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Re 1

Protest Against The Black Bill in Front of Parliament in Delhi On 25th February 1986



GREETINGS ON INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

We Congratulate You Sisters!

RAJIV GANDHI, the Prime Minister perhaps never expected that the Muslim Women's Protection Bill would create such a storm in the progressive community of Muslim, among the common democratic minded people and also in his own party, leading to the resignation of Mr. Arif M. Khan the Minister of state for energy. Muslim women in Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, Maharashtra and other places voiced their protests by way of demonstrations, huge processions, meetings and courting arrests, with burqua-clad women in the forefront. At no time such a debate took place in Parliament and outside, where writers and actors, lawyers and judges, professors and teachers and the press came out openly raising objections to the Bill depriving Muslim women the right to maintenance. The atmosphere created a few months back, when Rajiv Gandhi claimed the support from the Muslim 'community' which of course meant 'fundamentalist's, and when protest processions of thousands of men only were taken out — changed considerably since then, putting the fundamentalists on the defensive for the first time. Arif Khan's resignation created more problems for Rajiv Gandhi with the inner discussions on the Bill in the Cabinet, raising the question who was the culprit then for drafting the Bill? Now the suggestion as it appears in the press is to send the Bill to the select committee. All the women's organisations demanded the withdrawal of the Bill.

Women belonging to all political parties and communities have become vocal in support of the 125 Cr. Pr. It is significant, the AIWC, the women's wing of the ruling congress too issued a statement in support of 125 clause, while Smt. Margret Alva the Social Welfare Minister of state asked to withdraw the clause. It is true that women in all communities are treated as a second class citizen in regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance and so on. But Muslim women were kept most backward by the obscurantist fundamentalists. It was a most welcome feature, that these sections were courting arrests and joining demonstrations, articulating in the meetings,

In This Issue	
We Congratulate You Sisters !	2-23
Women Teachers in Forefront— Nina Rao	3-4
Women in Industry	5-6-20
International Women's Day Observed, Protest against Unjustified Transfer	7-21
AIDWA Meets in Bombay	8-9
AIDWA 3rd Maharashtra Conference	10-11
Muslim Women Oppose the Black Bill —Maimuna	12-13
Women's Struggle in Iran	15
Participation of Women in Trade Unions in Vietnam Discrimination of Women in Britain	16-17-20
Claims by Zahra (Iran) refuted	18
Ban Nuclear Explosion—Soviet Leader Gorbachov Announces Better deal for Working Mothers, From IV	19
The Bell of Hiroshima Warns that Tragedy should Never be Repeated	22-23
Did you Know?	24

demanding maintenance for divorcees. This was the first time such a fraternity among women in Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other communities was observed making a common cause for all the exploited women under the present set up of the Congress rule. It is a welcome sign that despite their beliefs in religion, women come forward demanding justice for themselves and their children. It does require a great courage for our Muslim sisters to come out openly against the Moulavis, despite their threats of social boycott, etc.

It is here that the right to work for men
(Contd. on page 23)

Women Teachers in Forefront in Delhi University Strike

Nina Rao

ON 10th December 1985, the DUTA launched one of the most difficult struggles in its history, which was sustained for 74 days. From August 1985, as the DUTA had mobilised opinion regarding the main concerns of the teachers, they had found Women teachers most vocal on the question of the hard won Promotion Scheme and the introduction of the professors grade in colleges. These two demands were the focus of their academic identity.

The 1983 strike had also changed the attitude of teachers on methods of struggle that were acceptable to them. This time, women teachers, who had been hesitant before, had a changed outlook on their participation in the trade unions activity and agitation. They had found their identity as working women, and in all staff rooms they welcomed the DUTA activists when they came to speak before them on the day-to-day developments, before the strike and in the course of the struggle. They held the Vice Chancellor, the U.G.C. and the Ministry of Human Resource Development responsible for pressurising the teachers to take an action like an indefinite strike. They gave the call of a one point programme: implement the 1983 Agreement.

The strike was total until the middle of January, because the University authorities and the U.G.C. were not particularly concerned with the fact that the premier university of the country was not functioning. They were pre-occupied with other matters. But then the Vice Chancellor began to put pressure on the teachers beginning with what he considered were the weakest links, like the ad-hoc and temporary teachers, and women teachers. Women teachers are generally the first to be undermined, because every working woman knows what a struggle she has been through to get a job. Her job is precious to her. It gives her the social strength both within and out side the family. On the other hand,, Women Principals feel insecure in their deci-

sion-making role, and are conservative or led-by-the nose by the authorities. It must be said to their credit that until they were told to become active strike breakers, on their own they did not take any steps to force the teachers to come back to work.

When these methods did not break the strike, and staff associations unitedly pledged to protect temporary teachers, then the next weapon was unleashed, the wage-cut. It was felt that once again the weakest links would crumble. Side by side, a public and press campaign to malign the teachers was set up at an unprecedented scale. Here again the women teachers stood with DUTA with courage. The pressure of parents, husbands and principals did not break them. In one staff room there was heated opposition to the comment of a teacher that the wage cut did not affect women since they had their husbands to earn for them. Other colleagues felt that this was an affront to their professionalism.

After this threat failed to break the unity of DUTA, a letter was issued by the Vice Chancellor informing the teachers that if they rejoined by a specific date, no harm would come to their service conditions. Along with this a rumour campaign was started to make the teacher unsure of the ability of the DUTA to protect their jobs. The threat of zero year was also paraded, because it is well-known that women teachers have a close and often a very personalised contact with their students. They become emotionally undermined when it is a question of the students interest at stake. At this point, the participation of women teachers in the Court Arrest programme was evidence that during the struggle the protection of the strength of the DUTA had become their main interest. The turn out of students in the support of the teachers also helped them to stand firm in the face of propaganda. Though agents of the authorities had told women who had never participated in any action that they would be held in custody for 15 days and they should have their husbands

ready to bail them out, many came prepared with their things for a stay in jail. None of these threats deterred them from coming forward as volunteers. In this strike, the consciousness of women teachers grew to an unprecedented level. They did not treat the strike period as an extended holiday. They participated, in large numbers, in the daily Dharnas, the hunger strikes, and demonstrations. They called regular staff association meetings and expressed their views at the well attended General Body Meetings. The March to Parliament was a historic event at the close of the struggle. An overwhelming number of teachers participated in the March and the subsequent rally. There was competition amongst women teachers to carry the posters and placards since the March was silent. They were now proud to be DUTA activists.

This struggle brought the Working Woman to the forefront, and showed that politics and action can be grasped and realised by all sections of the teaching community. The apolitical woman teacher is now a creature of the past. The number of teachers who attended the extended executive meetings, showed the interest and involvement of women teachers at the decision making level.

The strike was called off at the initiative of the teachers movement, when the morale of the teachers was high. The stand of the DUTA was vindicated, and the teachers were able to win public sympathy for their cause. They also learned that in the face of a Government that does not honour its Agreements a strong and united organisation, with an active membership is necessary. They are also aware that the New Education policy will not only attack and undermine academics and their working conditions but the democratic rights of the University community. Women teachers have now been drawn into the mainstream of DUTA and it has been proved by their action that the working woman to-day understands the issues and the framework of her work situation. She has the courage to stand firm in the face of repression and harassment, because she no longer feels grateful that she is employed and she no longer is content just to take her salary home. In the future, we can expect much greater awareness and participation from women teachers, who now want DUTA to see them as activists.

In Parliament

Withdraw the Bill

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on February 26 on the proposed Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, Kanak Mukherjee M.P., CPI (M) described the Bill as a violation of the fundamental and human rights guaranteed by the Constitution. In the name of protecting the divorced Muslim women's rights, what the Bill actually intends to do is to deprive them of the constitutionally guaranteed minimum rights by putting them out of the purview of Section 125 of the Cr PC.

Kanak Mukherjee described it as going not to the 21st century but to the 13th or 14th century and bowing down before the threats of the fundamentalists.

Kanak Mukherjee pointed out that the Bill has come precisely at a time when communal harmony is needed most. But ignoring the lessons of what happened in Punjab and Assam the Government is encouraging communal reactionary forces, sowing thereby the seeds of national disintegration. In order to catch votes, backward sentiments of the masses are being appeased.

