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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



Struggle for Strengthening of ICDS!
Work for Consolidation of the Union!!

TRADE UNION UNITY, ONLY THROUGH STRUGGLES

The Conference of the INTUC held at Bangalore on October 21-24, 2005. had appealed to the trade unions for a nationwide unity and formation of a single national trade union centre. M.K. Pandhe, President, CITU addressed the Conference on October 24, 2005. While welcoming the appeal for trade union unity, Pandhe emphasised the need for united movements and struggles, which alone could create a fovourable background for trade union unity and ultimate formation of single national trade union centre.

In the circumstances today, merger of trade unions from above is not possible. Experience of six years of talks between the HMS and AITUC earlier, as well as the recent talks for over two years between the INTUC and HMS could not achieve any results because objective realities do not lead to such a development in the country. Quoting some INTUC resolutions, Pandhe noted that it is possible to organise joint movement for demanding removal of the ceilings in the payment of Bonus Act, demanding banning of all contract labour in permanent and perennial nature of jobs, against growing unemployment and downsizing manpower, against privatisation of profit making public sector undertakings, for revival of sick industrial undertakings, against Supreme Court judgement depriving the right of the workers to strike, against threat of communalism in the trade union movement and against non-implementation of the labour laws. We also can launch a joint movement to ban export of iron one to protect Indian steel industry.

The remarkable unity achieved in the coal industry resulted in achieving successful industry wise national settlement. The Bill to privatise coal mining in the country industry could not be pursued by the Government for the last several years due to united opposition by the unions. The united efforts made by the save IISCO Samiti could also achieve merger of IISCO in SAIL.

Though the INTUC was opposed to strike action, unity with the trade union movement on other forms of actions could be explored. In several local movements the INTUC unions had participated in joint movements, which is a welcome trend. This can extend to the national level also.

It is only such movement can generates favourable atmosphere for national level unity of the working class. The ideological differences need not come in the development of such a united movement.

It may be necessary to try certain intermediary organisational forms to generate confidence among the trade unions for organisational unity of the working class, prior to formation of a single trade union centre, Pandhe opined.

The delegates of the INTUC congress responded well to these views.

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40TH SESSION OF INDIAN LABOUR CONFERENCE

The 40th Session of the Indian Labour Conference will be held on December 9 - 10, 2005 at the Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. M.K.Pandhe, President, Chittabrata Majumdar MP, General Secretary and W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary will represent the CITU as Delegates. Kali Ghosh & Tapan Sen, Secretaries and Raghunath Singh, Vice-President will participate as Advisers. The agenda items include the issues related to unorganised sector workers and amendment of labour laws.

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

DECEMBER 2005

YOU SAID IT by Laxman

TOI Archives



Same here: I am very popular outside my country, but inside, my people don't understand me.

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

WTO HONG KONG MINISTERIAL:
RALLY TO END THIS ILLUSION!

The World Trade Organisation is having its meeting in Hong Kong on December 13-18 2005. The WTO Virodhi Bharatiya Jan Abhiyan a platform for united resistance to the imperialist globalisation symbolised by WTO, has called for a NATIONAL DAY OF PROTEST on the opening day i.e. December 13, 2005. The trade union movement and the CITU in particular have endorsed the call.

The imperialist powers seeking to push through their self-interests through machinations in the WTO are doing everything to undo the failure of the earlier Ministerial at Cancun two years back.

It is unfortunate that the UPA government, during the WTO negotiations, not only religiously toes the positions adopted by the previous NDA Government, but also has entered into a Framework Agreement in July 2004 Geneva talks. This has immensely harmed the interests of the country as well as the unity among the developing countries, particularly the G20 countries (led by Brazil, India, China and South Africa).

It is intriguing to find that whether on Iran nuclear related issues or going ahead with strategic military cooperation with the USA, the UPA regime has displayed its eagerness to be a pliant ally of the imperialist super power. And this stance is casting its shadow on the negotiations in the WTO.

Hence it is necessary, to mount popular pressure on the government that they should NOT Succumb to the pressures of USA and EU at the Hong Kong Ministerial. That the experience of the past ten years of India's engagement with the WTO had only led to unmitigated spiraling of poverty and unemployment in developing countries and widening inequality between and within countries.

There is nothing to panic over Hong Kong Ministerial ending without any agreement, because there is unlikely to be any scope for an agreement that would really protect the interests of developing countries. Rather, not giving in to the huge concessions in agriculture, services and industrial goods that the USA and EU are greedily asking for will do the country much good.

The country has been tired of being fed with stories of the 'gains' that would flow from our engagement with the WTO, which has turned out to be an illusion. The peasantry and rural populace have been pauaperised beyond measure, rural distress has assumed alarming proportions, economy is witnessing deindustrialisation, the employment scene is becoming graver with every passing day and our own natural resources are getting mortgaged to MNC giants to loot at will.

The working people must rally en-masse to end to this illusion and demand of the government to reorient its policies on international trade in the interests of the country and the people.

CALL OF THE 5TH CONFERENCE OF AIFAWH

STRENGTHEN ICDS, CONSOLIDATE UNION

Hemalata

The 5th conference of All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) was held in Susheela Gopalan Nagar (Town Hall) in Bangalore on November 8- 11, 2005. It is significant that 561 delegates out of the total quota of 565 participated in the conference. They represented anganwadi employees from 20 states – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Pondicherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal. Delegates from Bihar were not able to participate due to the elections in the state and the Chat festival; Representatives from Jharkhand could not make alternative travel arrangements as their train was cancelled; those from Jammu & Kashmir had to cancel their travel in the last minute because of the situation in the state.

The conference emphasised the need to universalise and institutionalise the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme, which has completed 30 years of existence on October 2, 2005. Started experimentally with 33 projects in 1975, today, ICDS is recognised nationally and internationally as one of the most unique and effective services for the benefit of women and children. At present more than 6.5 lakh anganwadi centres in 5,480 ICDS projects are operational. Another 1,88,168 anganwadi centres in 467 projects have been sanctioned by the government this year and are expected to be operationalised by the end of this financial year. But it still will only be a little over half of the anganwadi centres required to universalise ICDS, as per the Supreme Court directive. The number of children below six years of age covered by the Scheme will also be only one third of the total of around 16 crore eligible children in the country.

Over the years, the services provided through the anganwadi centres have diversified and the anganwadi workers and helpers are involved in many jobs other than those originally envisaged under the ICDS. Besides providing immunisation, supplementary nutrition, preschool education, health checkups, health and nutrition education and referral services, the anganwadi workers are also involved in formation of Self Help Groups, small savings groups, conducting several surveys including leprosy survey, handicapped survey, cattle survey, BPL survey etc. They are provided training in identifying and providing simple medical aid in cases of upper respiratory tract infections, diarrhoea, simple fever etc. They are also required to create awareness on HIV/AIDS. Their services are utilised in adult education, non-formal education etc. Most of the basic information about the people in the village – births, deaths, number of handicapped persons, BPL population, etc is invariably available at the anganwadi centres. The anganwadi workers in several states are also asked to actively involve themselves in stopping child marriages and other such practices. In short, over the years, anganwadi centres have developed into multiple service delivery centres for the benefit of children and women at the grassroots level. Their services are generally welcomed and appreciated by the people.

Several studies carried out by agencies and institutions like the UNICEF, AIIMS, Planning Commission, NCAER etc to evaluate the functioning of ICDS have noted its positive impact on the community. It was found that the immunisation rate and school enrolment rate have increased while the incidence of severe and moderate malnutrition and the Infant Mortality Rate have come down in the villages with functioning anganwadi centres compared to those without an anganwadi centre. The Planning Commission has strongly recommended that anganwadi centres should be run as 'Day Care cum Crèches' so that women agricultural workers,

peasant women and other women workers can leave their children in the anganwadi centre for the whole day. This will also help in bringing down the school dropout rate among girls. The Second Labour Commission has also recommended the same.

The conditions of the anganwadi workers and helpers, the key functionaries at the local level, are gruesome. They are not recognised even as employees by the government of India, which sponsors the Scheme. They are paid a pittance as 'honorarium'. They do not have any social security or job guarantee. After working all their lives in the anganwadi centre, they have nothing to fall back upon in their old age.

Noting the role of ICDS in ensuring a healthy future for the children and its potential in promoting women's empowerment, the 5th conference of AIFAWH demanded that ICDS should be institutionalised as a permanent department of the HRD ministry of the government of India and the anganwadi workers and helpers, who are the key functionaries of the ICDS, be recognised as Grade III and Grade IV employees respectively.

The conference also noted that achieving this demand would not be possible as long as the government was seeking to wriggle out of its responsibility of providing the basic services like health, education etc to the people, particularly the poor, by implementing policies of liberalisation and globalisation. The conference decided to actively participate in the struggles of the trade unions and other mass organisations in opposing these policies. The need to develop strong bonds with the people in the anganwadi area, particularly the beneficiaries, was emphasised by the conference.

The government was also resorting to measures, which, in effect, weaken the ICDS. In several states, nursery centres to provide pre-school education were being opened by the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, which is actually meant to provide elementary education. These centres were being opened in the same areas where the anganwadi centres were already functioning and providing pre school education. As a result, the number of children in the anganwadi centres was coming down leading to closure of the anganwadi centres. This was also denying the children other benefits provided in the anganwadi centres like immunisation, health and nutrition education etc. The Conference unanimously adopted a resolution opposing opening of nursery centres by the SSA in the same areas where anganwadi centres were functioning.

COMMISSION DISCUSSIONS

The Conference devoted half day session on the 10th November 2005 for Commission discussions on four subjects - 'Strengthening the Relations with the People', 'Role of Anganwadi Employees in the Trade Union and Democratic Movements', 'Universalisation and Strengthening of ICDS' and 'Organisation'.

