	Jalpaiguri	408	409
	29	Mercara	452	456		66	Kolkata	524	528
Kerala	30	Alwaye	463	471		67	Raniganj	414	416
	31	Mundakayam	454	457	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	505	505
	32	Quilon	459	459	Delhi	69	Delhi	539	545
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	532	530	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	507	502
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	410	413					
	35	Bhopal	503	504					
	36	Indore	484	486					
	37	Jabalpur	459	460					
								ALL-INDIA	469 472

Additional Series of Labour Bure

State	Centre	April 2002	May 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1Kethgudem	457	464
Himachal Pradesh	2Himachal Pradesh	450	451
Rajasthan	3Bhilwara	468	467
Madhya Pradesh	4Chhindwara	425	429
Tripura	5Tripura	434	436
Goa	6Goa	572	573

TUI - TRANSPORT GENERAL COUNCIL MEET

The meeting of the general council of the Trade Union International of Transport Workers (WFTU) was held at Damascus, Syria, on 2 -4 July, 2002. From India, W.R.Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU and Arpita Raut of Air Corporation Employees Union, besides Debkumar Ganguly of WFTU participated. Nasr Zarif Mehrez, President TUI Transport, chaired the meeting.

Addressing the Council, W.R.Varada Rajan said: "the world has witnessed massive changes and major developments that left great impact on the lives of the peoples at political, economic and social levels and have been negatively reflected on the working people and its trade union movement. Surely this fact calls upon trade unions throughout the world to intensify their struggle and to promote their action for facing those impacts and to preserve the rights and protect the interests of workers".

The Occupational Trade Union of Transport Workers - Damascus, Syria and the Trade Union of Transport Workers in the Ministry of Communications in Kuwait, jointly hosted the Council meeting,

Representatives from 15 countries, besides two representatives each from the Cuban and DPR Korean Embassies at Damascus attended the meeting. Adib Miro, Deputy General Secretary of

WFTU also participated.

The meeting devoted considerable attention to reviving the activities of the TUI Transport and on taking corrective action against the organisational impropriety indulged in by the Secretary General of the TUI - Joseph Toth - at the headquarters in Budapest.

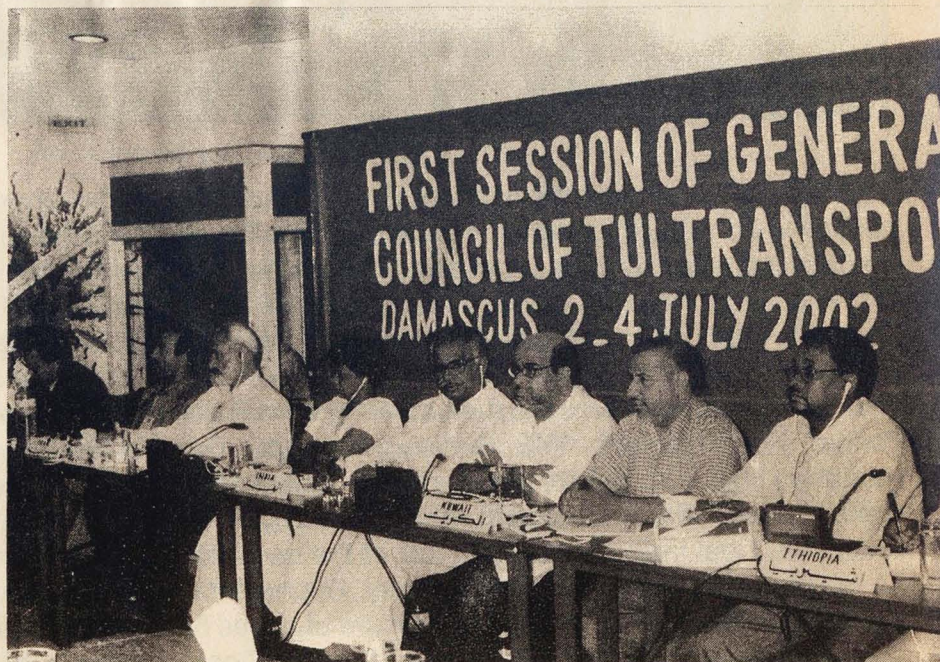
A resolution was adopted dealing with the international developments relating to Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Cuba and Indo-Pak.

The resolution out rightly denounced the Israeli militarist attacks on the people of Palestine. It also rejected the U.S.President George W. Bush's vision of Palestinian nationhood, calling for the ouster of Yasser Arafat.

The meeting also viewed with grave concern the escalating of tension on the borders between India and Pakistan. It pointed out that continued mobilisation of the forces of the two countries would be a real threat of a war breaking out. It called the workers of both the countries to stand up against war and for peaceful resolution of contentious issues.

The Council decided to hold the next Congress of the TUI-Transport, by March 2003. Nasr Zarif would contact the organisation in Greece for hosting the Congress in Athens.

Alternatively, Libya would be the venue. A work plan, with two seminars in the run up to the next Congress, was also draw up.



SIX LAKH COAL MINERS TO DOWN ON 5-11 AUGUST

In a massive demonstration of over 10,000 coal miners before Coal India Headquarters at Kollon 17th July, a notice of strike from 5th to 11th August 2002 was handed over to the Chairman, Coal India. The notice was jointly served by five federations of coal unions belonging to the CITU, INTUC, HMS and BMS.

The main demands of the workers are: Withdraw the Bill of privatisation of coal mines; Restore custody of imported coal; No closure of potentially viable mines; Grant budgetary support to coal industry for enhancing the coal production; Formation of one single public sector coal company; Constitution of JBCCI for wage negotiations etc. The workers shouted slogans in support of their demands, expressed their firm determination to carry forward the struggle till the demands of the workers are accepted.



(M K Pandhe addressing the Kolkata rally)

M K Pandhe addressing the workers condemned the NDA Government policy of privatisation of industry to bring back foreign companies and mafias to control the core sector of economy. Welcoming the unity achieved by workers of all affiliations he called for strengthening the unity and for building a self-reliant coal industry. The CITU criticised coal India management for unilaterally preparing various proposals without consulting trade unions. The adamant attitude of the Government is alone responsible for the less supply of coal to the power plant in the event of a long drawn strike.

Among others who addressed the gathering were Rajendra Singh, General Secretary, INTUC, Jay Poddar, Vice President, HMS, Gurudas Dasgupta, General Secretary, AITUC, C Frank, BMS, late Haradhan Roy, S.K. Bakshi and Sunil Sen. Speakers appealed to the workers to prepare for indefinite strike in case NDA Government refuse to change the policy even after 7 days strike.

Chairman, Coal India stated that most of the demands were directed to the Government of India, he would refer them to the Coal Ministry. Representatives of the trade unions told the CIL Chairman that coal workers would not accept closure of mines having good reserves. They also expressed strong opposition to the proposal to sell Dankuni Coal complex. If the Government does not announce the withdrawal of the Bill to privatise coal mines, the coal industry in India will be completely paralysed for one week from 5th to 11th August.