In view of all this Kanak Mukherjee urged upon the Govt. to withdraw the Bill forthwith.

On Feb. 27 eight women Members of Parliament, belonging to both the Houses submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister asking for immediate withdrawal of the Bill. They were Kanak Mukherjee, Ila Bhattacharya and Bibha Gosh Goswami of the CPI (M) M.S. Jayalalitha of the AIADMK, Sarojini Mahishi of the Janatha, I.U. Bhandari (Sikkim) and Dr. T. Kalpana Devi and N.P. Jhansi Luxmi of the Telugu Desam.

Of Inhuman Bondage

GANGA PARMAR, at 70, has 30 years of contract labour behind her, years spent in moving in a Saraspur textile mill. Sunken eyes and a lined and wrinkled face testify to the effort put in to earn the beggarly sum of Rs. 9.50 a day. Widowed for many years, she still works eight hours a day because "of the desire to live. If I do not work like this I will starve."

Ratan Sundar's story is a little different. She was earning Rs 14 a day as a contract labourer in the New Gujarat Synthetics No. 1 mill, and had put in 10 years when she asked the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) to request the management for a raise. She was preemptorily sacked for her pains, and now she says helplessly: "After all these years, I was suddenly asked to go home." Punja Parmar and his wife Maghi were also sacked from the Saraspur mill after they asked for a wage increase. Asks Punja: "Did I do wrong? All I requested was a slight increase in the Rs. 10 we were getting daily. I did not even ask for the minimum wage. "With no financial benefits the aged couple now depend on their carpenter son who earns just Rs. 20 a day.

Such stories are legion in Ahmedabad where up to 10,000 contract labourers in some 60 textile mills are in the same hapless shoes as Ganga Parmar, Ratan Sundar and the Punjas. Trapped in the warp of a declining industry, they seem to count for no more than the waste cotton that Ganga Parmar extracts from the bobbins for an endless hour into the late evening of her life. More than 25 per cent of the contract labourers are women, and the extreme uncertainty of their jobs makes them highly vulnerable for every conceivable form of exploitation, including sexual abuse. Says G.K. Parmar, secretary of the state unit of CITU: "Sexual exploitation will continue as long as stoves in the kitchen have to burn. Our union is working on many cases where women have been sacked because they refused to respond to the sexual advances of their employers."

The low wages and sexual exploitation are symptomatic of a system where even the term 'contract' is a misnomer, for there is in fact no contract of any sort, except between the mill and the labour contractor. Profit-hungry textile mill managements, instead of paying wages of Rs. 35 or more to their regular workers, get contractors to employ workers to run a particular section of the mill. The contractors, making full use of a saturated labour market, hire destitute job seekers, often for less than Rs 10 a day. The influx of poor migrant labourers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh has helped them substantially in this game and put the contractors in an unassailable position. Says Atulbhai Chinubhai, managing director of Ajit Mills: "The contract system is advantageous since salaries are less by 50 to 70 per cent. With an increasing labour force this trend will continue."

Most of the contract labourers live a faceless existence with even their names being changed every few months, so that there is no proof of them having worked in any one place for a prolonged period of time. Contractors also keep shuffling the workers around, and the mills of course do not maintain any records of their work, a fact that helps them get clean chits from factory and labour inspectors. The contractors are no better, of course, even though they are required by the law to maintain proper records. Thus contractor Umaji Devaji at the Bharat Vijay Mills innocently told a flying squad of the Labour Department which had come visiting along with lawyers from the Gujarat High Court that he could not produce the records he had maintained on the contract labourers since he had just lost them.

For all that, the workers themselves are usually compelled by their circumstances to keep their mouths shut. Asks Shakuntala Sonavane, 50, who has put in 22 years as a contract labourer in Ajit Mills: "Why should I lose a job which gives me at least Rs. 12 a day?" Lack of proof, documentary and other-

wise, has also come in the way of the workers filing cases in labour courts. A young contract worker in Nutan Mills, for example, was sacked from the cloth Department after four years when he demanded a raise. When his case came up in court, nobody was prepared to testify that he had worked in the mill. Even representatives of the Textile Labour Association (TLA) did not come forward to help him. This emboldened Arvind Mills to sack over 100 contract labourers four years ago, confident that no legal action could be taken against them. Fortunately for the workers, they could produce in court the curfew passes issued to them by the mill when the anti-reservations stir was on.

But such cases are few. When Shantinath Mills in Surat collapsed in the late 1970s, none of the workers' families secured any compensation since their names did not figure in the records. Says advocate Akhil Kureshi: "The workers are so poor and illiterate, many of them do not even know the minimum wages they are entitled to."

Admits M.U. Shah, a retired high court judge who is the chairman of the Contract Labour Board: "Many contractors who were paupers have become millionaires by drafting contract labourers and exploiting them. The movement of law and administration of progressive labour legislation has lagged far behind the subversion process. At any given point of time, subversive forces are in ascendance over the state and the law." He pointed out that the board had no clout with the mill owners who generally ignored its directives. And last year the board in its annual report called for the total abolition of the contract system since attempts at regulation had failed. Two months ago, even the august Gujarat High Court was compelled to state that the contractors were violating labour laws with impunity. Where action was taken, it generally resulted in "Flea-bite fines" being levied. Said human rights activist Girish Patel: "The only way to stop these contractors from trading human misery is to impose very heavy fines coupled with imprisonment." He pointed out that the light fines being levied now-a-days actually made the contractor eager to pay them off as soon as possible so that he could get back to business.

The TLA, also known as the Majoor Mahajan, is one of the largest trade unions in the country with 85,000 members in Ahmedabad, but it has done very little to ease the lot of the contract labourers. Wedded to Gandhian ideals, the organisation maintains a largely pro-management slant which Arvind Buch, its president, justified: "In a poor country there will always be contract labourers. Even the public sector employs contract labourers, so why is everybody gunning for the private sector?" The truth, of course, is that TLA representatives in many mills are double as contractors, and the mill managements prefer to turn a blind eye to their activities as this keeps the grassroot union leaders on their side. TLA Secretary Bachubhai Shukla says helplessly that he cannot stop labour leaders from becoming contractors since the law only requires that they get a licence from the labour Department.

In the same breath, Shukla adds that contract labour is not a burning problem because there are hardly a thousand such labourers in Ahmedabad. While his statistics are questionable, Navinchandra Barot, president of the National Labour Organisation, maintains that the TLA must take a strong stand on the issue and bring pressure to bear on the Government. Meanwhile, the labourers themselves, sandwiched between an uncaring labour union and an ineffective Labour Department, remain in a wretched state.

The only ray of hope at the moment is the high court, which last fortnight decided to treat as a writ petition a letter written by the Gujarat Mill Mazdoor Union, informing the court about the workers' plight. Terming the state enforcement machinery ineffective, the court requested five socially committed lawyers to accompany labour officials in surprise checks of the textile mills. They quickly struck pay dirt.

Ramesh Dholakia, one of the lawyers, walked into a mill and asked the contractor how much he paid his labourers. When the pat reply mentioned Rs. 23 — which is the minimum wage — Dholakia promptly nailed the lie by lining up the workers to receive their wages. That forced the contractor to rush home for more money since he had come

(Contd. on page 20)

International Women's Day Observed In Walled City

Meera

MARCH 8, the day symbolising women's struggle for emancipation, was observed in a big way in Delhi. Following closely on the heels of the momentum built up by the Delhi bandh and the protest actions against the Black Bill concerning Muslim women, the Janwadi Mahila Samiti (Delhi) conducted a wide campaign. Demarcating itself from the conglomeration of bourgeois feminist groups, the JMS focused on the issues of education, employment and legal inequality. These issues were placed in the political context of the growing attempts to divert the attention of the struggling women and to disrupt this unity of women against the brutal attacks being perpetrated on them by imperialism, neo-colonialism, zionism and apartheid. In the Indian context, the JMS stressed on three points: That their struggle was against the anti-people policies of the Government, not an individual; it was against the present socio-economic system, not against men; that their struggle was not separate, it was part of the struggle of all the oppressed for freedom.