It was observed that though the anganwadi employees had in general good relationship with the people, sometimes, the negligence of the government created some tensions between the beneficiaries and the anganwadi employees. Several state governments were not supplying supplementary nutrition sometimes for years at a stretch. When it was supplied, the quality was so bad, that children refused to eat it. The Commission on 'Strengthening Relationship with the People' called upon the anganwadi employees to place their difficulties before the people, mobilise their support and organise campaigns on such issues by involving the beneficiaries also. It also called upon the activists of the unions to actively intervene to ensure that benefits from various government programmes reach the beneficiaries. The Conference called upon the anganwadi employees to ensure that the eligible persons in the anganwadi area, particularly the women, get the benefit of the Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Experiences in several states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra etc showed the potential of the unions of anganwadi employees in helping other sections of the unorganised sector workers, women etc to get organised. While actively participating in the struggles on their own demands, the anganwadi employees in these states also helped the domestic workers,

community health workers, mid day meal employees etc to form unions. They also helped in organising the women, agricultural workers, youth etc in their areas.

The Commission on 'Role of Anganwadi Employees in Trade Union and Democratic Movements' emphasised that strengthening the trade union and democratic movement in the anganwadi areas will help in advancing the movement of the anganwadi employees. The Conference called upon all the state committees to replicate these efforts in all the states. It has also decided to organise a national level workshop/ meeting with trade unions and organisations of women, agricultural workers and peasants, followed by state level workshops/ meetings to discuss how to develop and strengthen mutual cooperation.

The Commission on 'Organisation' noted that the membership of the Federation has increased by 92,906 (68%) after the last Conference. Membership has increased in all the states except Jharkhand. Because of the advance in states like Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab etc, the unevenness in membership has come down to some extent. The membership of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, which was 58.18% of the total membership at the time of the last Conference, is 54.88% in 2004. In Pondicherry and Tripura more than 90% of the anganwadi employees in the state are the members of our unions. In Punjab more than 66% of anganwadi employees in the state are our members. But at the same time, the Conference expressed its concern at the continued weakness in the vast stretch of the Hindi speaking region, where the Unions could not make much progress. Because of this, at the all India level the membership of the Federation was only around 18% of the total anganwadi employees in the country. It was decided to concentrate on developing the organisation in the Hindi speaking states.

The Conference called upon all its affiliate unions and state committees to reorient their work to build a strong all India organisation. It reiterated the decision of the 4th Conference to link up the campaigns and struggles with education and training programmes; identify the activists during the campaigns, train them, raise their consciousness and involve them in the organisation. Emphasising the importance of developing committed, conscious and capable cadres in strengthening the organisation, the Conference gave a call to concentrate on cadre development.

The Conference started with the hoisting of the AIFAWH flag by Neelima Maitra, President of the Federation. VJK Nair, Vice President of CITU, inaugurated the Conference. MK Pandhe, President of CITU greeted the Conference, which was presided by Neelima Maitra, Bhabatosh Roy (Working President), Sandhya Rani (Andhra Pradesh), Khirala Brahma (Assam), Sabita (Karnataka), Padmini (Kerala) Bhuvaneswari (Tamil Nadu), Harjeet Kaur (Punjab) and Sushmita Biswas (West Bengal).

A massive procession and rally of anganwadi employees was held on the first day of the Conference on 8th November 2005. Thousands of anganwadi employees not only from all over Karnataka, but also from the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu participated in the procession. A colourful calendar for the year 2006 depicting the struggles of the anganwadi employees in different states was released in the rally by Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU.

A seminar on 'ICDS – Role of Government' was organised on the occasion of the Conference, on the 9th November 2005. The well attended seminar was inaugurated by the former Prime Minister Deve Gowda. Prakash Karat, General Secretary of CPI (M), Dharam Singh, Chief Minister of Karnataka, Subbulakshmi Jagadeesan, Central Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment and Jayati Ghosh, well known economist spoke in the seminar and supported the just demands of the anganwadi employees. Bhageerathi Marulasiddanagowda, Minister for Women and Child Development in Karnataka released the souvenir on the occasion.

A booklet 'Scaling New Heights' (Episodes of Anganwadi Employees' Struggles), published by AIFAWH, was released by Nirupama

Chatterjee, a veteran communist, former Minister for Social Welfare in the Left Front government of West Bengal and a founder office bearer of AIFAWH.

The Conference unanimously adopted the General Secretary's report including a charter of demands, placed by Hemalata and elected a 67 member Working Committee with 21 Office Bearers. Neelima Maitra, Hemalata and AR Sindhu were re-elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer. Kanai Bannerjee, who participated in the Conference throughout, made the concluding remarks. AR Sindhu presented the vote of thanks.

The conference was greeted by leaders of various fraternal organisations. Among them were AIKS vice president S Malla Reddy, AIAWU general secretary and MP A Vijayraghavan, AIDWA leader K S Vimala.

Tasks

The Conference decided to conduct an intensive campaign on the demand of universalisation and strengthening of the ICDS and regularisation of the anganwadi employees. It has decided to

- Organise massive state level demonstrations and processions in all the state capitals on the same day (on a date to be decided by the Working Committee) during the Budget session of Parliament. This will be preceded by project and district level demonstrations.
- During the Monsoon session of Parliament, a 10 day continuous day and night mass dharna/ relay hunger strike will be held near the Parliament, in which around 500 anganwadi employees from different states will participate on each day.
- This will culminate in a one day all India strike.
- An all India campaign will be conducted opposing opening of nursery centres by the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in the same place where anganwadi centres were already functioning. Telegrams will be sent to the Prime Minster and HRD Minister from all the project committees and also by the Self Help Groups.
- Participate in the 'March to Parliament' by the Unorganised Sector workers on 8th December 2005.
- Participate in the demonstrations against the WTO conditionalities on 13th December 2005

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX: MUMBAI INCIDENT

There was a sudden fall in the index figures for Mumbai registering a steep fall by 30 points in the month of May 2005 came up for discussion.

The Labour Bureau justified the steep drop in the figures, during discussions during a meeting with the central trade unions. It cited the Maharashtra Government ban on open sale of kerosene leading to only the PDS price of kerosene being taken under the head "fuel & lighting", which resulted in the drop of 30 points. The officials also took credit that the position had been thoroughly explained to the regional leaders of the trade unions during a seminar on the subject at Mumbai on September 14, 2005.

The fact remains that at the seminar in Mumbai, it came out clearly that the ban on open sale of kerosene in Maharashtra only related to 'blue' kerosene, meant for distribution to the BPL-PDS cardholders and not on 'white' kerosene, which was available for sale in the open market at a price band of Rs. 20 – 24 per litre. The representatives of trade unions pointed this out and also objected to the weightage relating to kerosene being shifted to other items.

This significant revelation knocks off the justification mounted by the Labour Bureau spokesmen for the drop of 30 points in the index figures for Mumbai.

The CITU has demanded the Ministry of Labour to take action to rectify the index figures for Mumbai from May 2005 onwards and to fix up responsibility for the misleading information, which led to altering the basis of compilation of the index for Mumbai.

This is the real face of the consumer price index mechanism!

Federation of Petroleum Workers Founded

The foundation conference of the Petroleum and Gas Workers' Federation of India took place at Haldia, West Bengal on 14th and 15th November, 2005. All total 177 delegates from 52 trade unions (30 unions of regular workers and 22 unions of contract workers) from all the major Petroleum PSUs including ONGC, IOC, OIL , BPCL, HPCL CPL, KRL, NRL, BRPL, IBP, Balmer Lawrie, IOBL etc., from all parts of the country attended the conference.

The most significant features of the Federation launched at the end of the two-day delegate conference are: it represents all the public sector petroleum companies in the country in Oil and Gas Exploration & Production, Oil Refining and Marketing of Gas and Refined Products, the Federation affiliates together command the support of overwhelming majority of the workers in the different respective companies and of course in its totality in the entire oil PSUs. Undoubtedly it is the biggest Federation of the petroleum and gas workers in the country composed of trade unions with various affiliations as well as the unaffiliated independent trade unions functioning in all the segments of the petroleum industry.

The Inaugural Session

The inaugural session commenced on 14th November 2005 at Haldia with the welcome address by Lakshman Seth, MP, Chairman, Reception Committee and the inaugural address by M K Pandhe, President CITU.

Inaugarating the conference, M K Pandhe, President, CITU and also the Co-Chairman of International Energy & Mines Organisation congratulated the delegates for the broadest unity of the Petroleum workers cutting across affiliations and belief reflected by most representative participation in the conference. Unity and United Struggle is our life-line, Pandhe asserted. Petroleum workers must also play a frontline role in the ongoing united countrywide struggle against the neoliberal policies and onslaught on trade union rights and the new Federation has to take urgent initiative in that direction, Pandhe pointed out. Kali Ghosh, General Secretary, West Bengal State Committee of CITU also greeted the conference.

Delegates from Abroad

The inaugural session of the conference was also attended by the distinguished trade union leadership of the Petroleum and Energy Sector trade unions from France, United Kingdom, Egypt, Libya, Russia, Bangladesh etc besides the leadership of International Energy & Miners Organisation (IEMO).

Alongside the foundation conference of the Federation, Haldia also hosted the meeting of the International Steering Committee of Petroleum Trade Unions represented by Fawzy Abdel Bary Hussein, General Secretary, Genera Secretary of Arab Federation of Petroleum, Mining and Chemical Workers, Cairo, Egypt, Mohamed Fadiel Abusata, General Secretary, African Federation of Oil and Natural Gas Workers, Tripoli, Libya, Robert Ippoliti, International Secretary, National Oil and Chemical Workers' Federation, Paris, France, Md. Jane Alam and Munir Uddin Ahmed President and General Secretary respectively of the Bangladesh Oil & Gas Workers' Federation. It is worthwhile to note that these leaders represented around 70 per cent of the total oil reserve of the world. They also attended and addressed the inaugural session of the conference.