The JMS campaign which began on the February 27, included padyatras and meetings in the resettlement colonies (Rampura west, Manakpura), in the working class area of Faridabad, among the service sections (LIC, Boat Club) and among students in Delhi University (Miranda, I.P. College, Daulat Ram) and Jawaharlal Nehru University. Hundreds of people attended the meetings where leaflets were distributed and 1500 key-chains of the JMS flag sold. The highlight of these campaigns was the JMS street theatre group of women who put up the play "Dhoke ki kahani". The play written by the JMS Treasurer, Kalindi Deshpande and based on the experiences of the struggles conducted by JMS was a big success.

On March 6, the Joint Committee for International Women's Day held a March in the walled city. The organisations included AIDWA, NFIW and their state units, the Janwadi Mahila Samiti and Delhi Mahila Federation respectively; the Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, Social Wel-

fare Board Employees Union, Pragati Hosiery Workers Union, Student Federation of India and many others. It was a militant display of unity and nearly a thousand women from all walks of life participated. The colourful procession included school children carrying little white doves to symbolise women's demand for peace and against war. Placards highlighted women's demand for education, employment and legal equality. One showed a computer kicking women out of jobs and another a pig-tailed girl child demanding, "Would you have let me study if I had been a boy", and yet another one had three women of different religions holding hands under the scales of justice. Many placards demanded that the Black Bill relating to Sec. 125 Cr PC be withdrawn. This demand was made through militant slogans by a big group of burqua-clad women who led the procession. The procession concluded at the Town Hall where a unanimous resolution was passed. It condemned the U.S. aggressive policies which threatened world peace and expressed solidarity with the struggles of women in South Africa, Nicaragua, El Salvador. The resolution also condemned the Indian Government's policies towards women in the spheres of education, employment and legal status. Aruna Asaf Ali, Vimala Faruqui (NFIW) Vimal Ranadive addressed the gathering. Songs were sung and the play 'Dhoke ki kahani' performed in front of a large crowd that had gathered there.

The JMS campaign ended on March 8 with an exhibition on employment which was inaugurated by the AIDWA Vice President, Vimal Ranadive. Over 300 people visited the exhibition which was appropriately titled, "Right to Work is the Right to Life". The exhibition movingly depicted how women were forced to leave their villages and come to the cities in search of work, the low and unequal wages that they received, the lack of protective legislation and inhuman working conditions and their double burden which in turn forces young girls to take on the adult responsibilities of childcare. The focus of

(Contd. on page 21)

A.I.D.W.A. Calls for Massive Anti-price Hike Stir

THE Central Executive Committee of the All-India Democratic Womens' Association (AIDWA) met in Bombay on February 8-9, 1986, and gave a clarion call for observing February 20 as a protest day against the price-hike on petroleum products, rice and wheat that was recently announced by the Central Government, by organising joint and independent meetings, demonstrations, dharnas and picketings all over India. Joint womens' demonstration will be held in their states on that day.

Major Decisions

Apart from this, the CEC took three other major decisions. It gave an All-India call for observing March 8 (International Womens' Day) as a day for Peace, National Integration and Womens' Rights. 1986 being designated by the U.N. as the International Year of Peace, the CEC welcomed Soviet leader Gorbachov's proposals for complete elimination of all nuclear weapons in three stages to be achieved by the turn of the century. On the other hand, the meeting condemned the "Star Wars" programme of the U.S. atomic war maniacs, who have moreover earmarked \$ 1800 billions for military spending over the next five years.

Another important decision was to vigorously intensify the all-India agitation, propaganda and signature campaign demanding of the Central Government not to buckle under the demand of Muslim fundamentalists to amend Section 125 of the Cr. P.C. The meeting resolved to unequivocally struggle for common rights for all women irrespective of religion or caste, and condemned the reactionary manouevres of both Muslim fundamentalists and Hindu communalists against womens' equality.

The CEC decided to hold the next All-India Conference of the AIDWA in Kerala in the month of September 1986, and to begin preparations for the same. It was decided to publish a Souvenir in connection with the Conference, and a Souvenir Committee with Sarojini Balanandan as Convenor and Kanak Mukherjee, Susheela Gopalan, Vimal Ranadive, Papa Umanath, M. Udayam, Brinda Karat and Mythili Shivaraman as members

was set up. Finally, a call was given to step up the AIDWA membership, and to send all detailed State reports to the Centre by June 15 for the preparation of the Central report to the All-India Conference.

Two other documents were circulated at the CEC meeting. In the General Secretary's Report, Susheela Gopalan comprehensively outlined the international and national political situation with special reference to its impact on women. The Work Report from States gave an account of the many-sided activities of the organisation, including the various struggles and campaigns in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Andhra, Tamil Nadu, U.P., Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Assam.

AIDWA leaders from several States attended the Bombay CEC meeting. It was presided over by Capt. Laxmi Sehgal (U.P.), and was attended by all the following:— Susheela Gopalan, Vimal Ranadive, Pramila Pandhe (Centre), Kanak Mukherjee, MP, Shyamali Gupta, Banani Biswas (West Bengal) T. Devi, Sarojini Balanandan (Kerala), Ila Bhattacharya, MP (Tripura), M. Udayam, M. Swarajyam, Aruna T. (Andhra), Papa Umanath (Tamil Nadu), Tushita Dohatiya, Rama Das (Assam), Rajendra Kaur (Punjab), Brinda Karat (Delhi), Sudha Bindu Mitra (Bihar), Sumitra Swamy (Rajasthan), Niruben Patel (Gujarat) and Ahilya Rangnekar (Maharashtra). Women comrades from Bombay had made painstaking arrangements for the success of the CEC meeting, which generated a lot of enthusiasm and also won wide press publicity.

Public Meetings

On February 10, a large public meeting was held at the Vanmali Hall, Bombay to welcome the All-India leaders of the AIDWA. The hall was not only packed but was overflowing with women from various parts of the city. Hundreds of women came in processions under the banner of the Shramik Mahila Sangh, several of them coming with their little children. There were women from all walks of life—working women in factories and offices, zopadpatti dwellers, contract labour grass-cutters, housewives, and also women

teachers, professors and girl students. They belonged to every caste, religion and language, and included a significant section of Muslim women. Shramik Mahila Sangh activists from Bombay had held several meetings in various parts of the city for two weeks to mobilise for the mass meeting, and among the areas represented were Wadala, Dharavi, Mahim, Azad Nagar, Sion, Worli, Bhandup, Chembur and many others. A large contingent of women grass-cutters under contract labour with the RCF had come in a procession, and so also women from the Kanak Industries, who had been victimised after a grim and long struggle.

The mass meeting was presided over by Ahilya Rangnekar, Prabha Savant made the introductory remarks, and Suman Sanzgiri welcomed the guests. The main speakers addressed the gathering in a mixture of languages: Laxmi Sehgal in Hindi, Vimal Ranadive in Marathi, Susheela Gopalan in English, which was translated by Prema Oak, and Papa Umanath in Tamil, which was translated by Laxmi Sehgal. Tara Valanju proposed the Vote of Thanks. All the speakers, while conveying the decisions of the CEC meeting in the context of the political situation, lashed out at the anti-women policies of the Central Government and dealt with a whole range of issues affecting women, like price-rise, atrocities, dowry and bride-burning, the Shah Bano case and right to maintenance of Muslim divorced women, education and employment, and also the larger issues of war and peace and national integration. They called for a powerful women's movement to effectively deal with all the above issues, and outlined the sterling work that the 15-lakh strong AIDWA had carried out in various states. At the end of the meeting, a powerful street-play in Marathi called "Mulgi Zaali Ho" (A Girl is Born) depicting the discrimination against women at every step, was staged by the Stree Mukti Sanghatana.

Taking advantage of the presence of AIDWA leaders in the city, several other mass meetings were also held in various places on the 10th and 11th February. A large mass meeting at Dharavi was addressed by Susheela Gopalan, Papa Umanath, Laxmi Sehgal and Ahilya Rangnekar, on the 10th night. Another meeting on the 11th at Dadar on the Current Political Situation was addressed by Susheela Gopalan, Sarojini Balanandan, T. Devi and

Ahilya Rangnekar, while Maharashtra CITU Secretary P.R. Krishnan presided and U.K. Nair made the introductory remarks. Yet another meeting in the telugu-speaking area of Bhoiwada was addressed by the veteran Telangana fighter M. Swarajyam. A seminar was also held at the Kurla Nehrunagar area where Susheela Gopalan was the main speaker.