Delegate Session

The delegate session started in the afternoon of 14th November and continued till 15th November 2005. The delegate session was conducted by a Presidium comprising Pradeep Mayekar (ONGC, Mumbai), Chandu Dalvi (HPCL, Mumbai), Mahesh Rane (BPCL, Mumbai), Rohini Kalita (Oil India Ltd, Assam), TS Rengarajan (IOC, Chennai), Phani Barman (IOC, Guwahati), Sisir Chakraborty (ONGC, Kolkata) and Dipankar Mukherje, (Secretary, CITU). The conference also constituted a Constitution Drafting Committee comprising Ardhendu Dakshi, Praful Matre, S S Singh, M C Goswami, Nogen Chutia, and Tushar Dutta Majumdar, a Credential Committee comprising Swapan Ganguly, Shiben Guha, T S Sukul, Uday Kumar Majumdar and Atul Rajak and

a Souvenir Sub Committee comprising Abhi Bose, B Balgopalan and Sanjay Chatterjee.

Swadesh Dev Roye, Convenor of the Central Steering Committee placed the Convenor's Report. The report dealt at length the situation facing the Oil and Natural Gas sector in the country and in the international arena. It also dealt on the privatization onslaught on the Oil PSUs. It also pointed to the menace of contractorisation in the Oil PSUs, bringing about adverse change in the composition and quality of employment thereby affecting the trade union rights and right to collective bargaining of the workers. The Report pointed out that in view of the forthcoming challenges before the Oil PSUs the National United Forum has to be strengthened and widened further.

29 delegates from various unions took part in the deliberation on the report. Swadesh Dev Roye responded to various points raised in the deliberation on the report. Various suggestions have also been received from the delegates on the constitution of the new Federations. They have been adopted in principle and it has been decided by the conference that the first meeting of the Committee elected from the conference will finalise the Constitution of "Petroleum & Gas Workers' Federation of India (PGWFI)" on the basis of the suggestions received and circulate the same to all the constituents.

The conference elected unanimously a 29 member strong Office Bearers with Pradeep Mayekar as President, Swadesh Dev Roye, as General Secretary and Ardhendu Dakshi as Secretary (Finance). It has also elected an Executive Committee comprising representatives from the constituent units of the Federation.

The Issues Prioritised

The Federation must take determined steps to promote the industry level all round unity of the workers of the entire petroleum and natural gas industry breaking the barrier of company centric comparatively low level of consciousness. Based on this basic understanding, in the forthcoming days, the Federation must work out detailed plan of action.

The onslaught of privatization of oil PSUs through various routes – divestment of shares strategic or otherwise, leasing out discovered hydrocarbon blocks both on shore and off shore, off-loading of jobs through massive contractorisation, discriminatory favour to private sector, too many JVs with big business houses etc. must be fought vigorously by the Federation.

Attack on labour laws, attack on trade union rights and attack on right to strike are integral part of the structured capitalist ploy of privarisation. Therefore fight against privatization and fight against attack on labour laws and trade union right must go inseparably parallel.

The menace of contractorisation must be fought tooth and nail. The question of right to trade union and collective bargaining for the contractor workers must be taken up on priority basis. "We must seriously ponder over the ever deteriorating dangerous ratio of regular workers, contractor workers and executive cadres in the oil enterprises – both in private sector and public sector and fight out this dangerous distortion."

COM KAISER IMAM

Com Kaiser Imam, Secretary, Bihar State Committee of CITU, died of massive heart attack on 15th November. While traveling with another comrade in motor cycle in the interior village of Sugouli for election campaign, Com Kaiser suddenly felt acute chest pain and he was taken to hospital where he succumbed to death.

Com Kaiser joined the trade union movement as an activist of BSSRU (FMRAI) in 1981. He was dismissed from his job of medical representative for his trade union activities and started working as whole timer in the organisation since then at Mujaffarpur. He had been very active as organiser and contributed immensely in expanding CITU at Bihar. He faced lathi charge by police while organizing Rail-roko on 29th September strike.

The condolence meeting was held on 18th November at Beena Concert Hall at Mujaffarpur Town which was attended by several hundreds. Arun Kumar Mishra, General Secretary, Bihar State CITU, Bijaykant Thakur, Secretary, Bihar State CPI(M), Dipak Bhattacarya, General Secretary, BSSRU and the leadership of CPI, SUCI, CPI(ML) addressed the meeting to offer homage to the departed comrade.

UNITED OPPSITION TO REDUCE EPF INTEREST

Normally, the Central Board of Trustees (CBT), EPF meets during March every year to make its recommendation to the government on the rate of interest on EPF for the next financial year. But, during the last few years there is considerable time lag on this score, in view of successive attempts to reduce the interest rate and the trade union resistance thereto.

The EPF interest rate for 2004 – 05 was also lingering on till May this year. First, the then Labour Minister, after four rounds of discussions in the meeting of the CBT, announced an interim rate of 8.5 per cent as a majority decision. It may be recalled that the Prime Minister had assured the UPA – Left coordination meeting during August 2004 to consider the Left request to not to reduce the interest-rate further from 9.5 per cent. But, there was no decision on this until May 2005. The PM convened a meeting on the subject on May 4, 2005 and a sub-committee, including two representatives of the Finance Ministry, was constituted to go into this issue. The sub-committee, which met on May 25, 2005, felt that either budgetary support be extended as one time measure or the interest on Special Deposit Scheme (SDS) be hiked from 8 to 9.5 per cent. Both the alternatives did not find favour with the representatives of Finance Ministry. Ultimately, on May 28, 2005 the CBT meeting took a majority decision to dip into the Special Reserve Fund (to the tune of Rs. 716.07 crore) to continue the interest rate at 9.5 per cent for 2004 – 05. Trade union representatives protested this decision to drain the Special Reserve Fund, as that is the only fall back provision for settling the claims of workers of closed establishments, when employers had defaulted.

While taking this decision by majority, the Labour Minister also announced that in future in no case interest outgo should exceed the income of the fund and in case the government declared a higher interest, it should bridge the gap of income deficit.

In this backdrop, the Labour Minister convened the meeting of the CBT on July 30, 2005 but it was postponed. The meeting was finally held on November 21, 2005. The figures placed at this meeting revealed that the interest yield (on EPF investments) could only sustain an 8 per cent interest for the year 2005 – 06. Even an 8.25 per cent would result in Rs. 163.27 crore, which would go up to Rs. 1176.37 crore if the rate of 9.5 per cent were to be continued.

This situation is the direct outcome of the policy of soft interest regime pursued by the government. The balance in the SDS is frozen as at 31.3.2004 level and the interest thereon is now paid to the EPFO. The options available to the EPFO as per government guidelines on investments can only fetch interest ranging from 6.5 to 6.75 percent. (This was one per cent lower during corresponding period of last year.)

The government had, during 2004 and 2005, been issuing bonds bearing interest ranging from 5.5 to 6.5 per cent, which is lower than even the administered rate of interest (which stands reduced to 8 per cent since April 2002), and much lower than the prime-lending rate of the banking system (which now ranges from 10.25 to 10.75). All the securities as per approved pattern are now being quoted in the market at a premium and this would result in the yield on investments dropping further lower.

In view of this, all the nine representative of trade unions (including two from the INTUC) presented a joint letter to the Labour Minister requesting him to take up with the Prime Minister the issue of enhancing the rate of interest on the Special Deposit Scheme as well as on the government bonds, with a view to ensure that the interest rate on EPF is not further reduced from 9.5 per cent. (Text of the joint letter is reproduce hereunder.)

During the meeting, the Labour Minister attempted to push for a decision to declare the rate of interest at 8 per cent, once again by majority with the government and employers supporting it. As it is necessary for another meeting of the CBT to

be held before December 10, 2005, the Minister announced to hold another meeting on December 7, 2005. After protracted discussions, the Minister put off the decision to the next meeting.

Though the issue is stalled at least till December 7, 2005, the Finance Ministry is pressurising the Labour Ministry to decide the interest rate at a level, which can be sustained by the interest income of the EPFO. This, in clear terms, means a reduction from 9.5 to 8 per cent. This would not stop here even. With the government resorting to steadily lowering the interest rate, there could be a further slide in the rate in the successive years as well.

This issue must be taken to the mass of the workers through wide campaign to build a strong resistance to the move to further reduce the interest rate on EPF.

TEXT OF JOINT LETTER BY TRADE UNIONS

"We, the undersigned members of the CBT, EPF, draw your kind attention to the repeated requests made by the Central Trade Union Organisations, both inside the CBT as well as outside, for restoration of the interest rate on Provident Fund to the pre-July 2000 level.

As you are very well aware, the question of interest rate on the deposits of the Employees' Provident Fund subscribers had been lingering as a contentious issue, ever since the Government of India decided to reduce the administered rate of interest during successive years from 2000 – 01. Arising from this, the declaration of rate of interest for the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 had been a matter of uncertainty for unduly long periods.

As recommended by the 168th meeting of the CBT, the matter has been taken up with the Government of India for continuing the Special Deposit Scheme and enhancing the rate of interest on it, since August 2004. Unfortunately, the Government of India had so far not favourably responded to this.

In your address to the Special meeting of the CBT held on May 28, 2005, you referred to the 'various trade union leaders' having 'met the Prime Minister and 'made representations continuously for declaring the rate of interest @ 9.5 per cent'. However, the said meeting took the unprecedented decision, by majority, of bridging the deficit of Rs. 716.07 crore from the Special Reserve Fund to meet the interest for the year 2004 – 05 at 9.5 per cent. The meeting also noted that for declaring a rate of interest higher than the income of the fund, the Government should bridge the gap of income deficit.

As the Government persists with the administered rate of interest at 8 per cent and has resorted to issue Government bonds (in which a minimum of 40 per cent of EPF funds are required to be invested as per the guidelines on investment) at interest rates further below that rate, the yield on the investments of the EPF is dropping to further lows.

In view of this, we request you to kindly take up the issue of enhancing the rate of interest on the Special Deposit Scheme, as well as on the Government bonds, with the Prime Minister with the view to ensure that the rate of interest is, in the least, not reduced further for the present fiscal year of 2005 – 06.