There is no doubt that the holding of the AIDWA CEC meeting in Bombay gave a big fillip to the women's movement here and enthused all those connected with it. The Maharashtra State Conference of AIDWA is now due to be held on February 22-23 at Talasari (Dist. Thane) and the guidance given by the CEC will no doubt make it an even greater success.

Maharashtra S.F.I. First State-Level Girl's Convention

THE 1st State-level Girl Student's Convention organised by the SFI Maharashtra State Committee was held in Sangli on January 29, 1986, on the eve of the 5th State Conference, and was attended by 105 girl students from 15 districts of Maharashtra, and 2 girl delegates from Goa. The Organising of the Convention was a concerted attempt to increase SFI influence among girl students, and the response to the Convention was indeed beyond expectations. The Convention was inaugurated by Adv. Usha Thombre of the Shramik Mahila Sangh (AIDWA) and a former SFI leader herself. The main resolution of the convention, which described the social and educational conditions of women in general and girl students in particular and ending with a Charter of Demands, was placed on behalf of the SFI State Committee by Lata Bhise and seconded by Jayashree Waghmare. The Presidium of the Convention consisted of Kranti Chavan, Kusum More and Mugdha Gokhale. All India Joint Secretary of AIDWA Ahilya Rangnekar was the Chief Guest of the Convention, and in her rousing concluding speech, she dwelt on the larger political issues before women, as also their own specific problem, and called upon the girl student delegates to rapidly build the SFI and the student movement in their own districts.

AIDWA — 3rd Maharashtra State Conference

THE 3rd Maharashtra State Conference of the Shramik Mahila Sangh (AIDWA) which was held at Talasari (Dist. Thane) on February 22-23, 1986 has given a fresh impetus to the women's movement in the State. The Conference, which was attended by 350 women delegates from 11 districts, formulated a 19 point Charter of Demands, and gave a call for a massive Statewide dharna in Bombay on March 21 to focus on the price-rise, the grave drought situation, and the burning question of ensuring justice to Muslim women, a cause that is being seriously threatened by the recent Central Government bill in Parliament that shamelessly panders to the whims and fancies of the most backward sections of Muslim fundamentalism. The March 21 dharna will be staged jointly by several women's organisations in the State. The 3rd State Conference also called for intensifying the membership drive, and strengthening the organisation, in preparation for the ensuing All-India Conference of the AIDWA in Kerala in September.

Inauguration

The delegate composition of the Conference was remarkable in that it consisted of women from all cross sections of society — agricultural workers and poor peasants (a large proportion of these being adivasi tribals), powerloom and factory workers, grass-cutters, nurses, teachers, professors, students, office employees and housewives. Out of 350 delegates 265 were from the working women. One of the welcome feature was the large preponderance of young women from all the above sections. The largest delegation of 117 women was from Thane district, followed by all other districts like Raigad, Dhule, Bombay, Buldana, Satara, Beed, Kolhapur, Parbhani, Aurangabad and Usmanabad.

The venue of the Conference was colourfully decorated with the flags, banners and placards of AIDWA highlighting the principal demands. The Conference began on the evening of February 22, with the flag-hoisting by Shalini Kilinge, a powerloom worker from Ichalkaranji (Dist. Kolhapur) who had just

been released after a 10 day jail term along with several others for their militant participation in the CITU led struggle for minimum wages. After the floral tributes at the Martyr's Column, several districts presented songs on women's liberation.

Reception Committee Chairperson Hemlata Kom, Chairman of Panchayat, while welcoming the delegates, recounted the terrible conditions and atrocities heaped on Adivasi women by the landlords in Thane district before the formation of the Kisan Sabha by Shamrao Parulekar and Godavari Parulekar 41 years ago, and referred to the valiant struggles waged during this period, struggles which had enabled the Adivasis to regain their pride and self-respect. A Presidium consisting of Prabha Savant (Bombay), Kusum More (Usmanabad), Sangita Patil (Raigad), Aruna Kulli (Buldana), Shalini Killinge (Kolhapur) and Sukmabai Thakre (Dhule) was elected to conduct the proceedings.

The Conference was inaugurated by AIDWA Joint Secretary Ahilya Ranganekar. She began recalling that February 22 today marked the 40th Anniversary of the glorious revolt of naval ratings of 1946, which opened a new chapter in India's freedom struggle, and recounted the mass upsurge of the working class and people of Bombay which was brutally suppressed by the British forces. In the indiscriminate firing on that day, over 250 people were killed in a single day in Bombay, and among them, she said, the memory of young Kamal Donde of the then United CPI would forever be cherished, as a brave martyr of the women's movement.

She then explained at length the All-India character and the militant struggles of the AIDWA, the largest and most powerful women's organisation in the country, and dealt with all the current women's issues, connecting them to the political situation — the Central Government's anti-people policies, injustices against women in general, and Muslim women in particular, the danger of divisive forces, importance of the Left Governments, and the peace movement against U.S. imperialism.

Reports of Struggle

The highlight of the Conference was undoubtedly the session where the delegates placed the reports of struggle waged by the various district units of the Shramik Mahila Sangh. (SMS). These reports enthused and inspired the delegates. At Uran in Raigad district, SMS activists had won increase in the number of fair price shops, as well as increase in grain rations. In Ichalkaranji in Kolhapur district, women had faced merciless police lathicharges and jail in the struggle for minimum wages for powerloom workers; an entire colony called Lal Nagar had been set up for zopadpatti dwellers whose huts had been reduced to ashes in a big fire. In Dhule district, intense women's struggles had been waged for drought relief, and for expansion of the Employment Guarantee Scheme; successful actions had also been held against drunken Government and police officials. In Kalamnuri of Parbhani district, there were struggles for increased farm wages, and against the Government compulsion on Gramsevikas (village workers) to complete family planning targets by hook or by crook.

In Bombay, there had been large demonstrations against the price-rise in the novel form of the "Latni Morcha" (Rolling Pin morchas), and also gheraos of the Maharashtra Cabinet in Mantralaya. In Beed, a large anti-dowry convention and campaign had been held. In Satara, there had been actions for drinking water and sanitary facilities. In Ulhasnagar of Thane district, women had gheraoed the police station to successfully retrieve abducted Muslim girls. In Thane district, the rural areas had seen massive women's participation in the struggle for forest plots, in numerous long-drawn out agricultural workers' strikes, against the hike in bus fares, and in protests against the recent Ozarkhed massacre by the police. Apart from these struggles, women had participated in several political campaigns throughout the State.

Resolutions on the price-rise, peace movement, drought, EGS, atrocities on women, unemployment, and the new education policy were adopted amidst great enthusiasm, and a call given to increase the SMS membership and strengthen the organisation in a radical

manner. A new State Committee was unanimously elected with the following office-bearers: President—Ahilya Rangnekar: Vice-Presidents—Hemlata Kom, Kusum More, Tarabai Guthe, Shalini Killinge, Tarabai Valanju, Suman Sanzgiri; General Secretary—Usha Thombre; Jt. Secretaries—Prabha Savant, Shanta Joshi, Ratnaprabha Bhagwat, Shalini Hormusji; Treasurer—Asha Vartak.

Public Meeting

On the evening of February 23, a 10,000 strong public meeting was held in Talasari town, this including over 6,700 Adivasi women who had marched for several miles from various parts of Thane district. Wearing red sarees, red blouses and red ribbons, the women turned the meeting place into a memorable sea of red which will long be remembered by all those present. The enthusiasm at the meeting was indeed infectious and it appropriately crowned the success of the State Conference. The public meeting was presided over by Hemlata Kom, and was addressed by Ahilya Rangnekar and by Chief Guest Kamal Vaykole, General Secretary of Maharashtra Government Nurses Federation, which has led several successful struggles in the State. Excellent arrangements for the entire Conference had been made by the Thane district Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers Union and the Adivasi Pragati Mandal, Talasari.

Anti-Price Rise Morcha In Bombay

On February 18, a huge morcha of more than thousand women was taken out against the price-rise, in food-grains, Railway and Bus fare, Kerosene oil etc. on behalf of the Womens' Anti-Price Rise Action Committee. The women brandished their well-known symbol of resistance, the rolling-pin! Ahilya Rangnekar, Mrunal Gore, Pramila Dandwate and others led the procession.

Muslim Women Oppose the Black Bill

—Maimoona

FEBRUARY 20, 1986 — the opening day of the budget session of Parliament saw a historic sight at the gates of Parliament heavily cordoned off by the Delhi Police. Women, — Muslim, Hindus and Sikh — but a large number of them Muslims clad in burqas demonstrated their anger against the black bill the Govt. was adamantly bent on introducing, under the facade of protecting Muslim women's rights. Giving the lead were All India Democratic Women's Association and its Delhi Unit, the Janwadi Mahila Samity and other women's organisations, viz. NFIW and Mahila Dakshata Samity. Also taking part was the Committee for the Protection of Rights of Muslim Women. The women throwing up their veils, children wailing, wanted to know what their fate was. Does the man only have rights and no responsibilities? Why should our parents or brothers suffer, for no fault of theirs? And for the crime of fighting for their rights about 300 women were arrested and taken to Mandir Marg Police Station.

So far the divorced women in India irrespective of their religion had the right to seek maintenance under Sec. 125 Cr. P.C. from their former husbands until death or remarriage. This was also upheld by the Supreme Court of India in the Shah Bano case. But the Muslim clergy in India raised a hue and cry of "Islam in danger" to rouse the Muslims against the judgement. And the Govt., bowing to the obscurantists introduced a bill which closes the option to the Muslim women to take recourse to Sec. 125 Cr. P.C. As per the bill, the husband is bound to support the woman only upto the *iddat* period. He has no responsibility towards his children after two years. And the woman is supposed to go back to her parents or brothers "who are the natural heirs to her property". If the woman has no relatives she has to fall back on Wakf Boards — an unrealistic proposition because (a) Wakf property cannot be alienated, (b) they do not have enough funds, (c) in many States there are no Wakf Boards.

All this is being done on the plea that the Muslims are for it. But the fact is that the Govt. is out to make use of catchy obscurantist

appeal to further Cong(I) interests at the hustings.

In Muslim countries like Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Pakistan the responsibility of providing maintenance to divorcees are on their former husbands. And all Muslim scholars worth naming — Shah Waliullah Dehlavi, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilvi, Maulana Ahamad Saeed, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Fateh Md. Jalandhri and jurists like Imam Shafee and Imam Jaffar Sadiq have supported the cause of the destitute women.

Also it is heartening to note that progressive and liberal men and women in the country have risen up to raise their voice against the retrogressive steps of the Govt. It is in this connection that the Committee for Protection of Rights of Muslim Women was formed in December at the initiative of Zoya Hasan, Sabha Husain, and others. The Committee collected (about 120) signatures of prominent Muslim personalities in Delhi and outside on the demand that Sec. 125 Cr. P.C. shall not be changed, that Muslim Women's constitutional rights be upheld and the husband shall not be exonerated from the responsibility for maintenance to divorced women. The signatories include. Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Salim Ali, Moonis Raza, Abid Husain, Obaid Siddiqui, Rais Ahmad, Sardar Jafri, Rasheedudin Khan, Danial Latifi, A.J. Kidwai, A. Rahman, Irfan Habib, etc.

Janwadi Mahila Samity also approached Muslim women in bastis and other Muslim areas. Contrary to the claims of the Govt. and obscurantists JMS found an overwhelming majority of Muslim women supporting women's rights.

In fact the women, poor and destitute, told our activists that because we have no voice our rights are being trampled upon. Some of them described the Govt. action as inhuman. Some said that we give the best part of life and after divorce are thrown out with the man shouldering no responsibility at all? Is this

justice? Another woman said, the reality is that I am a divorced woman with children and nowhere to go. And my husband has happily married twice after divorcing me. Now what do I do? Also they said that if they come out openly to support Sec. 125 Cr. P.C. they will be harassed by the fundamentalists.

This is not the problem of Muslim, women alone. If this continues, then, the day is not far off when the Hindu communalists will

demand that obnoxious practices like Sati be revived. And if we allow communal elements to gain an upper hand then the secular fabric of India will be in danger.

It is high time all those who wish to end oppression and communal frenzy and wish to see a secular India marching forward come forward and resist the reactionary attempts of the Govt. which will only take us several centuries back.

Appeal to Members of Parliament

THE following appeal was given to all members of Parliament on 19th February 1986 on behalf of Committee for Protection of Rights of Muslim Women.

"As you are aware, a bill which seeks to exclude Muslim Women from the purview of Section 125 of the Cr. P.C. is to be introduced in the Parliament shortly. An impression has been created that the entire Muslim opinion is behind such a move. We take this opportunity to bring to your notice that over the last few months our Committee has established contacts with a wide cross-section of Muslim society. We have been collecting signatures on an appeal to the Prime Minister of India urging him not to support any such move. A copy of the appeal with the signatures is enclosed. As you can see the signatories represent an important and wide cross-section of the Muslim community.

It is our earnest appeal to you that when the bill comes for discussion you should raise your voice against it. Such a bill is retro-

gressive in character and attacks the rights of women in general and Muslim women in particular.

As a representative of the people, we hope and trust that you will heed our appeal and will raise your voice against a provision which will further oppress women of this country. As you are aware, such a blatant attack on a destitute woman's right to maintenance has not been made within Muslim countries and it is ironic that in a declared secular state like ours such a step could even be contemplated, leave alone implemented.

May we request you to extend your support in preventing the Government from adopting a backward looking measure which will seriously jeopardise basic rights of divorced Muslim women.

Yours sincerely,

Thanking you in anticipation,

Sahba Husain

Daniel Latifi

Saba Zaidi

Fatima Al Talib

Zoya Hasan

Saeed Mirza

Salima Tyabji

Withdraw the Muslim Women Protection Bill

THE four women's Organisations, namely Mahila Dakhshata Samiti, All India Democratic Women's Association National Federation of India Women, YWCA of India and Joint Women's Programme issued the following statement on 26.2.86 to the Press.

"We are shocked to find that the Government has decided to introduce in parliament a Bill on the issue of maintenance to divorced Muslim Women entitled the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights) Bill, 1986.

We, the representatives of the Dahej

Virodhi Chetana Manch have met the Prime Minister on two occasions — December 17 and 24, 1985, and had received his assurance after an hour's discussion that there will be no change in Section 125 of the Cr PC without consulting the women's organisations and that Muslim Women's recourse to the law courts would not be taken away from them.

However, we find that the Bill has already been circulated and the Prime Minister has claimed that he had consulted women's organisations prior to drafting the Bill.

(Contd. on page 19)

Consolidate National Unity

Unity in diversity has assumed a new dimension in the present day Indian context. The need of the hour is to strengthen ties between different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. We should all strive hard to preserve and promote the fundamental principles of federalism.

It is imperative on our part to guard against any form of over-centralisation. Let us all work together to consolidate the unity and integrity of the country.

26th January, 1986

Government of West Bengal

Women's Struggle in Iran

THE women supporters of Iranian People's Fedaian (Majority) in India congratulate March 8th, the International Solidarity Day of the Women of the World, to the struggling women of India. March 8th designates the solidarity day for women of the world in struggle against injustice, discrimination, inequality, war, killing, destruction, repression and cultural corruption.

Struggling women of India!

The reactionary regime of the Islamic Republic has not only recognised the Eighth of March but even has tried to replace by introducing 2nd of March (birthday of Hazrat Fatimeh, D/o Prophet Mohammed) as the so-called international women's day and has severely trampled the most basic rights of Iranian women in the social spheres. According to the Centre of Statistics in Iran, 78 per cent of working women are illiterate, 50 per cent of women in urban areas are illiterate and only 5 per cent of working women have received higher education. Overall illiteracy among women is 85 per cent to 90 per cent in Iran and the regime of Khomeini has deprived women in studying in many educational fields such as Law, agriculture, technical fields, mining, etc., etc.

In the realm of the family and social rights, the regime has imposed its reactionary laws.

— If a man thinks his wife has committed adultery and kills her, he is exempted from prosecution or has to pay a sum for compensation.