The deposits in the EPF constitute the mandatory savings from out of the earnings of the workers, of which a very substantial portion remains invested with the Government for almost the entire career life of the workers. You will appreciate that any reduction of the rate of interest on these deposits will hit the workers very hard and therefore the same should accorded a differential treatment as against the other market related interest rates.

We trust you will kindly accede to this request of ours and refrain from repeating the unhealthy precedent of breaching the time-honoured tradition of the CBT, EPF to arrive at decisions only by consensus and not by majority".

The signatories to the joint letter are: Hasubhai Dave, A.Venkatram and Baij Nath Rai (BMS) Ashok Singh and Nirmal Ghosh (INTUC), W.R.Varada Rajan (CITU), A.D. Nagpal (HMS), D.L. Sachdev (AITUC for Pardhuman Singh) and Sankar Saha (UTUC-LS). (Sanjeeva Reddy of INTUC did not attend the meeting)

WTO HONGKONG MEET: ISSUES OF CONCERN

Next ministerial meet of WTO scheduled to be held on 13th December 2005 onward at Hong Kong is going to deal on various crucial issues of concern viz., 'Agreement on Agriculture' (AoA), 'Nonagricultural Market Access (NAMA)', 'General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS)', 'Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)', etc. Given the structural inequality and asymmetry that is built in the WTO agreement and negotiating format in favour of the rich industrialized nations, it is but natural that the developed countries' governments will compel the developing countries to sacrifice their interests.

Last Ministerial meet held at Cancun ended in a failure owing to strong united resistance by the developing countries against the designs of the rich and industrialized countries. But subsequently the role of India joining the team of five interested parties (FIP) along with USA, EU and Brazil, in bringing about 'July framework Agreement 2004' formulated at Geneva, marks the weakening of the resistance. This 'July framework Agreement' is going to be the framework for discussion for the forthcoming Hongkong Ministerial meeting.

In the Hong Kong meet, the rich countries' Govts while playing on their huge agricultural subsidy, will pressurize the developing countries to withdraw all protections to agriculture, to provide unbridled market access to MNCs in the nonagricultural areas, and also to remove all barriers of entries and control of foreign companies in public utility services like water, health etc and strategic service sectors like finance, general communication, telecom etc. This will spell further disaster in all the sectors of our economy.

WTO'S 'Agreement on Agriculture' is capital intensive and is insensitive to the needs of the masses of peasantry and the small and marginal farmers in India. On the other hand, the Govt of India seems to be focusing on opening up of the agricultural sector to corporate capital, both domestic and foreign and introduction of large-scale corporate agriculture. Owing to such misplaced priority, there is every possibility that Govt of India may remain non-resistant to the pleadings in the WTO and getting bogged down in insisting the developed countries' agricultural subsidies. But in reality, the G-20 proposal for reduction of agricultural subsidies by the developed countries, will not come into effect till 2012-13. Whereas, the agricultural market access that is being negotiated starts from 2007 itself. Even if the developed countries do not manipulate their subsidy reduction commitments, once the developing countries open their market by lowering their already low tariff barriers, the cheap subsidized imports would devastate the developing countries' agriculture in these five years' time. In totality, the WTO's AoA regime is designed to give a long hand to manipulate on their commitments for reduction in agricultural subsidies without actually reducing it while pressurizing the developing countries to open their agricultural market for exploitation by foreign corporates.

The agenda of 'Non Agricultural Market Access' (NAMA)' is another contentious issue. The draft proposals made by the developed countries in this regard known as "Derbez Text" was rejected totally by the majority of the WTO member countries in the Cancun meeting. But the "July Framework, 2004" to which India is also a party, has brought back again into the agenda. The key issue in NAMA is that while developing countries protect their market through higher tariffs, the main mode of protection for the developed countries is through technical barriers. Today 44% of Indian exports to US and 23% to the EU have to face non-tariff barriers. Technical barriers to trade and Psytosanitary (SPS) measures are the main NTB affecting Indian exports. The NAMA is designed to press upon the developing countries to drastically reduce their tariff barrier. Hence tariff reduction issues being negotiated under NAMA would allow the developed countries to have much greater access to the markets of the developing countries. This trend is an one-sided gain for the rich countries. Moreover many of the items identified for tariff reduction in the draft are crucial for Indian

peoples' livelihood. In national interest, Govt of India must retrace its steps, should not agree to line-by-line tariff-cuts, and any tariff reduction without concurrent dismantling of the non-tariff barriers by the developed countries.

In respect of 'General Agreement on Trades in Services' (GATS)', the developed countries have now been trying to pressurize the developing countries to open their services sector. The developed countries are also trying to distort the basic structure of GATS in their favour in the name of "benchmarking approach", "a common baseline approach" or more recently, "complementary approaches" to negotiations. Since the developed countries are already having a liberalized service sector, these approaches imply that the burden of opening in the current round of negotiation would have to be entirely borne by the developing countries only.

India unfortunately, has been adopting a pro-active stance in the GATS negotiations. A very extensive "offer list" has been submitted which includes sectors like water, health and education etc. This pro-active approach reflects India's willingness to open up several sectors of the economy in lieu of some concessions from the developed countries in respect of Mode 4 (movement of natural persons) and Mode 1 (cross border supply including BPO). Given the conservative approach of the developed countries, particularly EU and US in respect of Mode 4, it is evident that the Indian authorities are running after illusory gains while opening crucial service sectors. The experience of privatization of crucial public utilities like water supply, health, education, power distribution etc in certain parts of the country is enough to guess probable impact of unregulated opening of service sectors of our economy.

The negotiation on issues relating to "Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights" (TRIPS) in the Hong Kong round assumed crucial importance following introduction of products patent regime in India through amendment of Patents Act. It is now an acknowledged fact that the Uruguay round commitments on which the TRIPS regime has been built up have been made in a nontransparent manner by the-then Govt and that had adversely affected the nation and the people. In that context, in the present round of negotiation India must press for expeditious negotiation on Protection of Geographical Indicators in the WTO to extend it to agriculture, natural goods, manufactured goods, industrial goods, food-stuff etc, a complete review of TRIPS agreement in the broader context of reviewing its impact and appropriate changes like exclusion of micro-organism, non-biological and micro-biological processes from patentability and other remedial measures, appropriate provision for prompt transfer of technology as an integral part of the patent laws in each country etc.

The Left parties has already cautioned the Govt of India about the danger through a detailed note on the stand to be taken by the Govt on all the above issues in the forthcoming Ministerial meet.

To strengthen the resistance further, peoples movement is required to be developed to restrain the Govt of India from capitulating under imperialist pressure. The Working class movement has to take initiative in this direction. All the state committees of CITU, and Industrial Federations are requested to take urgent initiative to unleash a thorough grass-root level campaign on the issues mentioned hereinabove and try to involve other trade unions, mass organisations and all sections of patriotic people in the joint campaign.

1. Campaign through meetings, seminars, publishing leaflets and other literatures in all the workplaces and centers at blocks, districts and industrial townships.
2. State and district level conventions to be completed preferably by first week of December 2005
3. All India Protest Day on 13th December 2005, the day of the commencement of WTO meet at Hong Kong to be observed through massive demonstrations in State capitals throughout the country including Delhi and also in the districts and industrial centers wherever possible.

ECONOMY: REALITY CHECKS

GROWTH AND ILLITERACY

Of the 771 million adult illiterates in the world without basic literacy skills, South and West Asia together fare the worst, with the lowest adult literacy rate of 58.6%, according to Unesco's Education For All (EFA) global monitoring report 2006, released here today by Kumud Bansal, secretary in the ministry of human resource development. The report, whose global release took place simultaneously in London, mentions that illiteracy prevails in countries where severe poverty is the norm. "In most instances, where poverty rates are higher, literacy rates tend to be lower. This is true among and within countries.

In Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique and Nepal, for example, where 78% or more of the population lives below $2 per day, adult literacy rates are below 63%, and the number of adult illiterates exceeds 5 million in each country." The number of illiterate people in India is more than 5 million, according to the report. Nepal and Pakistan also have similarly high rates. The report puts India among the 30 countries unable to achieve adult literacy targets by 2015, due to the slow pace of progress. The other countries at risk of not achieving the goal are Pakistan and Nepal, several countries of Africa and Latin America.

Sri Lanka is the sole exception among South Asian countries as it figures among 23 countries that have a fairly high chance of meeting the adult literacy target. According to a government official, the problem with India, apart from a growing population, is that there are huge discrepancies between states such as Kerala with full literacy, and Bihar and UP, where the literacy rate is about 50%.

(The Financial Express, 10-11-2005)

GROWTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT

As per report "Employment and Unemployment Situation of India, January-June 2004" released by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)...., the unemployment rate (persons unemployed per 1000 persons) for urban females was highest at 165 and for rural females at 31....A similar trend was seen for urban males which had the rate of unemployment of 87 compared to 42 for rural males.

In both rural and urban areas, unemployment rate among the educated youth (defined as persons above the age of 15 with education level of secondary and above) was higher than that among those below secondary level. The unemployment rate among urban women above higher secondary level is 305, and at below secondary level is 268. Unemployment rate among educated male is 147 and 101 for urban and rural areas respectively....According to the Report, amongst all categories, the unemployment rate stood highest for educated youth (for each sex and sector).....

(The Financial Express, 22-11-2005)

GROWTH AND POVERTY

If you do a comparative study of the country's state, Maharashtra ranks first in industrialization, second in urbanization and third in wealth. Sounds rosy enough ? But that's only half the picture. The state also has a ballooning fiscal debt, increasing unemployment, deteriorating governance, high environmental pollution and huge regional disparity in poverty, education and health.