— If women do not observe Islamic veil in streets, they are liable to be prosecuted by confinement and alongwith 74 lashes (according to Article No. 102 of Islamic Civilian Law).

— A woman cannot travel or work without the permission of her husband. Under such circumstances, our women are continuing their unwavering struggle against lawlessness, rightlessness, inequality and oppression. Reports

from jails of Khomeini regime tell of horrifying conditions of political prisoners. The women constitute 1/10th of all political prisoners in Iran. The number of executed women by the regime of Islamic Republic is 1505, i.e. 12.5 per cent of total executed patriots.

Among these women who have been executed, are 47 pregnant ladies, 22 girls aged 13 to 15 years, 12 women aged between 50-70 years. Iranian women both during puppet regime of Shah and criminal regime of Khomeini have been in forefront of struggle for democracy, Social justice and peace.

As you are aware the devastating war of Iran-Iraq is continuing for the last five years, upto now 7,35,000 have been killed in this war. Out of every five Iranian women, one is a war-refugee and out of every ten Iranian women, one has lost one of her beloved one.

Progressive women of India!

During the past year, there have been many opposing movements in different cities of Iran and women have participated actively in anti-war movement and against unjust laws, unemployment, inflation, agitations. For instance, in anti-war demonstration held in 13th ABAN locality of Tehran, 107 women and girls were arrested last year. The martyrdom of 33 Fedaian women is an honour for the struggling women of Iran in the attainment of their legitimate rights. At present 33 per cent membership of Fedaian-Majority are women.

The Eighth of March this year, has coincided with the year of world-peace. Let us take this vital struggle of women, for establishing world peace.

Long Live 8 March!

Long Live Peace!

**Women Supporters of Organisation of Iranian
People's Fedaian (Majority) in India.**

Trade Unions and the Participation of Working Women in Vietnam

IN Vietnam today, the working women in industry and agriculture, in commerce and services, in fact, in all walks of life, are playing a significant role in carrying forward the tasks of social development.

At present women account for over 60 per cent of the total work force in agriculture, industry, handicrafts, trade, public health, culture and education. They make up nearly a half of the total number of factory workers and public service employees.

Rights Enshrined in the Constitution

Working women enjoy broad rights under the Constitution, for example Article 63 states:

"Women and men have equal rights on political, economic, cultural, social and family positions. The State and society have responsibility to create favourable conditions for women to improve their qualification in political, cultural, scientific, technical and professional fields and to increasingly bring into play the role of women in social life. The State shall adopt labour policies which safeguard the health and social conditions of women and guarantee the right to equal pay for equal work. State and society shall look after the development of the building of maternity hospitals, kindergartens, creches, nurseries, canteens and various social insurance establishments in order to create favourable conditions for women in production, labour, study and for rest and leisure".

The Vietnamese trade unions see as an important task the strict implementation of these constitutional provisions upholding the rights of working women. Special attention is devoted to secure for women equal rights with men as well as to ensure their full participation in economic, social and political life. This includes strict vigilance against any manifestation of discrimination whatsoever.

Vocational Training and Advancement

In a situation where the economy of the country is still faced with many difficulties

caused by the ravages of 30 years of war and imperialist aggression, the trade unions pay special attention to women's active participation in the struggle for development of the national economy and for raising living standards of working people. The increasing participation of women in the process of social production is recognized as an important factor accelerating economic and social development and the full utilization of human resources.

Considerable progress has been achieved in encouraging the greater participation of working women in economic management. Already in the light industries which have a predominance of women employees, leading management positions are held by women. At the top political level, in the country, there are five women as Cabinet Ministers, 12 as Vice-Ministers and there are 219 directors and deputy directors of large factories and enterprises.

Special attention is paid by the trade unions to gradually eliminate all forms of discrimination in education and training for women. The State provides many facilities for equal access for women workers to vocational training and to education to advance professional knowledge and skills.

Training for women is free of cost and special leave and other facilities are offered for educational purposes. Women have access on an equal basis to all schemes of retraining where new technology is introduced.

The concrete results of such encouragement given to working women can be seen from the following. Women account for 49.6 per cent of all scientists and technicians, 31.2 per cent of University graduates and post-graduates (before the August 1945 revolution, there was only one in the whole country), and 52.2 per cent trained in secondary vocational training institutes. Women constitute 34.6 per cent of skilled workers in industry, 60 per cent of teachers in basic and secondary schools

47.3 per cent of professors in higher educational establishments and 52.5 per cent of doctors.

Social Protection Constantly on the Up

International standards of social protection for women workers are maintained in labour legislation in Vietnam. Employment of women in hazardous occupations has been banned. The age of retirement for women is five years lower than for men. In annual collective agreements between trade unions and management boards, there are special provisions for the improvement of working and living conditions of women workers. The strict implementation of these provisions is always controlled by the trade unions and official inspection bodies.

To improve social amenities for women, particular attention is devoted to the further improvement of child care centres. A network of creches, nurseries and kindergartens has been established and by the end of 1983, nearly two million children were looked after in about 50,000 creches. Some 180,000 nurses and other trained personnel are engaged in the running of these child care centres.

Encouraging Women's Participation

From the point of view of "participation"

Sex Discrimination Legislation and Part-time Employment in Great Britain

PART-TIME workers now comprise over a fifth of the total labour force in Britain; more than four out of every five part-timers are women. The study reported here initially aimed to show the effects to Equal Pay, Sex Discrimination and other legislation on the conditions of employment of part-time women workers. In addition, however, the report casts much light on part-time employment generally and on the factors behind employer interest in extending part-time work.

Part-time work offers various advantages to employers, including a greater flexibility of

— a key objective of the UN Decade for Women, the success of the efforts of Vietnam is impressive. Women in large numbers have been drawn into the administration of affairs of the State and the society. Women delegates to the Seventh National Assembly, the supreme elected body in Vietnam, numbered 108 (nearly 22 per cent of the total) and among them were one Vice-Chairperson, one member of the Standing Committee and one member of the Council of State. 44.95 per cent of the members of elected bodies at the provinces, cities and districts — the "People's Councils" — are women.

Working women also play an important role in the supervision and control bodies, to ensure smooth distribution of essential goods and in the organisation of the services. They are in the forefront of the campaigns for the establishment of the "socialist order on market management".

The active participation of women in leading positions within the trade union movement is continuously increasing (49,690 of trade union members are women). At present, over 20 per cent of the members of leading bodies of trade unions at the various levels are women and steps are being taken to further enhance women's participation and contribution to the organisation and further development of the trade union movement, based on the considerable achievements to date.

working hours and the association of part-time jobs with relatively low labour costs. The part-time workers is concentrated in the lowest grades and on average enjoys relatively fewer fringe benefits, compared to the full-time workers. However, since most of the female part time jobs tend to be dissimilar from those undertaken by men in the same establishment, the authors argue that there is little scope for using the provisions of the Equal Pay Act, despite the evident indirect discrimination against women that is taking place and even though part-time employment
(Contd. on page 20)

Claims Made by Zahra Rahnavaard Refuted

THE following statement is issued on behalf of women supporters of Organisation of Iranian Fedaiian (Majority) in India on the interview given to the press on the 5th March 1986 in Hyderabad by the wife of the Prime Minister of Iran, Zahra Rahnavaard. The statement says:

"What the wife of the Prime Minister stated in the press conference was totally false and the conditions of Iranian women are worst in Iran today. According to the Marriage Law of Islamic Republic of Iran "when a women gets married with a man permanently, her exit from the house will be subjected to the consent of the man and she should surrender

herself for all the enjoyment that man wants and it is compulsory for the man to give her (wife) clothes, food and house". In the Islamic Republic the woman is not eligible to accept any "movable and immovable properties" of her husband as Zahra Rahnavaard claims. It is baseless claim that "After divorce, belongings will be divided equally". The statement further says that "The guardian council says, "if a man marries again with prior permission of his wife he cannot be prosecuted and court also cannot punish him in this connection". The man can divorce his wife whenever he wants and right of divorce is in the hands of the man and it is possible that the man can divorce all his four wives at the same time."

The statement further explains that Iranian women get miserable wages. Therefore, "the income of the women belong to themselves" has no meaning.