A chapter in the Maharashtra Development Report, a comprehensive assessment put

together by Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research (IGIDR) and other institutes for the Planning Commission likens the state to "islands of urban prosperity in a sea of rural poverty". The findings of the Report seems timely, given the recent spate of farmers' suicide....The Report notes that the per capita product of Mumbai is consistently 2 to 2.5 times higher than the rest of the state. "Villages, where the overwhelming majority of her disadvantaged communities live, have no share in the prosperity." Fifty per cent of the rural dwellers, for example, still don't have easy access to drinking water. Indeed the state's success(?) in achieving high rates of growth has been tarnished by its inability to reduce poverty, ignorance and disease, says the Report.....Such skewed regional development means that in some districts, up to 50% of people live below poverty line...

Although the Maharashtra Development Report has both good and bad to say about the state's achievements, it's the brickbats that seem to dominate it....

(Times of India, 10-11-2005)

ONLY INDIA HAS TRADE DEFICIT AMONG BRIC COUNTRIES

India is the odd man out among the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries when it comes to trade deficit and the role of export in driving the GDP growth. While Brazil, China and Russia are all trade surplus countries, India's trade deficit has shot up from $14.6 billion in January-September 2004 to $27 billion in January-September 2005...While India's exports have grown by 24% in the first nine months of 2005, its import has grown at a much faster rate of 35%...Besides oil, there has been an equally buoyant growth in the import of machinery and raw materials in recent months. ...In the medium to long run however, with the possibility of rising inflation and interest rates, along with a current account deficit, a large and growing trade deficit could begin to put pressure on India's balance of payments.

(The Economic Times, 10-11-2005)

LABOUR LAW VIOLATIONS IN IT & ITES SECTOR: MINISTRY OF LABOUR SEEKS REVIEW BY STATES

In response to the letter dated October 12, 2005 addressed by the CITU on violation of labour laws by the IT/ITES Sector throughout the country, the Ministry of Labour has urged the State Governments to review the implementation of labour laws in the concerned sector and report back.

K M Sahni, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India, in his reply dated November 3, 2005 has stated:

"This has reference to your letter dated 12th October 2005 following our discussions of 10th October 2005 regarding provisions of labour laws that protect the interests of the workers of Information Technology and IT-Enabled Services. As discussed, the state Governments are the "appropriate" authority under labour laws and legally vested with powers to deal with violations of labour laws. Chief Secretaries of the States have accordingly been requested by us to get implementation of labour laws reviewed expeditiously and to convey their views on the suggestions that we have received from your organization".

'INVESTMENT FUND' TO PROMOTE DISINVESTMENT?

Tapan Sen

Despite opposition from the trade unions and the Left parties, the UPA Govt has been going ahead with its privatization plan. The National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) does not permit the UPA Govt to privatize the profit making PSUs. Thus the Govt took a move for selling shares in phases of the PSUs and they started with the BHEL, a Navaratna PSU. In the face of countrywide protest and opposition to such move followed by General Strike, the Govt announced that the shares of Navaratna PSUs will not be disinvested for the moment. But immediately thereafter, the Govt announced their decision to divest shares in other non-Navaratna profit-making PSUs.

The plea of the Govt is that selling minority shares of PSUs is not privatization. And another plea is that the Govt needs fund for social sector expenditure and for revival of sick PSUs. These are just pleas to camouflage the ill intention to privatize the public sector units as a part of the so called neoliberal "economic reforms" process. Since, owing to dependence on Left parties, the Govt cannot straightway privatize the PSUs, the Govt wants to keep the process of privatization on, through selling shares of profitable PSUs in installment up to 49 per cent of govt holdings and wait for appropriate time for wholesale privatization.

The plea of mobilizing funds for social sector spending is also baseless.

Recently, after being compelled to back track in the matter of BHEL disinvestment, a desperate Govt swithched over to the Non-Navaratna PSUs for disinvestment and hurriedly announced operationalisation of "National Investment Fund (NIF)" to park the sale-proceeds of shares of other profit-making PSUs. Such move has been opposed by the entire trade union movement. In a statement issued by CITU on 4th November 2005, it has been mentioned that "CITU opposes the 'General Scheme for Operationalisation' of so called 'National Investment Fund' on the camouflage of funding 'social sector expenditure' or reviving sick PSUs. In reality, the National Investment Fund is nothing but an instrument of privatizing the profit making PSUs through phased disinvestments of their shares. In a welfare state, expenditure on social sector schemes is a continuous process and any idea of funding the same through one time disposal of some shares lacks sanity besides exposing total insincerity of purpose on the part of the Govt. In reality, the return on the NIF, proposed to be used for declared objectives would be peanuts, in the area of resource mobilization, which exposes the real motive of the Govt behind their disinvestment move. It is ironical that though there is no reference of disinvestments in NCMP which actually mandates revival of sick revivable PSUs, the UPA Govt. since last 16 months have been prioritizing disinvestments as its main agenda ignoring revival of sick CPSUs."

The Govt is milking the assets of public sector units only, on the plea of funding social sector expenditure, leaving the private majors whose profit have jumped manifold during recent years mainly because of policy patronage and liberal concessions by the Govt. In a letter addressed to the Finance Minister, P Chidambaram on 14th November, M K Pandhe, President CITU debunked the opportunist plea of the Govt that "disinvestments up to 49% equity is not privatization" and stated that "If the Government of India desires to raise resources for social sector and revival of sick Public Sector units, the same can be done by imposing tax on super profits earned by several private sector companies including some prominent MNCs. We believe that some tax concessions they are enjoying are unjustified and undeserving. The IT Sector is an example."

But instead of making the private monopoly houses pay for resource-mobilisation on social sector projects, the Govt has been moving in the opposite direction to arrange resources for the private sector players to ensure their control on infrastructure projects. The Union Cabinet made a recent announcement on constituting a 'Special Purpose Vehicle" (SPV) stated to be for funding

infrastructure projects. The entire scheme is to arrange resource for the private sector partners in infrastructure projects and such private sector partnership will get overriding priority from the SPV. While expressing concern over such move by the Govt, the statement issued by CITU on 4th November 2005, noted that "The main logic, put forward by successive Governments for entry of private sector in infrastructure, was on the plea of 'resource crunch' of Central and State Govts. There can thus be no logic at all for Govt guaranteeing for private player's raising funds either for their wholly owned projects or for their partnership on so called PPP (Public-Private partnership) projects, which is the real face of the so called SPV exercise. CITU strongly opposes such decision of Govt. to fund private and so-called public-private (which would be more private than public) partnership. The euphemistically designated India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL), as clear from its objectives, would formalise Govt. as guarantor, for private sector's raising funds from the market and their commercial borrowing. Govt.'s role as facilitator for arranging fund as a guarantor to private sector is totally unacceptable in light of bitter experience of more one lakh crore NPA and same amount of taxes due from Indian corporates. Govt. should concentrate on mopping up these dues instead of extending further assistance to private sector. CITU also demands that 'viability gap funding' if any, should be extended only to the public sector projects where the projects are getting delayed because of lack of resources. This fund, if extended to private sector, in CITU's opinion, would be another major source of scam. CITU opposes strongly the Cabinet decision to fund private sector projects by the Govt. in one form or other."

WHERE IS THE MONEY?

The Government of the day is desperately pleading for selling PSU shares for garnering resources for social sector spending and for revival of sick PSUs. A dubious plea indeed to befool the people! They seek to do this by always lamenting lack of resources for much needed finances for spending on common people or for revival of sick PSUs, which they had to commit while occupying seat of governance.

But, what is really lacking is their political will and sincerity of purpose. There is no dearth of resources at all.

Here are some glaring facts. As per current figures, 50 profit-making PSUs are having reserves and surpluses of Rs 2,21,157 crore, of which only 37 per cent have been spent on investment, another 40 PSUs have invested less than 33 per cent of their huge reserves and surpluses and the rest - must be a huge sum of more than two lakh crore - is lying idle, mostly in low-interest Govt. securities. BSNL, for instance, has a reserve of Rs 50,000 crore but has been allowed to invest only 12 per cent of its reserve. MTNL could invest only 9 per cent of its Rs 9698 crore reserve. Almost same is the situation of unutilised reserves in most of the 140 profit making PSUs, of which at least 132 units have now been the target of privatisation in phases. Only a small fraction of this huge amount of reserves are required for investment in the revival of all the sick PSUs and that can well be harnessed instead of pushing the profit-making PSUs in the privatisation track. But when privatisation is the main motive, then disinvestment is the only available route before Chidambaram & Co and revival of sick PSUs is only a deceptive cover and nothing else. The Govt. is pleading - there is no money to revive the sick but viable PSUs owned by the Govt. itself. But the same Govt has enough money to revive the Enron project without penalising Enron for its misdeeds. The Govt. has liberally allowed Rs 3200 crore to be spent by the Public sector financial institutions (with the Govt. as guarantor) for retiring the debt of Enron-owned Dabhol Power Corporation by the foreign lenders, besides forcing NTPC, GAIL and MSEB to spend around 10 to 12 thousand crore rupees for revival of the Enron Project.

The Govt. laments, it has no money and hence it requires selling PSU shares for social sector spending. And at the same time it will allow tax default to the tune of one lakh crore of rupees by Indian corporates, besides allowing them to usurp Rs 1, 20,000 crore from the nationalised banks in the form of NPA (unpaid loans).

Do they consider, people are all fools?

(In an unusual move, the Secretary, Labour & Employment, Government of India, (K.M. Sahni), while appearing before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour on October 5, 2005, made a presentation on "Making Labour Markets Flexible – Suggestions for Consideration". Later, he forwarded a copy of the presentation to all the Central Trade Union Organisations (CTUOs) seeking their considered views on the suggestion made in the presentation.

All the CTUOs decided to take a united stand on the issue and respond jointly to the Ministry of Labour. A meeting of the representatives of all the CTUOs was held in the office of the HMS in New Delhi on October 28, 2005 for the purpose.

The national conference of the INTUC was held in Bangalore on October 22 – 24, 2005. The entire leadership of the INTUC had moved out to Bangalore for the conference and no one was available at their New Delhi headquarters. In view of this, the INTUC was not represented at the meeting. Though the BMS had already sent their reply to the Ministry of Labour, a representative of the BMS did participate in the meeting and was also a signatory to the joint letter sent to the Ministry of Labour by all the CTUOs.

We publish hereunder the text the joint reply sent on October 28, 2005, by the CTUOs to the Ministry of Labour. This should be utilised for a wide campaign among all sections of workers with the view to build up a united resistance to the move to amend labour laws to the detriment of the interests of labour. - Editor)

MOVE ON LABOUR LAW CHANGES OPPOSED

Text of joint letter by AICCTU, AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, TUCC, UTUC and UTUC-LS, addressed to Shri K.M. Sahni, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India.

"We have for reference a copy of the presentation on "Making Labour Markets Flexible – Suggestions for Consideration" made by the Ministry of Labour & Employment before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour on October 5, 2005, seeking our considered views on the suggestion made therein.

It is indicated: "the note had been drawn up by the Union Labour & Employment Secretary in consultation with his officers". We are at a loss to comprehend why a set of officials of the Labour Ministry chose to prepare the note suggesting labour law changes, without consulting the Central Trade Union Organisations (CTUOs) - violating the commitment of the present government in its own NCMP. We take a very strong exception to such a procedure adopted and to directly placing these views to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, on such an important subject, admittedly having 'wider ramifications.' We wonder whether this has a hidden motive as the very same subject is listed, inter-alia, for discussions in the ensuing Indian Labour Conference to be held on the 9th & 10th December 2005.

The presentation suggests the note that has been drawn up "is the outcome of innumerable earlier discussions on the subject of Labour Reforms and also keeping in mind what was discussed with the employers' and the employees' representatives at formal sittings on 29th and 31st March 2005 respectively." By implication, it seeks to present that the entire discourse on the subject had been confined to 'Making Labour Markets Flexible', which in our view is a misrepresentation of facts and events.

We wonder how your Ministry had chosen to totally sweep beneath the carpet a host of the suggestions/proposals made by the trade unions and cherry picked the proposals made by the employers only for the present exercise.

We do not want to dwell at length the general remarks made in the presentation as a backdrop to the wish list on labour reforms appended. But, we deplore your averment that both the trade unions and the employers 'are protecting their respective turf' and 'sadly nobody is talking of the youth of the country, the unemployed graduates, the school drop-outs, whose future is at stake'. We wish to refute the allegation with all the emphasis at our command as at least from the trade unions side we had consistently been

raising the issues of employment generation, lifting the ban on recruitment et al and opposing downsizing in both the public and private sectors, keeping in view the interests of the youth of this country. While your sweeping remarks are contrary to this fact, the specific suggestions mooted in the note only make a mockery of the concern expressed over youth employment. Fact remains that if somebody is least concerned about youth unemployment, it is the government which is bent on reducing the employment potential in the country through its liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation policies.

The trade union movement has all along been resisting these policies of jobless growth, which are further aggravating the already menacing unemployment problem and placed several suggestions in various fora to reverse this trend. We find that your note seeks to intensify this trend by suggesting that the ongoing downsizing by the government, industry's obsession with cutting costs, in its quest for a slice of the globalising pie, wanting only seasonal workers etc. must be accepted as an unalterable phase and a quest for anything to the contrary would be a sheer folly to try and live in splendid isolation is totally unacceptable to the trade unions.

We cannot but express our anguish that the suggestions made in the note are nothing but echoing the employers' demands for unfettered rights for 'hire & fire', albeit couched in a different language.

ANOTHER BID TO FREE EMPLOYERS FROM LABOUR LAWS

The Government of India has introduced the Labour Laws (Exemption From Furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by Certain Establishments) Amendment And Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2005 in the Rajya Sabha on August 22, 2005. The proposed Bill seeks to extend the scope of exemption from the requirement of maintaining registers and furnishing returns by employers. At present the Act (which was passed in 1988) extends to 'small' and 'very small' establishments, in which 10 to 19 persons and below 10 persons are employed and covers nine labour laws. Under the proposed Bill 'very small establishments' will be deleted and instead 'other establishments' will be included, the latter employing 20 or more but below 500 persons. The Bill has also provisions to empower the Government to extend the coverage of the law to establishments employing more than 500 persons also, through a notification. More, the Bill will empower the Central Government to change the Schedules/Forms etc in the Act at their will and both the Central and State Governments can exempt any establishment even from the proposed legislation. The Bill intends to pass off all these measures in the name of 'the simplification of the forms and registers'!

The Bill is now before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, which has sought the comments/suggestions from the employees'/employers' organisations. The AITUC, CITU and HMS had addressed a joint communication to the Standing Committee together with a detailed note detailing our objections to the basic thrust and content of the Bill. (Due to paucity of time, we could not make this jointly with the other CTUOs but we have requested that they may also place their views on similar lines before the Standing Committee.

(As per parliamentary procedures, the memorandum to the Standing Committee should be treated as a privileged document until the standing committee submits its report. Hence, we are not publishing it. – Editor)

The very premise that the emerging reality in the world of work is increasing use of contract labour and that it should be formalised in the legal framework reflects a flawed thinking and has ominous portents. It is strange that the conclusions of the International Labour Conference - to which the Government of India is a party - that the units and workers of the informal sector should progressively be mainstreamed into the formal sector is summarily negated by this suggestion.

Even according to official statistics, 93 per cent of the workforce in the country is in the informal sector, where practically most of the labour laws remain inoperative. In this background, we are shocked to find the government abandoning the every concept of creating durable employment in the formal sector. Worse still, should the government choose to cater to the greed of the employer class to push the entire labour force – cent percent – into the informal work?

Though the presentation assumes the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), adopted by the UPA government, to be a pertinent factor under the given circumstances, the suggestions cover the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 as well. The NCMP stipulated that "No automatic hire & fire; dialogue to be pursued with industry and trade unions regarding changes in labour laws while fully protecting the interests of workers." It also envisaged that the 'Industrial Disputes Act' will not be tinkered upon and decision on reforms will be by "consensus". The proposals made in the note violate all these aspects of NCMP stipulations on labour laws.

The post liberalisation period is also the period of increasing incidence of poverty in absolute numbers. A major section of the poor people are 'working poor' mostly engaged in unorganised/ informal sector occupations. Whatever is being proposed in the note in the name of labour reforms will spread greater informalisation in workplace and deepen the incidence of poverty. poverty instead of generating decent employment. The direction of the labour law reform should be just opposite to what is being proposed. Amendments are, of course, needed to change the outdated and obsolete provisions in the existing laws such as Payment of Bonus act, Provident Fund Act, Gratuity Act, minimum coverage in some of the statutes etc. and not in the manner suggested in your communication. Besides, the government should take speedy steps to legislate the long-awaited enactments on unorganised and agricultural workers. Measures are also called for strict implementation of the existing labour legislations, which is in a state of disarray.

CITU APPEAL TO INTUC

In a letter dated October 31, 2005, Chittabrata Majumdar MP, General Secretary, CITU appealed to Sanjeeva Reddy, President, Indian National Trade Union Congress, to take a stand similar to that taken by the CTUOs on the move on labour law changes. He forwarded copies of two joint letters addressed by the Central Trade Union Organisations (CTUOs) - first to the Prime Minister on the Small & Medium Enterprises Development Bill, 2005 and the second to the Secretary, Labour & Employment on the proposed labour law changes. He noted that the entire leadership of the INTUC had been busy with their national conference held in Bangalore on October 22 – 24, 2005 and hence could not take part in these joint initiative. He also referred to the stand taken by the INTUC on the subject of Contract Labour legislation and the issue of labour reforms itself, at their recent conference and in the light of that expressed a hope that the INTUC would communicate to the Government of India on similar lines. The response from the INTUC is awaited still.

These suggestions for amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act and Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act are aimed at further constricting the area under the coverage of labour regulations and expanding the employers' discretion indefinitely in the entire workplace of the country. Two Bills already introduced in Parliament viz., the Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by Certain Establishments) Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2005 and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Bill 2005 are also intended to usher in total anarchy in industrial relations.

In fine, we view with resentment these suggestions and convey our total opposition thereto".

{The signatories are: Rajiv Dimri (AICCTU), Gurudas Dasgupta (AITUC), R. Pande (BMS), W.R. Varada Rajan (CITU), A.D. Nagpal (HMS), P. Devarajan (TUCC), Aboni Roy (UTUC) and R.K. Sharma (UTUC-LS)}.

PFRDA BILL:

'GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS UNACCEPTABLE': CITU

The UPA government in a bid to push for legislating the PFRDA Bill in the ensuing winter session has put up a few proposals for amendments to be incorporated in it, in a note presented at a meeting of the Left-UPA coordination al panel on November 22, 2005.

In response to this move, the CITU secretariat in a statement issued on Nov. 22, 2005, termed the proposed amendments as "only cosmetic changes, besides being a bid to confuse, and in no way address the basic concerns voiced by the employees and the trade unions".

The proposals now floated only seek to incorporate a few proposals in the main report of the Standing Committee, which vetted the Bill, and the issues raised in the dissenting notes appended thereto by the M.P.s from the Left have totally been ignored.

The dissent notes specifically pointed to Section 20 (f) of the Bill clearly ruling out 'any implicit or explicit assurance of benefits except market based guarantee mechanism' and stated: 'This means the fate of the employees in their old age will be determined by the vagaries of the market'. They had also termed the government's move as one "to dismantle the existing pension system for the government's own employees and withdrawal of the responsibilities of supporting its own employees after their retirement. This is a retrograde step and in a welfare state (government) disowning this responsibility is unacceptable". The proposed provisions for permitting one pension fund manger to be public sector or for option of 100 per cent investment in government securities do not in any way protect the employees from being the victims of the vagaries of market forces nor do they guarantee any minimum benefit of pension.