The reactionary rulers of Islamic Republic propagate the polygamy and so-called temporary marriage which is an Islamic Type of the prostitution and this has become the official policy."



Conditions of Women are worst in Iran Today

Women workers of agricultural, forestry and plantations!

Let us intensify our common struggle for trade union and democratic rights, for the improvement of your standards, for peace and disarmament!

March 8, 1986

The Secretariat

March 8th International Women's Day
Greetings From:

Trade Unions International, Agricultural,
Forestry and Plantation Workers

(TUIAFPW)

Ban Nuclear Explosions

WIDF called women All over the world to do utmost to ensure that the year 1986 should be observed as "the International Year of Peace". It issued the following appeal:

"The Women's International Democratic Federation again expresses its deep concern over the continuing nuclear tests and resolutely demands that they be ended. The continuation of nuclear tests is a source of escalation of tension and the threat of war, of intensification of mistrust among peoples. The termination of nuclear explosions is an important step towards discontinuation of the build up and modernisation of nuclear weapons and towards nuclear disarmament.

The WIDF, like millions of people of good will all over the world, highly appreciates the consistent policy of the USSR in the field of termination of nuclear tests, a policy confirmed by the major initiative put forward by the USSR this summer. As on August 6 the Soviet Union unilaterally ceased all nuclear tests and called upon the US government to act in the same way, The USSR declared that the Soviet moratorium would last till January 1, 1986, but could be prolonged given reciprocity on the part of the United States. Millions of women all over the world are concerned over the absence of a positive response to the proposal of the USSR on the part of the US administration, as well as over the continuation of the intensive programme of underground tests of nuclear weapons in the USA. Termination of nuclear tests is a question on which, if there is a positive approach on the part of the US administration, concrete results can already be achieved today.

A joint move by the USSR and the USA to stop nuclear explosions could create favourable conditions for positive development of the process which began as a result of the Soviet-American summit meeting in Geneva, leading to effective practical measures to curb the nuclear arms race.

The WIDF once again appeals to the women of the whole world to obtain a positive response from the US administration to the

Soviet proposal for a moratorium on all nuclear blasts. This would respond to the strivings of all peace-loving peoples and further the cause of peace and detente.

Berlin, December 1985.

Gorbachov Announces Better Deal for Working Mothers

The Soviet leader, Mr. Mikhail Gorbachov, has announced several measures to improve the countries living standards and promised a 60 to 80 per cent rise in the real per capita income in the coming year. The measures included a better deal to mothers looking after their babies, women will be given paid leave until their babies are 18 months old and working women will have shorter work days.

Lower income families with children of upto 12 years will receive child allowance while the minimum old age pension will be increased. People can retire earlier too while compensation for disability or the loss of the bread winner will be raised.

(Contd. from page 13)

We would like to clarify that we were not consulted and we strongly disapprove of all the provisions of the Bill. We regard this as a retrogressive measure which will lead to disintegration of the Country and a blatant violation of the Constitutional rights of our women. It will strengthen the communal forces and the fundamentalist of every community if such a Bill is passed.

We appeal to all members of Parliament, especially those of the ruling party to dissuade the Government from introducing this Bill.

(Contd. from page 17)

does not of itself constitute sufficient grounds for policies which discriminate against women.

Two developments which have been occurring in recent years in relation to part-time work give grounds for concern. First, there has been a growth in number of part-time jobs in which weekly hours work are below the threshold of obligation under employment protection legislation (which take effect after a minimum of sixteen hours or in some cases eight hours). Second, gross weekly earnings of increasing numbers of part-time women in service industries are below the level of liability for compulsory contributions to the National Insurance scheme. Between 1975 and 1982, the proportion of female part-timers with gross earnings below the National Insurance threshold rose from 18 per cent to 33 per cent.

To examine these issues information from 21 organisations between the years 1979 and 1982 was collected; these covered various types of manufacturing (food, drink and tobacco, clothing, electrical engineering and metal goods), as well as several service industries (banking, insurance, retailing and catering) and public sector organisations (local authorities and hospitals). One of the conclusions from the study is that the disadvantages attached to female part-time employment would be reduced by implementing the proposed Draft Directive of the European Commission which provides for equal treatment of full-time and part-time workers with regard to remuneration, holiday payments redundancy and retirement payments. The authors also note, however, that the most likely outcome of this sort of legislation would be a harmonisation of conditions of part-time and full-time women without seriously tackling the differences between the conditions of employment of men and women, whether in part-time or full-time work.

(Contd. from page 6)

prepared to pay only Rs. 10 per head. Two other advocates, Sailesh Parikh and Akhil Kureshi, discovered that record books had been freshly prepared and were being palmed off as old ones. As awareness grew of the fall-out from the court order, contract labourers at Ajit Mills gheraoed factory inspectors last

fortnight, demanding that they systematically examine the mill records rather than just pay 'lightening visits.'

If nothing else, the gherao demonstrated the workers' faith in the courts, although roughly 1,500 cases relating to contract labourers wait for legal decisions. That faith had received a fillip once earlier when, four years ago, 20 contract workers of the Ahmedabad New Cotton No. 2 mill were awarded arrears of Rs. 1.55 lakh as minimum wages that had not been paid to them. The illiterate workers could hardly believe their luck and even gifted a scooter to their lawyer. But for the thousands of others, the pressures of living a subhuman existence have robbed them of the ability to even dream of a better future.

[By RAMESH MENON,
India Today, 30 Nov. 1985]

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I, Vimal Ranadive, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-

Vimal Ranadive,
Publisher.

Dated: 1st March, 1986

Protest against Unjustified Transfer

The following letter was written by Vimala Ranadive Secretary AICCWW to Shri B. Shankaranand, Minister of Water Resources on 3rd February, 1986:

"I am enclosing a copy of an appeal from Smt Shanti Bajaj, a lady teacher whose husband is employed under your ministry for your special attention.

Shri Bajaj, who is now posted at Delhi is being transferred repeatedly to Bhopal or any other far way places which is surely going to affect their home. There is a standing instruction from the Home Ministry about the desirability of keeping both the husband and wife together as far as practicable. Here Shri Bajaj has already foregone his promotion once. Now although there are vacancies at Delhi and Faridabad, which posts could be manned by him without any difficulties, these posts are

being filled up by bringing in workers who are juniors to him. This is also improper. The principles of natural justice demands that the workers are least disturbed.

It is being stated that there is a system of one moving on promotion out of Delhi. That is not true. I have been given to understand there are many who are not sent out on grounds of health. They get their due promotion. If health ground is considered as a valid ground, conjugal rights are much more valid, as the same is recognised by the ministry as a whole particularly in cases of married working women.

I hope you would issue appropriate orders to promote Shri Bajaj without transfer and let us know the same.

With regards".

(from page 7)

exhibition, however, was the Government's new economic policies and its impact on women. The most striking was the section on the form of labour which the Government sought to encourage — home based production. Collected from information and material from a JMS survey on home based production in Delhi, the exhibition exposed the varied forms of such production—from pin making to almond peeling—that women are forced to undertake within the household at low wages, long working hours and involving other members of the family, particularly children. The JMS campaign ended with the play being staged outside the venue of the exhibition.

8th March Observed in West Bengal

On the occasion of the International Women's Day on March 8, large meeting of women was held in Calcutta. The West

Bengal Ganatantrik Mahila Samity, West Bengal Mahila Samity, Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha and Agragami Mahila Samity sponsored the rally at the CITU's office Shramik Bhavan. Leaders of women's organisations including Shyamali Gupta, General Secretary, WBGMS, and others called upon the women folk, irrespective of communities, to unitedly come out in defence of Muslim women's right threatened by the proposed legislation.

On 8th March, the International Women's Day

- * We greet all women of the world
- * We greet the Women in South Africa & Latin America in particular for their heroic fight against Imperialism
- * Our Struggle for world peace will continue

The Bell of Hiroshima Warns that Tragedy Should Never Be Repeated

THE town clock in Hiroshima strikes like an alarm bell warning mankind that the tragedy of the Japanese city must not be repeated, and that pooling efforts, the nations must put up an insurmountable barrier to thermonuclear disaster.