Similarly, the inclusion of Tier –II account as part of the basic feature of the New Pension system is nothing new but a repetition of replacing the present mandatory General Provident Fund as a voluntary additional provision. This also does not address the basic objection of the trade unions to incorporating the Individual Retirement Account concept as the first and mandatory tier. In this context again the dissent notes clearly pointed out: "No other country, including the OECD countries, has made the individual retirement account based on defined contribution concept, the mandatory first tier of Social security".

The proposals to limit FDI and overseas investment are nothing but to push through opening up of the pension sector to FDI, which the trade unions have opposed. Here again the dissent notes had pointed out: " ... the neo-liberal regime practically wants opening up of the pension funds to the private operators (Fund Managers) including foreign fund managers. And this is a move, which is sought to be resisted the world over even in the developed countries".

In view of the foregoing, the CITU stated: "the UPA government will be do well to adhere to the sane advice tendered to it in the dissenting notes to "desist from pushing forward such anti-employee Bill" but to "discuss the matter with all concerned trade unions and taking their views evolve a comprehensive policy and framework to implement the same".

TELECOM WORKERS' PROTEST AGAINST HIKE IN FDI

The telecom employees all over the country staged day long dharna and demonstration on 18th November 2005 against retrograde decision of the Govt of India to raise the FDI-cap in telecom sector and also to un-bundle 'the last mile copper cables' of BSNL and MTNL to unduely favour the private telecom players, both domestic and foreign. BSNL Employees Union called upon the employees to organize countrywide protest against the disastrous move of the Govt.

The statement released by the BSNL Employees Union on 12-11-2005 denounced the decision of the Govt to raise the FDI cap in telecom to 74% saying that the decision will adversely affect the national interest and also the interests of the telecom PSUs. The assurance given by the Govt that care would be taken to safeguard the national interest is meaningless as the MNCs are capable enough to bypass the direction of an ever-obliging Govt. The Union also denounced the retrograde proposal of the Govt to un-bundle the last mile copper cables laid by MTNL and BSNL for use by their rival private telecom companies. Such biased and unfair move will put the telecom PSUs in competitive disadvantage and will allow private companies and Telecom MNCs to mint huge profit practically without any cost by using PSU infrastructure. The statement also pointed out that the private tecom companies are busy in cherry-picking, i.e., providing services only in profit-earning urban areas while evading rural areas altogether, where maily the PSUs are providing service.

As per report received, countrywide, the telecom employees staged massive demonstration and dharnas and wore black badges against the anti-national decision of the Govt.

Himachal Pradesh

SECOND CONFERENCE OF GAMON WORKERS' UNION

The Second Conference of Gamon Workers' Union, representing the project workers of Col-Dam hydel project at Kullu District of HP was held on 16th October at Kullu. The union was formed among the project workers in the process of grim struggle in which the former General Secretary of the Union, Ashok Kumar was killed by the gangsters deployed by the contractors.

The conference commenced with offerings of floral tribute to the martyr's column of Ashok Kumar. The delegates to the conference was elected from 900 workers.

The conference was conducted by a presidium comprising Nima Lama, Mansingh Rana, Ravinder Kumar and Benoy Chauhan,

The conference was inaugurated by Ravinder Kumar, President, Himachal State CITU. In his inaugural speech, Ravinder pointed to the roll of CITU in organizing the hydel project workers in the state braving atrocities by the employers and state administration and making many sacrifices. The Gamon Workers' Union carries that glorious tradition and must keep the flag of united struggle flying in defence of workers' rights. He stressed upon more intensive grass root level campaign to unify and politicalise the workers.

Outgoing Secretary of the union, Hemraj placed the report in the conference. The report was discussed thoroughly by the delegates. The conference elected 66 member executive committee with Hemraj as President, Benoy Chouhan as General Secretary and Ranjit Thakur as Treasurer. The conference was also addressed by Prem Gautam, Secretary, Kullu District CITU.

JHARKHAND

COAL WORKERS ON STRUGGLE

Coal mine workers of Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL) at Dhanbad have been on struggle against 1)non-implementation of national coal wage agreement (NCWA-VII) 2) non-employment of dependents of employees who were murdered while on duty at Muruldih colliery, 3) victimization for participating in 29 Sept strike. About 3000 workers of Mohuda group BCCL including the washery went on strike from 18the October onwards. Despite threat for 8 days' pay cut for one day's strike and onslaughts by police and CISF etc, strike could not be broken. In the face of management's refusal to talk to the unions, the unions decided to hold mass squatting before BCCL headquarters and work-stoppage all over BCCL from 24th October onwards.

As the preparatory campaign for 24th action programme went on, the management was forced to call joint meeting with the unions on 23rd October and had to agree for withdraw all victimization measures and give employment to dependents of the employees.

Besides above the workers of Dabori Colliery staged two days strike against victimization. The contract workers of Kissoregarh siding struck work on 27th October and blocked coal dispatches to press for their demands.

MEDICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVES TO STRIKE

Under the leadership of Federation of Medical & Sales Representatives Association of India (FMRAI), the medical and sales representatives are going in for three days' countrywide strike on 14th to 16th December 2005 to press for urgent Govt action in sorting out their just demands.

The demands of the workers are: extension of Sales Promotion Act to sales representatives/field workers in other industries besides pharmaceuticals, recognition of 'sales promotion' as 'industry' under ID Act, against unfair trade and marketing practices by some companies and black-marketing, against victimization etc.

On the days of strikes, demonstration s will be organized before various establishments throughout the country.

Andhra Padesh

APSRTC STAFF & WORKERS FEDERATION'S CONFERENCE

The 6th State Conference and Silver Jubilee Celebrations of APSRTC Staff & Workers Federation were held at Com. N.V. Bhasker Rao Nagar, Hyderabad from 10th to 12th September 2005. A big rally was held on 10th September. M. Babu Rao, Member of Parliament and the Chairman of the Reception Committee, K.K. Divakaran, General Secretary, AIRTWF, A. Soundarajan, General Secretary, Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU were among the important speakers who addressed the gathering.

The delegate session was inaugurated by Com. Dr. M.K. Pandhe, President CITU on 11.09.2005. The Vice Chairman & Managing Director with other officials of APSRTC and other dignitaries were also present. Ch. Sankar Rao, General Secretary SCRMU, B. Rama Rao, President of APSRTC Employees Union (AITUC) and Vijay Kumar, General Secretary APSRTC Karmika Sangh (BMS) were

among others who greeted the conference.

Representing from all the 23 districts of A.P., participation of 680 delegates including 30 women delegates in the conference is significant and remarkable. The report of General Secretary to the conference and the discussions of delegates on the report, were mainly concentrated on the organization.

This conference mainly dealt on the steps to be taken to improve the standards of functioning of the union further and to the manifold increase of the membership. The conference concluded on 12.09.05 with remarks, observation and valuable suggestions to improve the organization, made by S. Veeriah, General Secretary, CITU, AP State Committee. The conference unanimously adopted some important resolutions which include, "on the intervention of Judiciary in the strikes", "On September 29th strike" and "on Building up a mass movement to protect APSRTC".

The conference re-elected Com. M.N. Reddy, R. Laxmiah and S. Bhogeshwar Rao, as President, General Secretary, and treasurer respectively along with 21 other office bearers.

PUNJAB

SIX-DAY LONG JATHA MARCH BY CITU

As follow up to 29th September General Strike which paralysed the entire state, the Punjab state committee of CITU undertook a programme of six-day long jatha march to campaign on the pressing issue of the workers in preparation to a bigger struggle. The Jatha march started on 4th November and concluded on 9th. Tw jathas were organized. One started from Hussaniwala in Ferozpur district led by Raghunath Singh, General Secretary of Punjab CITU and the another started from Jalianwalabag led by Vijay Mishra, working president Punjab CITU along with other comrades. The main demands are 1)Upward revision of minimum wages, 2) abolition of contract labour system, 3) strict implementation of all labour laws, 4) Ration cards to migrant workers, 4) regularization of daily wage workers in various departments.

The jatha starting from Hussaniwala took off with a huge public rally before the office of the Dy Commissioner. This jatha passed through Malaout (Muktasar district), Dhanoula town (district Sangrur), Malerkotla and Ahemadgarh, Ropar, Chandigarh, village Patran, Rajpura, and Dera Bassi. In all the places numerous rallies, meetings and processions were held at factory gates, town chawks , district headquarters etc in which several thousands of workers and common people took active part.

The Jatha starting from Jaliwanwalabagh after paying tributes to the Martyrs, passed through Batala, Pathankot at Gurudaspur district, Talwara town, Hoshiarpur and Garshamkar at Hoshierpur district, Nawan Shehar, Jallandhar etc and in all the centres number of public rallies were held drawing several thousands of people.

Both the Jathas converged from two different directions at Ludhiana. Along with the jatha marchers, two huge processions one starting from The Highway Cycle factory gate and another from Rockman Cycle factory gates passed through several parts of the city to converge into a public meeting at Chattar Singh Park. The processions have drawn several thousands of workers from various factories and paralysed normal traffic in the city for couple of hours. The park was overflowing with people from all walks of life. The rally was addressed by Raghunath Singh, Vijay Mishra and other state CITU leaders.

The jatha march and the mobilizations at numerous centres of the state enroute have been joined by the unions and workers from all segments of the economy, both in organized and unorganized sectors. Govt employees and

employees of banks, insurance, medical representatives have also joined the rallies in a big way. Peasants and agricultural workers welcomed the Jatha at various spots of enroute. The rallies held were addressed by the district and industry level leaders of CITU and also by the leadership of Kisan Sabha, DYFI, AIDWA and other mass organizations. The rallies and meetings held at Chandigarh on 7TH November were also addressed by Tapan Sen Secretary CITU.

In the process of the Jatha march Rs 1,86,900 was collected and handed over to the leaders of the jatha by the workers in various districts.

HARYANA

PIT-LOOM WORKERS' STRUGGLE AT PANIPAT

Around twenty thousand workers of Pit-Looms at Panipat have been struggling braving attacks by the gangsters deployed by the employers and police. The main products of the Pit looms are blankets and Carpets which are woven by the skilled workers in the looms placed in small rooms below ground level. Most of the workers are migrants hailing from West Dinajpur District of West Bengal. Their struggle are being jointly conducted by CITU and IFTU leadership at Panipat.

Entire products are being exported products are being exported and the employers are earning hefty profit. But workers are getting much below the minimum wage. After prolonged struggle by the workers including number of strike actions, the Labour Deptt had to intervene and an agreement on wage rates was arrived at on 22-09-2005. But employers started violating the agreement immediately thereafter and workers' agitation started again. Despite repeated complaints with the Labour deptt, no action was taken against the erring employers. Continuous dharna was staged by thousands of workers before DLC office from 18-10-2005 to 26-10-2005. On 28th October 2005, workers held a big rally at the circus ground which was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, Satvir Singh, General Secretary Haryana State CITU, Anand Jawahara, Secretary, Panipat District CITU and others. On 29th October, 2005, PP Kapur, leader of the IFTU union and Jay Bhagawan, Secretary, Industrial Workers' Union (CITU) were severely beaten by the employers in front of the police Station. And after that Police arrested both the leaders. Thousands of workers spontaneously mobilized before the police station and took the leaders to Hospital. On 30th October 2005, there have been spontaneous strike in all the Pit Looms and around 10000 striking workers mobilized before the mini-Secretariat and staged demonstration and demanded immediate arrest and action on the concerned employers for assaulting the trade union leaders. It was also announced from the rally that dharna will be organized before the office of the District Commissioner followed by one day industrial strike in Panipat.

The workers rally was addressed by Satvir Singh, General Secretary, Haryana Sate CITU, R C Jagga of Sarb Karmachari Sangh, Anand Jawhara, Secretary District CITU, P P Kapur and Dr Aparna of IFTU.

DECEMBER 15 - WORLD TEA DAY

During the World Social Forum in January this year, an international seminar participated by the trade unions of plantation workers and organisations of tea-growers decided to observe a day every year as 'World Tea Day'. The objective is to highlight the adverse impact of globalisation on the tea plantations and conditions of workers and small growers. It has since been decided to observe this day on December 15th every year. The All India Plantation Workers' Federation has called for observance of the by holding rallies and demonstrations in all plantation areas, jointly with the other trade unions. An international seminar is being held on Dec. 14 in Delhi.

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month Aug.'05	Sep.'05	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month Aug.'05	Sep.'05
Andhra	1	Gudur	504	502	Maharastra	38	Mumbai	607	610
Pradesh	2	Guntur	529	531		39	Nagpur	564	566
	3	Hyderabad	535	537		40	Nasik	575	578
	4	Visakhapatnam	530	529		41	Pune	590	597
	5	Warangal	557	559		42	Solapur	543	545
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	455	454	Orissa	43	Barbil	489	486
	7	Guwahati	535	535		44	Rourkela	481	483
	8	Labac-Silchar	413	415	Punjab	45	Amritsar	493	503
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	445	451		46	Ludhiana	505	516
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	442	444	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	539	541
Bihar	11	Monghyr	519	524		48	Jaipur	501	506
Chhattisg	12	Bhillai	492	492	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	558	561
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	528	522		50	Coimbator	500	507
	14	Bhavnagar	549	546		51	Coonoor	510	512
	15	Rajkot	510	504		52	Madurai	500	499
	16	Surat	505	518		53	Salem	478	469
	17	Vadodra	508	510		54	Tiruchirap	582	580
Haryana	18	Faridabad	557	559	Uttar	55	Agra	518	525
	19	Yamunanagar	525	523	Pradesh	56	Ghaziabad	554	566
J & K	20	Srinagar	628	634		57	Kanpur	530	536
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	516	521		58	Saharanpu	510	520
	22	Jharia	451	448		59	Varanasi	581	587
	23	Kodarma	476	481	West	60	Asansol	516	516
	24	Noamundi	488	489	Bengal	61	Darjeeling	445	451
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	509	511		62	Durgapur	595	594
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	540	543		63	Haldia	630	629
	27	Belgaum	597	603		64	Howrah	625	626
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	548	555		65	Jalpaiguri	459	467
	29	Mercara	492	497		66	Kolkata	592	590
Kerala	30	Alwaye	544	544		67	Raniganj	474	477
	31	Mundakayam	514	514	Chandigarh	68	Chandigar	624	629
	32	Quilon	545	551	Delhi	69	Delhi	650	655
	33	Thiruvananthapura	606	609	Pondicherry	70	Pondicher	577	581
Madhya	34	Balaghat	489	492					
Pradesh	35	Bhopal	569	572					
	36	Indore	543	540	ALL-INDIA			540	542
	37	Jabalpur	550	549					

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State		Centre	August 2005	September 2005
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem	554	564
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh	512	519
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara	535	540
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara	485	485
Tripura	5	Tripura	466	470
Goa	6	Goa	638	638

A TALE OF TWO GOVERNMENTS...

The Finance department of the Govt of Orissa directed to scrap 75% vacant posts and gave a go-ahead to contractual employment in Govt jobs. A letter issued by Finance Secretary, Govt of Orissa on contractual employment says, "if any base level vacant post is essentially required to be filled up, the same should be made on contract basis at a consolidated salary, that too after abolition of the former post carrying a particular scale of pay...while making the contract appointment, the letter must make it clear that the appointment is valid up to end of February of that financial year and renewal of appointments can be considered only if continuance of the post is extended with finance department's concurrence." The instruction of the finance department further stipulates that before handing over contract appointment, the authorities will ensure a written undertaking from the appointee. The model form of the written undertaking from the contractual appointee says, "I am aware that my appointment is purely temporary and on contract basis and can be terminated any time without notice and assigning any reason thereof.... Further, I do hereby give an undertaking that in future I shall not claim regular scale of pay and other allowances for continuing in the said post merely on the ground that I have been given a contractual appointment and my employment have been extended from time to time." (Hindustan Times, 17-08-2005)

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On the other hand

The LEFT FRONT GOVT OF WEST BENGAL The Finance Department (Audit Branch) issue an office memorandum on 26th September 2005, discontinuing contract employment against regular vacancies, reads:

" For some time past, the State Government has been following the policy of filling up non-PSC/ non-promotional posts on contract basis generally for one year initially with the approval of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) in each individual case. The contract appointment of those employees is also being reviewed from time to time. Since, however, the job attached to these posts are also perennial in nature, the above policy has been reviewed. On the basis of the review, the Governor has been pleased to decide as under:-

i) The non-PSC/non-promotional posts in general may be filled up on regular basis with the approval of Finance Deptt and the ACC...

ii) There shall be not further appointment on contract basis against regular vacancies or engagement of private agencies for getting the jobs associated with regular posts done, except in the following cases where...

a) the posts are required to be filled up exclusively for time bound projects

b) the posts require specialized, scientific or technical qualifications and

c) the situations are of specific exigencies as may be decided by the Cabinet.

The Governor has been further pleased to decide the employees who were initially recruited on contract basis following the norms, rules and methods as applicable to the relevant posts, may, if still continuing in contract service be brought under the regular establishments, subject to above principles against regular vacancies in which they have been initially appointed with the approval of ACC. Consultation with the Finance Department will be necessary in such cases."

One can seen the difference in approach !

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PSU UNIONS: ALL INDIA COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEET

The meeting of all India Coordination Committee of Public Sector Unions was held on November 24 – 25, 2005 at B T R Bhawan, New Delhi. Around 70 leading comrades from various public sector units from all over the country attended the meeting. The meeting discussed at length the situation facing the PSU workers arising out disinvestments, privatisation, FDI policy of the Govt, discriminatory policy of the Govt against PSUs and mass scale contractorisation etc.

The meeting was presided over by Ardhendu Dakshi, Secretary CITU. M K Pandhe, President, CITU, delivered the inaugural address. Jibon Roy, Secretary CITU placed the Convener's report. 21 comrades took part in the deliberation on Convener's report and put forth various suggestions. Meeting denounced the Govt.'s move to disinvest in non-navaratna PSUs and urged to build united countrywide resistance movement against the same. The meeting also stressed the need to strengthen united platform of PSU workers in the struggle. In view of the end of the tenure of the present wage agreement in PSUs in 2006, the coordination committee decided to start preparation for developing a common approach among the public sector unions on future course of wage negotiation. It also emphasised the need for mounting pressure on the Govt for revival of sick PSUs. In view of the menacing pace of contractorisation in PSUs, the urgency for organising the contract workers' struggle has also been pressed for by the delegates in the meeting.

After prolonged deliberation the meeting took the following decision:

- Observance of All India Demands Day on 20th December 2005 in all the PSUs by demonstrations, issuing leaflets and sending telegrams to the Prime Minister with copy to CITU Centre.
- Text of the telegram: " NO TO DISINVESTMENT IN PSUs. TAKE URGENT STEPS TO REVIVE SICK PSUs."
- Besides above programme, our unions in all the PSUs should organise protest through demonstration and sending telegrams as soon as any PSU is taken up for disinvestments by the Govt of India
- CITU will take up with other unions to hold a CPSTU workshop at the earliest on wage revision as per decision of the CPSTU meeting dated 16th August 2005.
- Demands on the rights and wages of the contract workers in PSUs should also be incorporated in the PSU workers Charter of Demands
- In view of the menacing pace of contractorisation of regular jobs in all the PSUs and consequent adverse change in the composition of the workforce and quality of employment, our unions in the PSUs must take up the task of organising the contract workers and lead their struggles on a priority basis.
- The All India Convention of the All India Coordination Committee will be held sometimes in June 2006 for two days. The delegation to Convention must comprise of representatives of both the permanent workers and the contract workers in all the PSUs. One day should be devoted to discuss on contract workers' issues and our tasks to organise them.
- State level/regional convention of public sector workers should be organised during the intervening period in all the states and regions under intimation to CITU Centre and participation in the said state/regional convention must also comprise of representatives of both permanent and contract workers of the PSUs in the state/region.

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