The clock in Hiroshima strikes not at noon but at 8.15 a.m. Every day for forty years now it has been reminding people how a lethal mushroom-shaped cloud rose over the city. Stones and concrete melted in the infernal flames of the atomic explosion, and only shadows on walls and stairs remained of the people who had been there.

The monument to the victims of the US bombing on August 6, 1945, is a concrete marquee, gray, strict and majestic, framed by the greenery of the Peace park. There is the Peace Bell nearby. Passers-by strike it, and long drawnout mournful sounds reverberate in the air.

There is a limestone slab within the monument, and under it a casket with a list of those killed in the explosion. Every year another hundred or so names are added to that horrifying list. Atomic flames continue consuming their victims decades after.

Nagasaki is the Japanese city where the tragedy of Hiroshima was repeated a mere three days later. On August 9, 1945, everything in the epicentre of the explosion was atomised. Everything was instantly reduced to ashes in 300,000 degree flames, and even stones fused.

The toll in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was immense. Nearly half a million civilians were killed or maimed. To this very day people in Japan have been dying of radiation disease.

On August 6 each year tens of thousands of people gather near the monument in Hiroshima's Peace Park to pay tribute to those who perished in the 1945 atomic explosion and to reiterate the words inscribed on the common

grave: "Rest in peace. The blunder shall not be repeated." Meanwhile countless white lanterns and wreaths are flowing along the river close by. People stand on bank in silence, as if repeating inwardly those words.

But it was not by blunder that the US atom bombs reduced Hiroshima and Nagasaki to ashes on August 6 and 9, 1945. There being no military necessity whatsoever, the bombings were an expression of long-term goals for the whole post-war period. Atomic blackmail was being launched against the Soviet Union and the whole of mankind. Although the bombs exploded in Japan, it was the first hot act in the notorious cold war against the USSR, and a test of a "Limited Nuclear War".

Sir Winston Churchill was to say that it would be wrong to believe that Japan's fate had been decided by the atom bomb. When the United States dropped atom bombs on the Japanese cities, the fate of that ally of Hitler Germany was already sealed. It is a historical fact that Japan capitulated unconditionally not after the atomic bombing, but when the Red Army with powerful blows defeated the Kwantung Army, the main force of the Japanese militarists. It was again the Soviet Union which made the decisive contribution in ending the war in the Far East. This is an indisputable fact.

The tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated. This implies cohesion and pooled efforts of all peace-loving people, including men of good-will in Asia. This acquires particular significance in the present complex international situation whereby the imperialists harbour plans for 'winning' 'limited' or protracted nuclear wars, and threaten to spread the nuclear arms race to outer space.

To the war strategy the world community must confront a strategy of peace whose substance is no nuclear war at all—neither all-out, not limited, neither large-scale, nor small-

scale. No war whatsoever as a means of settling inter-state disputes.

At the Geneva conference on disarmament the USSR representatives insisted that a comprehensive disarmament programme and a number of projects limiting individual aspects of the arms race, notably those providing for a ban on neutron and chemical weapons, should be worked out.

The Soviet Union calls for the resumption of talks on a number of important issues of arms limitation that have been broken off by Washington. These are *inter alia* the talks on banning chemical weapons, on imposing a complete and universal ban on nuclear

weapons tests on limiting military activities in the Indian Ocean, on limiting the sales and deliveries of conventional weapons etc.

Life itself, the stern realities of the nuclear age make it imperative for the East and the West to meet each other half way on the key issues of war and peace, on the key issues of curbing the arms race. A nuclear war is not fatal, it can and must be prevented through concerted efforts of all countries and the whole of mankind. This is the firm conviction of the Soviet Union. But to remove the sword of Damocles hanging over the planet, the earth should be made secure against the nuclear "kamikaze" who are preparing for the peoples the fate of "hibkushia" the victims of a nuclear war

(from page 2)

and women becomes important, especially for a woman. No self respecting, educated and independent woman from any community will try for maintenance from her husband who has rejected her. But the economic and political conditions in our country where more than 2 crores are unemployed, where can those women go but to take shelter under somebody's wing or go for prostitution? The husband who enjoyed the wife's company, produced children, and who divorced the woman, should he not be forced to look after her and her children till she stands on her feet? The dishonest and unscrupulous nature of these people mixed with obscurantism has no parallel.

Shah Banu raised the point correctly by the support of muslim women! The great

fraternity among all sections of women got the courage to support her and other down trodden sisters. A joint voice was raised on the platform, to fight unitedly for the common cause.

We are proud for our Muslim sisters while we feel a bit unhappy that we could not help much earlier because of our weakness in the women's movement to embrace all sections. We were not able to make muslim women a part of our common movement. The vested interests remain in all communities while Congress rulers take advantage of our weaknesses. Let us overcome this and move forward to fight against these vested interests, and the Congress rulers. We congratulate you, our Muslim sisters, admire your courage and greet you on the 8th March with full of our strength.

Issue will be Raised in Parliament

Many members of Parliaments came out of the House in support of the demonstrating women. They assured women they would fight tooth and nail in Parliament to oppose the Bill. The MPs included Vasudev Acharya, Kanak Mukherjee, Ila Bhattacharya, Somnath Chatterjee, Shaiffuddin Choudhari, Indrajeet Gupta and Madhu Dandvate. The Prominent MP to support the Bill was Shri Beherul Islam of Congress(I). Vimal Ranadive (AIDWA), Vimala Faruqui (NFIW) and Pramila Dandvate (M.D.S.) also spoke in support of the Women's cause.

Did You Know ?

The department of women's welfare has recognised four national level voluntary organisations to assist women in distress, under the provision of the Dowry Prohibition (amendment) Act, the House was informed by the Home Minister Mr. S.B. Chavan on 5.3.86. A cell to deal with crimes against women has also been set up in the Delhi police to deal exclusively with offences.

(6.3.1986 Indian Express)

32 Dowry Deaths in Six Months

There were 32 dowry deaths leading to arrest 80 persons in the Union Territory of Delhi during April to October this year, reports UNI.

During April, 1984 to the end of March this year 50 dowry deaths were reported and 115 persons arrested, Minister of State for Home P.A. Sangma told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

(Patriot 20.12.85)

Shariat Makes Provision for Maintenance Smt. Najma Heptulla—General Secretary Congress(I)

Dr Najma Heptulla, has said that the Shariat laws place the responsibility for the maintenance of a divorced Muslim woman on a number of relatives besides the husband.

The controversy over the Shahbano case was on account of peoples' concern that the woman would be left a destitute. But if the Shariat laws were implemented in full, such Muslim women would not be destitutes. Dr. Heptulla said that the Shariat laws provided "a ladder" for the maintenance of divorced women.

"Husband bears the maintenance cost for the first three months after divorce, then she goes to her father, son, uncle or nephew in that order. If she has no relative, the state bears the cost of her maintenance.

"The woman should have a right to go to court if the protection is not given according

to the Shariat laws and use whoever is responsible", she said. The Shariat laws made it clear that there was no need for the husband alone to bear the maintenance. She maintained that Islam was not anti-women. The main idea of those who are supporting the Supreme Court judgement in the Shahbano case was that the women should not be left a destitute. Under the Shariat, she does not become a destitute. "The whole problem is over".

She demanded that the Shariat laws be implemented in full.

(14.12.85 Times of India)

Christian Marriage Laws 'Irrelevant'

The Joint Women's Programme along with Christian women today presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi on 4th of Feb. '86 to put an end to the discrimination in the laws relating to Christian marriage, divorce, succession and maintenance. They charged that the archaic and oppressive laws enacted by an alien (British) government more than a century ago were not only irrelevant, but also violative of the present constitutional provisions.

They pointed out that the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872 was made by the British to suit their policy and was no longer relevant for the Indian Church. In fact, the English laws had undergone a great deal of change on marriage, divorce, and right to property but the Indian Christian Personal Laws remained the same. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, was based on the principles of the English Divorce Courts. The women demanded that the Indian courts should be guided by the facts of the case and the circumstances customs and beliefs of India. Otherwise the entire provisions of the English Divorce Act must be made applicable to Indian Christians and the grounds of divorce liberalised as in Britain.

They said that the Indian Succession Act, 1925, did not give a wife the full rights of her husband's property if he died without making a will and demanded that the right to one's husband's property should not be lineal descendants of the deceased.